



Warsaw, 24th June 2015

GRUPA ZAGRANICA'S POSITION on the Polish government's policy regarding taking in refugees

Amnesty International
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Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej
Centrum Kształcenia Liderów i Wychowawców im. Pedro Arrupe
Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych
Dom Pojednania i Spotkań im. Św. Maksymiliana M. Kolbego
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Fundacja Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego
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Fundacja Solidarności Polsko-Czesko-Słowackiej
Fundacja Szczęśliwe Dzieciństwo
Fundacja Usyszczać Afrykę
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Fundacja WWF Polska
Gdańska Fundacja Oświatowa
Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka
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Instytut Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich
Instytut Spraw Publicznych
Instytut Studiów Strategicznych
Instytut Wschodnich Inicjatyw
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Małopolskie Towarzystwo Oświatowe
Pallottińska Fundacja Misyjna Salvatti.pl
Polska Akcja Humanitarna
Polska Fundacja im. Roberta Schumana
Polska Misja Medyczna
Polska Zielona Sieć
Salezjański Wolontariat Misyjny - MŁODZI ŚWIATU
Stowarzyszenie Jeden Świat
Stowarzyszenie Misji Afrykańskich
Stowarzyszenie Szkoła Liderów
Stowarzyszenie Willa Decjusza
Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota Kulturowa Borussia
Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota Polska
Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Kobiet / NEWW
Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Wschód
Wschodnioeuropejskie Centrum Demokratyczne

The non-governmental organisations grouped together in Grupa Zagranica are expressing their deep disappointment with and strong opposition to the stance that the Polish government has taken on the issue of rejecting the European Commission's plan to introduce mandatory quotas for migrants to be taken in by EU member states under the relocation and resettlement programme.

Following the recent tragic events on the Mediterranean Sea and an appalling situation in overpopulated refugee camps in Greece and Italy we wish to underline that all EU member states, including Poland, have a moral and legal obligation to take action and assume responsibility, in the spirit of solidarity, for taking in refugees from Syria, Eritrea, North African countries, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Poland, as a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and as an EU member state, should assist refugees and support, out of solidarity between European societies, efforts of the "first contact" countries, that is Italy and Greece, where refugees arrive.

Under the plan which has been proposed by the European Commission Poland should commit to taking in 3,621 refugees as part of the EU resettlement and relocation programme. We are willing to support the Polish government's efforts with this regard and we are offering our assistance in establishing and running integration programmes.

Our reaction to the declaration which the Polish government has made regarding the objection to the European Commission's proposal is that of astonishment and shame. If we are to call Poland the "cradle of solidarity", if we declare that we hold freedom and human rights dear, we should commit to providing assistance and support to those who cannot return to their home countries. At the time where protests against enslavement were widespread, where we fled the country fearing for our lives, in search of a safer and better future, we counted on help from others. And we were given that help. We were offered shelter, work and hope. It is high time we paid off this debt and, what is equally important, we were faithful to the ideas that had brought about the political transformation in Poland and enabled us to live in dignity. We are calling on the Polish government to change its position on the issue of refugees and we are calling for immediate measures to be taken in order to develop a scheme which will ensure in the long term that refugees can live safely and in dignity and can integrate with the rest of society. We declare our readiness and willingness to work together with the Polish government in order to develop an effective system of assistance and work with new groups of immigrants coming to Poland.

Poland, as an EU member state and the party to the 1951 Geneva Convention, should not remain indifferent to the plight of thousands of refugees and should take firm action in order to protect their rights.

Grupa Zagranica is a Polish platform of civil society organizations, engaged in development cooperation, democracy support, humanitarian aid and global education.