

The European Independent

Will Europe respect its own human rights standards?

THE TWO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS meet in joint session this week to discuss 10 motions on the future of Europe. Most strongly debated are the proposals of the Pirate Party. They suggest to extend the Schengen area to include all European states, and to soften border controls. We have interviewed Members of Parliament Ms One and Mr Two to discuss their provocative proposal.

Independent: Your proposal to extend the Schengen area and reform the border controls has caused a lot of controversy. Why?

One: The way Europe has handled its borders is a scandal, and has been for more than 15 years. The political establishment doesn't like to be called

out like that. But it should have happened long ago!

Independent: What is so scandalous about the European border controls?

Two: Europe is paradoxical: as long as you are in, it is a land of freedom. But it's also a land of rejections, of militarised external borders, of alliances with rogue states. The death toll is extreme: Since 1998, more than 18.000 people died on the borders of Europe.

Independent: Those figures are extreme. Why is there so little public interest?

One: Even though journalists like Gabriele del Grande have documented this very well, the media has ignored this problem for over a decade. Politics was allowed to get away with outsourcing the problem. Contracts with countries like Libya have kept the issue out of public interest in Europe for too long.

Independent: You are suggesting to extend the Schengen area to include all European states. That would just push the borders further out – but the problem would remain the same.

Two: That is why our motion combines the extension of the Schengen area with border controls that respect human rights standards. It is unacceptable that states which haven't even signed the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR) get contracts to keep refugees away from Europe in inhumane camps, just so that our politicians don't have to dirty their hands.

Independent: What are the chances of the motion being passed by both European Parliaments this week?

One: We face fierce opposition from the conservative parties, who have installed these barbarous border controls many years back. They hope to keep the issue out of public debate, but luckily they are failing.

Two: Too many of the other parties are opposing our proposals just because we have made them. But the question is really too important for such kind of party play. Ultimately, Europe has to answer the question whether it will finally live up to its own human rights standards in the way in which it treats refugees at its borders.

One: We don't need fierce borders, we need fierce intercultural exchange across borders.

Independent: Thank you for your time.