

2nd March 2020

Greece

To Charles Michel, president of the European Council, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, and Heads of Member States;

EUROPE MUST ACT FOR THE IMMEDIATE DECONGESTION OF THE AEGEAN ISLANDS

The Aegean Islands have descended into crisis. 5 years of neglectful EU policy has finally culminated in days of protest ([1](#), [2](#)), NGOs threatened with violence, and mass strikes across the islands. Whilst over 42,000 asylum seekers reside on these islands, there is capacity for just 6,178 ([1](#)). Now, communities are braced for a surge in arrivals as Turkey has opened its borders, renegeing on the EU-Turkey agreement.

This ongoing political stalemate between the EU, Greece and Turkey must be resolved. This game, played by the powerful, is putting innocent human lives at risk. It must stop now. Added to this already volatile mix is rising panic over the coronavirus. With healthcare severely lacking in the hotspot camps, NGOs fear that an outbreak would have disastrous consequences.

Greece has been left alone to deal with this crisis - and the island communities more than anyone. Today, Europe must act to correct 5 years of negligent policy-making. It must own up to its chronic shunning of this international burden and recognise that good policy can fix this man-made catastrophe. As the humanitarian situation worsens beyond anyone's reckoning, it is your responsibility, as EU leaders, to ensure decisive and coordinated action to protect human life.

We, the undersigned, call for:

- 1) **Immediate action from all Member States to decongest the Aegean Islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros** through fair relocation of asylum seekers across European countries for the sake of universal human rights and in accordance with obligations set out under Art 78(3) of the TFEU and the 2001 Directive on Temporary Protection.
- 2) **The immediate provision by EU states of support to, and oversight of, the Greek government's Reception and Identification Centres**, to ensure access to a safe and legal asylum process in accordance with humanitarian law, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- 3) **The creation of a shared European register of legal, medical and protection staff** to support the Greek government through rotational placements in the Aegean in processing asylum applications in a humane, dignified and legal way.

We await the response of the Presidents of the European Council and Commission as well as Heads of Member States to this Open Letter. We remain united in the belief that asylum seekers and refugees

have the right to legal processes, that political irresponsibility can be made good through effective and humane policy and governance. Europe must act!

Signed:

1. *Action for Education*
2. *Advocates Abroad*
3. *Aid Hoc*
4. *amel, be human help others*
5. *Are You Syrious?*
6. *AsyLex*
7. *Basel hilft mit*
8. *Be Aware and Share*
9. *Becky's Bathhouse*
10. *Bras not Bombs*
11. *Bridge2*
12. *Calais Action*
13. *Cars of Hope, Wuppertal*
14. *Catch a Smile Luxembourg*
15. *Choosehumanity Switzerland*
16. *Chorleywood4Refugees*
17. *Collective Aid*
18. *DAHUMAS - Dachverband freiwillige humanitäre Hilfe Schweiz*
19. *Do Your Part*
20. *Donate4Refugees*
21. *Engage*
22. *Everyday, just a smile*
23. *Kids & Welcome*
24. *Glocal Roots*
25. *Hamburger Hilfskonvoi*
26. *Hello My Friend*
27. *Help Refugees / Choose Love*
28. *Herts for Refugees*
29. *Hope and Aid Direct*
30. *HuBB- Humans Before Borders*
31. *Human-aid-collective e. V.*
32. *Independent volunteers from Bosnia and Herzegovina*
33. *Indigo Volunteers*
34. *Intereuropean Human Aid Association*
35. *Jesuit Refugee Service - Greece*
36. *Kune Aid*
37. *Latitude Adjustment Podcast*
38. *LE Solidarity*
39. *Love Without Borders-For Refugees in Need*
40. *Mare-Liberum e.V.*
41. *Maç'i/Together/معاً Cyprus*
42. *mini decki*
43. *Mobile Flüchtlingshilfe e.V.*
44. *Northern Lights Aid*
45. *Offene Arme e.V.*
46. *One Happy Family*
47. *Open Cultural Center*
48. *People in Motion*
49. *People4People e. V.*
50. *PomegranateAid*
51. *Precious Plastic Samos*
52. *Project Armonia*
53. *RefuComm*
54. *Refugee 4 Refugees*
55. *Refugee Aid Network*
56. *Refugee Biriyani & Bananas*
57. *Refugee Compassion*
58. *Refugees Foundation e.V*
59. *Refugees Welcome in Olten*
60. *Refugee Welcome Karoviertel*
61. *Refugee Women's Centre*
62. *SAO Association*
63. *ShowerPower Foundation*
64. *Solidarität auf See*
65. *Stay Human Onlus*
66. *The Lava Project*
67. *The Voice of Thousands*
68. *Three Peas*
69. *Umino - Unterstützung für Menschen in Not*
70. *Frankenkonvoi e.V.*
71. *Verein Esperanza*
72. *Verein FAIR*
73. *Verein Soliba*
74. *We Are Here*
75. *Yoga and Sport For Refugees*