

Finland

Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review

First session of the UPR Working Group, 7-18 April 2008

In this submission, Amnesty International provides information under sections B, C and D (as stipulated in the General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information under the Universal Periodic Review):

- Under B, Amnesty International raises concern over shortcomings of the ratification of international human rights standards.
- In section C, we describe concerns related to human conscientious objectors, violence against women and asylum seekers.
- In each section Amnesty International makes a number of recommendations in the areas of concerns listed.

B. Normative and institutional framework of State

Ratification of international human rights standards

- Amnesty International recommends that Finland should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the International Convention for Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and that Finland should sign and ratify the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
- Amnesty International urges Finland to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

C. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

Civilian alternatives to military service

The length of the civilian alternative to military service in Finland remains punitive and discriminatory. Conscientious objectors are, at present, obliged to perform 395 days of civilian service, 215 days longer than the shortest and most common period of military service.

In October 2007 the government proposed changes to legislation which would shorten alternative civilian service to 362 days, and would recognize the right to conscientious objection in times of war or other public emergency. Amnesty International considers that the proposed length of alternative service, although a step in the right direction, would remain punitive.

- Amnesty International calls on the government of Finland to further reduce the length of alternative civilian service, in line with internationally recognized standards and recommendations.

As of the end of 2006 Amnesty International considered 11 imprisoned conscientious objectors to military service to be prisoners of conscience. Most were serving sentences of 197 days for refusing to perform alternative civilian service.

- Amnesty International calls on the government of Finland to release, immediately and unconditionally, all prisoners of conscience.

Action to prevent violence against women

As of November 2007 the government of Finland had still not created a National Action Plan on preventing violence against women.

- Amnesty International recommends that Finland should create such a National Action Plan without further delay.

Asylum-determination procedures

Accelerated asylum-determination procedures under the Aliens Act allow too short a time for claims to be considered thoroughly. The procedures do not allow asylum-seekers to exhaust all avenues of appeal, and allow expulsion whilst appeals were still pending.

Amnesty International notes concerns expressed about these non-suspensive appeals procedures by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a body of the Council of Europe, in its *Third report on Finland*, published in May 2007¹.

- Amnesty International calls on the government of Finland to reform asylum-determination procedures to ensure that no asylum-seeker can be expelled from the country until a final determination is made of their application for asylum, including of any appeals against initial refusals.

¹ ECRI: *Third report on Finland*, adopted on 15 December 2006, CRI(2007)23, para. 46.

Appendix: Amnesty International documents for further reference

- Entry on Finland in the Amnesty International Report 2007,
<http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Europe-and-Central-Asia/Finland>
- Entry on Finland in the Amnesty International Report 2006,
<http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/nld-summary-eng>
- Entry on Finland in the Amnesty International Report 2005,
<http://web.amnesty.org/report2005/fin-summary-eng>