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Security Council Update No. 3: The European Migrant Crisis

It has been three years since the current European migrant crisis was declared as the largest influx of migrants and refugees since the Second World War.¹ Many Member States in the Middle East and North African regions have spurred the mass movement of people to Europe due to their political and economic instability.² One must note, though, that migrants and refugees moving through the Balkans and across the Mediterranean Sea come from numerous Member States such as: Syria, Iraq, and Libya, and these migrants flee for a variety of reasons.

From Syria alone, there are over 5 million registered refugees fleeing into neighboring states.³ Turkey received the majority of these persons and others from the Middle East and as of May 2018, as 3.5 million of those 5 million refugees found asylum in Turkey.⁴ However, Central and Northern Europe also received considerable amounts of refugees and migrants. For example, a EUROSTAT press release reveals that, among the European States, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, and Austria have collectively received around two thirds of all new asylum applications in 2015 for Europe.⁵ Many European Member States claim to have been negatively impacted by this large influx of migrants. For example, the Federal Police Force of Germany released a report claiming a 52.7 percent increase in immigrant crime in 2016, alone.⁶ Italy is a haven for economic migrants itself, accepting 114,600 migrants just by sea in 2017. Smugglers and human traffickers are often key to a migrant's arrival in the host country. Considering the illegality of their movement into these Member States, which, similar to Germany, the Italian government claims to have seen an uptick in foreign "criminal gangs" in Italian waters.⁷

Poland's government, after their 2015 election (which signified a new right-wing, anti-immigrant rebirth in the Member State), stated that Muslim migrants would be incompatible with Poland due to the current population being too "homogeneous."⁸ Later in November of 2017, 60,000 people gathered in Warsaw for a far-right rally; one of the main sentiments among the crowd being the negative impact Muslim migrants were having on Poland, and northern Europe as a whole.⁹ Poland is not alone in this respect. A Risk Report issued by Time Magazine in 2018 assesses

¹ Henley, Jon. "What Is the Current State of the Migration Crisis in Europe?" The Guardian. June 15, 2018. Accessed October 13, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/15/what-current-scale-migration-crisis-europe-future-outlook>.

² "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe in Seven Charts" BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911> (Accessed on October 13, 2018).

³ "Syria Emergency" United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html> (accessed October 13, 2018).

⁴ "Syrian Regional Refugee Response." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>, (accessed October 12, 2018).

⁵ "Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015." EUROSTAT. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6> (accessed October 11, 2018).

⁶ Leubecher, Marcel. "Bericht Des BKA: Zahl Der Tatverdächtigen Zuwanderer Steigt Um 52,7 Prozent - WELT." DIE WELT. April 23, 2017. Accessed October 13, 2018. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article163918666/Zahl-der-tatverdachtigen-Zuwanderer-steigt-um-52-7-Prozent.html>.

⁷ Scammell, Rosie. "Mediterranean migrant crisis: number of arrivals in Italy in 2015 passes 50,000." The Guardian. June, 7, 2015. Accessed October 12, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/07/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-italy-passes-50000>

⁸ "Why Poland Doesn't Want Refugees." POLITICO. May 26, 2017. Accessed October 13, 2018. <https://www.politico.eu/article/politics-nationalism-and-religion-explain-why-poland-doesnt-want-refugees/>.

⁹ Kranz, Michal. "60,000 People in Poland Held One of the Largest Far-right Marches in Europe Ever." Business Insider. November 19, 2017. Accessed October 13, 2018. <https://www.businessinsider.com/60000-people-huge-far-right-march-in-poland-warsaw-white-nationalist-fascism-independence-day-2017-11>.

that Italy, France, Hungary, and even Sweden have been experiencing increasing nationalistic, right-wing, anti-immigrant sentiment following the 2015 crisis, creating an atmosphere of intolerance and conflict.¹⁰

Mass immigration towards Europe continues to result in a high death toll for migrants.¹¹ As of the beginning of 2017, upwards of 2,700 people have gone missing or died crossing the Mediterranean Sea to seek refuge in Europe.¹² The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has prioritized rescue-at-sea operations by all actors to reduce these risks.¹³ Child migrants are particularly vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking as well as emotional and psychological pressures not only while in route to Europe, but even once they have arrived in Europe as well.¹⁴

The UNHCR has also called for improved access of legal pathways to refuge and improved family reunification processes.¹⁵ Additionally, the UNHCR calls for European Member States as well as other Member States to offer 40,000 more resettlement locations to be made available for refugees in the 15 Member States prioritized by the UNHCR along the central Mediterranean route: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sudan and Tunisia.¹⁶ Through the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe: Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans Route of 2016, the 2017 Roadmap, and the 2017 Call to Action, the UNHCR and the broader international community has taken action to improve the situation of migrants within and en route to Europe.¹⁷ The UNHCR aims to improve the situation of unaccompanied migrant and refugee children who have been separated from their families and survivors of gender and sexual based violence as well as to providing migrants with access to efficient procedures of seeking asylum.¹⁸ Additionally, the UNHCR aims to provide migrants with, “humanitarian and cash assistance, provision of accommodation and support to improve reception conditions, prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, protection monitoring and interventions, engaging with refugee communities to enhance their participation and including their voice in their voice in the response, identification and support to persons with specific needs, including separated and unaccompanied children, and referral to appropriate services.”¹⁹

Even with the assistance of the UNHCR, there are still serious concerns. Member States receiving a large influx of refugees and migrants are dealing with economic and infrastructure constraints and increasing worries about security risks resulting from this influx. Some Governments are facing backlash from their citizens for accepting large numbers of refugees and migrants. Many refugees and migrants are living in dangerous conditions and are separated from their families. The Security Council must be cognizant of both sides of this issue and create a solution that ensures the rights of migrants as well as respects the delicate situations that Member States are facing economically as well as from their citizenry.

¹⁰ Bremmer, Ian. "How the European Far-Right Is Growing in Power and Influence." Time. September 13, 2018. Accessed October 13, 2018. <http://time.com/5395444/europe-far-right-italy-salvini-sweden-france-germany/>.

¹¹ "Europe Situation" UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/europe-emergency.html> (accessed October 13, 2018)

¹² "Europe Situation" UNHCR, (accessed October 13, 2018)

¹³ "Europe Situation" UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/europe-emergency.html> (accessed October 14, 2018)

¹⁴ "Europe: new Roadmap to improve the situation of unaccompanied and separated refugee and migrant children" UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/7/59634ac74/europe-new-roadmap-improve-situation-unaccompanied-separated-refugee-migrant.html> (accessed October 13, 2018)

¹⁵ "Europe Situation" UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/europe-emergency.html> (accessed October 14, 2018)

¹⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/9/59b6a5134/central-mediterranean-situation-unhcr-calls-additional-40000-resettlement.html>

¹⁷ "Europe Situation" UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/europe-emergency.html> (accessed October 14, 2018)

¹⁸ "Europe Situation" UNHCR, (accessed October 13, 2018)

¹⁹ "Europe Situation" UNHCR, (accessed October 13, 2018)