



## **The European Confederation of Police**

**Spring Meeting 2020**

**Porto 11<sup>th</sup> March**

### **Migrant and Refugee Crisis in Greece – March 2020**

The European Confederation of Police (EuroCOP) sitting on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in Porto, Portugal heard from the Panhellenic Federation of Police Officers about the sudden and dramatic deterioration of conditions for migrants seeking to enter Europe following the unilateral decision of the government of Turkey to abandon its 2016 deal with the European Union.

The Confederation also heard how this translated into intolerable pressures and demands on police officers in the region who were on the front line of the response to this dramatic upturn in migrant activity.

The Confederation further heard and saw examples of the realities facing migrants and how this impacted on the police officers in the region. The officers are increasingly finding themselves not only dealing with the challenges presented by those fleeing war and persecution, but also with increased resentment and hostility from the resident Greek population.

The Confederation expressed extreme concerns that COVID-19 had been detected in Lesbos and noted that Lesbos and the other Greek Islands remained at the front line of entry points into Europe. Specifically the Confederation noted the migrant population in Lesbos exceeded 19,000 and the original holding camp at Moria had been intended to house 3,000 people. The Confederation noted that sanitation and health care available to support the migrant population remained poor.

The meeting heard that last week hundreds of residents attacked police officers guarding the future detention camps on Lesbos and Chios. A large crowd laid siege for several hours to a Lesbos army camp where riot control officers were billeted. Dozens of police officers were injured during the unrest. Greek officials reported that

43 police officers were injured, two of whom received leg injuries from shotguns blasts. 9 further officers were injured on Chios where an angry mob burst into a hotel used by riot police. The officers were beaten up and their belongings were thrown out.

Today (11<sup>th</sup> March 2020) EuroCOP calls upon all of the political institutions in Europe to immediately work together to:

- Reinforce Greek, and by extension European borders, with additional European border guards; themselves in addition to those working on Operations Neptune and RABIT.
- Ensure the necessary logistical support and equipment (permanent and temporary) such as boats, aircrafts, helicopters, vehicles with thermal cameras, etc. are made available without delay.
- Ensure the financial resources to deal with the crisis are provided immediately.
- Ensure all EU Member States are doing all they can to share the distribution of asylum applications and the hosting of applicants.
- Expedite work on a new European system of immigration and asylum, adapted to current needs.
- Continue all efforts to find a diplomatic solution to ending the war in Syria.

In addition EuroCOP calls for an increase in the humanitarian support available to migrants in the region in order that they are able to live safely, healthily, and in as dignified a manner as is possible in the current circumstances.