



EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
ON REFUGEES AND EXILES

CONSEIL EUROPEEN  
SUR LES REFUGIES  
ET LES EXILES

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## Refugee NGOs warn of flaws in EU migration proposals

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles warns of flaws in proposals presented by the European Commission to the JHA Council today. The umbrella organisation welcomes the fact that the two communications, aimed at managing migration from Africa, recognise that refugee protection is central. However, no attempt is made to answer the key question: how are refugees, when faced with even tougher immigration controls, supposed to reach the EU?

ECRE General Secretary Bjarte Vandvik said,

“Europe is saying to Africans, *“if you want to come and work, study or join your family, we are willing to talk. **But if you are fleeing for your life, the door will stay closed**”*. We are creating a fortress, whose gates are located in African airports and on ships off African coasts. People will continue dying as they attempt to reach the EU until they see a credible alternative to jumping into a small boat.”

“A global approach to migration must include comprehensive solutions for Africa’s refugees: not only returns, but also local integration in host countries and resettlement to the EU for the most vulnerable – and most importantly to ensure people fleeing for their lives have access to seek asylum in Europe,” added Mr. Vandvik.

Two justifications are given for an expansion of joint maritime patrols: rescue at sea and the interception of irregular migrants. These two wholly different objectives, each with complex legal frameworks, are often confused. ECRE reminds member states that if they are intercepting boats, they bear a corresponding duty to ensure that anyone in need of protection is identified and treated accordingly, including respecting the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Yesterday’s Council conclusions on the progress of the Hague programme indicate that the EU will continue to prioritise partnerships with third countries in its asylum and migration work. If Europe continues to single-mindedly fortify its borders and fails to show a visible commitment to a high standard of refugee protection and respect for human rights at home, it will struggle to dissuade its partners abroad from closing their borders and expelling people in need of protection.

For further comment/background and interviews:

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Notes for editors:

1. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles represents 80 refugee assisting NGOs in 30 European countries, and is concerned with the needs of all individuals seeking refuge and protection within Europe.
2. The two communications on migration to be presented by the European Commission today are:
  - “The Global Approach to Migration, One Year on” and
  - “Reinforcing the Management of the Southern Maritime External Borders of the EU”