

Unity for Democracy

Statement on Refugees and Migration

We believe that the problems and conflicts which arise within the context of migrations and migrants can be overcome by steps to be taken in the direction of the program presented below, which has emerged through discussions with experts and stakeholders in the field. We call upon all democratic and socialist parties, institutions and actors to engage in a common dialogue to elaborate and implement these aims.

Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has declared that the number of displaced people exceeded 80 million by mid 2020 and said, "With forced displacement doubling in the last decade, the international community is failing to safeguard peace. We are now surpassing another bleak milestone that will continue to grow unless world leaders stop wars."

Over the past 10 years, the number of forcibly displaced people has doubled. This indicates that we are internationally unable to safeguard peace. We are unfortunately stepping over yet another watershed in this ominous picture and things will only get worse as long as the world leaders do not put a stop to the ongoing wars.

We face the consequences of the catastrophies created by those who have made the globe unlivable. Migration and refugees are global facts which determine the political situation. The exploitation by the populist politicians, of the inequities, unemployment, insecurity and high cost of living, which are increasingly threatening the working classes are making life ever more difficult for immigrants and refugees who have no hand in these problems which are becoming increasingly prominent. Misinformation, the securitization of migration, lack of regulations or controls, the perception of threat and occupation, further exacerbate the problems which face the displaced peoples. The exploitation of refugees for bargaining power, the attempts to exaggerate the problems in order to garner votes and fake "news" make it mandatory to put in place a trustworthy communications strategy.

1. Lately, migration and immigrants tend to be depicted as the *reason* for racist uprisings, as for example the incident in Altindag, a quarter in Ankara, where Syrians became the target. The resolution of the problems creating great tensions and differences engendered by such incidents call for a democratic, rights-based and egalitarian solution on the international level and the establishment of bottom-up solidarity networks. For everyone who lives in Turkey, the assurances provided by public authorities should be based on universal rights rather than ethnic affiliations.
2. Turkey does not possess a healthy, functioning immigration and refugee system which is based on basic human rights. Turkey has accepted the Geneva Accords only with a "geographic reservation". The geographic reservation concerning migration and immigration laws should be lifted, and the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention should be respected.

3. Everyone has the right to asylum in other countries than one's own, and benefit from the right to seek asylum. Safe passage for refugees to travel to third countries should be recognized; Turkey, the European Union (EU) and other countries should accept the demands for asylum and the refugee status. The Readmission Agreement which was signed by the EU and Turkey in 2013 and came into effect in 2016, should be annulled. The EU should relinquish the practice of keeping refugees outside its borders and stop seeing Turkey as a "refugee depot".
4. The United Nations (UN) should set up offices for migration and for seeking asylum. These offices would regulate the procedures and offer access to the right to seek asylum.
5. For those refugees who would like to stay in Turkey, policies for mutual integration, adjustment and coexistence should be implemented.
6. Immigrant workers should be granted work and resident permits; their participation in the workforce should be regulated by law and work for less than the minimum wage should be prohibited. Super-exploitation of the immigrant workers should be stopped. Penal procedures should be applied in cases where employers do not register the workers or force them to work under excessively exploitative conditions.
7. Means should be created in order to make it possible for immigrant workers to join trade unions. Trade unions should in fact pave the way for the organization of such workers in trade unions.
8. Global inequalities, the detrimental effects of climate change in emigration countries, the political crises and civil wars engendered by the interventions of imperialist powers, the deliberate suppression of various identities by authoritarian countries, are among the most important reasons for the phenomenon of global migrations. A global political climate which would allow everyone to live in freedom, in their own country, under humane conditions, is clearly the solution and initiatives in this direction should be encouraged. The inequalities are aggrandized by the fact that, while capital can roam the world without any impediments, labour is trapped within national boundaries. The rights pertaining to labour and the manner in which it self-organizes should not be restrained by national boundaries.
9. The political pressure for the acceptance of refugees by Northern countries should be stepped up. It is unacceptable for some countries to set up "immigrant reservoirs" supported by financial and political means.
10. Policies should be established in order to encounter the securitization of migration, and the trend to treat migration as the motivation for governments to take anti-democratic measures. Attitudes based on rights and equality are the best antidote against repressive policies regarding immigrants and the consolidation of such policies by authoritarian powers.

11. The repudiation of a foreign policy based on expansionist and provocative “New Ottoman” attitudes towards neighboring countries, and the adoption of regional solidarity and cooperation, are of fundamental importance.
12. Independent residence permits should be accorded to those immigrant women and LGBTI + individuals who face violence based on social gender. Violence based on social gender should be considered as persecution and therefore justification for seeking asylum. The refugee procedures should further develop appropriate practices, guides and auxiliary services sensitive to social gender issues.
13. The “No Readmission” principle should be exercised also in the case of battered women. No woman who is a victim of violence and who demands asylum or is a refugee, should be sent back to a country where either her life or her freedom could be in danger.
14. Necessary institutional measures should be taken to collect information and compile statistics for setting up an inventory of refugees without records. The absence of a policy for migration or refugee affairs, results in encouraging human smugglers. The penalties for smuggling should be harsh enough to be deterrent, in order to stop the refugee deaths and to prevent the violation of their rights.
15. For the duration of the present crisis regarding both climate warming and food shortages, the contribution which interested refugees could make to their welfare by farming idle land, under secure, humane and equal working conditions, could be considered.
16. The encouragement of local municipalities to take initiatives to deal with issues related to refugees on the basis of just and equitable solutions, could yield very positive results.
17. A forced repatriation policy without any infrastructure is bound to give rise to destructive results on both the individual and social scale and cannot be accepted.

Coordination of Unity for Democracy