

Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission

Charles Michel  
President of the European Council

David Sassoli  
President of the European Parliament

Letter sent by e-mail:

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Dear President von der Leyen,  
Dear President Michel,  
Dear President Sassoli,

Following the recent developments at the Turkish-Greek border, where thousands of people - including women, children and families - are stranded in appalling conditions and amid reports of human rights violations, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) calls for immediate EU action. As set out under EU law<sup>1</sup>, the European Commission must take the initiative and submit to the Council a proposal for a protection scheme for the immediate relief of displaced people at Greek borders and with the contribution of all member states.

The dramatic situation we are witnessing today is the result of terrible political mistakes made in the past by the EU and governments. The ETUC has always denounced the illegitimacy and the inconsistency of the EU-Turkey deal. We, therefore, call for the immediate suspension of the EU-Turkey deal in order to prevent the three million refugees being used for political blackmail by President Erdogan. The ETUC strongly condemns Erdogan's instrumentalization of migrants; refugees should not be forcefully compelled to cross the border irregularly into Greece.

Greece needs the support of the EU and all European partners, in full and unconditional solidarity. All resources allocated to tackling this emergency should be used for the direct benefit of displaced people, and for the dignity of the people crowding refugee camps. They should not go towards funding military operations for which there are no justifiable reasons.

Moreover, a possible COVID-19 outbreak in the Greek islands, would be a catastrophe given the appalling sanitary and overcrowded living conditions in the refugee camps. We urge for the immediate evacuation of the migrants in the Greek islands to an appropriate and safe accommodation.

Immediate diplomatic European and International action should aim at re-establishing peace in Syria and at creating the conditions for the return of Syrians, most of whom dream of being safely back in their homes.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons. Article 5.1 "The existence of a mass influx of displaced persons shall be established by a Council Decision adopted by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, which shall also examine any request by a Member State that it submit a proposal to the Council".

At the same time, the ETUC opposes any use of violence, and attacks against the migrant population at the Greek borders. We condemn the raids that neo-fascist groups have been perpetrating against migrants and humanitarian organisations. We urge you to safeguard the right to seek asylum in Greece and ensure that all EU member states comply with their international obligations. EU member states should show solidarity and urgently relocate asylum seekers from Greece and fairly process their asylum claims. The right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right.

Finally, we call on the EU to safeguard European democratic values and to establish a European path of solidarity.

Thanking you in advance for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luca Visentini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Luca Visentini  
General Secretary