



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

April 26, 2016

No : ECA.Let-2016-047

Dear Ms. Janice G. Foerde,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 20th April to Asger Ryhl, Director of UN Women's Nordic Office, expressing concern with the situation of refugee women and girls in Europe and Turkey.

UN Women shares your concern about many of the issues that you mention. In a statement issued last month, UN Women called for the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls to be addressed in the response to the refugee and migration crisis.

Kindly see more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/3/statement-un-women-calls-for-protection-of-refugee-women-and-girls#sthash.Mz3aO758.dpuf>

UN Women has been raising these issues on different occasions and has called for stronger gender responsive services for refugees. Among the issues we have raised is women's lack of access to sufficient and clear information on asylum procedures in languages that they can understand; lack of legal and psycho-social services for survivors of sexual and gender based violence; the need for safe and secure spaces to rest and the importance of asylum procedures that allow women to make claims independently of their husbands and to get priority consideration when they are victims of trafficking and conflict related sexual violence.

UN Women has an important role to play as an advocate for greater attention to the needs and rights of the most vulnerable women, among them refugee women and girls. In my capacity as a Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia I served as a Special Rapporteur for an event at the European Parliament on "Women refugees and Asylum seekers in the EU" organized by the EP's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality where I highlighted many of the issues that you discuss in your letter. As you probably know the European Parliament subsequently issued a resolution on women refugees:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2016-0073+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

UN Women staff in the Europe and Central Asia Regional office in Istanbul are in contact with CSOs and Women's NGOs that are working on issues related to women refugees. We will continue to work with CSOs on this issue including with our UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group in Europe and Central Asia to raise awareness of the needs and vulnerabilities of refugee women and girls.

We are working at the field level on needs assessment of refugee women and girls (<http://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/01/un-women-assesses-the-needs-of-syrian-women-refugees-in-serbia-and-fyr-macedonia>) and also the provision of direct assistance to women refugees. UN Women has also been heavily engaged in coordination efforts of UN agencies in Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Turkey to ensure that the needs and vulnerabilities of women are taken into consideration in the planning of aid distribution and protection. The condition of refugees stranded in FYR Macedonia is a matter of serious concern and UN Women along with other UN agencies have offered to provide both technical and financial support in devising solutions that can ensure greater respect for human dignity and additional protection for the many vulnerable individuals.

The current plight of refugees trying to reach the EU is one of the biggest tragedies of our time. It is being accompanied by a nasty rise of xenophobia, hate speech and hostility in many parts of Europe. At the same time we have witnessed a powerful movement of volunteers aiming to help refugees. It is this sense of solidarity that we must, together, continue to build on.

UN Women will continue to implement its mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment and carry out its coordination role so that we can effectively contribute to the new SDG commitments to leave no one behind.

Thank you very much for reaching out and wishing you all the best in your own efforts.

Yours sincerely,



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UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia
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