**Los Angeles Times Editorial**

A shameful response in Europe to the refugee crisis in North Africa and Mideast

This is a humanitarian crisis of astounding breadth. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported this year that war and other upheavals have displaced more than 14 million people in North Africa and the Middle East (more than half of them from Syria) and an additional 15 million people in sub-Saharan Africa. Most remain in or near their home countries, but hundreds of thousands have fled in an effort to start new lives in Europe, where the crisis has now become political.

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And there, the European Union is stumbling badly. Last week, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker urged the European Union's member states to permanently resettle 120,000 refugees now in Italy, Greece and Hungary under a binding quota system based on national population and economic vitality. On Monday, EU ministers agreed to an earlier recommendation that 40,000 refugees be scattered across Europe but rejected Juncker's new proposal, then put off any further discussion for a month.

Worse, according to the Guardian newspaper, the ministers also discussed creating [refugee camps](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/14/refugee-crisis-eu-governments-set-to-back-new-internment-camps) in Italy and Greece to hold these undocumented migrants, establish other camps in Africa to try to keep the refugees from moving on to Europe and then deny their right to seek asylum in Europe. Meanwhile, Germany, Austria, Slovakia and the Netherlands reestablished border controls to try to divert the flow to other countries, as Hungary continued to seal up its border with its non-EU neighbor Serbia, creating a bottleneck of migrants there. Hungary also instituted new laws criminalizing unauthorized entry into the country.

Beyond the improbability of European-funded refugee camps in Africa — there is no indication that African nations would approve such a plan — the inhumane impulse propelling the EU's lack of response is indefensible. It's true that the response has not been uniformly bad. Germany and Sweden, for instance, have met their moral responsibilities by taking in hundreds of thousands of refugees. But England, France and others have been much slower to respond. As has the United States. Last week, President Obama ordered his administration to resettle "at least 10,000" Syrian refugees in the coming year, while advocates reasonably argue, citing the United States' history as a leading recipient of refugees, that the U.S. should resettle 100,000 Syrian refugees in the next year.

Meanwhile, the human tide flows, overwhelming Greece and Italy first, then Hungary and now, potentially, Serbia. Winter is looming, and the EU's failure to craft an adequate and timely humanitarian response sets the stage for an even worse crisis. The UNHCR [expressed](http://www.unhcr.org/55f817399.html)"deep disappointment" at the lack of action. The word the agency was looking for is "outrage."