



Quaker  
Council for  
European  
Affairs

# around europe

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# 61 civil society orgs say: EU peace project under threat

↑ Quakers protesting outside the recent DSEI arms fair in London. PHOTO: ROOTS OF RESISTANCE (CC)

Concern about militarism in the EU's budget proposals has continued to grow, with 61 civil society organisations – including QCEA – signing a joint letter to the new European Parliament which warns that "the EU peace project is under threat."

The joint letter, which was coordinated by our partner organisation the European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAA), highlighted the dangers of proposals in the forthcoming Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) which is currently being negotiated by the EU's member states. These include:

- A new European Defence Fund, which would dedicate €13 billion to the research and development of new or enhanced weaponry. This is more than the Humanitarian Aid budget (€11bn).
- An African Peace Facility fund, which would allocate yet more billions to train and equip African armies without any oversight by the European Parliament.
- A new Military Mobility programme, with €6.5 billion to facilitate the movement of military personnel and assets across and beyond the EU.
- An amalgamation of various humanitarian and peacebuilding funds which would reduce the amount of money ring-fenced for good causes.

These spending plans will be subject to parliamentary approval in the coming year. The signatories of the joint letter, which also included Greenpeace and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), expressed "deep concern" about the MFF and called on MEPs to block the proposals.

To read the joint letter visit [bit.ly/2IPT5hF](https://bit.ly/2IPT5hF)

## Italy swings to the centre after populist government collapses

On September 10, Italy's parliament voted in favour of a new coalition government formed by the incumbent Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, bringing to an end a political crisis and pushing Italian politics back towards the centre ground.

The previous right-wing government – an alliance between the populist parties The League and The Five Star Movement (M5S) – collapsed after the Deputy Prime Minister, Matteo Salvini, withdrew his support in the hope of triggering early elections in which his League party was expected to do well.

Instead of propelling Salvini to power, the political machinations had the opposite effect, as Conte (who represents M5S) began negotiations with the centre-left Democratic Party in order to form a new coalition. Observers – and perhaps Salvini himself – had considered it unlikely that such a move would occur. However, the M5S has an unusual set of policy positions drawn from across the political spectrum, and this appeared to offer enough leverage for a successful negotiation.

Campaigners and aid groups hope that Italian policy on migration can finally move away from the inhuman and repressive approach which had been adopted by Salvini in recent years. His policies included barring rescue vessels from coming to shore in Italian ports.

Carlotta Sami, a spokesperson for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Italy, said: "This is a chance to carry out inclusion policies towards refugees, policies that consider them a resource and not a problem."

## EU member states nominate their Commission candidates

Now that we have had the European elections in May, attention turns to the formation of the next European Commission – the 27-member group which oversees the implementation of the EU's policies and the workings of its civil service.

Each member state nominates a "Commissioner-designate", usually a high-ranking national civil servant or politician, and they are each given a portfolio by the newly-appointed Commission President (see right column). This process is now complete. The final configuration of the new Commission is yet to be confirmed but is unlikely to change greatly.

The proposed Commissioners include **Josep Borrell**, the current Spanish Foreign Minister, who looks set to take on the EU's "High Representative" role – essentially, the head of its foreign office. Meanwhile, Greece's **Margaritis Schinas**, a long-time Commission official, will likely assume a coordinating mandate on migration and border security under the proposed heading of "Protecting our European Way of Life" – wording which has already been criticised in Brussels because it frames migration as a threat.

### WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Each Commissioner-designate will be subject to a hearing in the European Parliament in the coming weeks, in which MEPs will question them to determine their suitability for their posts. Following these hearings, the Parliament will then accept or reject the proposed Commission as a whole. The work of governing the EU can then recommence.

It is worth noting that the UK will not have a place on the Commission even if Brexit is postponed further – a change to the EU treaties in 2009 means that the Commission is no longer obliged to include all member states, and the UK has suggested it has no plans to nominate a candidate in the case of a delay.

Full analysis of the finalised Commission will feature in the next edition of *Around Europe*.



↑ MEPs applaud after Ursula von der Leyen wins the support of the European Parliament to become Commission President. She was approved by 383 votes to 327 in July.

PHOTO: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (CC)



PHOTO: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (CC)

## Who is the new European Commission President?

**Ursula von der Leyen** was nobody's first choice as Jean-Claude Juncker's replacement, but the machinations of EU politics often produces surprise candidates for top institutional jobs. Who is she?

