Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
http://assembly.coe.int

1949.2019

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 14923
26 June 2019

NGO members working on search and rescue operations at sea accused of helping refugees

Written declaration No. 678

This written declaration does not reflect the position of the Assembly; only of those members that have signed it. It will not be considered further by the Assembly.

We, the undersigned, declare the following:

Dozens of young Europeans and NGOs committed to help saving lives in the sea are now being charged with aiding illegal immigration and risk prison sentences for up to 20 years.

They acted in coordination with military vessels from several European countries involved in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. At all times, migrants rescued were turned in to the authorities.

The Parliamentary Assembly reminds that the duty to render assistance to persons or vessels in distress at sea is an obligation that binds both States and shipmasters of all types of vessels, including NGO vessels, according inter alia to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, in her recommendation "Lives saved. Rights Protected. Bridging the protection gap for refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean" and the report of the Assembly "A comprehensive humanitarian and political response to the migration and refugee crisis in Europe", support this work of NGOs.

The criminalisation of persons acting for humanitarian reasons in situations where migrants' lives are in danger is not in compliance with international law; it is contrary to the principle of solidarity and humanitarian aid and a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

MARQUES Duarte, Portugal, EPP/CD
AZZOPARDI Jason, Malta, EPP/CD
BAYR Petra, Austria, SOC
BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR Rósa Björk, Iceland, UEL
CEPEDA José, Spain, SOC
CORREIA Telmo, Portugal, EPP/CD
DUNDEE Alexander, United Kingdom, EC
EIDE Petter, Norway, UEL
ESTRELA Edite, Portugal, SOC
FASSINO Piero, Italy, SOC
FILIPE António, Portugal, UEL
FRIDEZ Pierre-Alain, Switzerland, SOC
GAVAN Paul, Ireland, UEL
GERASHCHENKO Iryna, Ukraine, EPP/CD
GONÇALVES Carlos Alberto, Portugal, EPP/CD
GORROTXATEGUI Miren, Spain, UEL
GURMAI Zita, Hungary, SOC
GUTIÉRREZ Antonio, Spain, SOC
HEINRICH Frank, Germany, EPP/CD
HUNKO Andrej, Germany, UEL
IELENSKYI Viktor, Ukraine, EPP/CD
KANDELAKI Giorgi, Georgia, EPP/CD
KOVÁCS Elvira, Serbia, EPP/CD
KYRIAKIDES Stella, Cyprus, EPP/CD
LEITE RAMOS Luís, Portugal, EPP/CD
LÓPEZ Pere, Andorra, SOC
MARSCHALL Matern, von, Germany, EPP/CD
MASSEY Doreen, United Kingdom, SOC
MENDES Ana Catarina, Portugal, SOC
MIFSUD BONNICI Carmelo, Malta, EPP/CD
MUNYAMA Killion, Poland, EPP/CD
NICK Andreas, Germany, EPP/CD
OVERBEEK Henk, Netherlands, UEL
PISCO Paulo, Portugal, SOC
POMASKA Agnieszka, Poland, EPP/CD
RAMPI Roberto, Italy, SOC
RIEF Josef, Germany, EPP/CD
RUSSELL Simon, United Kingdom, EC
SANDBÆK Ulla, Denmark, UEL
SARAMO Jussi, Finland, UEL
SCHENNACH Stefan, Austria, SOC
SILVA Adão, Portugal, EPP/CD
SOBOLEV Serhiy, Ukraine, EPP/CD
SOCOTAR Gheorghe-Dinu, Romania, SOC
STROE Ionuț-Marian, Romania, EPP/CD
SUTTER Petra, De, Belgium, SOC
UCA Feleknas, Turkey, UEL
YEMETS Leonid, Ukraine, EPP/CD
ZINGERIS Emanuelis, Lithuania, EPP/CD

Total = 49

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1. EC: European Conservatives Group
   EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
   SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
   UEL: Group of the Unified European Left