



# Socialist International Women

## SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

### Regional Meeting

Marseille, France, 02 and 03 October 2015

## WOMEN AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN

### DECLARATION

The continuing aggressive displacement of millions of individuals worldwide is of serious humanitarian concern. In 2014, over 50 million people were forced to leave their homes due to war, violent oppression and persecution. Of the 13 million refugees displaced worldwide, over 80 percent found sanctuary in developing countries.

Over 50% of the world's refugees originate from five countries: Syria; Afghanistan; Somalia; Sudan and South Sudan. Continuing instability in these and other countries, particularly Syria, has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of refugees migrating to Europe. The United Nations (UN) estimates 400,000 asylum seekers will flee to Europe during 2015.

Migrants face long, exhausting and often terrifying journeys over land and sea, and are often separated from family and friends. Regrettably, the inhumane treatment, suffering and death toll of refugee migrants continues to rise. Some migrants will seek refuge in the countries they initially enter, such as Italy and Spain, perhaps too exhausted or frail to travel further. Others will continue their journeys to countries perceived as migrant friendly, such as Germany and Sweden.

The protection of the human rights, safety and dignity of all migrants lies at the heart of the core values of the SIW. The danger of violence and exploitation by human traffickers sadly affects all migrants. Women and girl child migrants are additionally vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual violation and exploitation. Women migrants also face the challenges and suffering of gruelling migration journeys while heavily pregnant, or nursing young babies.

The SIW asserts that the provision of healthcare services along migration routes is urgent and vital for all migrants, and particularly women and girls. The SIW applauds the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for their work in helping ensure women migrants have access to essential sexual and reproductive healthcare. The SIW welcomes UNFPA plans to distribute 70,000 dignity kits to migrant women on Balkan migrant routes, containing essential hygiene and healthcare items.

The SIW strongly suggests that agreement of a united European response policy is urgently needed to address the current refugee migration emergency. The SIW welcomes recommendations by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the creation of an initial 120,000 additional places for migrant refugees in Europe, and for the establishment of reception facilities in European countries where refugee migrants are entering.

The SIW also strongly suggests the need to reform or suspend the European Union 'Dublin System' which is an unfair system that currently fails to provide efficient and effective

protection to refugee migrants. This system allows countries to deport refugee migrants back to the country where they first entered the European Union, creating further confusion instead of solving or aiding the refugee migration.

During the past nine months, to mid-September 2015, almost half a million refugees escaped violence and oppression by crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The majority, 54 percent, originated from Syria and almost 70 percent were adult men. The suffering of these individuals was highlighted worldwide in April 2015. Five boats, carrying almost two thousand migrants, sank in the Mediterranean Sea, with the loss of over 1,200 lives.

The SIW urges all European leaders to take urgent humanitarian action, in cooperation with neighbouring countries, to develop Euro-Mediterranean solutions to manage refugee migration, and human trafficking activities, in the Mediterranean region.

The SIW urgently suggests increasing aid to humanitarian programmes, such as UN assistance to refugees, to support the integration of European migrant populations. The SIW also suggests the development of a pan-European policy agreement to provide humanitarian funding and infrastructural support to European countries hosting refugee migrant populations.

The SIW urges all Euro-Mediterranean countries to form relations to manage the refugee migration, with the aim to prevent the activities of human trafficking in the region and to address the causes of the sustained migration: poverty, lack of opportunities, instability, conflict and war affecting the southern countries of the Mediterranean. Through the share of co-development, technology and sustainable investment it will be possible to offer sustainable solutions to reduce the migration flows. Sustainable solutions together with political responses based on democracy and respect for human rights including women's rights are also essential for putting an end to the many conflicts affecting the region.

The Socialist International Women (SIW) calls on all European leaders, all Governments, Member Parties of the Socialist International, and NGOs with similar core values to the SIW, to take urgent action to end the suffering and exploitation of refugee migrants entering European countries. The SIW urges nations, and regions to develop policies and interventions to safeguard the human rights, safety and dignity of all refugee migrants, with particular sensitivity to the gender-specific needs of migrant women and girl children.

The SIW calls for urgent action to:

- *Promote* education, discussion and understanding of refugee migrant issues and challenges at local and national level.
- *Encourage* and support increased provision of humanitarian and infrastructural aid for countries hosting refugee migrant populations.
- *Implement* national and regional policies and practices which engender compassionate, humanitarian treatment of refugee migrants, including the provision of adequate migrant reception facilities and healthcare.

- *Challenge* refugee migrant discriminatory practices and policies within communities and national governance.
  - *Create* partnerships and alliances with local and national groups and NGOs to support and encourage the integration of refugee migrant populations.
  - *Support* co-operation and discussion between countries and regions, to share success stories and best practice, to the benefit of all migrant and host country populations.
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