Until her appointment as the new President of the European Commission at the start of the summer, Von der Leyen had been the longest-serving member of Angela Merkel's cabinet, holding her most recent post – Defence Minister – since 2013. Her performance in the role was not without criticism, with many observers suggesting that Germany's military had been mismanaged on her watch. Her defenders claim that she managed wider structural problems linked to defence spending to the best of her ability.

Politically, she's seen as a social liberal inside a party (CDU) which is often cast as conservative on key issues, and she has stood out as an advocate of LGBT rights and gender equality: in 2008, she said that "equality is achieved when men are no longer insulted as wimps if they take care of their baby or their infirm father." She also took a Syrian refugee into her home in 2014, and has called for politicians to reinvigorate democracy in response to populism.

On the world stage, Von der Leyen is an outspoken critic of what she considers to be Russian and Chinese meddling in international affairs, and has advocated tough responses in the past. She's also made comments calling for an "army of Europeans" in the past which led many commentators to paint her as a hawkish federalist in the days following her appointment. Yet she has also made clear that she doesn't favour centralised militarism, but rather closer cooperation; she also vetoed the idea of supplying arms to Ukraine in the tense days following Russia's annexation of Crimea.

In short, her record suggests that Von der Leyen is above all an ardent defender of post-war transatlantic liberalism – for better and for worse – which she sees as the foundation stone of Europe's values and stability. She represents a political "old guard" which is eager to resist radical change – but in turbulent times, there is a risk her staunchly 20th century worldview will seem passé to many in 2019.



NEWS FROM  
**Quaker House  
in Brussels**

Since 1979, the Quaker Council for European Affairs has worked to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions.

**Showcasing the talent  
of people on the move**

In September, Quaker House played host to an exhibition of striking paintings by the young artist **Boush Musa**, who comes from Darfur. His work is highly impressive and varies greatly in style, but each painting bursts with colour and is rich in symbolism. Boush painted the above, *Dublin Guy* – a self-portrait featuring aspects of the asylum process – as well as the artwork on the cover.

More than 200 people attended the exhibition over five days, including undocumented migrants and staff from the EU institutions. We also recently co-hosted an exhibition of portrait photos taken by women refugees in Greece, *Seen*.

ARTWORK: BOUSH MUSA PHOTO: ANDREW LANE



**QCEA represents Quakers  
at global peace conference**

One thousand religious leaders, and representation from governments and the European Commission met at the 10th **World Assembly of Religions for Peace**, in Lindau in Germany during August.

The official title was *Caring for our Future – Advancing Shared Well-being*, with sub-themes were: (1) Positive Peace, (2) Conflict Prevention and Transformation, (3) Just societies, (4) Sustainable human development, and (5) Climate / Earthcare.

In different ways, the European arms trade emerged as a recurring issue. The location in southern Germany was very near significant weapons research and production centres in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

The Catholic Archbishop of Nigeria and a senior Nigerian imam took the stage in conversation about the challenges for peace in their country.

Andrew Lane, attending for QCEA, was struck by how they both called for Europe to stop flooding their country with weapons, which they described as helping to fuel violent religious and political groups that target economically disadvantaged young men. European arms production is posing a direct challenge to peace, anti-corruption efforts and democracy. Andrew learned that some of the women and girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria were from a sister peace church, Church of the Brethren.

There was a specific call for European representatives to ask for forgiveness at the congress. This related to the actions of western corporations in the global south, including arms companies, but also to slavery, colonialism, consumption (and its climate impact). The importance of the peace voice being heard at the World Council of Churches gathering in Germany in 2021 was mentioned several times.

**A letter from QCEA's Clerk**

AIR MAIL



As many of you may know, the Quaker Council for European Affairs has a General Assembly to set the vision of the organisation, and an Executive Committee to oversee the working of the organisation. I've been working with both for several years, but it is this year that they decided to ask me to be the Clerk – basically the Chairperson – for these two bodies.

It was a "wow" moment for me, because Oliver Robertson has been in the role of Clerk for some years, and he has helped steer QCEA to being an effective and well appreciated voice for Quakers. I've been working in the European Union for decades, and feel passionate about Europe as my material home as much as I feel the Quakers are my spiritual home. It seemed that being Clerk was a perfect role for me, now that I no longer need a paid job, and because I love the idea of promoting Quaker values in Europe. Well, that may still be true, but I'm beginning to think that the work we have to do is more daunting than ever.

