

# "Protect our laws and humanity!"

## Open Letter by 256 Organizations

### To:

Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Kyriakos Mitsotakis  
President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli  
President of the European Council, Charles Michel  
President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

**Athens, 6 March 2020** – The undersigned organisations are deeply concerned about recent developments at the Evros border and the Aegean islands where people are stranded at the borders of Europe, instrumentalized for political purposes, and subject to violations of their rights. We are also deeply concerned about the way the authorities of Greece and the European Union are handling new arrivals. Equally alarming are the extreme actions by security forces against refugees and by civilians against staff of human rights and humanitarian organizations. We would also like to point out that the climate of panic and rhetoric of 'asymmetric threat' –also promoted by the authorities– does not reflect reality and seriously affects not only vulnerable refugees- but also our society and the rule of law as a whole.

### Specifically:

**We firmly express our opposition to the recent decisions** of the Greek Governmental Council on Foreign Affairs and Defense (KYSEA), and in particular the adoption of the Emergency Legislative Decree, which stipulates the suspension of the right to seek asylum for all people entering the country and their return without registration, to their countries of origin or transit. Applying such a regulatory provision is inhumane and illegal as it violates the fundamental principle of *non-refoulement*, incurs international responsibilities for Greece and endangers human lives. It is beyond dispute that Greece has the sovereign competence to control its borders and to manage any crossings there. Nevertheless, the right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

**We also denounce** the attacks on organizations that defend human rights and humanitarian organizations, noting that without the support of these organizations, the refugee management system in Greece would collapse. In addition, solidarity has been stigmatized and become the target of suspicion, which has been also exacerbated by members of the Government, fomenting violence and lawlessness in society in general. We denounce any statements, actions or policies that foment or tolerate bigotry.

**We call upon the Greek Government to:**

- **Withdraw the illegal and unconstitutional Emergency Legislative Decree** and to respect the obligations of the Greek State concerning the protection of human life and rescue at sea and at the land borders.

- Immediately stop returning people to states where their lives and freedom are at risk, or where they are at risk of being subjected to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- **Immediately alleviate overcrowding on the islands by relocating asylum seekers to the mainland, protecting their well-being and health.** Priority should be given to the most vulnerable, unaccompanied minors and families with children.

- Take the necessary measures to protect every person from acts of violence, victimization and racism.

**We recall that the EU should assume substantial responsibilities for the protection of people on the move** in a manner that demonstrates respect for human dignity and lawfulness and as a matter of shared responsibility among EU member states in the context of managing what is, first and foremost, a European issue. The right to asylum and the respect for the principle of non-refoulement are fundamental elements of international and EU law and therefore the authorities of the European Union must take the necessary measures for their protection.

Therefore:

- **The European Commission, as the guardian of the Treaties,** should protect the right to asylum as enshrined in EU law. Therefore, it should reverse the “aspida (shield)” rhetoric used by Greece and urge it to assume its legal obligations.

- EU Member States should re-establish immediately the **mechanisms for the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers from Greece** to other Member States, in a fair and rational manner, with priority given to unaccompanied children. EU Member States should increase resettlement of refugees directly from Turkey.

- EU Member States and institutions should revise the EU-Turkey Statement, which – in addition to legal lacunae– has now proven to be an unpredictable and unsustainable political tool for border management.

In closing, we call on all sides to respect the law and safeguard European democratic values. Any further backsliding will have major consequences on European societies, European democracy and the rule of law.

