



Creating Change for People

Preparing People for Change

24th April 2015

Dear Prime Minister Muscat,

Earlier this week, we wrote to you asking you and other European leaders to take a clear stand towards saving lives whilst ensuring respect for human rights including the principle of non-refoulment. Reading the public statement issued by the Summit yesterday, we cannot help but feel disappointed at the failure of the European Union to take concrete bold measures that will effectively help prevent further deaths in the Mediterranean.

There is no indication in the information that has been released as to an expansion of the operational area of the now more heavily funded Frontex mission. Whilst we welcome the commitment to increase the resources for Frontex Operations, we are concerned that the failure to expand the operational reach of these missions will not sufficiently address the humanitarian tragedy that is playing out in the Mediterranean.

We support measures to combat migrant smuggling and to bring those responsible to justice, not only for the transgression relating to smuggling individuals across international borders but also of knowingly placing people's lives at risk. However, closing the borders and stopping people from leaving Libya is not currently a viable solution considering the ongoing conflict and human rights violations in Libya, as well as the time it would require to resolve these larger issues. Smuggling persists partly because persons fleeing persecution have no legal and safe way to access international protection. Whilst we encourage action to combat the unscrupulous smuggling rings that place people's lives at risk, we call on you and the European Union to develop effective legal and safe channels for persons in need of protection to reach Europe.

We welcome the decision to host a summit with African nations in Malta. We see such a summit as an opportunity to raise human rights concerns with countries of origin and transit, and to step up current efforts to address the factors that lead people to undertake perilous journeys. However, the summit cannot only be about

agreeing on return arrangement but needs to address the serious human rights concerns that arise about these countries of origin. Until safety and effective human rights protection are restored in countries of origin, it is critical that international protection in Europe remains a viable option for those fleeing persecution and conflict.

As migrants are drowning in the seas surrounding us, long term solutions to people's need to flee need to be coupled with short term measures to effectively save lives at sea and offer displaced and persecuted persons access to international protection. The European Council conclusions from yesterday's meetings have fallen short in addressing this situation. Securitization and immigration control have won over humanitarian principles under which saving lives and ensuring respect for human rights are the priority.

We would like to share with you our appreciation for the way in which the funeral of the recovered persons was carried out yesterday. We felt this was a well organized, respectful and dignified service to pay our last respects to those who tried to access a safer future but perished. This, together with the way people in Malta took up the invitation to walk in solidarity with those who lost their lives, made us proud to be Maltese.

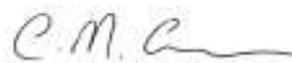
We reiterate our commitment to support you in promoting more and better European action in this regard.

Thank you,

Kind Regards,



Jean-Pierre Gauci



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The People for Change Foundation is a human rights think tank based in Malta. PFC compels evidence based and data driven policy and action to promote human rights through research and analysis, lobbying, advocacy and capacity building.