

Brussels, 13/12/2018

Dear Members of the European Council,

In light of the approaching winter that will exacerbate the already inhumane living conditions, we plead all heads of states of the European Union to promptly relocate asylum seekers from the Aegean Islands to ensure their access to adequate living conditions.

For the third consecutive winter, asylum seekers staying in the camps of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos, and Leros will have to face low temperatures and adverse weather conditions. 12,500 people are currently living in makeshift tents and containers - almost triple the capacity of the camps. Previous winters have painfully exhibited that accommodations, without heating, insulation or even proper flooring, are woefully ill-suited.

Moreover, numerous human rights organizations have this fall reported on the appalling and deteriorated conditions in the overcrowded refugee camps. Not only has the deficiency of hygiene and sanitation led to a high risk of infectious diseases, the lack of basic protection measures has left women and children, as well as members of the LGBTI+ community, vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault. The standard of living conditions has simply become unacceptable.

The European Union has a duty to ensure an adequate standard of living for asylum seekers, guaranteeing their subsistence and protecting their physical and mental health. Portugal's recent agreement to transfer 1000 asylum seekers and potentially up to 1,000 through 2019 is a positive step. Following the attached call of twenty NGOs, we urge you to swiftly follow the example of Portugal and to each relocate 1000 asylum seekers from the Aegean Islands to suitable accommodation in your countries while their asylum applications are being processed.

We must no longer look away.

Yours faithfully,

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