DISMISSED FORMER FRONTEX CHIEF FINDS HIMSELF A NEW POSITION

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Fabrice Leggeri, former head of Frontex (European [Union] Border and Coast Guard Agency), whose name was once in the spotlight because of the scandals in which he was involved, seems to have now found a fitting place for himself. About 10 years ago, Leggeri argued that migrants were treated as criminals despite their actions not constituting a crime (although, Leggeris statement itself contained illegality) and maintained a stance that adamantly defended human rights. However, on Saturday, 17 February, he announced that he is now at the forefront of the far-right in France, adopting an approach that is the exact opposite of his stance from ten years ago.

Leggeri, the former head of Frontex, running as a candidate for the far-right Rassemblement National in the European Union (EU) elections, criticized EUs migration policy on the French-Italian border on Monday, 19 February. He stated that the Union needs to reassert control over its borders[1].

Leggeri made his first official visit as a candidate on Monday to Menton, located on the France-Italy border in the south of France, accompanied by Jordan Bardella, President of the Rassemblement National and the party's lead candidate for EU elections.

"I want France and Europe to reclaim control of their borders, which is why I'm adding my name to Bardella's list. The European [Union] Commission has assumed control of Frontex and we must return it to its original function as a border guard," said Legerri.

Leggeri, who was head of Frontex from 2015 to 2022, was regularly accused by non-governmental organizations of turning a blind eye to the illegal refoulement of migrants. According to the German newspaper Der Spiegel, Leggeri is known to be complicit in "push-backs", which means that migrants' asylum applications are rejected without examination.

Rassemblement National leader Bardella told reporters that; "like Fabrice Leggeri intended, Frontex must be reoriented towards the mission of protecting our borders and

civilization". As it will be remembered, Bardella and Marine Le Pen had recently met with the leaders of the far-right groups with racist tendencies. In fact, one of these individuals, a Bavarian deputy from the Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) party, the German ally of the Rassemblement National, even displayed an SS order signed by Heinrich Himmler, one of the architects of the Holocaust, and was arrested on 30 October at his home for possession other writings praising Adolf Hitler and weapons. This development has strengthened suspicions about AfD's ties to neo-Nazi circles.[2]

While Frontex was expected to act as a neutral body of the EU that would provide a way out for migrants, no response was provided by Leggeri's accusatory statements against the European Commission. Despite all the previous scandals, the EU has not even taken responsibility or even apologized for working with someone who has far-right and corrupt tendencies.

**Photograph: https://www.euractiv.com/section/migration/news/eu-border-agency-hijacked-by-eu-commission-its-former-boss-says/*

[1] EU Border Agency hijackedBy EU Commission, Its Former Boss Says, Euractiv, February 19, 2024, https://www.euractiv.com/section/migration/news/eu-border-agency-hijacked-by-eu-commission-its-former-boss-says/

[2] Frances Far Right Forges Alliances With Europes Extremist Parties, Le Monde, December 6, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/12/06/france-s-far-right-forges-alliances-with-europe-s-most-extremist-parties_6316574_7.html

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