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26 June 2019

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

**Written declaration No. 678**

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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.

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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<sup>1</sup>:

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

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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