



Two years after the EU-Turkey statement; Nine months after the agreement between Italy and Libya with the financial and political support of the EU

Continued violations of human rights; increasing hostility towards migrants and humanitarian workers and NGOs in the EU; financial and political support from the EU for authoritarian regimes and unstable institutions: this seems to be the result of the lack of effective action and support from the EU and its Member States concerning the recent migrant and refugees' flows trying to reach the EU, from Turkey, and from Libya to Greece and Italy.

GREECE: For a fair sharing of responsibilities

Two years after the agreement between the EU and Turkey concerning the arrival of migrants and refugees from Turkey to Greece, the management of the refugees' crisis in Greece has entered a new phase. Since the routes to central Europe have been closed and processes for the reunification of families frozen, about 65.000 refugees and migrants have been trapped in Greece. Their hopes of rebuilding their lives free from violence and persecution have been crushed as they learn that their future in Greece during its economic crisis is uncertain.

In mainland Greece, most of the refugees and migrants are being held in camps, with a smaller number in residences provided by the UNHCR and other organisations. A few have been able to move to northern Europe by various means, but those who remain in Greece are becoming increasingly frustrated.

In the Aegean Islands, there are fewer arrivals than in the past, although boats are still arriving nearly every day. The camps are overcrowded, unsanitary, lacking adequate medical services, and increasingly unsafe, especially for women and girls. More than 15.000 refugees are now on the islands, about 23% of the total in Greece, while the island residents constitute only about 2.2% of its population. Yet the Greek government and the EU are not sufficiently committed to improving conditions in the camps and relocating people to other places. The processing of paperwork for asylum can take a year or more, increasing already intolerable conditions of overcrowding. The EU should invest more in capacity building in Greece, inter alia through the commitment of asylum experts to assist with a thorough examination of each request for asylum.

There is an immediate need to move those refugees currently on the islands to mainland Greece and eventually to relocate the majority of them in Europe. The islands cannot be expected to function as 'open prisons' for what is a European crisis of political will. Nor can the suffering of migrants and refugees stranded in one of the smallest countries in Europe, which has limited capacity to host all newly arrived refugees in the long term, be used as a deterrent for migration or as a message to other refugees that they are not welcome to Europe.

The islands' citizens, whose reaction to the so-called refugee crisis has been praised, are now in the difficult position of not being able to see any end to a crisis caused by the lack of solidarity and political will among Member States which has negatively affected their livelihoods. Patience is wearing thin. Existing tensions within local communities and between local communities and refugees are being exacerbated by violence in the camps and violence incited by extremist local groups. Given the current situation in both Turkey and Greece the EU should renounce the EU-Turkey statement, whilst continuing to support Turkey, both financially and through resettlement of refugees, as it hosts 3,5 million (Syrian) refugees.

With summer approaching, arrivals are expected to increase. Without immediate intervention to transfer refugees to the mainland, establish a relocation system founded on solidarity, prioritise family reunification and protection of children and vulnerable people, the situation will



only get worse. In addition, internal problems in Turkey concerning democracy and Turkish military operations in northern Syria are firing up tensions in the area and creating more insecurity for millions of Syrians, which may also increase refugee arrivals in Europe. Armament deliveries from EU Member States to the Turkish government are not paving the way to a peaceful future for Syria and the Middle East but further escalating the conflict and, as a consequence, forcing even more people to escape from their homes.

Therefore, we call upon all the responsible authorities in Greece, in Europe, and in the United Nations to take immediate steps to improve the migration management and the asylum system in Greece, including relocation of refugees based on the principle of solidarity.

LIBYA: Stop the suffering in Libya's detention centres

Libya is the most used crossing point for asylum seekers and migrants trying to flee to Europe. UNHCR estimates that thousands of refugees and migrants are currently detained in the 33 official detention centres in Libya. The humanitarian situation in these centres is still dramatic, in some places even deteriorating. People who had to escape from war or prosecution have been trapped there for months under utterly devastating and inhumane conditions. This has to stop right now. The EU and the international community have to undertake immediate steps to support UNHCR's call for evacuating the refugees from these centres, providing them with the necessary humanitarian goods and services, resettlement and guaranteeing respect of their human rights.

