

Letter on the status of the budget heading for assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey and emergency assistance within the EU

Concern about the financing and organization of assistance to migrants and refugees in the territory of Greece and the Balkan countries

Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission.

Mr. Dimitri Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Internal Affairs and Citizenship.

Dear Sirs,

With regard to the debate scheduled for today in the European Parliament, *Emergency Aid for refugees and migrants facing weather conditions in European camps*, and in reference to the situation of extreme urgency and necessity that we are living, we ask, for the second time in a week, to act swiftly against the violation of human rights, democratic values and decisions adopted by the European Parliament in recent months.

Neither the funding nor the organization deployed at the onset of winter have been able to prevent thousands of migrant and refugee people in Greece and Balkan countries from living without the minimum conditions of shelter, a suffering that has been aggravated by the cold wave of these weeks. The consequences are being diseases, frozen extremities and even death.

And this happens in a supposedly developed continent such as Europe. Is it inevitable? The Commission's response so far has been to refer to the funding given to UN agencies and social entities and to place responsibility in the countries where refugees are located.

Europe has experience in managing emergency situations outside its borders in situations of humanitarian catastrophe through the ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Aid Department) agency, whose experience in rapid and uniform coordination in emergency missions could help in addressing the urgency that the cold wave has generated in refugee people in the route of the Balkans.

It also has a European Civil Protection mechanism, designed to coordinate the civil protection services of member states in emergency situations. This mechanism has been used punctually in previous years and is currently open only in Greece but with requests for material from a year ago and with material still to be supplied that is not directed at dealing with the cold situation.

In any case we are not only facing a problem of material or of funds against cold, it is not a question of giving only blankets or money, but we are seeing a clear absence of logistic capacity and coordination to face in an holistic and unified form this dramatic situation.

The current cold wave coupled with the situation of migrants and refugees on the transit route is a new situation that requires a novel, immediate, forceful response of Europe as a whole. We believe that the best way to deal with the cold crisis would be to launch a European operation under a unified civil protection command and ECHO in the coming days to provide sufficient logistical and organizational capacity in close collaboration with the governments of the affected countries.

We are forced to ask the European Commission an obvious question, what are their climate contingency plans for the thousands of refugees who are currently lacking proper attention on European territory. If Europe continues to refuse to reallocate the refugees among member states, we should at least come to their aid so that they do not freeze and become ill. The European Union should be able to manage the emergency aid to several thousand people through the civil protection public services of the member states.

We are only supporting the demands of the civil society organizations when we address the following petitions to the European Commission:

-To urgently launch a European civil protection operation through the European Civil Protection Mechanism and ECHO to ensure a single, coordinated, effective and immediate response to the most serious consequences of the cold being gone through by refugees in Greece and other states of the Balkan route.

- To organise a meeting with Mr. Dimitri Avramopoulos, and the under signatories to deal with the issues above raised and organise action

Sincerely,

MEPs:

Miguel Urbán Crespo

Malin Björk

Gabriele Zimmer (GUE/NGL president)

Marie Christine-Vergiat

Ángela Vallina

Marina Albiol

Barbara Spinelli

Marisa Matías

Cornelia Ernst

Martina Anderson

Ernest Urtasun

Martina Michels

Estefanía Torres

Matt Carthy

Fabio de Masi

Merja Kyllönen

Florent Marcellesi

Miguel Viegas

Helmut Scholz

Nikolaos Chountis

Javier Couso

Paloma López Bermejo

Jean-Luc Mélenchon

Patrick Le Hyaric

João Ferreira

Rina Ronja Kari

João Pimenta Lopes

Sabine Lösing

Josu Juaristi

Stefan Eck

Liadh Ní Riada

Tania González Penas

Lídia Senra

Xabier Benito Zuluaga

Lola Sanchez Caldentey

Younous Omarjee

Lynn Boylan