

AITHMA <http://www.aitima.gr>
ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth <http://arsis.gr>
Network for the Social Support of Immigrants and Refugees
<http://migrant.diktio.org>
Greek Helsinki Monitor <https://greekhelsinki.wordpress.com>
Greek Council for Refugees <http://www.gcr.gr>
Greek Forum of Refugees <http://www.refugees.gr>
PRAKSIS <http://www.praksis.gr>
Initiative for the Detainees' Rights. <http://www.tokeli.gr>

**TO: THE PRESIDENT OF EU COMMISSION JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER
PRIME MINISTER OF GREECE ALEXIS TSIPRAS**

Athens, 30 November 2015

No More Lives Lost in the Aegean Sea!

In the aftermath of the recent tragic developments and the loss of so many human lives due to the terrorist attacks, another tragedy is still unfolding in the Aegean Sea, as hundreds of people who are in need of international protection –amongst them many children –lose their lives in an effort to reach the Greek/EU territory and seek protection.

It is worth mentioning that a big number of refugees who try to reach the Greek/European territory have fled from their country because of persecution by the forces who have taken responsibility for the Paris attacks.

Given that the right to life is the ultimate human right and that the protection of this right should be a priority in all circumstances, we appeal to you in order to ask you to take all the necessary measures so that the loss of life in the Aegean Sea ends.

These fatalities could have been avoided if safe access of refugees to the Greek/EU territory was available, e.g. through large-scale resettlement from third neighbouring countries to European or other countries who can receive them as well as through the provision of a safe land route to reach the Greek/EU territory.

The EU is providing very limited opportunities for people to reach Europe safely, including through direct resettlement of refugees from third countries (such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey), despite the fact that this would ensure the safe transfer of refugees to Europe without any danger and without the need to resort to smugglers.

At the same time, the fence that was built at the Greek-Turkish border prevents people entitled to international protection from accessing EU territory by land and forces them to take the dangerous sea route, which has caused a considerable number of fatalities. This happens although Greece has an obligation deriving from international,

EU and national law to ensure protection of human life and fulfillment of fundamental rights.

The UN Committee of Human Rights, in its recommendations to Greece issued a few days ago states inter alia that: *The State party is encouraged, in consultation with its international and regional partners and neighbours, allowing migrants wishing to enter its territory to have access to safe entry points, where their asylum claims can be evaluated,*

(http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/GRC/CCPR_C_GRC_CO_2_22220_E.docx)

The undersigned organizations call on the EU and the Greek Government:

- **to develop sufficient and effective resettlement programmes for refugees from third countries to the territory of European countries**
- **to develop refugee relocation programmes from Greece to other EU countries under which there will be significant increase in both the number of refugees relocated and the eligible countries of origin**
- **to offer to Greece the financial and technical support needed**
- **to remove the fence from the Greek-Turkish border and in any case to take all the necessary steps to ensure safe access to the land Greek-Turkey border for people entitled to international protection**
- **to take all the necessary steps so that the people entitled to international protection entering Greek territory are enjoying appropriate reception conditions that respect foremost human dignity.**