



This letter was sent to Heads of State or Governments of Member States of the European Union, to Presidents of European Institutions, and to the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the International Organisation for Migration. It was subsequently published in national newspapers in countries throughout the European Union.

In the name of protecting civilians in Libya, you have committed [*name of country*], alongside several member States of the European Union, to a war against the forces of Muammar Gaddafi. This conflict has already displaced more than 750,000 civilians, who have fled violence in their country.

Despite difficult conditions, Tunisia and Egypt have already received more than 630,000 of those individuals. However, the European States are hiding behind the fight against illegal immigration to deny their responsibilities to allow these victims of war to enter Europe.

By engaging in this war, you have also agreed to bear its consequences and, thus, to take all necessary steps to limit its impact on civilians. This is both a legal obligation under the international conventions to which [*name of country*] is a signatory and a moral responsibility.

We urgently request that you respect the rights of all civilians fleeing the conflict in Libya by guaranteeing their *non-refoulement* from Europe's territorial waters and lands to a war zone and by ensuring that they are received properly in Europe and have access to asylum procedures when they so request.

These rights are not currently being respected and thousands of people, victims of war, are paying the price of the European States' inconsistent policy. Several hundred men, women and children trying to reach Europe -- or who were driven out by Libyan authorities, who see this as an opportunity to create disruption -- died at sea when their boat sank. Thousands more have landed along the Italian coast in the last few weeks. As our teams in Lampedusa have observed, their reception has been inadequate, given their needs.

You must now turn words into actions regarding the protection of civilians in Libya. You are responsible for the fate of these victims of war and for ensuring that their rights are respected. This responsibility must be at the heart of your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Unni Karunakara
International President
Médecins Sans Frontières