



Dear Members of the International Ombudsman Institute,

Ahead of the Seminar "Human Rights Challenges Now: The Ombudsman Facing Threats" to be held in Barcelona on 26-27 of April, we the undersigned Members of the European Parliament would like to transmit to you our full support for the tasks the European Ombudspersons are carrying out to protect and defend human and social rights in Europe.

Europe is facing immense challenges: security concerns are being put on top of the agendas in some EU countries at the expenses of fundamental rights and the current refugee and humanitarian crisis is putting at stake the respect of human dignity and of International and European law. We have been witnessing the sinking of boats, the dreadful conditions in which families are travelling or living and people seeking protection being blocked by fences, or worse, being seriously mistreated by police forces. The European solidarity is at risk while at the same time xenophobic reactions and racism are growing over the continent.

Given this reality, some Members of the European Parliament from different countries and parties would like to request the European Ombudspersons be outspoken and denounce openly the human rights violation being committed in Europe. You as representatives of the European citizens have the tools and the means to denounce and pursue these cases. That is why we would like to express our full willingness to introduce in the European Parliament any proposal and action that could help you in developing your work and that could make EU ombudspersons to play a greater and more empowering role in relation of the rights of refugees.

Great challenges require great alliances and with the above statement the following members of the European Parliament encourage the European Ombudspersons to continue fighting for the respect of human rights and human dignity in each Member State, whilst remaining at your disposal and ready to cooperate in any matter that could be useful.

Yours sincerely,

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Guillaume Balas, S&D, France

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Julie Ward, S&D, UK

Members of the European Parliament

Brussels, 25th April 2016