The European Union was born of a Europe turning its back on divisive nationalisms which had torn it apart, was proud of the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was keen to demonstrate that social democracy could be a bulwark against raw capitalism and against totalitarian communism. Ever closer, sure of its values, until...

Enlargement made it looser, austerity made it more unequal, until Brexit and other narrow nationalisms undermined it, until it responded to migration by higher walls, to Trump and Putin by spending more on arms. Europe is caught in a storm, uncertain of which way to go.

The Quaker Council for European Affairs is a quiet voice in that storm. If we can make that voice louder, it can help to restore the core values of the EU. After all, it was William Penn, a Quaker, who proposed in 1693 that a 'Council of Europe' should be established to bring peace to a war torn Europe. The EU is that vision for the 21st century – if it isn't derailed by all the problems I list in the previous paragraph!

Over the next years, the Quaker Council for European Affairs will focus on two priority programme areas – on peace and on human rights. On peace it has already demonstrated that it should be heard – be it in areas such as peace building abroad where the EU is happy to listen, or in others such as armament manufacture where the EU is hard of hearing, keen as it is to build its military capabilities. On human rights, the Quaker Council for European Affairs has focused on the treatment of migrants. This is a particularly testing space, for the *de facto* deterring of migration through selective abuse of human rights has become a nasty response to nationalist voices in Europe. QCEA focuses on quiet diplomacy to get its voice heard and to make a difference.

How will QCEA look in three years' time when I may hand on the Clerkship? I hope it will be on a solid financial footing. QCEA is hugely cost effective, but it needs more revenue than it is now getting. I hope it still has a brilliant and motivated staff just like today, and I hope it will be recognised as an essential Quaker voice for peace and human rights in Europe – which is our contribution to the European Union being an essential voice for peace and human rights in the world.

*Jeremy Lester*

**Jeremy Lester**  
jeremy.lester@qcea.org



**Magid Magid MEP joined with QCEA to raise money for an excellent cause – and spoke to us about his desire to build bridges in the name of a more humane, democratic Europe.**



## A different British voice in Brussels

PHOTOS: ASHLEY SHERWOOD / MARTIN LENG

Magid Magid is used to doing things differently. A member of the Green Party of England and Wales, he sat on the city council of his hometown, Sheffield, before being appointed to the ceremonial position of Lord Mayor in 2018 by his party colleagues. This role saw him raising over £100,000 for local charities – occasionally while wearing fancy dress – and holding a party for local children to decorate the city's Christmas tree. His official portrait as Lord Mayor was famously informal, attracting the ire of some conservative commentators. But as the youngest ever person to hold the post – and a Somali-British Muslim environmentalist too – Magid is used to being "everything the Daily Mail probably hates."

In May he was elected to serve as an MEP for his region, Yorkshire and the Humber, and has wasted no time speaking out in favour of refugee rights and against Brexit. He made a bombastic maiden speech in Parliament, decrying politicians who "watch a child drowning, gasping for breath and turn their backs." For Magid, whose family fled Somalia when he was four years old, migration policy is very personal.

Recently, Magid and QCEA teamed up to raise funds for a humanitarian charity working to save lives in the Mediterranean (see box, right). While he was at Quaker House, we took a moment to speak to him about his personal perspective on life as an MEP, as well as his belief in building bridges and engaging citizens in the name of a more humane EU.

### How have you found the transition from being Lord Mayor of Sheffield to becoming an MEP?

It's a lot more responsibility. I'm someone who puts a lot of pressure on myself but I'm quick to adapt to new environments and new people. This feels different because before I was representing Sheffield but now I'm representing all of Yorkshire and the Humber which is a rich, diverse region in terms of people, landscape and ideas. It's a real privilege. The interesting thing about being an MEP is there's a lot of actual fascists and really horrible people around – sometimes you can't tell because everybody wears suits. *[laughs]* But in all seriousness, being an MEP forces a lot of collaboration which is a good thing.

### How is the EU important in terms of human rights and migration?

It's really important. The great thing about the European Union is that we are working collectively towards the same goals – or at least we should be. It's important that we remain in the EU to tackle global issues which have no borders, like climate change for example. But it's how the EU responds to migrants and refugees which will define its character. Is it going to be a union of courage which puts compassion for people first? Or is it going to be cowardly and turn its back on people? I'd like to see the EU putting more pressure on members who aren't showing solidarity, and working actively to create safe passage for people coming to Europe.

### In your maiden speech in the European Parliament, you caused a stir after referring to Matteo Salvini as a "coward" for his harsh migration policies. What can people do to resist inhumane policies?

