‘Don’t go any further’: Erdogan accuses EU of betrayal, threatens to open borders for migrants

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned that his government will open its border gates to allow migrants to flow into Europe if it is pushed any further by the EU. It comes after lawmakers in the bloc voted to halt membership talks with Ankara.

“We are the ones who feed 3-3.5 million refugees in this country. You have betrayed your promises,” Erdogan told the EU, as quoted by AP. *“If you go any further those border gates will be opened.”*

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He also accused the EU of not treating people fairly, claiming it *“never treated humanity honestly”* and *“did not pick up babies when they washed ashore on the Mediterranean...,”* Hurriyet reported.

Conversely, Germany believes that the EU has not broken any of its promises given to Turkey and *“threats on either side”* are *“not helping”* when handling the current situation, said Ulrike Demmer, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s spokeswoman, according to Bild newspaper.

“We see the EU-Turkey agreement as a success for both sides,” Demmer said, adding that it is in the interests of both parties for the agreement to hold.

“Threats on either side are not helping. Where there are difficulties, we need to deal with them.”

Erdogan's warning to open the border gates refers to a deal struck between the EU and Ankara in March, in which Turkey agreed to help stop the flow of refugees across its border and take back migrants rejected for asylum in Europe.

In response to Ankara's threat, the German Foreign ministry said it is in the interests of both the EU and Turkey to stick to the agreement on migrants, Reuters reported.

“If one looks at the facts, then it is the case that both sides are sticking to the agreement and we hope that remains the case, as it is in the interests of both sides,” ministry spokeswoman Sawsan Chebli said during a government news conference on Friday.
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The European Union should think twice about halting membership talks with Turkey, Croatian Foreign Minister Davor Ivo Stier said while on a visit to Slovenia, according to Reuters.

“It is not in the interest of the European Union, Croatia or Slovenia to suspend talks with Turkey… We need a balanced standpoint towards Ankara,” Stier told a news conference on Friday.

Turkey agreed to the deal in exchange for billions in refugee assistance from the EU and accelerated talks on becoming a member of the bloc. It also rallied for visa-free travel to Europe's Schengen zone as part of the deal, but was told by the EU that a list of 72 conditions must first be met – a key sticking point of which is Turkey's strict anti-terrorism laws, which Europe has said must be loosened for the agreement to go ahead.

The deal has been tumultuous from the start, and tensions worsened on Thursday when EU Parliament members voted for a temporary halt to membership talks with Turkey, citing Ankara's *“disproportionate”* reaction to July's failed coup.

The coup attempt was followed by a mass crackdown on Turkish opposition figures, including teachers, journalists, and civil servants deemed sympathetic to Kurdish separatism and self-exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen, who Turkey says was the mastermind behind the unrest.

Erdogan has also said he may reinstate capital punishment to deal with those who took part in the attempted coup – a notion which was strongly condemned by EU lawmakers.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim lashed out against the EU's vote one day before Erdogan, noting that Turkey is *“one of the factors protecting Europe.”*

“If refugees go through, they will flood into Europe and take it over, and Turkey prevents this,” he said, as quoted by Turkish Minute.

Yildirim also stressed that a cessation of ties between the two sides would hurt the EU far more than it would hurt Turkey.

“I accept that cutting off ties with Europe would harm Turkey, but it would damage Europe five to six times more,” he said.