ITALY: A European answer to racism and xenophobia is needed!

In Italy, despite a dramatic fall in arrivals in recent months (-79.83% in 2018 compared to the same period in 2017; 3.116 migrants are believed to have perished at sea), there has been increasing opposition and hostility towards migrants and refugees. This issue played a major role in the results of the Italian elections on 4 March 2018: Lega, and to some extent MoVimento 5 Stelle, based their successful campaign on failures within the migrant and refugee arrival management system in the country, and on the very obvious lack of a common approach and solidarity among many EU countries, notably the Visegrad countries and France. This issue gave a very powerful push to an anti-European sentiment that already existed during the worst years of the economic crisis. What is needed to reverse this situation is a visible change of attitude on the part of the EU and better management, in terms of the legislation, resources, speed and reliability of the procedures for integrating migrants and refugees in Italy.

Specifically, we ask for:

An EU initiative against the increasing criminalisation of NGOs and aid workers:

1. An EU initiative aimed at breaking the impasse over asylum seekers stranded in Greece; in particular it is urgent to give a clear timetable and perspective for establishing a permanent and solidarity-based relocation system, by reforming the current dysfunctional Dublin Regulation; every refugee must have the right to mobility, with a residence and work permit.
2. Better living conditions in the islands' camps and on mainland Greece to reach a humane standard. The migrants are not criminals and the camps must become reception camps and not resemble detention camps, with zero tolerance for overcrowding, safe accommodation for unaccompanied minors, and the safety of



women and girls within the camps; Asylum seekers should urgently be allowed to move to mainland Greece;

3. A renewed effort, also through stronger and quicker infringement procedures, by reforming the Dublin Regulation, to establish a permanent relocation programme which expired in September 2017 and which remained widely unapplied, partly because it was based on an unrealistically high recognition rate for protection. Future relocation programmes need to be based on a more realistic recognition rate so that more asylum seekers are eligible for relocation to other member states where their claim can be examined (only about 33.000 of the 160.000 foreseen were relocated from September 2015 to September 2017);
4. More detailed control and public scrutiny on the way the EU's and Member States' money is spent in Turkey and Libya; cooperation on migration with third countries may only be established or continued if full compliance with fundamental rights and international law can be ensured;
5. Repeal of the code of conduct for NGOs undertaking activities in migrants' rescue operations at sea established by the Italian government and supported by the EU, which is resulting in more and more obstacles in the rescue operations, the forced return of migrants and asylum seekers to Libya, where they face detention upon disembarkation, and the criminalisation of NGOs, as demonstrated by the recent case of the ship operated by the Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms which was seized in the port of Pozzallo by Italian judges.
6. Explicit EU support and the stepping up of humanitarian corridors, in addition to resettlement, which started to be implemented in Italy and, according to the outgoing government, should result in about 10,000 particularly vulnerable asylum seekers arriving in the country. These humanitarian corridors, coupled with resettlement on a large scale, humanitarian visas and adequate channels for migrants, including family reunification, study and work permits including in medium and low-wage sectors in the European Union, could represent a major tool towards preventing the smuggling of human beings.
7. An international task force, operating under the aegis of the UNHCR and IOM, to ensure prompt evacuations from all detention centres in Libya, with a view to providing victims with a durable solution through resettlement and guaranteeing respect of their human rights.
8. Finalisation of the reform of the Dublin system along the lines of the European Parliament's position.
9. An EU initiative in order to call on the EU Member States to stop all armament deliveries in states and areas of conflict and to stop sending refugees and asylum seekers back to states with ongoing armed conflicts such as Afghanistan.