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Dear Commissioner Johansson,

I am writing to draw your attention to the recent arrest in Greece of Salam Aldeen, founder of Team Humanity, a Danish non-profit NGO created in 2015 and dedicated to helping refugees on the island of Lesbos (Greece).

Aldeen was in the European Parliament last November to denounce the conditions in which thousands of children live in Moria, where there is no school and no sanitary conditions sufficient to accommodate minors. The conditions are so harsh that NGOs repeatedly report suicide attempts among children.

For this reason, Aldeen set up a warehouse a few metres from the camp, a space with inflatable castles, games and a small football field. When the sun goes down, cartoons are projected and the mothers can gather in safety to drink the tea, fleeing the harassment and fear that they experience on a daily basis.

Salam Aldeen was previously arrested in Greece for human trafficking, on charges of up to 10 years in prison, for rescuing migrants in the Aegean Sea. Like Sevillian firefighters Manuel Blanco, Julio Latorre and Quique Rodríguez, members of the NGO Proemaid, he was absolved of these charges in 2018.

Dear Commissioner, please redouble your attention to what is happening in Moria, where civil society organizations are trying to supplant the responsibility of the public administration towards asylum seekers.

This detention is in line with the new asylum law approved by the Greek authorities, regarding which UNHCR has pointed out that it hardens all the elements of the procedure, reducing the guarantees and rights of asylum seekers who arrive in the country and, furthermore, that it has been processed without having carried out the necessary public consultation.

The adopted text contains a number of provisions that make the deprivation of liberty and movement of asylum seekers a customary measure, and not a measure of last resort, as FRA claims it should be. It is quite possible that this new law is in conflict with Union law on asylum and does not meet the minimum standards.

I hope that you will be able to verify these facts and, if necessary, take the appropriate measures,

Sincerely,

Maite Pagazaurtundúa  
Member of the European Parliament