



24th of May of 2024

Dear Vice-President Schinas,  
Dear Commissioner Várhelyi,  
Dear Commissioner Johansson,

We are writing to you concerned by the information published in a joint investigation by Lighthouse reporters, El País, Der Spiegel, The Washington Post, Le Monde, IrpiMedia, ARD, the Moroccan newspaper Enass and the Tunisian newspaper Inkyfada. This investigation, published on the 21 of May 2024, sustains that the European Commission supports, finances and is directly involved in clandestine operations in North African countries to seize and abandon thousands of migrants in the desert or remote areas each year to prevent them from coming to the EU.

The findings conclude that in Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia, refugees and migrants, as well as people who had legal status and established livelihoods in these countries, are apprehended based on the colour of their skin, loaded onto buses and driven to the middle of nowhere, often arid desert areas. There, they are left without any assistance, water or food, leaving them vulnerable, and facing the risk of kidnapping, extortion, torture, sexual violence and death. Others are taken to border areas where they are reportedly sold by the authorities to human traffickers and gangs who torture them for ransom. It is clear to us that these practices constitute clear human rights violations that are totally unacceptable.

The investigation has concluded that these practices run thanks to money, vehicles, equipment, intelligence and security forces provided by the EU and Member States and claims that the European Commission, Frontex and EU Member States are well aware of the dump operations.

For example, workers on projects funded by the EU Trust Fund, under which the EU has given Tunisia, Mauritania and Morocco more than €400m for migration management in recent years, state that the aims of the fund is to “make migrants’ lives difficult, including by leaving them in the desert repeatedly, so they opt for a voluntarily return.

The joint investigative consortium has shown that EU officials have had knowledge of these practices and have held internal discussions on these abuses since, at least, 2019. The investigation also proves through internal documents that Frontex has knowledge of the racial profiling and forcible relocation of mainly black migrants by Morocco. Equally, the evidence show that the EU is directly funding the Moroccan paramilitary auxiliary forces, responsible, in part, for these practices. Additional proof is presented of the use of equipment, in particular vehicles, financed or donated by the EU or EU Member States, employed to transport migrants during their forceful expulsions.



We are concerned by the implications that EU funds are used directly and indirectly to commit human rights violations, which would make the EU complicit and responsible under international law. For these reasons, we write to you to ask for an explanation and a full review of the use and deployment of EU funds and to immediately withhold such funds, in case of breach of EU values, European and international legal obligations.

With kindest regards,

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