

Bridges, not weapons!

An appeal for a migrant, asylum seeker and refugee reception policy

June 2015

It is estimated that over 20,000 people have lost their lives along Europe's borders over the past 20 years, with almost 2,000 of them perishing in the Mediterranean since the start of 2015. The Member States of the European Union (EU) will address the issue of these repeated tragedies at the 25-6 June European Council meeting.

Our organisations cannot accept the fact that the EU's institutions are not prioritizing saving lives. On the contrary, the EU and its Member States had no trouble agreeing to reinforce its arsenal of security measures, which is largely responsible for these migration tragedies, and have added the option of armed intervention to Frontex's remit. The UN and some countries from the Southern Mediterranean, including Libya, have strongly criticized these plans.

In response to this refusal to accept the reality of the migration situation and the repeated breaches of the EU's founding principles, our organisations have decided to take action to urge Europe's leaders to implement an alternative policy that respects fundamental rights, life and human dignity. They are calling on civil society to rally round and follow them. In light of the urgent nature of the situation, they are calling for everything possible to be done to protect people who are forced to risk their lives in order to reach a safe place and to exercise their right to freedom of movement.

In order to achieve this and without delay, our organisations are calling for the European Union and its member states to implement the following measures as a matter of urgency:

- Organize a properly resourced maritime search and rescue operation supported by all the Member States to prevent boats from sinking and rescue anyone in distress. Frontex, even if its resources are increased three-fold and its area of intervention is widened, remains a security agency.
- Implement a broad-based and real migrant and asylum seeker reception and refugee protection mechanism, based on solidarity between Member States and guaranteeing that asylum seekers have the freedom to choose their country of residence.
- Open up legal and safe immigration channels for migrants and asylum seekers and immediately abolish the transit visas required by many people fleeing war-torn countries, such as Syria.
- Immediately activate the system laid out in Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons, for example from Syria or Eritrea.
- Refuse and / or suspend migration related cooperation with countries of origin and transit countries that fail to respect freedoms and fundamental rights.

The European Commission and the Council of the EU have proposed deploying the military against people traffickers and smugglers. Our organisations feel that the use of force is disproportionate and dangerous for migrants and asylum seekers who would be caught between a rock and a hard place.

Through our cross-Europe campaign, set to run on the eve of the next European Council meeting on 25 June, our organizations are calling for each and every individual to support and publicize this appeal and to take any useful initiative to organize and bolster the campaign events so that the European Union takes immediate action, implementing emergency solutions for those seeking protection.

Our organisations are insistently calling for a meeting at the European Council in order to convey an alternative opinion, as it is wrong to claim that only one policy is possible.

Our organisations will be in Brussels on 24-5 June to remind the European Council of its responsibility to defend fundamental human rights. The organisations will hold a press conference on 24 June to be attended by the appeal's signatory organisations.

Signatories:



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



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