## List of Signatories

A BUON DIRITTO (ITALY)  
ACT ALLIANCE EU (BELGIUM)  
ACCIÓN POLITEIA (SPAIN)  
ACTIONAID HELLAS  
ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL  
ACTIONAID ITALIA  
ACTION FOR EDUCATION (GREECE)  
ADDART (GREECE)  
A DROP IN THE OCEAN (DRÅPEN I HAVET)  
AED EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS (GERMANY)  
AFGHAN HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION (UK)  
AIDOS - ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA DONNE PER LO SVILUPPO (ITALY)  
AITIMA (GREECE)  
ALLIANCE FOR AFRICAN ASSISTANCE (ITALY)  
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
AMURT-AMURTEL HELLAS  
ANASA CULTURAL CENTER (GREECE)  
ANTIGONE (GREECE)  
ANTI-TRAFFICKING AND LABOUR EXPLOITATION UNIT (ATLEU) (UK)  
AOI, ASSOCIATION OF ITALIAN NGO'S FOR COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY  
ARSIS – ASSOCIATION FOR THE SUPPORT OF YOUTH (GREECE)  
ASGI ASSOCIAZIONE PER GLI STUDI GIURIDICI SULL'IMMIGRAZIONE (ITALY)  
ASINITAS, ROMA (INTERCULTURAL CENTERS) (ITALY)  
ASSOCIATION DE SOUTIEN AUX TRAVAILLEURS IMMIGRES - ASTI ASBL (LUXEMBOURG)  
ASSOCIATION FOR INTEGRATION AND MIGRATION (CZECH REPUBLIC)  
ASSOCIATION FOR LEGAL INTERVENTION (POLAND)  
ASOCIACIÓN POR TI MUJER (SPAIN)  
ASVIS (ITALIAN ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)  
ASYLOS (UK)  
ATTIKA HUMAN SUPPORT  
AVOCATS SANS FRONTIÈRES  
BABEL DAY CENTER (GREECE)  
BAOBAB EXPERIENCE (ITALY)  
BORDER CRIMINOLOGIES-OXFORD UNIVERSITY (UK)  
BORDERLINE-EUROPE HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT BORDERS (GERMANY)  
BRIGHTON MIGRANT SOLIDARITY (UK)  
CARE DEUTSCHLAND E.V.  
CARITAS HELLAS  
CCM – COMITATO COLLABORAZIONE MEDICA (ITALY)  
CENTER FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND FREEDOM (CEPS) (MONTENEGRO)  
CENTRAL ASYLUM YORKSHIRE  
CENTRE DIOTIMA (GREECE)  
CENTRE FOR PEACE STUDIES (CENTAR ZA MIROVNE STUDIJE) (CROATIA)  
CENTRE FOR TRAUMA, ASYLUM AND REFUGEES, UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX (UK)  
CESIE (ITALY)  
CESSMIR, UNIVERSITY OF GHENT (BELGIUM)  
CHANGE MAKERS LAB (GREECE)  
CHEER INTERNATIONAL GROUP (CHEERING) (GREECE)  
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE ASSOCIATION (SMAN) (GREECE)

CIRÉ (COORDINATION ET INITIATIVES POUR REFUGIES ET ÉTRANGERS) (BELGIUM)  
COLLECTIVE AID (SERBIA)  
COMHLÁMH (IRELAND)  
CONCORD ITALIA  
COORDINADORA DE ORGANIZACIONES PARA EL DESAROLLO (SPAIN)  
COSPE ONLUS (ITALY)  
CZECHIA AGAINST POVERTY AND INEQUALITY  
DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (DRC)  
DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL GREECE  
DIRTY GIRLS (ΕΛΛΑΔΑ)  
DONATE4REFUGEES  
DUTCH COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (DCR)  
DUTCH LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (NETHERLANDS)  
ECHO100PLUS (GREECE)  
ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT OF THESSALONIKI (GREECE)  
EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION (GREECE)  
ELIX (GREECE)  
ELPIDA HOME  
END FGM EUROPEAN NETWORK  
EPAPSY (GREECE)  
EQUAL RIGHTS BEYOND BORDERS (GREECE)  
EQUAL SOCIETY (GREECE)  
EUROPEAN ANTIPOVERTY NETWORK (EAPN)  
EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES (ECRE)  
EVERY CHILD PROTECTED AGAINST TRAFFICKING (ECPAT)  
FEDERAZIONE DEGLI ORGANISMI CRISTIANI SERVIZIO INTERNAZIONALE VOLONTARIO  
(ITALY)  
FENIX HUMANITARIAN LEGAL AID  
FIX IN ART (GREECE)  
FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE (GREECE)  
FREEDOM FROM TORTURE (UK)  
FREE MOVEMENT SKATEBOARDING (UK)  
FUNDACION CEPAIM (SPAIN)  
GAASBEEK EN GAASBEEK ADVOCATEN (NETHERLANDS)  
GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP  
GCAP EUROPE (BELGIUM)  
GCAP HELLAS  
GCAP ITALIA  
GENERATION 2.0 RED (GREECE)  
GERMAN NGO FORUM ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT  
GLOCAL ROOTS (SWITZERLAND)  
GREATER MANCHESTER IMMIGRATION AID UNIT (GMIAU)  
GREEK COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (GCR)  
GREEK FORUM OF MIGRANTS  
GREEK FORUM OF REFUGEES  
GREEK NETWORK FOR THE RIGHT TO SHELTER AND HOUSING  
HARINGEY MIGRANT SUPPORT CENTRE (HMSC)  
HELLENIC ANTIPOVERTY NETWORK  
HELLENIC LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (HLHR)  
HELLENIC PLATFORM FOR DEVELOPMENT  
HELLO MY FRIEND

