Belarus OUT (Photo by Leonid Shcheglov / BELTA / AFP)

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Press release | 01.12.2021

Commission plans tantamount to accepting pushbacks

Migration

Today, the European Commission has just announced that it will allow Poland, Lithuania and Latvia to 're-direct' asylum seekers to a formal border crossing point, where they can be detained for up to 16 weeks. The proposal implicitly endorses the current practice of pushbacks at the borders with Belarus, which brings asylum seekers, including families, back in horrible circumstances in Belarus with no access to protection.

Tineke Strik MEP, Greens/EFA Coordinator in the Civil Liberties Committee, comments:

"The Commission's proposed 'temporary asylum and return' measures are tantamount to endorsing the illegal, immoral and life threatening practice of pushbacks. The Commission has caved in to far-right pressure from the Polish government and blackmail from the Belarusian dictator, and thrown European values to the wayside. Instead of enforcing EU asylum law and starting infringement procedures, the Commission choses to allow the illegal practices of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia at EU borders.

"People are cold, hungry and dying on our borders, hostages of a desperate dictator. Yet, the Commission's response to this crisis is to detain all asylum seekers and offer them even less protection. To achieve this, it bypasses the European Parliament by using emergency legislation. We strongly condemn the Commissions' reactionary and short-sighted announcement. One of the core values enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, access to asylum, is being undermined in an undemocratic way. We will push for the Parliament to not be sidelined while the Commission undermines European values.

"This crisis shows why we urgently need a real EU-wide migration and asylum policy with fair and equal distribution across Europe. NGOs, international officials and the press must be granted access to the borders to ensure that people's human rights are respected and that individuals are given the opportunity to apply for asylum should they need. Europe must show solidarity and a human face during this crisis."

More:

The new rules mean that Belarussian asylum seekers will face obstacles to flee the oppressing Lukashenka regime. The proposal will make it practically impossible for migrants to apply for asylum in the EU, as Belarussian border guards keep migrants away from the Polish and Lithuanian border crossing points.

The practice of pushbacks is banned under the Geneva Convention. The Greens/EFA Group demand the Commission changes course and comes out with a plan that respects human rights and the right to asylum.

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