



CLC IN EUROPE DEMANDS: SAVE LIVES! PRACTICE HUMAN RIGHTS!

The Covid-19 pandemic must not be taken as an excuse to turn a blind eye to the human rights violations taking place at the Greek-Turkish border

Nowadays **we are witnessing a reality of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment to people who are fleeing their homelands because they cannot live there**, because their lives are in danger in their countries of origin. This reality cries out for our attention, especially now, with the alarming situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. A view of compassion, fraternity and justice becomes urgent. These people need to be part of the transformation towards a dignified, human and fair treatment.

There are children, women and men who are living in appalling conditions in the refugee camp of Moria, on the Greek island of Lesbos. They have been waiting for the resolution of their asylum applications, some of them for years. However, since last March, we read with perplexity how EU tolerates the break of Geneva Convention by a member state suspending the right to seek asylum to those who arrived from that moment on - instead they would deport all migrants who enter Greek territory, asking for asylum, to their countries of origin. These are intolerable violations of fundamental human rights!

As a result of Turkey's political action related to paralyse the control of the border to Greece, 450 people arrived in Lesbos. Once they arrived, they were transferred to a centre to be immediately deported. In addition to the arrivals to Greek-Turkish land border, thousands of people are also trying to gain access to the EU through the Aegean islands. **Greece has prevented the attempts of more than 24,000 people to cross.** There are numerous testimonies of migrants who claim to have been arrested by the Greek police after arriving in Greece by crossing the river Evros. The police officers have stripped them of their belongings (even their shoes) and returned them to Turkish territory violently, even by bullets and tear gas!

CLC in Europe contends that all migrants, regardless of their administrative status, the way they arrive at the border, the place they come from, their religious affiliation, must have recognized their fundamental rights, derived from International Law. The states must do their utmost to develop, promote and enforce these rights. In particular, the best interests of the children should be a primary consideration applied to all children at international borders, regardless of their migration status or their parents' condition. The same primary consideration should be applied to people with some type of functional diversity, elderly people, pregnant women, single-parent families with minor children, victims of human trafficking, people with serious illnesses or mental disorders and people

who have suffered torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as women victims of female genital mutilation.

Therefore, **EU Member States must safeguard human rights, especially in the context of extremely serious situations, as witnessed in Greece and also in Italy and Malta, where boat people are forbidden to dock.** EU Member States must take immediate action to provide assistance, including food and water, blankets, clothing, sanitary items and the opportunity to rest legally.

Especially in this health emergency caused by COVID-19, **CLC in Europe urges the states to:**

- **Ensure that all migrants are welcomed in a secure place and receive necessary medical care.**
- **Close all camps, administrative centres, hot-spots and organize humanitarian corridors to better welcome migrants, unaccompanied minors, sick people within Europe.**
- **Respect the principle of non-refoulement and the prohibition of collective expulsion.**
- **Stop violence against refugees at the European frontiers and support humanitarian organizations which protect those people from sea who try to reach Europe fleeing from war, persecution or poverty.**

Members of CLC in Europe are particularly concerned about the situation of lack of even basic hygiene and overcrowding in the settlements of people who are waiting to enter European territory or those waiting to regularise their situation. **We therefore demand to make the rights effective that are compulsory for the EU States.**

We join the words of Pope Francis: **“Let us not forget our brothers and sisters, the many children that are suffering there”.**

As members of the Christian Life Community in Europe, we want the fundamental values of equality, justice and freedom, based on Gospel, to be realized in respect for the asylum seekers staying in the refugee camps or waiting in boats. We recall that the construction of a more human society needs to receive, care and protect the extremely vulnerable people living on the frontiers. Therefore, we ask EU and all their member states to make all efforts to reach agreements that put these people at the centre!

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