



**Vice-President Margaritis Schinas**  
**Commissioner Ylva Johansson**  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200  
1049 1049 Brussels  
Belgium

27th May 2020,

Dear Vice-President Schinas,  
Dear Commissioner Johansson,

Following previous exchanges we have had with you, we are sending to you this letter in order to raise two urgent matters that have come to our attention, being confident of the interest and commitment that you will show in their regard.

Both issues relate to current developments in Greece, the first one relating to the eviction of refugees from their current accommodation and the second one relating to the right to effective remedy.

According to our information, the Greek Authorities are proceeding with the eviction of around 10.000 refugees (including several vulnerable persons among them) from camps, hotels and apartments where they are hosted in the mainland. The evictions are to take place in a few days, at the end of May. Despite efforts of the City of Athens, NGOs and civil society associations, no solution to provide new accommodation to these people is found for the moment. This move is supposed to provide place for persons to be transferred there from the islands, as no new places were created in the mainland. However, this is obviously creating a new, very serious problem mainly for the persons who will be left on the streets but, also, for the local communities. The situation further aggravates due to the fact that the Authorities have terminated the cash allowance provisions and the programmes of social inclusion and assistance for those persons.

Is the Commission aware of this situation? Does the Commission know if and how the Authorities have used or plan to use the funds, of around 350 million euros, that were made

available since March for housing purposes? Are there any concrete measures foreseen in order to avoid homelessness for those refugees, and if yes, which are those?

The other urgent matter we would like to bring urgently to your attention is regarding the right to legal remedy for asylum-seekers. During the closure of Asylum Services of Greece to the public, the Services managed to work on the pending asylum applications. At the end of last week, around two thousand applicants, currently on Lesbos and other islands, have received negative decisions on their asylum requests and the applicants only have one week (five working days, until Friday 29/05) to be able to file their appeal to the first degree decision. However, to our understanding, there are several practical obstacles to that: several administrations and services still only provide limited access due to covid-19, the restriction of movement still applies for asylum seekers (despite the fact that they have been lifted for everyone else in Greece) making it almost impossible for the applicants to move around in order to find legal support etc. (a fine of 150 euros is imposed to anyone violating the restriction of movement) and public legal aid is not ensured since the new law has been adopted. This leads to a situation where applicants need to break the rules on movement restrictions and to “compete” among each other in trying to get legal assistance and/or interpretation services by the scarce resources of relevant NGOs on the islands or, just simply, lose the deadline. This seems to be a de facto violation of the rights of asylum seekers and a failure of the Greek State to comply with its obligations to, among others, provide the means for effective remedy to each applicant.

It is to be noted that, following the adoption of the new law, these persons can be detained without time limitation until their return/readmission to Turkey or their country of origin.

Is the Commission aware of this situation? In which way is the Commission planning to cooperate with the Greek Authorities so that all the rights, including that of effective remedy, of applicants will be ensured?

We are confident that you will look into both of these serious issues in an effort to find solutions that guarantee the respect of EU legislation, fundamental rights and the dignity of all persons involved.

Furthermore, we would like to draw your attention to the new rules adopted on the registration and certification of Greek and foreign NGOs active in the area of asylum, migration and social inclusion, as well as their members, staff and volunteers. They include requirements which can be defined as disproportionate and arbitrary, such as the unfettered discretion of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum to deny registration to NGOs and/or individuals even when they fulfil the legal requirements, on the basis of assumptions relating to the quality of their activities and personality, and to revoke registration where it deems that an organisation is not adequately performing its functions. Such powers create risks of arbitrary and non-transparent assessments as to which organisations should be permitted to operate in the country, related to services as well as monitoring and defending human rights, and may therefore have worrying repercussions on rule of law and transparency in Greece. Is

the Commission prepared to assess to what extent these new rules on registration are in compliance with Union law, including Article 21 of the Charter?

Sincere regards,

Cornelia Ernst, GUE/NGL coordinator in the LIBE Committee

Sophie In't Veld, Renew Europe coordinator in the LIBE Committee

Tineke Strik, Greens/EFA co-coordinator in the LIBE Committee