

Dear Madam/Sir,

Since 2010, Group 484 is coordinating activities of the regional network of civil society organizations. This network is supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia through a project 'Fostering regional human rights network'. The goal of the project is to support regional civil society initiatives, provide a forum for the development of the joint strategies in addressing human rights issues pertaining to the forced and voluntary migrants in the Western Balkan region and enabling the joint advocacy initiatives.

I would like to underline that the activities of the network members in some countries during the course of 2015 have primarily focused on the refugee crises in the region. Along with state institutions and international organizations we engaged in providing the assistance and in monitoring observance of human rights.

I would like to use this opportunity and express our deep concern over the lack of the concerted efforts and a joint European approach in addressing this large-scale influx of refugees and migrants. In our opinion this disintegrated approach allowed the violations of the core principles of the Refugee Law and International Human Rights Law. In addition it resulted in the lack of solidarity with countries which bear the burden of the refugee problem, as the first countries of entry or the transit countries.

Recently this was displayed through closure of the border- crossings, through exchange of the harsh rhetoric and a growing potential to affect good neighborly relations in the entire region.

Therefore we call for immediate action in reaffirming and observing existing international instruments and the standards contained therein for protection of human rights and for granting the assistance to refugees and migrants, which in addition must include observance of the commitments for solidarity and burden sharing among countries.

We note that the Western Balkan countries are bearing the heavy burden of the refugee crises, in addition to the difficult economic situation and unresolved refugee situation as a consequence of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

We sincerely hope that the Western Balkan will be able to contribute to the development of the European strategy for addressing these challenges soon.

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