

PRESS RELEASE

OVER 100 ORGANISATIONS CALL VON DER LEYEN TO STOP CRIMINALISATION OF SOLIDARITY WITH MIGRANTS

Over 100 independent organisations are calling the new European Commission to stop the criminalisation of solidarity with migrants in Europe in a joint statement published today.

The organisations are calling the European Commission and its newly elected head Ursula Von der Leyen to reform the EU Facilitation Directive, which currently allows Member States to criminalise humanitarian aid.

In particular, the signatories wrote:

“Most investigations and formal prosecutions are related to the vague definition of crime in the EU Facilitation Directive which fails to properly distinguish between human smuggling and humanitarian work. But the European Commission has been reluctant to consider the links between the EU Facilitation Directive and the criminalisation of solidarity”

The statement also refers to a recent study by the European research platform ReSOMA which found at least 158 Europeans have been criminalised for their help towards migrants since 2015.

The signatories wrote:

“The targets include volunteers, activists, NGOs, crew members of rescue ships, migrants’ family members, and also journalists, mayors and priests. The recent arrest of the Sea Watch 3 captain, Carola Rackete, is just the latest example of how people are being blamed for saving migrants’ lives and providing the humanitarian assistance which Member States are unwilling or unable to provide, despite being obliged to according to international and EU law.”

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Notes to the editors:

- The signatories to the joint statement include organisations working for human rights and humanitarian aid.
- The full list of signatories is available in the joint statement in attachment.

Press contacts:

- For information about the joint statement and the history of criminalisation of solidarity in Europe, please get in touch with Gianluca Cesaro at gianluca.cesaro@picum.org or at **+32 488 60 76 21**.
- For information about the joint statement and the ReSOMA research, please get in touch with Hind Sharif at hsharif@migpolgroup.com or at **02 230 59 30** and Lina Vosyliūtė at lina.vosyliute@ceps.eu.