



Vision and values for a new Europe

The Call to Solidarity – Refugees

CEP General Assembly - A statement of the Jesuit Major Superiors of Europe

October 19th, 2015

Since January of this year, hundreds of thousands of refugees have arrived in Europe by different routes. We are deeply saddened at the suffering they have endured. We are shocked, as we hear of the death of hundreds as they cross the Mediterranean or who suffocate in lorries as they try to reach Europe.

Refugees

Those fleeing are coming from war-torn countries such as Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, often leaving houses, friends and relatives behind them. They desperately seek protection, making perilous and dangerous journeys. The majority are from countries that clearly are in a war situation. They deserve the protection normally given to refugees and all that goes with it.

Hospitality and Generosity

We are aware of the great numbers of refugees which countries such as Lebanon and Turkey have received, of the generosity of those countries and of the strain all this places on social and physical structures. We praise the generosity of so many European citizens and of civil society, Moved by the plight of those arriving, people are opening their homes and their hearts.

New Policies

- Our current system of border controls is not working. These controls need to be replaced by safe and legal ways to seek protection in Europe. These include humanitarian visas, resettlement procedures and family reunification.
- We need more European solidarity. Asylum procedures and reception conditions should not be left to individual countries which are at the front line as is largely the current situation. A more effective and more just European asylum system is needed. Hospitality and good policies for integration are vital.
- We are shocked that some politicians are using the situation to exploit the current situation for electoral gain, stoking up fears rather than taking courageous leadership and devising new policies.

Jesuit Response

We encourage our Jesuit companions and those who work with them in the Jesuit Refugee Service all around Europe at this time of anguish and challenge. We especially acknowledge the new JRS initiatives in Greece and Hungary.

We particularly want to mention the work done in these past decades with refugee and migrant communities by Jesuits and those working with them. They have worked tirelessly to reach out, to accompany, to befriend, to help people to integrate and build new lives for themselves. They have worked quietly, with few resources and out of the limelight. Yet, their work is a testimony that integration is possible, that our fears are often groundless, that different cultures and religions can indeed speak to one another, that we can reach out to others across our differences, that we can dare to call each other ‚friend‘. Such a testimony is more needed today than ever.

Ongoing Discernment

As Provincials and regional superiors of the Society of Jesus in Europe, we will continue to discern how we can work in our Provinces and Regions to address better this current challenge. This will include reflection on how to educate young people in our schools and universities towards a compassionate attitude towards the stranger, how to use our communications means to engage with public opinion, how to work more and more effectively alongside others in the Church and in civil society.

St Ignatius Loyola, our founder, said that love and concern for others is shown more in deeds than in words. In that tradition, we commit to building a Europe where ‚solidarity‘ and ‚hospitality‘ are not mere words but are lived out in deeds and become reality.