

Informal Meeting of Heads of States in Salzburg, 20/09/2018

A demand for the continuation of access to individual asylum rights in Europe

Since time immemorial, people have been fleeing from persecution, war, and poverty. Never in history, the social movement of migration could be impeded.

We, the signing organizations, appeal for the continuation of access to individual asylum rights in Europe and against the complete closure of the European borders. The increased number of people seeking protection in European countries in the past years has led to a reformation and tightening of European Migration Policies - with the aim of externalizing European borders. However, neither have these measures stopped people from fleeing their countries nor had the recent restriction and criminalization of sea rescue an influence on the number of people trying to reach Europe.

This summer, the EU Council promoted the establishment of detention camps for refugees and migrants, euphemistically called „Regional Disembarkation Platforms” in African countries and „Controlled Centers” in Europe. These plans have to be understood and condemned as another attempt to forcefully deny refugees and migrants their right to claim asylum.

In the light of the informal meeting of the heads of states of EU countries in Salzburg together with the Austrian Presidency of the EU council this month, we would like to underline Europe’s responsibility to respect human rights and protect the right to asylum. The Austrian motto „A Europe that protects” has to be equally applied to citizens and people seeking international protection. By sealing off its borders in disregard of international law and humanitarian principles, the EU gravely undermines its own foundation as a community where human rights are a fundamental value.

Therefore:

- We urge the Austrian Presidency and the EU governments to ensure the continuation of access to individual asylum assessments, regardless of origin or transit country of the person
- We urge the Austrian Presidency and the EU governments to promote and work towards a common European protection system, in which the interests of those seeking protection, fair asylum proceedings, and decent reception are guaranteed
- We urge the Austrian Presidency and the EU governments to end the financial and operational cooperation with the so-called “Libyan Coast Guards” and the Tripoli-based government; according to the findings of the latest “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons on her visit to Libya” (May 10, 2018), issued by the UN Human Rights Council, Libyan detention facilities “are notorious for endemic torture and other human rights violations or abuses”
- We urge the Austrian Presidency and the EU governments to fulfill their responsibility for taking actions in order to prevent more fatalities due to the restriction and criminalization of sea rescue; the European Union needs to comply with its own humanitarian principles and live up to its proclaimed values of respect and humanity, therefore cater for the immediate release of all seized rescue assets, open the European ports and providing access for safe and legal disembarkation of people rescued at sea

Europe, 13. September 2018

