



CANADIAN HELLENIC CONGRESS
ΕΛΛΗΝΟΚΑΝΑΔΙΚΟ ΚΟΓΚΡΕΣΟ
CONGRÈS HELLÉNIQUE CANADIEN

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March 5th 2020

Via electronic mail:

justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca / pm@pm.gc.ca

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Subject: Turkey's violations in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the escalating tensions at the Greek-Turkish borders

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

As you are aware, over the past two weeks the Turkish Government is once again undermining Eastern Mediterranean stability and security by sending waves of alleged refugees, migrants and asylum seekers to Greece's eastern land and sea borders.

Turkish military trucks are being used to transport tens of thousands of people close to Greek borders and are encouraging them to cross into Greece, and then to other European countries. These activities are in full breach of the European Union-Turkey Declaration and, in our view, the Turkish state has now become the region's human trafficker, instead of addressing the refugee and migrant issue within its territory. Of note is that Greece has stated that it is ready to support Turkey in dealing with its refugee problem and to find a solution to the Syria situation, but not under these circumstances.

Greece over the last years, although in severe financial crisis, has assisted thousands of refugees in the Aegean Islands. In some islands, refugees and migrants far outnumber the local population. The Greek people showed sympathy, helping out those in need, and they still do. However, the current issue is not about refugees. The Turkish government's actions have now created a new human tragedy in the region. It has systematically encouraged and assisted tens of thousands of refugees and migrants – now concentrated at the Greek-Turkish borders – to illegally enter Greek territory with the Turkish military's assistance.

The Greek Government has made it clear that it would not allow illegal entry onto its territory. Like Canada, Greece has the unquestionable right to exercise its sovereign rights and its constitutional obligation to safeguard the country's national security and territorial integrity.

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The Canadian Hellenic Congress is a national democratic communal institution that represents, advances, advocates and promotes the interests and concerns of Canadians of Hellenic descent and Hellenism in general. The Congress is the national voice of Hellenes and their communities and/or organizations across Canada.



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According to Turkish media reports, many of those situated at the Greek-Turkish borders include formerly incarcerated ISIS members, pro-ISIS Turkish fighters and criminals that the Turkish State wants to export to Greece and to Europe. Among these people there may be some legitimate refugees and asylum seekers, but their rights have been undermined by actions of the Turkish Government. Hence, they are not able to make a claim under the Convention.

Under these chaotic circumstances, the current situation at the Greek-Turkish borders constitutes a serious threat to Greece's national security and regional stability, as well as, to European Union territory. This is clearly no longer a refugee and migrant issue; it is an undeniable threat to Greece's eastern borders, which are also Europe's borders.

This is a major, international-level political issue and Canada – a staunch supporter of human rights and international law – has an obligation to not remain silent in the face of this human tragic event that is currently unfolding at the Greek-Turkish borders.

We, Canadians, urge our government, the Government of Canada, to send a very clear message strongly condemning this blatant attempt by the Turkish Government to openly use desperate people as geopolitical pawns to divert attention from its failures in Syria and in other areas.

Respectfully,

Dr. Theodore Halatsis
President

George Manios
Executive Vice-President

C.c.: The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Andrew Scheer, M.P., Leader of the Official Opposition
Jagmeet Singh, M.P., Leader of the New Democratic Party
Yves-François Blanchet, M.P., Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Michael Levitt, M.P., Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development
The Honourable Leo Housakos, Senator, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President
David Sassoli, European Parliament President

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