

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

As a group of community organizations as well as refugee and migrant support groups in Poland, we wish to remind the Polish government to deliver on its commitments and honour its international obligations by offering refuge to people fleeing war, violence and persecution.

For the last few days we have been observing a dramatic change of circumstances of refugees at Europe's borders. It has been five years since the announcement of the so-called "refugee crisis" and four years since the agreement between the European Union and Turkey came to force. Meanwhile, we see once again that people fleeing war are being deprived of their fundamental right to seek asylum in Europe.

The conflict in Syrian's province of Idlib has been escalating over the last few months. There are reports of attacks on civilians and bombings of hospitals and schools. People trying to escape the war have found themselves trapped. So far, Turkey has not opened its border with the province of Idlib yet due to a huge number of Syrian refugees already residing within its territory. However, Turkey has unilaterally announced the opening of the border with Greece and Bulgaria where refugees, encouraged by this fact, found themselves stuck in another buffer zone. Greek border guards do not allow them to enter the EU and use violence against people trying to cross the border. According to Aegean Boat Report, only in the last two days at least 45 boats with more than 1,500 people reached the Greek islands. Currently, there are over 40,000 refugees in only five European hotspots prepared initially to accommodate 6,000 people. This number is the highest since the agreement was signed between the EU and Turkey. Without solidarity and support of other EU members, Greece can no longer take in more people.

It is with great concern that we observe how the Greek government resorts to drastic measures in order to prevent further refugees from arriving at its territory. We wish to emphasize that in accordance with the European values, using gas, force, army and weapons against refugees at the EU borders is impermissible. Closing borders, deporting people without due process and coercing them to return to their home countries where war continues violates the basic principle of non-refoulement. It is also plainly inhuman.

Therefore, we wish to remind the Polish government that it also must fulfil its responsibility for protecting people fleeing the war in Syria. It is necessary to take urgent action to ensure that refugees have a safe passage to European countries where, in line with international standards, they have a right to seek asylum. Taking practical steps at the national and the EU level is both necessary and feasible. Poland, together with other EU countries, should strive to suspend Dublin transfers to Greece and fulfil their obligations under the relocation decisions, as well as create humanitarian corridors for refugees. Poland should also call on the EU forum for the support of Greece under Article 78 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union that allows for the implementation of interim measures including urgent humanitarian aid and urgent relocation, as well as acknowledge and respect the principle of non-refoulement.

We say "no" to persistent lack of action by the authorities. We insist that refugees are provided with a safe passage to European countries in which, according to the standards, they will be able to seek asylum. We also want that refugees can exercise their right to protection in our country. At the same time, we wish to express our solidarity with all male and female refugees at European borders as well as with the people who support them, filling the gap left by European governments.

Yours sincerely,