



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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RELEASE

**The European Union has to urgently assume its responsibilities and redesign its asylum policy
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The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) for the umpteenth time is cautioning about the tragedy of thousands of people, who risking their lives and having sold their belongings in order to pay ruthless human smugglers, attempt to enter the European Union (EU) so that they and their families may be saved from armed conflicts and slaughters.

Unimaginable tragedies for our era and civilization are taking place in front of our eyes on a daily basis with many children and babies as victims, especially in the Mediterranean. The southern European countries are flooded by ever increasing waves of mainly refugees, that countries of first reception, like Greece, are objectively unable to handle, given the additional burden placed on the border areas, despite the proven support provided by their residents. Regarding Greece, the latest official data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) confirm the urgent need to take measures on a European level, as the increase in migration and refugee flows in Greece, especially on the islands, is dramatic, considering that their number in July 2015 (50.242 persons) was greater than the total number for 2014 (43.500 persons)¹.

The EU migration policy, and especially the Dublin Regulation, has proven not to meet the realistic needs and leads to the detaining of the large majority of people entering from southern Europe, while not inhibiting, but rather increasing the wealth of human smugglers and human traffickers who continue to provide them with their “services” inside the EU. The humanitarian crisis is constantly worsening, with multiple serious dangers for refugees and migrants, as well as for countries that receive them and their population.

The GNCHR has noted long ago, welcoming the relevant findings and recommendations by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, that the EU migration policy and particularly the Dublin Regulation, disregards the obligations to respect and protect human rights and especially human dignity, as well as the obligations of solidarity and fair burden sharing among member states, enforced by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Treaties, especially Articles 1 of the Charter, 2 and 3, par. 3, of the TEU, as well as Article 80 of the TFEU (border monitoring, asylum and migration policy). It has also welcomed the similar findings and recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commissioner and the Representative for Europe of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The GNCHR, along with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)², has noted that the provision of financial aid (which is necessary, but inevitably insufficient) to burdened countries is not enough for the fulfillment of the above obligations. A complete redesigning of the EU migration policy is needed, focusing on the protection of human rights, as well as fair and effective burden sharing.

To this end, the relevant European bodies must act *urgently*, so that the EU, along with the UN, can assume its responsibilities in a consistent and effective manner that above all deals with the reality, in order to show the

¹ UNHCR data, 18.8.2015, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/vtx/search?page&docid=55d32dcf6&query=william%20spindler>.

² GNCHR Press Release regarding the recurring sea tragedies in the Mediterranean, 21.04.2015, available at: http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea_epikairothta/DT_naftikes_tragodies.pdf. ENNHRI Statement on the continuing tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, a human rights approach, April 2015, available at: http://www.nchr.gr/images/English_Site/NEWS/ENNHRI_statement_Mediterranean_Sea_Tragedies.pdf.

human face of the EU and so that the values and principles which form the foundation of European civilization are not simply words on paper.

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection. It was established by Law 2667/1998 and is functioning in accordance with the UN Paris Principles. Thirty-two institutions whose activities cover the field of human rights are currently represented in the GNCHR (independent authorities, departments of university-level educational institutions, trade unions, NGOs, political parties and ministries).