People can do a lot. If you can, donate to some grassroots organisations or charities which are doing good work. Get involved in your local community – whatever you're passionate about, join a campaign or start one! Whether it be an offline campaign in the streets or an online one, there are always going to be other people who'll want to work together with you. Lobby your elected representatives, whether that be at a local or national level, and use your vote wisely. And speak to your family and friends! To tackle injustice, we need to have difficult conversations. It can be hard at times, but at least it gets us talking.

### How do we build those bridges? How do we step back from the polarisation which defines our politics at the moment?

It's easy to point out what makes us different, or where we disagree, but the late Jo Cox MP said it perfectly: "We have more in common than that which divides us." We need to put power back in people's hands. A lot of people feel disenfranchised by the European Union as it is today – I speak with a lot of people who don't know what the EU does, or who their MEP is. How are people in Anderlecht or Bradford meant to get engaged? So I'd love for every European citizen to be able to vote for the President of the European Commission, rather than being told "this is your candidate, whether you like it or not." Make people feel like they have an ownership over these institutions!

And I'd love to lower the voting age to 16, to get people into the habit of voting and help young

people to become conscious of their decisions and inform themselves. If you go private school you're taught things like rhetoric and economics because you're expected to become future leaders, but you don't get those advantages in a normal school. Education is fundamental.

### How does it feel to be elected as an MEP and then have to leave so soon?

I still don't think we're going to leave! I'm hopeful. But it's not that naive kind of hope – people are going out on the streets, taking action, and my colleagues and I are doing a lot of work. Of course it is difficult – not just for myself and my staff, but if the UK crashes out without a deal it's going to impact everybody and it's in nobody's interest. It has been hard mentally, but this is the situation we find ourselves in and we have to do the best that we can with it.

### When you go back to Sheffield and you meet a working class person who's suffered from decades of austerity and industrial decline and they voted for Brexit, what do you say to them?

There are so many people like that. They feel left behind, they feel neglected, they can't get on the housing ladder, there are no school places... I completely get it. That's all down to failed British government policies, not some people in Brussels. These are domestic issues – this and previous governments have not helped people. That's what I tell people back in Sheffield. Let's be tough on Brexit, but tough on the causes of Brexit too. And let's inform people about the positives of EU membership – EU funding has been so transformative for towns in my region, but people don't see the value in it because they're not aware of it.

## QCEA and Magid raise over €2000 for refugee lifeboat charity

Magid Magid was at Quaker House to co-host a benefit dinner in aid of the humanitarian charity **Refugee Rescue**, which has saved over 3,500 lives off the coast of Lesvos, Greece since January 2016. They are a group of volunteers working with a single lifeboat, *Mo Chara*.

The dinner took place on September 5 and around fifty people were in attendance, including several other MEPs and senior civil society staff, all of whom were eager to meet Magid and the QCEA team – not to mention support this very good cause. The meal was generously offered by our friends **WeExist**, who make delicious traditional food from their home country, Syria.

We're pleased to be able to report that the event raised over €2000, which will go towards keeping *Mo Chara* at sea and saving lives.



How a legal commitment made by European governments requires police to protect rights

Don't violate rights. Protect them!



Even if you have not met a survivor of police violence yourself, you probably will have heard from refugee volunteers, or have seen the growing number of newspaper articles and NGO reports. From Calais to Croatia undocumented migrants are repeatedly experiencing violence in the parks, forests and other places where they gather for their own safety.

Across Europe police are under pressure from governments to act as a deterrent against young and vulnerable people seeking the freedom and security that was not available to them in Eritrea, Darfur and elsewhere. The record-keeping of NGOs such as Mediciens du Monde in Belgium, No Name Kitchen in Bosnia/Croatia, Help Refugees in France and others, thoroughly documents beatings with batons, smashing of mobile phones, stripping people of their clothes without lawful justification and many other forms of intimidation and violence.

However, European governments have signed an important legal agreement that outlaws many of the tactics used by police. So what does the law say?

The European Convention on Human Rights contains only basic or fundamental rights, such as right to life, freedom from torture and freedom of expression. It is not an aspirational document with 'nice to have' rights, but designed to prevent Europe from sliding back along the slippery slope of mass human rights violations. Forty-seven of the forty-eight countries in Europe have signed the Convention, which requires all member countries to protect basic human rights in their territories.

