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## **RACIST DOUBLE-STANDARDS PERSIST AT EU/UKRAINE BORDERS AND BEYOND**



Over the past weeks, there have been overwhelming accounts documenting students of African and Arab descent, and their family members, being prevented from crossing the Ukrainian border. Reports also reveal that racial profiling, violence, and restrictions including of visas are still being used to prevent racialised people from reaching safety from the conflict. While racism within EU Member States and at the borders was already well documented by international NGOs, the recent double standards in treatment and protection given towards migrants are a clear sign of systemic racism across Europe. The message to racialised people in Europe is even clearer: their lives matter less, and no one seems to care.

In response, the European Parliament rapidly adopted the resolution of 1 March 2022 on the Russian aggression against Ukraine which condemns racism and calls on all Member States to admit non-Ukrainian nationals fleeing the conflict and war, irrespective of nationalities.

While the swift reaction from the EU institutions is welcomed, the need to address the gap in protections provided to migrants of different nationalities and ethnicities arriving from this zone of conflict has been called for by multiple organisations including ENAR, Human Rights Watch, and the UN.

Newly appointed ENAR Director, Kim Smouter, commented: “It is alarming that Black people and other racialised groups are facing discrimination while fleeing the war, and instead of feeling safe once they finally escape, they only face further discrimination within the EU. The weapons used in this conflict are deadly to all people, irrespective of race or nationality. Every person crossing the borders is seeking refuge from the same dangers, yet they are treated differently.”

Juliana Wahlgren, Senior Advocacy Officer at ENAR, added:

“The decision to invoke the Temporary Protection Directive is historical and yet disappointing in that it still applies a racist double standard which prevents non-Ukrainians from having the same legal protection. Migrants from racialised backgrounds are often granted a 15 day visa which pales in comparison to the potential 3 years provided to Ukrainian migrants. Skin colour or passport types should not be a criteria which provides one group of people more protection over another. Europe must do better to be a safe haven for all. The Temporary Protection Directive shall not be an instrument that legitimises discrimination.”

These double standards are not new, however. While just in October 2021, Ministers of 12 Member States were calling for tougher border measures against migrants to justify the systemic violation of human rights, those same calls were not repeated when welcoming Ukrainian refugees. Meanwhile, the fundamental rights of racialised people are repeatedly disregarded, whether during the pandemic, the climate crisis, or fleeing war. According to a November 2021 report by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), approximately 40 000 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea since 2014.

ENAR urges European States to uphold their obligations to respect fundamental human rights and the right to international protection, refuge and asylum, and to ensure equal treatment and protection for all those displaced as a result of the crisis in Ukraine, regardless of immigration status, by eliminating racial profiling, different reception measures, and mistreatment by State agents.

“Despite a great deal of media attention and a corresponding increase in awareness, we still see blatant examples of racism and a knee-jerk reaction to pretend that these incidents are not real or being overdramatised. It took a lot of effort from grassroots organisations to raise awareness of what was happening on the EU borders with Ukraine, and this happens every day. The complete disregard for Black lives must end. The dehumanisation of people of African descent and other racialised groups in Europe can no longer be allowed,” Kim Smouter concluded.

**For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:**

Nabil Sanaullah, ENAR Communication and Press Officer

Mobile: +32 (0)475 988 585 - Email: [nabil@enar-eu.org](mailto:nabil@enar-eu.org) - Web: [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org)

**Note to editors:**

- The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands against racism and discrimination and advocates equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.
- ENAR delivered a joint statement to the UN Human Rights Council on the Ukraine migrant double standards signed by over 60 organisations on 23 March 2022.