

Statement

Reception of asylum seekers: dignified standards must be maintained across the European Union

Brussels, 25 November 2015 – Since the beginning of 2015, over 850,000 migrants have entered the EU¹. With 85% coming from the world's top ten refugee-producing countries, the number of asylum applications in European Union (EU) Member States is on the rise. Reception systems across the EU are currently under unprecedented strain.

National Red Cross Societies in the EU stand ready to support EU Member States' asylum systems to uphold the dignity and rights of those who have turned to Europe for protection and safety.

During our conference “**Emerging challenges in the European Union asylum reception systems**” last week, we debated the future of the EU asylum reception framework in the current migration context. Discussions highlighted two key challenges that the EU faces: guaranteeing and implementing high reception standards across all EU Member States, and reaffirming intra-EU solidarity to support common rules and procedures that safeguard the dignity and rights of asylum seekers across the entire Union.

As auxiliaries to the public authorities, we will continue to support compliance with fundamental rights, providing protection and assistance to all migrants based on the seven fundamental principles² of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Throughout the EU, Red Cross staff and volunteers are demonstrating their commitment to humanitarian values by working intensively to alleviate the suffering experienced by asylum seekers. With this in mind, we call for the full implementation of EU rules to ensure that dignified reception standards are not compromised in any Member State. Application of these rules should be guided by the principle of humanity and respect for the individual circumstances, vulnerabilities and needs of each asylum seeker.

Based on our longstanding experience working with and for asylum seekers, we call on the EU and its Member States to enhance reception capacities so as to avoid threatening the rights, dignity and well-being of all asylum seekers in this emergency context and in the longer term. We commend the important efforts made by citizens and public authorities to provide assistance and emergency accommodation to arriving migrants as quickly as possible. We now urge public authorities to move beyond an emergency response towards more sustainable and long term solutions.

The EU's responsibility to provide high reception standards for asylum seekers should not be undermined by the large numbers of current arrivals. Asylum seekers should be granted the possibility to live in dignified conditions while waiting to be registered and having their request processed. This is all the more important with the imminent arrival of winter and the added risks and vulnerabilities it brings.

Most of the asylum seekers now entering the EU were forced to leave their homes because of armed conflict, violence, persecution or repression. In the absence of safe and legal channels to the EU, they often had no other choice but to undertake perilous journeys to reach safety. Many suffer from trauma experienced in their home countries, or during their migratory routes to and through Europe. We urge EU Member States to implement effective systems that identify and respond to any special needs that asylum seekers may have without delay. EU

¹ UNHCR, [Refugees/Migrants emergency Response – Mediterranean](#)

² Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity and Universality.

asylum policies and procedures must recognise and address the added traumas suffered by migrants during their migratory routes.

Treating asylum seekers with dignity and upholding their rights enables them to become active participants in society. At the earliest stage possible, asylum seekers should therefore have access to a full range of assistance, protection and integration services such as healthcare, psychosocial support and rehabilitation, legal counsel and language courses.

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