#### KNOW THE LAW

The Convention is therefore a framework within which all police services in Europe must conduct their operations. If they fail to do so, the government of their country might find themselves being taken to the European Court of Human Rights, the court that rules on violations of the Convention. The case law, created through the judgements of the Court, helps governments and police services make difficult decisions about how to protect human rights.

Sometimes different human rights, or the human rights of different people, need to be balanced. However, the Convention and the Court have said clearly and consistently that one human right is absolute and can never be breached in order to achieve an objective or protect another human right. Article 3 of the Convention prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and allows no exception even in the event of a public emergency threatening the life of the nation.

#### EUROPEAN COURT IN ACTION

We know from judgements of the Court that "any recourse to physical force which has not been made strictly necessary by [their] own conduct diminishes human dignity and is in principle an infringement of Article 3". Court judgements also show that there is a positive duty on countries not only to refrain from breaching Article 3, but also to act to prevent torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and to investigate allegations of such misconduct.

Compliance with law applies in the same way to police officers as it does to all other citizens. Police officers are frequently asked to keep their countries and communities safe by running toward complex and dangerous situations. Their job is not easy, and sometimes requires them to control violent people through the use of force. However, excessive, disproportionate, violent or otherwise unlawful action by police officers cannot be justified by reference to their lawful exercise of coercive action.

#### WHEN DOES ARTICLE 3 APPLY?

The treatment must be labelled as at least one of the following: torture, inhuman or degrading treatment (see *box opposite*). Second the treatment must meet a minimum threshold of suffering. This is usually determined by the physical or mental effects, and the duration of ill-treatment. It can also include other factors such as the victim's situation, such as age, sex or health.



The evidence is now very well established that inhuman and degrading treatment are taking place in Europe in the context of police interaction with undocumented migrants, and that the threshold for the application of Article 3 is met.

Whilst there are many huddles for people on the move to submit cases for consideration by the court, even with the support of NGOs, the nature of the continued violence and the extent of the evidence means that many cases will follow in the years ahead.

Governments would be advised to stop scapegoating people on the move, and refocus their police onto their proper role of protecting everyone's human rights.

#### WHAT IS QCEA DOING?

Over the last two years QCEA has been working to reduce violence at European borders. Previous issues of *Around Europe* have reported back on our efforts to improve the EU's approach to its border with the Mediterranean, and limits the harms of the Integrated Border Management Fund and other mechanisms designed to build-up borders on migratory routes to Europe.

Throughout this period we have also been monitoring violence towards undocumented migrants within Europe, and using our position in Brussels to raise Quaker concerns about this violence with institutions and governments. A specific small grant from Dundee Friends Property Trust helped us to develop a resource which will be published soon and be actively used to refocus policy discussions onto the fundamental truth that human rights should be for everyone. No exceptions.

### Types of treatment

**Torture** is the most serious form of violation of Article 3 of the Convention, understood by the Court as deliberately causing very serious and cruel suffering.

**Inhuman treatment** is understood by the Court to be treatment or punishment that involves the infliction of intense physical or mental suffering.

**Degrading treatment** is when the Court assesses an objective of the treatment or punishment is to humiliate or debase, possibly contributing to adverse effects on the victim's personality. This is explained in a case from Greece in 1968, the decision recorded: "*Degrading treatment or punishment is designed to arouse in the victim feelings of fear, anguish and inferiority capable of humiliation and debasing them and possibly breaking their physical and moral resistance.*"

The evidence is now very well established that **inhumane and degrading treatment are taking place in Europe in the context of police interaction with undocumented migrants.**

# European Union: Let's change course on migration!

EU migration policy is at a crossroads. QCEA's Peace Programme Director, Olivia Caeymaex, makes the case for a new direction which puts people first.



PHOTO: KATE McNALLY

On the eve of important political discussions within the European Union about the future of its operations in the Mediterranean area, it is important to highlight the fact that European officials have a unique opportunity to improve on their response to ongoing migration by choosing a more humane approach. From next week and in the next few months, Europe will decide on the future of Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean and will vote its next budget – an important opportunity to redirect EU migration policy, which is widely criticised by civil society in its current form.

So far, the EU's migration policy has been roundly condemned for failing to prevent the deaths of thousands of people in the Mediterranean. The EU was initially created on the basis of solidarity and multilateralism but is now accused of building a 'Fortress Europe', blocking population flows heading to Europe and putting people on the move at risk trafficking and death.

Last June, two lawyers accused the EU and its member states of crimes against humanity, murder, torture, inhuman treatment and forced displacement, committed against migrants trying to flee Libya. The complaint, submitted to the International Criminal Court, is based on a five-year analysis of European migration policy in which all the measures taken only aim, in the lawyers' view, to discourage those who want to reach Europe – not to save their lives.