HELP REFUGEES / CHOOSE LOVE  
HERTS FOR REFUGEES (UK)  
HIAS GREECE  
HIGGS (GREECE)  
HUMANITY NOW (USA)  
HUMANRIGHTS360 (GREECE)  
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH  
HUBB - HUMANS BEFORE BORDERS (PORTUGAL)  
I AM YOU HUMANITARIAN AID (SWEDEN)  
ILIAKTIDA AMKE (GREECE)  
IMMIGRANT COUNCIL OF IRELAND  
INDIGO VOLUNTEERS (UK)  
INITIATIVE FOR THE DETAINEES' RIGHTS (GREECE)  
INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (UK)  
INTELEKTUALET E RINJ, SHPRESE (IRSH) (ALBANIA)  
INTER ALIA (GREECE)  
INTEREUROPEAN HUMAN AID ASSOCIATION GERMANY E.V.  
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR ERITREAN REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS – ICERAS  
INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION – EUROPEAN NETWORK (IPPF EN)  
(BELGIUM)  
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC)  
INTERSOS HELLAS  
INTERSOS ORGANIZZAZIONE UMANITARIA ONLUS (ITALY)  
INTERVOLVE (GREECE)  
IRIDA WOMEN' S CENTER (GREECE)  
IRISH ANTIPOVERTY NETWORK  
ISLAMIC HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
ITALIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES  
JOINT COUNCIL FOR THE WELFARE OF IMMIGRANTS (JCWI) (UK)  
JRS PORTUGAL  
JRS GREECE  
JUSTRIGHT SCOTLAND  
KHORA COMMUNITY CENTRE (GREECE)  
KITRINOS HEALTH CARE (GREECE)  
L'AUBERGE DES MIGRANTS (FRANCE)  
LAW CENTRES NETWORK (UK)  
LEEDS NO BORDERS (UK)  
LEGAL CENTRE LESVOS (GREECE)  
LEGAL SECTOR WORKERS UNION (LSWU) (UK)  
LEROS SOLIDARITY NETWORK (GREECE)  
LESVOS SOLIDARITY (GREECE)  
LIGHTHOUSE RELIEF (LHR)  
LIVERPOOL LAW CLINIC (LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY) (UK)  
MASS ACTION  
MEDICAL AID FOR REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE (MARDI)  
MED.IN MEDICAL INTERVENTION (GREECE)  
MEDECINS DU MONDE – GREECE (MDM - GREECE)  
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES – GREECE (MSF – GREECE)  
MELISSA NETWORK (GREECE)  
METADRASI (GREECE)  
METHORIA LAST RIGHTS (GREECE)

MIDDLESBOROUGH DIOCESE JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION  
MIGRANT'S RIGHTS NETWORK (UK)  
MIGRANT VOICE (UK)  
MIGRATION MOBILITIES BRISTOL (UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL)  
MISSION LIFELINE E.V. (GERMANY)  
MOBILE INFO TEAM (GREECE)  
MOVEMENT ON THE GROUND (THE NETHERLANDS)  
NETWORK FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS (GREECE)  
NETWORK FOR THE SOCIAL SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS (GREECE)  
NETWORK ITALIANO SALUTE GLOBALE  
ODYSSEA (GREECE)  
OFFICE OF DISPLACED DESIGNERS (ΕΛΛΑΔΑ)  
OMANIAE VZW ORGANISATIE (BELGIUM)  
OMNES (GREECE)  
ONE HAPPY FAMILY (GREECE)  
ONE PUMP COURT (UK)  
ORGANIZATION EARTH (GREECE)  
OXFAM  
OXFORD AGAINST IMMIGRATION DETENTION (UK)  
OXFORD MIGRANT SOLIDARITY  
PAMPIRAIKI SUPPORT INITIATIVE FOR REFUGEES & MIGRANTS (GREECE)  
PAR – PLATFORMA DE APOIO AOS REFUGIADOS (PORTUGAL)  
PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL (BELGIUM)  
PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (FINLAND)  
PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS (PICUM)  
POSITIVE ACTION IN HOUSING  
POVORD INSTITUTE (SLOVENIA)  
PRAKSIS (GREECE)  
PRAXIS COMMUNITY PROJECTS (UK)  
PROJECT ARMONIA (GREECE/SWITZERLAND)  
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CENTRE (PILC) (UK)  
QUAKER ASYLUM AND REFUGEE NETWORK (QARN)  
RAV REPUBLICAN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION (GERMANY)  
RED ACOGE (SPAIN)  
REFOCUS MEDIA LABS  
REFUGEE AID SERBIA (SERBIA)  
REFUGEE BIRIYANI AND BANANAS (UK)  
REFUGEE COUNCIL (UK)  
REFUGEEED  
REFUGEE FOUNDATION (SERBIA)  
REFUGEE INFO BUS (FRANCE AND GREECE)  
REFUGEE LEGAL SUPPORT (RLS)  
REFUGEE RESCUE (UK)  
REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE (RRE)  
REFUGEE SUPPORT AEGEAN (RSA)  
REFUGEE SUPPORT EUROPE  
REFUGEE WOMEN'S CENTRE (FRANCE)  
REFUGEE YOUTH SERVICE (GREECE/UK)  
RIGHT TO REMAIN (UK)  
ROOM FOR REFUGEES (UK)  
RTI HELLAS

