

The European Union member states are trying to look as if they are doing something serious to care for the poor, catastrophe-stricken people who flee from war zones to Europe under the most risky and inhuman conditions.

Apart from the lack of genuine humanism and compassion and the cynical intention to uphold the "deterrence" factor – other features surround these tragic events.

Refugees and migrants

In various media reports and political statements the word "refugee" is increasingly being replaced by "migrant" – hardly just a coincidence given the fact that the number of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum-seekers has passed 50 million fellow human beings worldwide.

A migrant, according to the UN, is a person who is engaged in (seeking) a remunerative activity in a state of which he or she is not a national. A refugee is an entirely different person who is outside his or her home country because of having suffered (or feared) persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; because he or she is a member of a persecuted social category of persons; or because they are fleeing a war.

And a refugee has the right to seek asylum and shall not be penalised for his or her illegal entry or stay. More about the refugee conventions here.

Add to that the now often repeated but totally misleading wording – that these refugees are coming "to seek a better life" in Europe – as if their lives were already good but they want it better.

It's plain nonsense. The issue is not what they flee to but what they flee from. Refugees are on the run from some version of hell.

These boat refugees run away to another continent without shoes, money or belongings because their lives are unbearable and they have absolutely no hope. Refugees are



Behind every refugee stands an arms trader

by Jan Öberg, www.transnational.org

not happiness-seekers. Using "migrants" instead of "refugees" takes away our attention from why they flee, from our own complicity in all this and it reduces our responsibility to protect refugees.

Most of the refugees come from zones where Western military interventions and arms exports have failed miserably their officially stated purposes and caused only more problems.

"Behind almost every refugee stands an arm trader". I'm here quoting freely the Swedish human rights advocate and humanist, Dr. Peter Nobel, former head of the Swedish Red Cross, when he was chairman of TFF's Board.

It's not to be understood literally, of course – people also flee from, say, natural catastrophes and maldevelopment. Another reason is that here is a classical case where a genuine humanitarian intervention would be appropriate.

However, since the first "humanitarian" intervention in Yugoslavia, this concept has been misused only to legitimise military operations. And EU leaders recognise that they can't handle the boat refugee problem with F16s.

Like with so many other problems

these years, there is a psycho-political denial of the fact that Western militarism is the single most important cause of the problems we are facing: Hatred and terrorism against the West (e.g. ISIS) is a problem caused predominantly by the US-led invasion, occupation and (mis)administration of Iraq. The Iraq and Iran nuclear issues have been caused by there being nuclear weapons in the first place and a few wanting monopoly over them while denying others the same privilege.

The most important single reason behind the dissolution of states, say Libya, is the attempt to solve structural, economic and democratic problems by military means. Further, the slow but sure weakening of the West, the relative U.S. economic decline in particular, is caused to a large extent by the costs of its (failed) wars, foreign bases and the accompanying lack of legitimacy in the eyes of ever more millions of people around the world.

We still do not have – anywhere – a decent public debate about the negative effects of virtually all wars. Now, look at what the EU actually does: It holds a meeting – politically high-level but intellectually and ethically low-level.

Its leaders maintain that they take

both quick action and responsibility. In reality, they display a typical Western programmatic malfunctioning: To solve a problem, we allocate more money but don't discuss causes underlying the problem or changing of attitudes and ethics. They apply no self-criticism, statesmanship and moral leadership. It's symptoms repair with no learning lessons or preventing the next catastrophe caused by the same old reasons.

Imagine EU leaders had instead stated something like this: "We have found that refugee numbers are increasing due mainly to arms trade and wars and therefore we are going to invest in early conflict warning and violence-prevention, in educating experts in these fields, in using smart civilian means including dialogue, mediation and negotiations.

Further, we shall increasingly put up arms embargoes instead of intensifying arms deliveries to these and future conflict areas."

The international "community" leaders who keep silent about, say, the Saudi-Arabia-led aggression on Yemen and never formulated any self-criticism about the peace-making catastrophes called Iraq, Libya and Syria also conveniently never connect the dots: Our own wars and arms profiteering is a major cause of these problems coming boomeranging back in the shape of refugees, terrorism and economic crisis.

Humankind has abolished slavery, absolute monarchy, cannibalism and, in principle, child labour. To solve, or at least reduce, the mounting refugee problem, we should begin to discuss how to increase human civilisation by criminalising arms trade and by abolishing war – as stated in the UN Charter Preamble.

But there are taboos on such common sense ideas in all the countries which consider themselves civilised compared with the morally weak and uncivilised countries they destroy, one after the other.