

Tear down the walls

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The European Movement Malta wishes to comment on the opinion piece by Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki (October 31). We wish to remind readers that Poland is one of the countries in a 'blocking minority' that have consistently blocked key migration initiatives in the EU, particularly the proposal for a permanent mechanism of responsibility sharing of refugees and asylum seekers arriving at the EU's borders.

It has not shown any solidarity with our country on this issue. Poland's behaviour has been described as 'solidarity à la carte', in other words, solidarity is good when Poland needs it but bad when it is sought by other member states.

We are also concerned about the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by Poland. The EU, including Poland, accuse Belarus of facilitating the entry of refugees and migrants into Poland as a form of illegitimate political pressure or extortion. We are shocked by this brazen manipulation of human lives and condemn it without reservation because we cherish human rights and human dignity.

However, we cannot agree with Poland's reaction. Poland is reported to be refusing to take them in, despite the manifest danger that lives may be lost, and it is constructing a wall on its borders with Belarus while discussing how to implement further mea-

asures to repulse refugees without allowing them to apply for refugee status. The European Movement Malta is extremely worried by this behaviour because it undermines human rights, the rule of law and international conventions.

Morawiecki referred to Poland's history and we wish to add a few worthy notes. We recall the millions of Polish refugees who escaped communism after World War II and were welcomed with open arms in the US, the UK, Germany and the whole of the democratic West. We are proud that the women and men of that generation did the right thing and gave them shelter and we invite all member states to give solidarity the highest level of importance it deserves.

We recall the bravery of the Solidarity trade union founded in 1980 in the Gdansk shipyards, when thousands of Polish workers put their lives at risk to oppose authoritarianism. That is when communism in Europe began to be dismantled. That was a truly glorious moment of which Poland should remain proud. The spirit of solidarity kindled at the time should not be left to be overshadowed

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owed and perhaps forgotten by policies that may satisfy short-term political expediency at the price of long-term stability.

In 2020, some 1,005,500 Polish citizens were working in other EU member states, according to Eurostat, the EU statistical agency. These Polish citizens are contributing to the economies and societies of the countries where they are settled. This is one of the advantages of EU membership, the freedom to live, move, study and work anywhere in the EU from the borders of Russia and the Black Sea to the Atlantic.

It would be a sad day indeed if the constant battering by some EU member states undermines the rule of law in the Union to the point of disunion.

Morawiecki said that Poland does not want to leave the EU and no one is saying that it should leave. But if it is unhappy with its situation, the most honest thing for it to do is to seek a compromise that diffuses the situation and allows the Union to get on with its more pressing tasks.

Member states often build walls in the EU by sulking, blocking agreement, paralysing policies and by ignoring the collective responsibilities that we Europeans share if we wish to survive this century not only as a Union but as nation states.

Isn't it time that we continue to tear down the walls instead of building new ones?

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