To Charles Michel, president of the European Council, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, and Heads of Member States:

EUROPE MUST ACT FOR THE IMMEDIATE DECONGESTION OF THE AEGEAN ISLANDS

The Aegean Islands have descended into crisis. 5 years of neglectful EU policy has finally culminated in days of protest (1, 2), NGOs threatened with violence, and mass strikes across the islands. Whilst over 42,000 asylum seekers reside on these islands, there is capacity for just 6,178 (1). Now, communities are braced for a surge in arrivals as Turkey has opened its borders, reneging on the EU-Turkey agreement.

This ongoing political stalemate between the EU, Greece and Turkey must be resolved. This game, played by the powerful, is putting innocent human lives at risk. It must stop now. Added to this already volatile mix is rising panic over the coronavirus. With healthcare severely lacking in the hotspot camps, NGOs fear that an outbreak would have disastrous consequences.

Greece has been left alone to deal with this crisis - and the island communities more than anyone. Today, Europe must act to correct 5 years of negligent policy-making. It must own up to its chronic shunning of this international burden and recognise that good policy can fix this man-made catastrophe. As the humanitarian situation worsens beyond anyone’s reckoning, it is your responsibility, as EU leaders, to ensure decisive and coordinated action to protect human life.

We, the undersigned, call for:

1) Immediate action from all Member States to decongest the Aegean Islands of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros through fair relocation of asylum seekers across European countries for the sake of universal human rights and in accordance with obligations set out under Art 78(3) of the TFEU and the 2001 Directive on Temporary Protection.

2) The immediate provision by EU states of support to, and oversight of, the Greek government’s Reception and Identification Centres, to ensure access to a safe and legal asylum process in accordance with humanitarian law, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights.

3) The creation of a shared European register of legal, medical and protection staff to support the Greek government through rotational placements in the Aegean in processing asylum applications in a humane, dignified and legal way.

We await the response of the Presidents of the European Council and Commission as well as Heads of Member States to this Open Letter. We remain united in the belief that asylum seekers and refugees
have the right to legal processes, that political irresponsibility can be made good through effective and humane policy and governance. Europe must act!

Signed:

1. Action for Education
2. Advocates Abroad
3. Aid Hoc
4. amel, be human help others
5. Are You Syrious?
6. AsyLex
7. Basel hilft mit
8. Be Aware and Share
9. Becky’s Batthouse
10. Bras not Bombs
11. Bridge2
12. Calais Action
13. Cars of Hope, Wuppertal
14. Catch a Smile Luxembourg
15. Choosehumanity Switzerland
16. Chorleywood4Refugees
17. Collective Aid
18. DAHUMAS - Dachverband freiwillige humanitäre Hilfe Schweiz
19. Do Your Part
20. Donate4Refugees
21. Engage
22. Everyday, just a smile
23. Kids & Welcome
24. Glocal Roots
25. Hamburger Hilfskonvoi
26. Hello My Friend
27. Help Refugees / Choose Love
28. Herts for Refugees
29. Hope and Aid Direct
30. HuBB- Humans Before Borders
31. Human-aid-collective e. V.
32. Independent volunteers from Bosnia and Herzegovina
33. Indigo Volunteers
34. Intereuropean Human Aid Association
35. Jesuit Refugee Service - Greece
36. Kune Aid
37. Latitude Adjustment Podcast
38. LE Solidarity
39. Love Without Borders-For Refugees in Need
40. Mare-Liberum e.V.
41. Maçi/Together/μας Cyprus
42. mini decki
43. Mobile Flüchtlingshilfe e.V.
44. Northern Lights Aid
45. Offene Arme e.V.
46. One Happy Family
47. Open Cultural Center
48. People in Motion
49. People4People e. V.
50. PomegranateAid
51. Precious Plastic Samos
52. Project Armonia
53. RefuComm
54. Refugee 4 Refugees
55. Refugee Aid Network
56. Refugee Biriyani & Bananas
57. Refugee Compassion
58. Refugees Foundation e.V
59. Refugees Welcome in Olten
60. Refugee Welcome Karoviertel
61. Refugee Women’s Centre
62. SAO Association
63. ShowerPower Foundation
64. Solidarität auf See
65. Stay Human Onlus
66. The Lava Project
67. The Voice of Thousands
68. Three Peas
69. Umino - Unterstützung für Menschen in Not
70. Frankenkonvoi e.V.
71. Verein Esperanza
72. Verein FAIR
73. Verein Soliba
74. We Are Here
75. Yoga and Sport For Refugees