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and

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The EU and, particularly, Greece are currently experiencing an unprecedented and critical situation on their land and sea borders, with episodes of high levels of violence and serious human rights violations. Following Turkish President Erdoğan's recent decision to allow crossings by people seeking international protection into Greece, thousands of refugees are getting trapped between the Turkish police, who keep pushing them forward, and the Greek police, who are preventing them from stepping onto European soil through the use of force, employing tear gas and water cannons against entire families with children. There are alleged deaths and injuries of people trying to cross. There are people getting imprisoned for the sole justification of their irregular entry into the EU.

The situation is growing more and more worrying every day, as the attacks perpetrated by violent far-right groups towards refugees and locals — including NGOs personnel, as the Basque NGO Zaporeak has recently denounced, and journalists — multiply and are left unattended by the police. The national authorities are also actively hampering the access of boats by sea, and did nothing to prevent a baby from drowning when the boat he and his family were travelling in, was perforated by the person who led them to the Greek waters and sunk on Monday.

The violence and the tragic events like those mentioned above must stop immediately, and the systems for handling asylum requests automatically restored and reinforced in order to ensure the refugees' rights and their access through safe and legal ways. Greece should refrain from the use of excessive force and uphold all national, European and international laws, including the principle of non-refoulement.

However, this is not a national issue to be handled solely by Greece, nor a bilateral issue between that country and Turkey. In light of the geopolitical tensions existing in the whole region, which involve EU and non-EU member states as well as other actors, this is a European responsibility toward which we cannot turn a blind eye. Even more when the threat of far-right populism, xenophobia and racism in the EU could intensify and have severe political implications.

The EU must act now and defend the principles and the rights that it swore and signed to protect, both within and without its borders. We need a comprehensive response based on a joint plan of action, one that ensures that the safety and the humanitarian needs of these people are assessed and covered, while the societies dealing with the matter are provided full institutional support. We need a plan that is based on the equal sharing of responsibilities amongst all EU member states, and in line with the Geneva Convention and international human rights law.

Additionally, there is an urgent need to respond to the situation in Idlib and take immediate action to ensure that Turkey stops using people fleeing violence and conflict as a tool for geopolitical pressure on Greece and Europe. This is only a consequence of the EU's decision to outsource the containment of migrants and refugee flows to Europe, which is now turning back against itself. And it is also a consequence of the EU's irrelevant role in conflicts taking place in our neighbouring regions of the Maghreb and the Middle East, repeatedly dismissing them until they arise at our immediate borders.

This is why we urge you to reject Turkey's strategy of blackmail and take all necessary actions to guarantee the safety and the international protection of migrants and refugees from the very moment that they flee their homes in Idlib up until they reach the front-line member states' borders and then the rest of the EU Member States. This means carrying out a new and human rights based migration policy with a fair and effective common asylum system where solidarity and legality take precedence.

Our group has asked for an extraordinary European Summit on this issue as soon as possible, so we can find and implement the necessary actions to solve this extremely unacceptable situation. Within this framework, we urge you to push for the activation of the "Temporary protection if there is a mass influx of displaced people" Directive and guarantee a distribution of asylum seekers across all the Member States.

Sincerely,

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