

Proposed EU Quota for Distribution of Illegal Migrants Runs into Criticism



Illegal migrants picked up in the Mediterranean

Source: Migrant Offshore Aid Station

The European Commission's (EC) European Agenda for Migration has floated its proposals for dealing with the massive surge in illegal migrants being smuggled across the Mediterranean by human traffickers. That has created discord among the 28 EU members about the rescue burden placed on so-called front line countries in the Mediterranean like Malta, Italy, Greece and Spain versus the relocation burden on major members like Germany and Sweden. It has also given rise to UN criticism for a controversial plan to destroy the rickety boats of human traffickers in Libya and elsewhere in North Africa, originally proposed by EU Foreign Relations Commissioner, Frederica Mogherini. A side show has been the UN and European Parliament [adverse comments](#) of the 'horrible' national survey in Hungary opposing EU and UN setting allotments and quotas for distribution of asylees and refugees. Hungary's PM Orban is a prominent member of the large center right European Parliament EPP coalition. The formal release of the EU Commission's proposal is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13th.

We wrote in our NER article on this roiling debate in the May edition, ["Stemming the Surge of Deadly Illegal Migration Across the Mediterranean"](#):

The EC [proposed](#) a pilot project to re-distribute 5,000

refugees who meet asylum requirements stranded outside the EU, as an attempt to fairly distribute the burden of asylees. That flies in the face of [objections](#) by major northern countries to further asylum quotas. In 2014, 626,065 refugees [filed](#) asylum claims, a 44% percent increase over 2013. As one example, Germany [experienced](#) a sharp rise in asylum requests over the first quarter of 2015 to 85,394, double over the same period in 2014. By contrast the US [received](#) 47,500 asylum applications.

The [majority](#) of those asylum seekers hail from Kosovo, Syria and Albania. Germany currently has a backlog of over 200,000 applications. This has given rise [to complaints](#) by municipalities in Germany about the impact on facilities and community integration. In the most controversial [proposal](#), the EC requested EU Foreign Relations Commissioner Federica Mogherini to develop rules of engagement enabling it to capture and destroy illegal smuggling vessels. Overall EC President Donald Tusk of Poland [said](#) the illegal migrant crisis is a "complex issue" that will "take time to tackle."

The *EUObserver* [reported](#) the leaked contents of the EC proposals and reactions:

Leaked documents, seen by EUobserver, indicate that both ideas are now back on the table in an effort to help ease pressure on select member states.

"The EU needs a permanent system for sharing the responsibility for large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers among member states," notes the draft document.

Some 80 percent of all asylum applications are processed in six EU countries, with most refugees from Syria either ending up in Germany or Sweden.

Germany's Angela Merkel reportedly backs the commission's proposals but the issue has already generated a backlash

elsewhere.

Hungary's PM Viktor Orban on Friday described the commission plan as "mad and unfair".

Earlier this month, he proposed setting up new national legislation to keep out immigrants even it runs counter to EU rules.

"If [other EU members] want to receive immigrants, they can do it. But then they should not send them back here, or through us," said the Hungarian leader.

According to the leaked commission text, the EU executive wants member states to resettle around 20,000 new refugees every year, although the final figure could change.

An initial figure of 5,000 had been floated last month at the EU emergency summit, but was then dropped.

[...]

The number of relocated migrants to be taken in by each state would depend on the member state's population size, economic strength, unemployment level and number of refugees already there.

"The commission will table legislation by the end of 2015 to provide for a mandatory and automatically-triggered relocation system to distribute those in clear need of international protection within the EU when a mass influx emerges," notes the commission paper.

The proposed quota system would not be binding on Ireland, the UK and Denmark.

This has brought an immediate reaction from the newly elected Conservative government of UK Prime Minister David Cameron.

The Guardian [reported](#):

“We will oppose any EU commission proposals to introduce a non-voluntary quota,” a spokesperson told the paper.

Britain is instead pushing for an UN-backed resolution to “destroy the business model of the traffickers” by sinking the boats and rubber dinghies used to ferry migrants across the sea.

The UK’s Royal Navy’s flagship HMS Bulwark and its three Merlin helicopters are already at port in Malta.

Debate at the UN Security Council [session](#) yesterday in Manhattan revealed criticism of the EU Foreign Commissioner’s proposal to attack the smuggler vessels engaged in trafficking of illegal migrants. The EU Observer reported:

Peter Sutherland, the UN special envoy on migration and a former EU commissioner, issued the warning at a meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC) warned the EU that “innocent refugees”, including children, will be “in the line of fire” of any operation to sink migrant smugglers’ boats.

He noted that in the first 130 days of this year “at least” 1,800 people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea trying to get to EU shores.

“This total represents a 20-fold increase over the same period last year. At this pace, we are on course to see between 10,000 and 20,000 migrants perish by autumn”.

He said about half the people who make it have a legitimate need for EU protection.

EU Foreign Relations Commissioner Mogherini [replied](#):

EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini told the UNSC, also on Monday, that she’s been tasked “to propose actions to disrupt the business model of human trafficking networks across the Mediterranean”.

“We have in these [past] weeks prepared for a possible naval operation in the framework of the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy. The mandate of this operation is currently being elaborated with the EU member states”.

“We want to work with the United Nations, in particular with the UNSC”, she added.

She took pains to say the military plan is part of a wider approach.

She also pledged that “no refugees or migrants intercepted at sea will be sent back against their will”.

[...]

“This is not all about Libya, we know that very well. This can happen in other parts of the world. But we all know also very well that the vast majority of human trafficking and smuggling in these months is happening in Libya, or rather, through Libya”, Mogherini noted.

Given the divisions within the EU, it would appear the roiling political debate over how to handle the deadly illegal migrant surge of illegal migrants across the Mediterranean may be irresolvable. Much of the illegal migrant flight is driven by civil war and jihad conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Al Qaeda-linked terror groups in Africa. This despite the suggestions of Dutch Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders that perhaps the only ways to deal with the surge is to adopt the Australian model of returning the stream of illegal migrants for possible relocation in North Africa and other areas in the Middle East. That is likely to be objected to by the UN High Commissioner of Refugees seeking to depopulate huge refugee camps in Turkey, Jordan and elsewhere across the Muslim Ummah. The Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council would clearly object to such a scheme involving the members of the GCC embroiled in a war against Iran-backed Houthi Rebels in Yemen. The

question is whether that means an increase in refugee resettlement allotments courtesy of the UNHCR might be coming here in the US. The arrival of Syrian refugees in the US Refugee Admissions Program is already causing a rising debate among localities in the American heartland.