

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

The Netherlands

Prinsengracht 583
1016 HT Amsterdam
E-mail: katrien.vandelinde@hrw.org
Tel: 020 520 5800

Senior Management

Kenneth Roth, *Executive Director*

Divisional Deputy Executive Directors:

Michele Alexander, *Development and Global Initiatives*

Arvind Ganesan, *Business and Human Rights*

Liesl Gertholtz, *Program*

Mausi Segun, *Africa*

Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Advocacy*

Netherlands Based Staff

Katrien van de Linde, *Netherlands Director*

Caroline Treur, *Senior Officer*

Josien Schrijnemakers, *Senior Coordinator*

Jan Kooy, *Deputy European Media Director*

Marije Crinca Le Roy, *Operations Manager*

Netherlands Committee

Glenda Nühn-Morris, *Co-Chair*

Erik Westerink, *Co-Chair*

Imogen Koster – Burbidge, *Vice-Chair*

Françoise van Rappard-Wanninkhof, *Vice-Chair*

Pieter Scheltema, *Chair Outreach Subcommittee*

Zaina Ahmed-Karim

Rob van den Bergh

Bernard Bot

Max Christern

Astrid Delhaes

Karin Doeksen-Kleykamp

Janneke Dreesmann-Beerkens

Geesje Hamming

Ernst Hirsch Ballin

Nani Jansen Reventlow

Frank L. Leijdesdorff

Pieter Ligthart

Monique Maarsen

Fred Matser

Ernst Nijkerk

Derk Sauer, *Founding Chair Emeritus*

Anna Timmerman

Roland Veldhuijzen van Zanten

Janet Visbeen

Susi Zijdeveld

To support HRW with a gift

Stichting Human Rights Watch Nederland

NL49 INGB 0000 0018 54 (IBAN)

INGBNL2A (BIC)

The Prime Minister
Ministry of General Affairs
Postbus 20001
2500 EA Den Haag
The Netherlands

Amsterdam, 22 April 2020

Dear Prime Minister Rutte,

This week, two European Union member states started to relocate to their territories dozens of unaccompanied migrant children from the Greek Aegean Islands. Several other member states have pledged in the past few weeks to contribute to what is an important effort of solidarity with Greece and respect for the rights of children in distress.

We call on your government to demonstrate its leadership and commit to welcome to your territory unaccompanied children from Greece in the weeks to come, or as soon as possible given the difficult context created by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Netherlands government has repeatedly stated its intention to embrace humane migration policies; joining the initiative to relocate unaccompanied migrant children from Greece would put us once again at the forefront of this laudable effort.

We welcome the initiative announced and supported by EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson and a group of EU member states on March 12 to swiftly relocate at least 1,600 unaccompanied migrant children from the Greek Islands. This initiative is important both immediately, in order to protect them in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also in the longer term, to ensure that they are not left out without a future in the difficult conditions in which they would be stuck in the Islands' camps.

As you know, at least 1,637 unaccompanied migrant children were in the Aegean Island camps on March 31. Luxembourg and Germany have relocated 70 of these children in the past week. Children are among the most vulnerable groups trapped in the overcrowded and substandard facilities, and the extremely limited access to running water, toilets and showers, is putting them at significantly heightened risk of infection. Children in the Island facilities are deprived of access to their most basic rights, [including the right to education](#). Many [face](#)

[insecure conditions](#) sleeping rough, sometimes in the open, in other formal and informal parts of the island camps.

In October 2019, Greece's Citizen Protection Minister called other European Union governments to share responsibility by voluntarily relocating unaccompanied children from Greece. On March 4, dozens of European non-governmental organizations [called on governments of all EU member states](#) to commit to the emergency relocation of unaccompanied children from the Greek Islands. On April 6, they [reiterated this call](#), considering the risks related to the looming Covid-19 pandemic in the Islands' facilities.

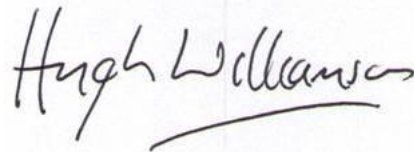
By responding positively to this appeal and joining the initiative pursued by EU's Home Affairs Commissioner and a group of EU member states, your government could ensure that a little bit of solidarity could greatly change the lives of these children, and offer them the care and protection any child deserves to have. It would also demonstrate your government's commitment to an EU response based on shared responsibility and shared humanity.

We look forward to your hopefully positive response and remain available to discuss this urgent matter with you.

Yours sincerely,



Katrien Van De Linde
Senior Associate Director, Amsterdam
Human Rights Watch



Hugh Williamson
Executive Director, Europe and Central Asia
Human Rights Watch