The European military mission Operation Sophia recently reduced its manpower at sea whilst increasing its air capacity, and has been criticised for this change of mandate. The mission of this operation was not to save lives at sea but to prevent human trafficking. Nevertheless, until October 2018, ships affiliated with Operation Sophia saved 46,165 people at sea, and with Operations Poseidon (Eastern Mediterranean) and Themis (Central Mediterranean) could have saved up to 450,000 lives! By diminishing its marine capacity and increasing the number of drones, FRONTEX – the European Union Agency for the management of operational cooperation at the external borders of the EU – has equipped itself with

the means to observe population movements without having to take on the responsibility of saving lives!

## Criminalisation of solidarity

At the national level, the criminalisation of solidarity movements within this context is also worrying: The sanctioning of humanitarian NGOs trying to save lives in Mediterranean has created an outcry, notably following the arrest in Italy of the Sea Watch captain Carola Rackete, who was finally released.

In Belgium, the legal proposal which allow police services to conduct home visits to private individuals, in order to apprehend foreigners staying illegally, may create a climate of tension between law enforcement and citizens that they are supposed to protect. This atmosphere is likely to widen the already yawning gap between society and the police, while there should be a relationship of trust between them – essential for the security of the citizens.

On the threshold of major changes within the European Commission regarding the form, the budget and the future of Operation Sophia, European leaders have a unique occasion to deeply change their migration policy by giving it a more humane focus. Recent discussions between some member states would have permitted new opportunities and some countries have expressed their capacity to welcome more migrants. Some fear that it will only encourage new population movements. Yet it is clear that the best way to prevent a rise of migratory movements is to try to understand them; to answer to their root causes by creating stability and economic opportunities in countries of origin. This presupposes an international aid in majority headed towards the need of the local and mobile populations, but it also implies decisions at the international level preventing conflict rather than promoting it, for example by avoiding or banning arms exports to countries involved in a conflict.

The Quaker Council for European Affairs has long called on Europe to put people at the centre of its decisions, both by ending migrants detention and by ensuring that its methods and interventions in the regions concerned put "human rights" at the centre of its priorities. Europe can build the research capacity needed to deepen its understanding of the extent and the real causes of the problem and identify efficient and tailored solutions for different contexts. Some of these decisions have been claimed/requested for several years by NGOs through various humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, human rights, spiritual and non-spiritual projects, as Amnesty International, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch.

## Potential ways forward

Operation Sophia could become a civil operation, collaborating with the ships of humanitarian organisations active in the Mediterranean for rescue at sea, such as Sea Watch and SOS Méditerranée. The new European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, could do the necessary research in order to obtain more reliable data on the root causes of current migratory movements, such as human trafficking. A better understanding of the issue will allow better, more sustainable solutions to be found.

Finally, the new European budget proposals foresee an estimated reinforcement of €11.3 billion for FRONTEX between 2021 and 2027, as well as the creation of a force composed of 10,000 operational staff positions. Rather than securitising our borders, shouldn't we equip them with men and women who are competent in psycho-social support and mediation, in order to bring to people on the move the comfort and help they need to enable them to tackle the challenges they face?

## Peace requires solidarity

Europe must stop the detention and/or imprisonment of migrants, who are often held in intolerable conditions. Such detention may create a sense of antagonism towards, rather than faith *in*, our countries and our norms. We owe it to ourselves to live up to our own values if we expect others to assimilate them. There are multiple alternatives to the detention of migrants which ensure respect for human rights, women's rights and children's rights.

It's time for Europe to change its approach! Let its policies and funding priorities be more sensitive to the situation of migrants and refugees, and truly work in the interests of the people who are so vulnerable that they are forced to travel thousands of kilometres, risking their lives and sometimes those of their children.

By only serving European interests, we are on the wrong track and risk causing continued significant distress – not to mention fomenting instability both inside Europe and at our borders.

Because peace requires solidarity and mutual comprehension, let us remember the foundations on which this Union was built and prove that we are willing and able to put people back at the heart of our decision-making.



This article was originally published on the website of *La Libre*, one of Belgium's flagship newspapers, on September 3. It was written as part of QCEA's efforts not only to influence decision-making at the European level but among EU member states as well. You can find the original French version of the article at [bit.ly/2lyNHlQ](https://bit.ly/2lyNHlQ)

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