

# Between Gratitude and Lamentation

An Interjection Concerning the Current Refugee Situation



Union of Evangelical Free Churches  
(Baptists) in Germany

[www.baptisten.de](http://www.baptisten.de) | headquarters

**“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”**

*Luke 10:36-37 (NIV)*

Just like last year, during its Annual Assembly from 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in Kassel, the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (Baptists) in Germany addressed the current situation of refugees in Europe. Even if we are not able to help everyone, we do not want to abandon to their fate people in need or withdraw our attention from them. Therefore, we declare:

**We are grateful** for the great willingness to help that we have witnessed in our country and in our churches. Many have supported the relief work on behalf of the refugees during the past several months. Refugees have received friendly welcome and support. Some of them have joined the churches that supported them. Many churches have become more diverse and colourful – and were blessed in the process. We express our gratitude to everyone who made other people’s suffering their own and thus followed the example of Jesus.

**We deplore the consequences** of the refugee policies currently practiced in Europe. When borders are closed and the admission of refugees almost ceases, the suffering of human beings is not alleviated but only kept from our sight. The conditions at the overcrowded camps in Greece, Northern Africa and the neighbouring states of Syria are untenable. Refugees are deported to Turkey without legal consideration of their individual right to asylum. This procedure is neither in accordance with the humanitarian or legal foundations of Europe, nor with the UN human rights declaration or the Geneva Convention of Refugees. While we recognize the pressure felt by the European nations, the local municipalities, and ultimately by everyone who is actively engaged on behalf of refugees, we cannot accept that Europe is relinquishing its humanitarian standards.

**We therefore urge** the German government to develop humanitarian rules for admission to Europe. Our prior concern is that people in need receive protection. Organisations such as the “Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe” (CCME) and “Eurodiaconia” have already developed specific solutions for the implementation of humanitarian and legal standards. We hope that our country will courageously lead the way in this matter instead of waiting for a European solution. Isolation and national egoism are incompatible with a Christian attitude. The focus for solving the refugee crisis must be on the wellbeing of the people in need.

**We confess** that we in the western nations bear part of the blame for the sufferings in the refugees’ countries of origin. In a globalised world, individual actions have global consequences. We therefore advocate just economic activity, sustainable living conditions, as well as justice and peace in global contexts. We support the sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations. This long-term commitment, however, cannot replace short-term relief work but can only complement it.

**We advocate** that the right to freedom of religion and conscience has to be respected and guarded in every regard and place. Those who are discriminated against or hindered because of their faith, have to be protected. The persecution of people for religious reasons has to end – regardless of their religious affiliation.

**We desire** to support all these goals according to our abilities, because, as a union of congregations, we are bound by the word of God.

Kassel, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2016