Help is no crime: stand with volunteers against the criminalisation of solidarity

*The arrest of Sarah Mardini and Seán Binder is the latest case of a worrying trend towards the criminalisation of solidarity* in Europe. The two volunteers were arrested by the Greek authorities on 21 August for helping refugees and migrants arriving by sea on Lesbos island. With this joint letter, European civil society organisations call on the Greek authorities to release Sarah and Sean while their trial is pending.

**Sarah Mardini and Seán Binder** – who are accused of smuggling by Greek Authorities – are currently in pre-trial detention. Sarah became known when she and her sister *pulled a boat to safety and saved a dozen refugees in 2015*. Like many individuals and organisations providing support and first aid to migrants and refugees across Europe, the two volunteers could face jail time.

European civil society actors have continuously opposed the intimidation and punishment of volunteers and non-governmental organisations. State practices that criminalise EU citizens for their solidarity with migrants and refugees are intolerable and risk our fundamental European values of justice and human rights.

Charges against Sarah and Seán occur in a broader context of a pan-European trend towards criminalising solidarity. As part of the #WelcomingEurope European Citizens’ Initiative, hundreds of civil society organisations and thousands of European citizens are fighting back against these restrictive policies that have created a hostile environment for people who help refugees and migrants.

Through this official EU tool, 1 million signatures from European citizens have the power to get the European Commission to comply with our joint-demand: end the criminalisation of solidarity acts across Europe.

*Join the call* to #FreeSarahAndSean

Tell EU leaders that helping people in need is no crime by signing the petition: [www.weareawelcomingeurope.eu](http://www.weareawelcomingeurope.eu)

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Signatories

1. Migration Policy Group
2. Picum
3. VolontEurope
4. JRS
5. Emmaüs Europe
6. AEDH
7. Sick of waiting
8. CCME
9. Migrant Voice
10. International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe
11. Refugees Welcome Denmark
12. Maisha e.V. African Women in Germany
13. Association for Integration and Migration
14. Federación SOS Racismo
15. Center for Legal Aid - Voice in Bulgaria
16. FLEX
17. La Strada International
18. Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations
19. Health Centre for Undocumented Migrants
20. Medinetz Mainz e.V.
21. Verenigde Protestantse Kerk in België – Église Protestante Unie de Belgique
22. Jugendliche ohne Grenzen - Youth without borders
23. Rosengrenská
24. LEGIS Volunteers
25. Medibüro Kiel e.V.
26. Secours Catholique
27. Parents International
28. Borderline-Europe
29. Afrique Culture Maroc
30. Stichting LOS
31. SB OverSeas
32. The Salvation Army Europe
33. ForumFer
34. Menedek
35. J&P
36. SOS Racism
37. ASTI
38. Greek Council for Refugees
39. Mundo en Movimiento
40. Solidarity now
41. HIAS
42. Human rights league
43. La Cimade
44. Oxfam Belgium
45. Passerell
46. Liga voor de Rechten van de Mens - Dutch League for Human Rights
47. CNCD
48. Positive Action
49. European Network of Migrant Women
50. New Europeans
51. Hellenic League for human rights
52. LIDU- Lega italiana dei Diritti dell’Uomo
53. Oxfam Germany
54. Welcoming Europe: Per un’Europa che accoglie
55. Réseau Education Sans Frontières
56. Ligue des droits de l’Homme
57. League for Human Rights – Civitas
58. ENAR
59. JRS Greece