

# Civil Society Action Committee Joint Statement on the current Greece-Turkey Border Crisis

12 March 2020

We, the [Civil Society Action Committee](#), a global platform of civil society organizations collectively engaging on global migration policy and governance, call upon States to protect and uphold the rights of refugees and migrants, and to not use them as bargaining chips. Events like those experienced recently at the Greece-Turkey border are completely unacceptable.

For almost nine years the international community has failed to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria. This cannot continue. We expect States to work together right now with all their power to bring an end to the conflict and violence in Syria first and foremost, and not turn their coast guards, police and other armed forces against the victims of conflict and injustices. Situations like those at the Greece-Turkey border are not in line with the two Global Compacts respectively on migration and refugees, signed by States in December 2018, and where States pledged to work together in better supporting refugees and host communities.<sup>1</sup>

As civil society, we are appalled to see that people escaping violence and conflicts are further instrumentalized and exposed to life-threatening situations. Children and pregnant women are in large numbers among those stranded in freezing temperatures and dire conditions at the Greece-Turkey border. Many of them need immediate medical attention. Children should be at school, protected and cared for. All are entitled to dignified solutions, in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other human rights laws. The right to seek asylum and the rule of non-refoulement (which under international law is binding on all States) remain core obligations for States and cannot be suspended.

Europe has the capacity to provide a rights-based response to migration, and Greece should not be left alone at this. We call upon European Union Member States to support Greece to ensure the safety and human rights of all refugees and migrants in Greece and at the border. We also call upon the international community to broaden responsibility-sharing and regular pathways to provide durable solutions for those concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> See especially commitments within Objective 11 (Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner) of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The militarized enforcement of restrictive policies enacted at the Greece-Turkey border mirrors dire situations generating increased humanitarian crises in other border areas around the world. For example, the southern border of the United States has long been the epicenter of punitive policies and practices against migrants, and refugees<sup>2</sup>. The complex border security apparatus has been designed to dissuade and discourage asylum, and block humanitarian claims with tragic results, including prolonged detention, permanent family separation, long-term trauma, and death. These policies push people into more hazardous routes.

We stand in solidarity with our colleagues and citizens who have been attacked for defending and supporting refugees and migrants. As civil society organizations we are facing increased obstacles including heightened risks of being criminalized for humanitarian assistance provided to refugees and migrants. Solidarity is not a crime.

Sidelining international law and criminalizing humanity are never solutions. We call upon States to uphold international obligations, and work with civil society organizations to make them a reality for the benefit of all.

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<sup>2</sup> Under the “Migrant Protection Protocols” (MPP), the U.S. government has expelled 60,000 asylum seekers to Mexican border cities. Many of those returned are children or infants, pregnant women and people in dire medical conditions who have been forced to live in tent cities exposed to freezing temperatures and heightened levels of violence.