

**An Open Letter from the Chair of ENNHRI to all its Members within the European Union, 10 September 2015, Brussels.**

Dear Colleagues

Europe is experiencing its gravest humanitarian crisis for over sixty years. The need for action becomes more urgent with each passing day and with each loss of life.

Further to [ENNHRI's statements](#) on Syrian Refugees and Tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, issued in January 2014 and April 2015 respectively, I now call upon each of us to demand of our governments that they step up to meet in full their human rights responsibilities.

An immediate opportunity is the meeting of the Extraordinary Council of Interior Ministers on Monday, September 14, 2015.

Yesterday the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, issued a call to action for this meeting and stated that we need more Europe in our Union and we need more Union in our Union.

I join with this call to action and add that what we need is more human rights in our European Union, including in its asylum and refugee policy and practice.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights prescribes that everyone has the right to leave any country, including their own and the right to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries. The right to asylum is also enshrined in Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees contains the principle of non-refoulement. Following the Hirsi Jamaa judgement of the European Court of Human Rights, it is undisputable that Member States should uphold their human rights obligations in high sea rescue operations.

I join with this call to action and ask you to impress upon your governments that among the initial actions to be taken include:

- the emergency relocation of at least 160,000 refugees as part of a coordinated EU response;
- fundamentally changing EU asylum policy by ending the Dublin system and providing adequate support to the border countries such as Greece, Italy and Hungary where most refugees are first arriving and, in the meantime, introduce a permanent crisis relocation mechanism for all Member States;
- improving safe and legal channels to Europe to prevent loss of life and deny profit from human misery to people traffickers; and
- improving support, integration and inclusion of asylum seekers during the application process.

The above are only some of the initial and urgent steps that must be taken to effectively address the current crisis.

The cause of this crisis also needs to be addressed. Without pretending that this is easy, lasting solutions nevertheless need to be found.

Refugees will continue to seek sanctuary as long as there is war and persecution in the neighbouring regions. Climate change will create climate refugees on a scale far greater than the current refugee crisis. Economic and social inequalities will continue to drive forced migration as long as globalisation does not benefit all.

The EU has a critical role to play in effectively addressing these challenges. This includes diplomacy to end the conflicts and persecution in the neighbouring regions. It also includes implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to be agreed by the UN General Assembly this month. It includes championing a binding legal agreement on carbon emissions at the Climate Change Summit in Paris this December.

It is only through the realisation of all human rights for everyone – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – that both the short-term and the long-term solutions can be found.

Of course, in today's inter-dependent world, this is a shared responsibility and not that of the EU alone. All regions, states and multi-lateral institutions must be part of the solutions.

On its part ENNHRI is committed to meeting its responsibilities in cooperation with all other actors, including the other NHRI regional networks of Africa, the Americas and Asia Pacific.

As part of this I ask you to impress upon your governments the urgent need and duty to respond to the call of these times to uphold human rights and agree these necessary initial actions at the Extraordinary Council of Interior Ministers meeting on 14 September, 2015.

Yours sincerely



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**Chair of ENNHRI**

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