



Serving those who serve the public

Office of the
Deputy General Secretary

Nerney's Court, Dublin 1.

Telephone: +353-1-8171500 Fax: +353-1-8171501/2/3 www.impact.ie

General Secretary: Seamus Cody

1 May 2015

Mr Charlie Flanagan TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Iveagh House
80 St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Dear Minister

Following the tragic loss of so many civilians in a series of migrant disasters on the Mediterranean Aegean Seas in April, IMPACT trade union would like to express its concern about the current migration and asylum crisis on Europe's southern borders.

Already in 2015 at least 1,500 people have died attempting to reach Europe. This represents a dramatic escalation from last year's equivalent figure.

In 2014 the European Trade Union Confederation argued strongly against cutting back the Italian Mare Nostrum search and rescue missions. Following the abandonment of these services, rescue capacity has proven to be thoroughly inadequate to meet our basic responsibility of saving the lives of desperate fleeing migrants.

European policy continues to prioritise border control over the protection of vulnerable human beings. The EU emergency summit on 23rd April categorically failed to rectify this outstanding problem, as evidenced by the increased budget for Frontex - without altering its border protection mandate - and maintaining the restricted scope of the Triton and Poseidon missions. Europe's position cannot be limited to border management, it must also include a humanitarian response.

A huge regional crisis exists on our southern doorstep and continues to grow due to civil unrest in a number of countries outside Europe. Most of the women, men and children who drowned in the latest disasters had been displaced from countries where war, human rights abuses and extreme poverty feature heavily, like Syria, Eritrea and Somalia. Many of these people would have qualified for refugee status under the UN Geneva Convention. Refugees need safe routes (both legally and physically) to reach secure environments while their homelands are in turmoil.

While EU leaders achieved progress in agreeing the principle of sharing the resettlement of asylum seekers, the commitment to resettle such a small number (5,000) relative to the severity of the crisis is disappointing. The vast majority of refugees worldwide are accommodated and sheltered in developing countries. Europe can and must do more to share this responsibility.

It is essential that this issue is not allowed to slip from the political agenda. Tangible progress must be made in helping ill-fated civilians to reach safety.

IMPACT is calling on the Irish Government to use its influence in Europe to help initiate a fundamental change in approach. The starting point to a resolution of this crisis is the immediate restoration of adequately-funded search and rescue missions. Beyond that refugees and asylum seekers require safe, legal routes to secure living environments in Europe. Significant commitments are required from nations across the EU to achieve this. IMPACT is calling for Ireland to be proactive in meeting its responsibilities in this regard.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Callinan
Deputy General Secretary