

European Union Throws Greece and Refugees to the Sharks

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Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

"Hypocrisy, the most protected of vices." – Moliere (Jean Baptiste Poquelin, 1622-1673.)

On 18th March the twenty eight European Union leaders reached: "an agreement that has an irreversible momentum", according to German Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

From Monday 4th April, all refugees and economic migrants arriving in Greece from Turkey after 20th March – the majority Syrian and Iraqis fleeing for their lives, risking the perilous sea crossing in which over eight hundred have died, the risk being preferable to the dangers at home – will be returned to Turkey.

In exchange for this disgraceful human-beings-as-chattels deal, Turkey, which already hosts three million fleeing refugees, would see the EU speed the transfer of three Billion Euros in financial assistance, with a further three Billion by 2018. In addition Turkish nationals would have visa free entry to all EU countries by June – dependent on Turkey meeting an astonishing seventy two long outstanding EU criteria, according to Reuters (20th March.)



Some of the millions of people who have fled Syria. Photo credit: The UN Refugee Agency / G. Gubaeva

However, as groups of desperate souls who have risked the unimaginable to arrive in the EU are being forcibly returned to Turkey with the casualness of shipping commercial cargo, the EU intends to take a refugee from a refugee camp Turkey for each person returned from Greece.

"At a time when Turkey is hosting three million, those who are unable to find space for a handful of refugees, who in the middle of Europe keep these innocents in shameful conditions, must first look at themselves", said President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in a

televised speech. His point is certainly valid, especially as the desperate flight has been caused by actions and interference of some EU Member States with a British government implacably reluctant to taking in the displaced, yet always a murderous cheerleader for slaughter and destabilization in far away places.

Amnesty called the agreement “flawed, immoral and illegal” and “an historic blow to human rights.”

Greece, having been fiscally hung out to dry by the EU, trying to somehow host and register countless thousands, is to be belatedly assisted in establishing: “a task force of some 4,000 staff, including Judges, interpreters, border guards and others to manage each case individually.” Who is going to foot the bill as the country reels under EU inflicted penury, seems unclear.

Moreover, the EU seems not to have done their homework – or perhaps they simply not care. Amnesty reports: “large-scale forced returns of refugees from Turkey to war-ravaged Syria” exposing “fatal flaws in a [refugee deal](#) signed between Turkey and the European Union ...” (1)

Research in Turkey’s southern border provinces: “suggests that Turkish authorities have been rounding up and expelling groups of around 100 Syrian men, women and children to Syria on a near-daily basis since mid-January. Over three days last week, Amnesty International researchers gathered multiple testimonies of large-scale returns from Hatay province, confirming a practice that is an open secret in the region”, but missed by the might of the EU? (Emphasis added.)

All forced returns to Syria are illegal under Turkish, EU and international law.

“In their desperation to seal their borders, EU leaders have wilfully ignored the simplest of facts: Turkey is not a safe country for Syrian refugees and is getting less safe by the day,” said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International’s Director for Europe and Central Asia.

“It seems highly likely that Turkey has returned several thousand refugees to Syria in the last seven to nine weeks. If the agreement proceeds as planned, there is a very real risk that some of those the EU sends back to Turkey will suffer the same fate”, states Dalhuisen.

In the course of their research Amnesty found three young children deported back to Syria without their parents and the forced return of an eight month pregnant woman.

“The inhumanity and scale of the returns is truly shocking ... Having witnessed the creation of Fortress Europe, we are now seeing the copy-cat construction of Fortress Turkey.”

Turkey with a per capita income (Gdp) of under \$11,000 (UK \$41,787; US \$53,000+) has, however, been taking in Syrians fleeing the Western generated terrors since early 2011. Further, until early this year according to Amnesty, Syrian residents with passports had been able to cross freely at border points and those who entered irregularly, “the vast majority” were also able to register with Turkish authorities.

“Over the last few months though, Turkey has introduced visa requirements for Syrians arriving by air, sealed its land border with Syria for all but those in need of emergency medical care ... “, according to John Dalhuisen. Much of the EU has long sealed theirs.

Shamefully, it has long been forgotten that Syria was a generous haven for Iraqis fleeing the US-UK onslaught of 2003. By 2007 1.2 million Iraqis had fled US-UK enforced “liberation, freedom and democracy” to be welcomed by Syria – a country of just eighteen million – and been offered “care and assistance ... in spite of the limited nature of its material resources.” (2 pdf.)

Iraqi children were assimilated in the free education system leading to the need for many more schools, as hospitals and clinics also needed to expand to deal with the influx. By comparison, Britain (population 64.1 million) under Prime Minister David Cameron, has finally condescended to take in meager 20,000 Syrian refugees – by 2020 – many whose plight his government’s plotting and bombing has helped create.

Jordan, population just 6.5 million, has taken in 1.4 million Syrians and has been hosting Iraqis since the 1991 blitz and subsequent twelve years of US-UK bombings, then the 2003 invasion and subsequent ongoing bloodshed.

Lebanon, population 4.5 million, hosts over a million Syrian’s seeking safety.

According to Europa.eu: “The EU covers over 4 million km and has 503 million inhabitants, the world’s third largest population after China and India”, yet with very honourable exceptions, the majority of EU countries have turned their back on a human tragedy of enormity.

Greece of course, is carrying the can: “We are expecting violence. People in despair tend to be violent”, the government’s migration spokesman, Giorgos Kyritsis, told the Observer. (3) “The whole philosophy of the deal is to deter human trafficking (into Europe) from the Turkish coast, but it is going to be difficult and we are trying to use a soft approach. These are people who have fled war. They are not criminals.” (Emphasis added.)

An example of the desperation manifested in a comment by Mustafa, a Syrian, with his wife and children: “If they make me go back to [Turkey](#) I’ll throw myself and my family into the sea, we went from hell to hell.”

By Sunday night (3rd April) it emerged that Frontex, the EU border agency, had not even dispatched the appropriate personnel to oversee the operation. “Eight Frontex boats will transport men, women and children ... back across the Aegean following fast-track asylum hearings. But of the 2,300 officials the EU has promised to send [Greece](#) only 200 have so far arrived, Kyritsis admitted.

“We are still waiting for the legal experts and translators they said they would send”, he added.

Moreover: “Humanitarian aid also earmarked for Greece had similarly been held up, with the result that the bankrupt country was managing the crisis – and continued refugee flows – on very limited funds from the state budget.”

Peter Sutherland, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for international migration and development is scathing: “Collective deportations without having regard to the individual rights of those who claim to be refugees are illegal. Secondly, their rights have to be absolutely protected where they are deported to, in other words Turkey. There has to be adequate assurances they can’t be sent back from Turkey to Syria.” (4)

The founding principles of the European Union include: “ the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights ...”

It seems when it comes to Greece both the country and the refugees they have hosted against insuperable odds, have been thrown to the sharks.

Notes:

1. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/04/turkey-illegal-mass-returns-of-syria-n-refugees-expose-fatal-flaws-in-eu-turkey-deal/>
2. <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/FMRpdfs/Iraq/08.pdf>
3. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/02/greece-violence-refugees-riot-forced-return-to-turkey>
4. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/fears-grow-over-refugee-safety-with-e-u-returns-plan-set-to-take-effect-a6965641.html>

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