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## **EU TO RESETTLE 30,000 REFUGEES THROUGHOUT BLOC BY 2017**

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Austria was instrumental in the closing of the Balkan route six months ago. Now a meeting in Vienna has taken stock of the closure. Germany's chancellor has emphasized common goals, as Barbara Wesel reports from Vienna. (24.09.2016)

EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos on Wednesday said some 30,000 refugees in Greece will be relocated throughout the EU by next year, claiming that the 28-nation bloc has made "significant progress" tackling irregular migration despite internal quarrels.

"The refugee crisis is not over, and this is why the progress of today must be sustained," Avramopoulos said during a press conference in Brussels, unveiling the European Commission's assessment of the migration crisis in Europe.

"The success of our common approach over the last months is essential for the success of everything else; from relocation, resettlement and the EU-Turkey statement, to the gradual return to the Dublin system and a normal functioning of Schengen," he added.

The EU last year forced through a plan to relocate refugees from frontline countries, including Italy, despite strong criticism from former communist nations, including Poland and Hungary.

The Visegrad group, comprised of Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, refused to take in refugees after the measure was passed, prompting a political crisis in the bloc. But Budapest has taken it a step further by scheduling a referendum for October on whether to accept the quotas.

"We have made significant progress as a Union, but we have more work ahead of us - and urgently: All member states need to take up their responsibilities and we will continue to support them," Avramopoulos noted.

However, 30,000 refugees is far below the number of asylum seekers hosted by Germany and Sweden since last year. Germany is expected to process more than one million asylum applications in 2016, according to its federal migration authority.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective

Leaving home - for good?

Zakaria received his camera on December 8 in Izmir, Turkey - one of the key hubs for refugees.

The Syrian fled from the "Islamic State" terror militia and the government, according to McElvaney's #RefugeeCamera project. Out of safety concerns, Zakaria doesn't name his hometown. In his flight diary, Zakaria writes that only God knows if he will ever be able to return to Syria.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
Rough dinghy ride

Zakaria documented his sea journey from Turkey to Chios. He was sitting in the back of his dinghy. At the Hamburg exhibition, which opens this weekend, the refugees' images will be complemented by a selection of shots taken by professionals, who helped to shape the representation of escape routes in the media. They all donated their works in order to support the project.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
Perilous arrival

Hamza and Abdulmonem, both from Syria, photographed the perilous landing of their dinghy on a Greek island. There were no volunteers to offer them support. That is exactly what McElvaney had in mind when he launched #RefugeeCameras. So far, he says, the media have offered a "visual blank" in this respect.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
Surviving the sea

After the landing, a young boy in wet clothes and life jacket stands on the pebbled beach. The image brings to mind Aylan Kurdi, the small Syrian boy whose lifeless body was washed ashore on a Turkish beach in September. The child in this picture made it to Europe alive. What became of him is not known.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
Seven cameras returned

Hamza and Abdulmonem also took this slightly blurred snapshot of the refugee group taking a break. McElvaney handed out 15 disposable cameras in total. Seven of them were returned, one was lost, two were confiscated, two remain in Izmir, where their holders are still stranded. The remaining three cameras are unaccounted for - just like their owners.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
Family in focus

Dyab, a math teacher from Syria, tried to capture some of the better moments of his journey to Germany. Pictured here are his wife and his young son, Kerim, who shows us the packet of biscuits he was given in a Macedonian refugee camp. The images reveal Dyab's deep affection for his son, McElvaney says: "He wants to take care of him, even on this arduous trip which he was forced to take."

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
From Iran to Hanau

The story of Saeed, from Iran, is a different one. The young man had to leave the country after converting to Christianity. He could have been arrested or even killed. In order to be accepted as a

refugee, he pretended to be Afghan. After his arrival in Germany, he explained his situation to the authorities' satisfaction. He now lives - as an Iranian - in Hanau, Hesse.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
Beyond selfies

Saeed took this picture of a Syrian father and his child on a bus from Athens to Idomeni.

The long trip to Europe from the refugees' perspective  
More than status

In another snapshot taken by Saeed, a volunteer working in a refugee camp somewhere between Croatia and Slovenia entertains a group of children, who try to imitate his tricks.

'Violating their own standards'

The EU migration commissioner also hailed the bloc's deal with Turkey that has curbed migration from the Anatolian nation.

The number of migrants arriving to Greece from Turkey has dropped dramatically, averaging 85 people a day since June, down from 1,700 daily in March and 7,000 in October 2015.

"Despite challenging circumstances this summer, the settlement has continued to work and remains our number one priority," Avrampoulos said.

However, the human rights groups have criticized the deal, saying it undermines the EU's principles on those fleeing conflict.

"Turkey already hosts over two million refugees, many of whom are struggling to survive and do not see their rights fulfilled as refugees," said Stephanie Gee of Human Rights Watch.

"Instead of trying to pass the buck and violating their own standards, EU government should play their part in global responsibility-sharing and give Syrian asylum seekers a chance to make their claims," Gee added.

Under the deal, the EU will provide Ankara with up to 6 billion euros (\$6.7 billion) to take back migrants in Greece who do not receive asylum in the bloc and possible visa-free travel for Turkish citizens.

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Kaynak/Source: