

Brussels, 14 July 2021

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Charles Michel
President of the European Council

David Sassoli
President of the European Parliament

Letter sent by e-mail

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Cc to

Ylva Johansson
Commissioner for Home Affairs

Dear President von der Leyen,
Dear President Michel,
Dear President Sassoli,

Following the recent developments at the Lithuania-Belarus border, and the recent decision taken by the Lithuanian parliament to approve the mass detention of migrants, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) calls for immediate EU action to ensure migrants' fundamental rights are respected.

Unfortunately, it is not the first time that migrants are being used for political blackmail. The ETUC has always denounced the illegitimacy and the inconsistency of the EU-Turkey deal and has called for its suspension. In this sense, while we understand the exceptional pressure Lithuania is being exposed to by Lukashenko's regime and the need for EU support, the EU has the duty to make sure that EU and international provisions and human rights are respected, which is not the case with the recent decision of the Lithuanian Parliament to allow the mass detention of asylum-seekers.¹

As expressed in the ETUC Statement on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum², the ETUC has regretted that the new Pact fails to create a common EU-wide, rights-based policy. One that ensures Member States take responsibility of asylum seekers and caters to migrants' needs. Instead, it succumbed to anti-immigrant political movements and Member States that wish to treat migration and asylum as an exclusively national matter in order to continue restricting access of those who seek international protection in their countries and refusing the fundamental rights of migrants.

Lithuania needs the support of the EU and all European partners, in full and unconditional solidarity. Migrants should be welcomed and protected and be given immediate assistance and information in a language they can understand. Pathways to be integrated in the labour market and society should be prioritised. The right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right.

¹ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/lithuanian-parliament-votes-to-allow-mass-detention-of-asylum-seekers/>

² <https://www.etuc.org/en/document/etuc-statement-new-pact-migration-and-asylum>

The EU's response to the arrival of 1.700 migrants cannot be the deployment of more border guards, drones and fences, and the detention and deportation of vulnerable people. The EU must stand against the blackmailing and political game that Lukashenko's regime is performing by showing an EU way of solidarity.

We ask you to immediately intervene to put an end to this situation, to urge Lithuania to fully respect EU and international legal provisions, and to concretely support Lithuania and any other EU Member States facing extraordinary fluxes of migrants at their borders.

Thanking you in advance for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luca Visentini', written in a cursive style.

Luca Visentini
ETUC General Secretary