

European Union intensifies war against refugees at Turkish-Greek border

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A nightmarish scene was presented to the world public at the Kastanies border crossing Tuesday. On the ground, Greek border police, supported by masked soldiers, brutally attacked unarmed refugees and forced them back with tear gas grenades, baton rounds and water cannons. From the air, a high-ranking European Union delegation, consisting of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, EU Council President Charles Michel, European Parliament President David Sassoli and Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, accompanied by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, watched the martial spectacle.

Up to 20,000 refugees, mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, are still waiting at the Greek-Turkish border, seeking protection in the EU. Many of them have been living for years under the most miserable conditions in Turkey, where they are not legally recognised as refugees but are, at best, tolerated. They had come to the Greek-Turkish border in the hope that the EU would take them in and that they could once again lead a dignified life.

However, the EU is instead deepening its brutal war against the refugees. Von der Leyen thanked Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis for “being our European shield in these times.” Although border guards shot women and children with tear gas before her eyes, von der Leyen praised them for their “tireless efforts.”

She declared that this border “is not only a Greek border, but a European one. And I stand here at your side as a European. Those who want to test the unity of Europe will be disappointed. We will stay on course and maintain unity.”

She assured Mitsotakis that the Greek government would receive all necessary support to continue to repel the refugees. This included a rapid reaction force of the European border protection agency Frontex to support

the Greek border guards. In addition, Frontex will provide a supply ship, six patrol boats, two helicopters, an aircraft and vehicles with thermal imaging cameras. The Greek government will receive €700 million in emergency aid to help strengthen border fortifications.

Croatian Prime Minister Plenkovic also defended the merciless action of the border police, proclaiming, “Greece is now the shield, the real external border of the European Union and the guarantee of European stability.”

During their visit, von der Leyen, Michel and Sassoli, the highest representatives of the EU, explicitly approved the Greek government’s actions—contrary to international law—in suspending the right of asylum and imposing a one-month halt in granting any more asylum applications.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, strongly condemned this step, saying there was no basis for it in the Geneva Conventions or in EU law. “Even persons who enter state territory irregularly should not be punished for applying for asylum to the authorities immediately.”

What the suspension of the right of asylum means has been experienced first-hand by the refugees who have reached one of the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Samos or Chios by rubber dinghy in the last few days, or who have managed to escape the Greek border guards. The camps on the islands were simply declared closed, new asylum applications were no longer accepted and the refugees were not even registered.

The Greek government is not shying away from using sinister gestapo methods. According to news magazine *Der Spiegel*, refugees on Lesbos have been told to come to the harbour because a boat was waiting for them there. In fact, only the riot police were waiting, who then chased the refugees through the streets.

The same police have given marauding right-wing thugs a largely free hand to push refugee boats back into the sea, to beat up journalists and refugee aid workers and to destroy and burn down aid organisations' facilities.

Britain's *Guardian* reported that a group of doctors who flew to Lesbos to volunteer at the Moria migrant camp were forced to flee after being set upon by a 50-string mob wielding nail-encrusted cudgels. "We left fearing for our lives," said Dr Victoria Bradley, an Irish GP. "It was very, very frightening."

Somehow "we managed to drive back to the camp and seek refuge there," she added. "Refugees were so kind, they brought us falafels and blankets. We stayed the night in a portable building. It was absolutely freezing. All I could think of was the people in the tents outside."

Several aid organizations, including "Médecins sans Frontières", have announced that they will cease their involvement on Lesbos.

The BBC also released a video showing the Greek coast guard firing live ammunition at an overcrowded inflatable boat and then forcibly pushing it away, as well as thugs beating up a reporter on Lesbos.

On the islands, all newly arriving refugees can now expect to be immediately detained and taken to the mainland, where they will be put into fortified camps. From there, they are to be deported as quickly as possible—without ever having had a chance to apply for asylum.

The same applies to refugees who have made it across the land border. If they are picked up by the Greek police, they are declared as illegal immigrants and threatened with up to four years' imprisonment.

The German government has only agreed to take in a few unaccompanied children who have been vegetating for months in appalling conditions in the "hotspots" on the Aegean islands. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer stressed that this could only be implemented by an alliance of EU states.

Seehofer is pleading for the refugees to continue to be provided for in Turkey and for the EU borders to remain closed. "If we do not achieve an orderly solution here, we will end up with disorder and loss of control," he told ARD television.

Incessant talk of "protecting the borders" is grist for the mill of the extreme right. Moreover, the EU is

putting into practice their fascist policy against refugees. It is no accident that the chairman of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), Jörg Meuthen, could rejoice on his Facebook page, saying, "The Greeks are doing it right. This is the way it is done!"

A few tens of thousands of refugees are being presented as a threat to Europe, a continent of 500 million inhabitants.

The EU's unrelenting attitude towards the refugees on the Greek-Turkish border is supported by the supposedly liberal press. In the online edition of *Die Zeit*, Ulrich Ladurner defends the brutal actions of the border soldiers as representing the legitimate interests of the EU, which should "not tolerate irregular migration." For Ladurner, the desperate people at the EU's external borders are part of a blackmail attempt by the Turkish government. "Europeans should be grateful to the Greek government for rejecting [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan's blackmail attempt in the past few days at the border," he wrote.

The mass of the population looks with disgust at the merciless war against refugees. On Tuesday, thousands demonstrated in front of the Federal Chancellery in Berlin for a humanitarian refugee policy and an opening up of the borders.

But appeals to the government in this matter are completely futile. The war against refugees on Europe's external borders is only the flip side of the growing right-wing extremist terror at home—two sides of the same coin. The ruling class is pursuing an aggressive policy of rearmament and militarism in order to defend and increase its interests and wealth. To break the growing resistance against this, demands more and more openly on fascist violence and authoritarian forms of rule.

See also:

Stop the war on refugees at the Greek-Turkish border!



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