

Refugee crisis: EU ministers have yet again failed to act, regrets EP Civil Liberties Committee Chair

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"Member states have yet again failed to make tough decisions and provide a compassionate response to the refugee crisis", said the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee responsible for migration and asylum, Claude Moraes. "We are running out of time - the meeting on 8 October is the EU's final chance to agree an organised response to the biggest refugee crisis since World War II in Europe", he added.

In response to Monday's Council meeting, Claude Moraes (S&D, UK) said: "Today should have been the most important Council meeting to take place on Justice and Home Affairs in the EU's recent history. Member states have yet again failed to make tough decisions and provide an organised and compassionate response to the refugee crisis. It is shameful that some of the richest countries in the world cannot stand together and help those fleeing war and persecution in Syria and elsewhere. The re-introduction of temporary internal border controls this past weekend clearly shows the need for member states to stick together and find common solutions. The reluctance of member states to show solidarity in response to the crisis has brought certain countries to the breaking point and made them temporarily reintroduce border controls. This does not mark the end of Schengen; Parliament has always supported open borders within the Schengen area and we will continue to do so. We must not give up on the open borders that have provided great benefits to the European citizens due to petty quarrels over a number of refugees equalling 0,11 % of the total population of the EU". On quotas and relocation "While welcoming the Council decision to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece, it is evident that the numbers agreed on so far are not sufficient to deal with the growing number of people in need of protection. At time of writing there is only general consensus about the relocation of 120,000 refugees with further discussion on 8 October. The European Parliament has done its job and has consistently stressed the importance of having in place binding measures to address relocation and resettlement, as well as search and rescue, the creation of reception centres and hotspots and development aid and partnerships. The Parliament is looking into all aspects of the migration challenges, including aid for countries which take the lion share of refugees such as Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. It is essential that the EU commits to increasing financial support to these countries". Concerns over migrants' detention The appalling conditions and chaos facing refugees and Europe as a whole show that there was no real preparation at Europe's borders and little respect for the existing EU Asylum Reception Directive. This has to be fixed, and fast. As co-legislators, we have contributed a great deal in establishing a Common European Asylum System. The Civil Liberties Committee calls on member states to properly implement the asylum rules in order to ensure that consistent and humane standards are applied across the EU. I have clear concerns about proposals for immigration detention. These must be agreed according to the Returns Directive but they must have judicial safeguards built in. There are also concerns about "safe countries" of origin. Claude Moraes warned: "We are running out of time - the meeting on 8 October is the EU's final chance to agree an organised and compassionate response to the biggest refugee crisis since World War II in Europe".

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Further information

- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Claude Moraes (S&D, UK): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/4519.html>

Press release

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