

To the Justice and Home Affairs Council,

Dear EU Interior Ministers,

We are currently experiencing a humanitarian crisis on European soil. And while this is neither a surprise nor a secret, European Member States have systematically and repeatedly neglected to truly share responsibility for the ever-deteriorating circumstances on the Greek hotspots. To resolve this dire situation, we need to accelerate and increase the relocation of asylum seekers from Greece to other Member States. **With this letter, we call upon you to act as one Union, both in solidarity and responsibility, so that the unnecessary suffering of people can be finally put to an end.**

Over 46,000 people are currently encamped on the Greek islands in and around the official refugee camp areas, which are designed for a maximum capacity of approximately 8,000 people. In the overcrowded camps, people are living in appalling conditions, with lack of access to basic shelter, security, food, medical care, and sanitation. People's access to asylum is impeded by lengthy procedures, which are caused by various factors including shortage of asylum caseworkers, legal aid providers, and qualified interpreters. This lack of basic human care combined with constant tensions are adding to an already traumatic situation.

The situation regarding unaccompanied minors is especially alarming; with around 1,200 minors living in dire conditions in and around the Moria refugee camp alone. With winter approaching, hundreds of new arrivals every night, and no concrete plan to improve the living conditions of those encamped, the situation is continuing to deteriorate into what has become a fully-fledged humanitarian crisis. One that some of us have gone to see first-hand and have come back appalled, saddened and truly disappointed.

Greece's mainland camps are also at full capacity. In many cases, transfers to the mainland camps can lead to even worse living conditions for those transferred. There are currently no measures in sight that properly address neither the gravity of the situation, nor the number of people suffering, nor the moral responsibility we have for the lives of these people.

We call on you to urgently agree upon and implement measures towards the situation happening now on the Greek islands, and thus ensure that all parties respect the EU standards on reception and asylum. The Justice and Home Affairs Council should take concrete action to:

- Improve living conditions immediately by providing shelter, medical care, sanitation, and sufficient food via emergency / humanitarian crisis procedures, e.g., by allowing for full operational UNHCR support;
- Set up emergency relocation measures to other European member states and urgently establish a long-term mechanism for relocation and family reunification;
- Accelerate family reunification for separated minors as well as for other individuals with family members residing in other member states, and to remove the administrative barriers currently imposed by some receiving member states;
- Lift geographical restrictions which lead to overcrowding of the camps on the islands;
- Oppose recently announced measures to replace the main camps in Lesbos, Chios and Samos with 'closed pre-departure centers', which would further violate basic human

rights and lead to the systematic detention of asylum seekers and subsequent traumatic experiences;

- Ensure asylum claims are processed adequately, by well-trained asylum case workers, interpreters, and decision makers and with effective legal, medical, and psychological support and accountability, with special attention given to vulnerable groups facing all kind of violence, and particular attention provided to unaccompanied children;
- Encourage and support local and international humanitarian activities, who currently are struggling to protect both human life and dignity by providing basic services.

We praise the efforts of the humanitarian staff and local communities trying to bring some sort of short-term solutions to the camps - they are the last line of defence for our European values. The measures presented above are the minimum necessary measures given the gravity of the situation. However, they are not a sustainable long-term solution.

The situation in Greece and its adjacent islands is a direct result of the EU's inability to act. It is imperative to implement long-term solutions based on solidarity, responsibility, and the respect and valuing of basic human rights. This includes the revision of Dublin. This process needs to begin now. Not for us, but for those suffering and dying on European soil while you are reading this letter.

Yours sincerely,

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