

To the attention of:

Mr Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands' EU Presidency

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

Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission

Mr Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

Mr Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development

Mr Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management

Subject: the EU Migration Partnership Framework

Brussels, 21 June 2016

Dear Mr Rutte,

For several years, our member organisations, working on the ground with migrants and refugees, have seen with concern the increasing externalisation of EU migration policies. We have seen several European initiatives preventing people from coming safely to Europe to ask for protection or simply to have a better life. We nevertheless believe that the new European Commission's proposal on the Partnership Framework is a turning point, with the virtually complete externalisation of EU migration policies. We also believe that if not rejected, this proposal risks being the end of the European Union values. As Europeans and human beings, we are truly opposed to any violation of values and of human rights.

We are deeply concerned with the flawed policy proposals for a new migration partnership framework, launched by the European Commission on 7 June, as it proposes in many ways the exact opposite of our stance. We are particularly worried by the following aspects:

- Scarce aid budgets shifted towards short-term migration management and border control measures, falsely assuming that border control can stop outward migration, and shifting resources away from long-term structural development measures and from other countries than those of origin and transit;
- Obliging third countries to prevent migrants to leave their territory, hence forcing them to violate the human right to leave a country, including one's own;
- Aid and trade conditionality upon readmission and (forced) return of migrants;
- EU migration policies focused on return and readmission rather than on international protection, respect of human rights, and effective integration policies;
- Externalisation of EU migration management to third countries, shifting Europe's responsibility for safe and responsible migration policies and international protection to countries of origin and transit;
- Closing European borders to people in need of international protection, compromising international refugee law, putting an end to the right to claim and seek asylum of people fleeing from war, extreme poverty, lack of opportunities, and natural disasters;
- Disrespecting the EU Treaty obligation of policy coherence for development, instead transforming this into policy coherence *for migration control*;

- Insufficient efforts to address the geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East, including Syria, and elsewhere that drive millions of people from their homes.

Faced with this unprecedented threat to European values and to human rights, we, European Christian organisations, urge European leaders to:

- Reverse the policies of deterrence and the paradigm on EU migration policies: they must be based on solidarity and fair responsibility-sharing rather than on externalising the management of EU borders to non-EU countries;
- Curtail the priority focus of protecting European borders, and instead focus attention on saving lives at sea with the aim of protecting human beings;
- Refrain from basing EU partnerships with development countries on the number of migrants originating or transiting through those countries;
- Stop conditioning development aid to the compliance of developing countries with readmission agreements. Engage in effective and ambitious development aid programmes, based on human rights, good governance and sustainable development with agreed Sustainable Development Goals as guiding principle;
- Open meaningful safe and legal channels to come to Europe, such as resettlement, humanitarian visas, and legal labour migration;
- Address the root causes of forced migration and displacement, including poverty and exclusion, engage in effective peace building, reconciliation and rehabilitation concerning the many conflicts in the MENA and African regions, and strengthen governance systems in fragile states.

We call on you and all European leaders to show moral, ethical and political leadership. We urge the European Council to take position on 28-29 June against the EU Migration Partnership Framework, which appears to be mainly a security measure and not a response to the human rights issues at stake.

We hope and expect that you take our concerns and recommendations into account, and take effective measures based on the very values and principles of justice and solidarity upon which the EU has been founded. We are also happy to coordinate meetings for you to meet with our organisations' delegates, who could provide you further evidence regarding the human rights concerns related with this.

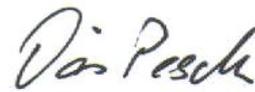
Yours sincerely,



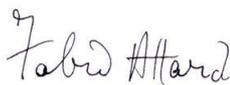
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