



Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen e.V. (VEF)
Association of Protestant Free Churches in Germany

The Soul of Europe and the Victims of Forced Displacement

A Statement by the VEF Executive and the Representative at the Seat of the German Government

A frightening mindset is spreading throughout Europe: Self-interest is prioritized over the protection of people seeking refuge from life-threatening distress. Personal comfort and prosperity are valued more highly than human rights. The right to seek asylum is undermined. Like never before since World War II, Europe is at risk of sacrificing its own fundamental values as well as those of the international community of states.

Today, people in Germany and Europe consider providing protection to refugees and displaced persons unacceptable. They worry about how life will change in their country. Some try to create the impression that they themselves are the true victims of forceful displacement, claiming that their standard of living and "Western Christian Civilization" are under attack. Meanwhile, the actual victims are increasingly denied protection or accused of abusing their right of asylum.

This stands in opposition to the gospel of God's love promised to all human beings, and is a wrongful act against refugees. In 1948, after the atrocities of two World Wars, the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is rooted in the conviction that human dignity and human rights universally apply to all human beings and are inalienable and indivisible. The Declaration was written in the spirit of a world order founded in global wellbeing and has established a universal humanitarian standard. Article 16 of the German constitution has its origin in it. The 1950 European Convention on Human Rights applies this claim to European law. Wherever people flee circumstances that are not in accordance with standards of human rights, they have the right to do so! As Christians, we know that the Biblical commandment to love our neighbor, and consequently God himself, demands that we protect them.

However, the European community of states is presently in the process of breaking away from this universal and well-founded consensus of rights and values. Being fully aware of the critical and hostile circumstances from which people flee, Europe nevertheless plans to deny them help and to relegate problems outside of its borders. The new asylum policies in Germany and Europe are no longer designed to first serve the protection of refugees but instead to serve the protection of our borders. This is inhumane. While the protection of borders is at its core a legitimate concern, for Europe to completely seal itself off from refugees in dire need is a crime against humanity.

Europe is about to sell out its soul. It urgently needs to change its course. Everything must be done to focus on global welfare and to ensure that human rights are protected worldwide. Instead of closing its eyes and borders to sometimes immeasurable suffering, Europe must follow international humanitarian standards in its political planning and action, and courageously implement the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. As long as those are not reached, Europe must at least offer protection to those whose lives are in danger, and to those who are suffering because of forced displacement and flight.

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