



Ylva Johansson
Commissioner for Home Affairs
Margaritis Schinas
Vice-President for promoting our European Way of Life
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels - Belgium

Brussels, 30 April 2024,

Dear Commissioner Johansson,

Dear Vice-President Schinas,

We are writing to you today to express our serious concerns over the latest decision of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to suspend all asylum procedures for Syrians, following significant arrivals from Lebanon, including many young and unaccompanied children.

We consider this decision a violation of the right to asylum under both EU and international law, which should trigger an immediate EU response. The European Commission as guardian of the treaties has to act without delay in order for Cyprus to immediately revoke this decision, register and examine all asylum applications. Taking into consideration that Cyprus is a small country, an island, almost half of the country under Turkish occupation, the Commission must put into place urgent solidarity measures towards Cyprus, which should include relocation of applicants to other European Member States.

We have also been alarmed by media and civil society reports of boats of persons seeking safety in Cyprus stranded at sea for several days without food nor water, some of which allegedly returned to Lebanon, which would constitute a violation of international maritime law, as well as Cyprus' obligations under international and EU law.

In addition we would like to share our concerns regarding ongoing negotiations towards an "EU-Lebanon deal", which would replicate the deals made with Tunisia and Egypt, once again bypassing the European Parliament democratic scrutiny. This deal would put Syrians and other applicants for international protection at high risk of destitution and refoulement. As you must be aware, the situation of Syrians in Lebanon is in particular not safe, as UNHCR has been asked since 2015 to stop de facto registering Syrians which has deprived many of them of basic

fundamental rights and have put them at risk of refoulement to Syria. There have also been reports of a recent increase in racist attacks and violence against Syrian refugees, as well as deportations to Syria. In the framework of a possible EU deal with Lebanon, we would like also to share our concerns regarding attempts to declare (parts of) Syria safe, which would be in breach of the principle of non-refoulement.

We call on you to urgently ensure that the Republic of Cyprus, as a Member state with significant arrivals, is not left alone by ensuring urgent relocation of applicants for international protection while acting against any violation of the current EU asylum acquis.

We therefore ask you to address the situation urgently and look forward to your swift reply.

Thanking you for your attention to this urgent matter,

Yours sincerely,

Cornelia Ernst, Member of the European Parliament, The Left

Damien Careme, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA

Dietmar Köster, Member of the European Parliament, S&D

Janina Ochojska, Member of the European Parliament, EPP

Róža Thun und Hohenstein, Member of the European Parliament, Renew

Milan Brglez, Member of the European Parliament, S&D

Pierre Larrouturou, Member of the European Parliament, S&D

Katrin Langensiepen, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA

Malin Björk, Member of the European Parliament, The Left

José Gusmão, Member of the European Parliament, The Left

Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Member of the European Parliament, Renew