SAFE PASSAGE INTERNATIONAL  
SAMOS VOLUNTEERS (GREECE)  
SANTE REFUGEE MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS PROJECT  
SAO ASSOCIATION FOR DISPLACED WOMEN (SWITZERLAND)  
SAVE THE CHILDREN  
SCI HELLAS  
SCOTTISH REFUGEE COUNCIL  
SEEBRÜCKE  
SHOWER POWER FOUNDATION (GREECE)  
SLOVENE PHILANTHROPY  
SOAS DETAINEE SUPPORT (UK)  
SOCIAL HACKERS ACADEMY - SOCIAL HACKER A.M.K.E.  
SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SID)  
SOLIDARITY4ALL (GREECE)  
SOLIDARITYNOW  
SOS RACISMO (SPAIN)  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE MIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACTION GROUP (SYMAAG)  
STATE OF CONCEPT  
STATEWATCH (UK)  
STILL I RISE (GREECE)  
STIL-UTRECHT (THE NETHERLANDS)  
SÜDWIND (AUSTRIA)  
SWINDON CITY OF SANCTUARY  
SXEDIA STIN POLI (GREECE)  
SYMBIOSIS SCHOOL OF POLITICAL STUDIES (GREECE)  
SYMBOLO - ROMA NORDOVEST PER LA SINISTRA (ITALY)  
SYNDICAT INTERPROFESSIONNEL DE TRAVAILLEUSES ET TRAVAILLEURS (SIT) (SWITZERLAND)  
TEXNODROMO (GREECE)  
TERRE DES HOMMES HELLAS  
THALASSA OF SOLIDARITY (GREECE)  
THE BALKAN FORUM (KOSOVO)  
THE BRIGHTON TRUST (UK)  
THE DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER FOUNDATION (NETHERLANDS)  
THE HOME PROJECT (GREECE)  
THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT (IRAP) (USA)  
THE LAVA PROJECT (GREECE)  
THE SUSSEX REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SELF SUPPORT GROUP  
THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT (IRAP) (USA)  
THE ROUTES OF THE OLIVE TREE (GREECE)  
THESSALONIKI PRIDE (GREECE)  
THESS DICTIO – VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS’ NETWORK OF THESSALONIKI (GREECE)  
THOUSAND 4 1000 (UK)  
TOGETHER FOR BETTER DAYS (GREECE)  
TO MOV (GREECE)  
TRP SOLICITORS (UK)  
TRANSGENDER SUPPORT ASSOCIATION (GREECE)  
UNITED AGAINST INHUMANITY - UAI  
UTOPIA 56 (FRANCE)  
VELOS YOUTH (GREECE)  
VEREIN FAIR (SWITZERLAND)  
VICTORIA SQUARE PROJECT

VIRGO SOLICITORS  
VLUCHTELINGEN ONDERSTEUNING SINT-NIKLAAS (BELGIUM)  
WESLEY GRYK SOLICITORS  
WORLD WITHOUT WARS AND VIOLENCE (GREECE)  
YOUNG ROOTS  
ZA'ATAR NGO (GREECE)