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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION 'REINFORCING' THE TÜRKİYE-BULGARIA BORDER WITH UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES

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The European Commission has included the issue of reinforcing the land border between Türkiye and Bulgaria with drones on its agenda. On February 1st, 2023, the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, expressed her view on enhancing border management capabilities. Earlier, the Austrian Chancellor said that Bulgaria would request □□ billion from European Union (EU) funding to reinforce its border with Türkiye. It is understood that, this request was taken seriously by Commission President Von der Leyen, who decided to discuss the issue with the MEPs[1].

There is a 270-km-long metal fence along the border, which is for preventing the entry of asylum seekers. Ursula Von der Leyen, who insists on using the term Western Balkans[2] and who favors defining the EUs eastern borders through Bulgaria and Romania, is determined to materialize this idea with her proposal to invest in drones for the Turkish - Bulgarian border.

According to the EU border agency Frontex, violence on the Turkish-Bulgarian border is also escalating. Uku Särekanno, the agencys deputy director, stated that armed attacks have been occurring almost every week[3].

In 2022, a Bulgarian border guard was shot dead while patrolling the Turkish border against migrants. However, according to the Amsterdam-based research organization Light House Reports, European border guards were also filmed shooting a Syrian refugee at the same border. Years of mistreatment towards asylum seekers and refugees along the same border have also been documented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Attempts to resettle 10,000 asylum seekers in Italy and Greece during Frances EU Presidency in the summer of 2022 have failed so far. Only 400 of the 10,000 asylum seekers have been resettled, in sharp contrast to the millions of Ukrainian refugees who have been granted refugee status since the Russian invasion last February[4].

Draft findings by the London-based NGO Statewatch indicate that the EU is ready to use all means at its disposal to deport unwanted migrants and rejected asylum seekers[5].

Taking the EU statements as a whole, it is clear that the EU is more concerned about the

entry of asylum seekers, especially those from the Middle East, than the use of force at its borders. A concrete example of this can be seen in their favoritism towards Ukrainian citizens fleeing the Ukraine-Russia war and seeking asylum in the EU[6]. The fact that the safety of asylum-seekers has taken a back seat is evident from the case that Mediterranean countries, especially Greece, have not even been warned for their conduct in the Mediterranean.

The time has come and gone for the EU to put an end to its double standards, and for it to instead act in an inclusive manner and to consider the entire European geography as the home of the same family.

[1] The European Commission wants drones for Bulgaria on the Turkish border, euobserver.com, EU Observer, February 1st, 2023, https://euobserver.com/migration/156668.

[2] **AVİM considers the term Western Balkans as a separatist political terminology and insists on the use of the geographical and historical definition of the region as Balkans.**

[3] "The European Commission wants drones for Bulgaria on the Turkish border," https://euobserver.com/migration/156668.

[4] The European Commission wants drones for Bulgaria on the Turkish border."

[5] EU: Tracking the Pact: Only 207 refugees relocated so far via voluntary solidarity mechanism, statewatch.org, Statewatch, January 31st, 2023, https://www.statewatch.org/news/2023/january/eu-tracking-the-pact-only-207-refugees-relocated-so-far-via-voluntary-solidarity-mechanism/.

[6] Hazel Çağan Elbir, Is There Discrimination Between Refugees In The Ukrainian Tragedy?, avim.org.tr, AVİM,https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/IS-THERE-DISCRIMINATION-BETWEEN-REFUGEES-IN-THE-UKRAINE-TRAGEDY.

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