



# A statement on the current 'refugee crisis' and Evangelical responses

23 September, 2015

As innocent blood is being spilled and people's rights are being deprived in Iraq, Syria and many other places in the world, what do we do? While the root causes of the crisis in the Middle East remain inappropriately tackled, a humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions is pushing hundreds of thousands of families and individuals to flee their homelands.

Significant humanitarian relief work is taking place in the Middle East, where most of the crisis and two-thirds of the displaced are. It is our moral **duty to urgently support the work of the many organisations and agencies which have been responding with humanitarian, conflict-prevention and peacebuilding work** in the region for many years, and more generally in the countries of origin of the refugees, and have been tirelessly raising awareness.

**What about Europe?** With transit stations for migrants in Hungary, emergency rescue in Serbia and Croatia, political advocacy in Slovakia, or awareness-raising to prepare churches and families to receive and host migrants in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom; with legal assistance, language courses and spiritual help or day centres for migrants and their families in Italy, the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) is proud and humbled by the significant and growing response of the Europe's evangelical Christians, from all traditions.

Some agencies are hiring new staff to face the crisis and, with the national Evangelical Alliances, endeavour to mobilise the church, creating special national working groups, like in Italy, Switzerland or Germany. Evangelical organisations in the UK, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands are supporting financially and operationally efforts in the Middle East and in countries of transit like Turkey, or in Greece, where Greek Christian workers and volunteers help with sanitation, health-care and renovations of reception centers.

These are only a few examples of Evangelicals' response to the crisis.

According to a database established by the EEA, **at least 30 Evangelical national or international agencies and NGOs**, including many Evangelical Alliances, and countless local alliances, organisations and churches, communities and simple volunteer groups are mobilised to respond, probably **totalling several thousand Evangelical staff and volunteers** above and beyond significant existing work for people in poverty or need in Europe, irrespective of their world-view or convictions.

**Migration is intrinsic to being human**, which may lead us to wonder why the current humanitarian and refugee crisis should be called a 'Migrant Crisis' as such. It is the lack of viable alternatives that drive uprooted women, children and men to risk crossing deserts and seas to seek refuge in the European Union (EU) and other industrialised countries. While we may not be able to find immediate solutions to the refugee crisis, we have no choice but to help where we can and **justice and compassion must inform and shape our response**.

So far in 2015, the majority of migrants reaching Europe were from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia. War and violence, failed states, rampant terrorism and oppression are well documented in these countries of origin. Although regularly portrayed as "economic migrants" by media and politicians, there can be little doubt that the majority of **these people are forced migrants in need of refuge**.

Indeed the current crisis should not hide **the wider challenge of migration and policies related to it**. Inspired by both Old and New Testament ethics, our evangelical Protestant convictions claim that the approach to asylum and **migration cannot first be one of security and defence. Migrants must not be viewed as enemies or invaders, but humans above all**. Christians are called to an ethic of justice, compassion and integration of the foreigner, and especially of protection of vulnerable people. We believe these values are universal; that governments and all individuals must stand for justice, **refusing to listen to the sirens of demagoguery, populism or xenophobia**.

**The Bible**, our supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct, includes multiple stories of migration, including requests to political leaders to pass through a land in security, which was granted in the name of justice (Deuteronomy 2). It says that God ‘hears’ the blood of the innocents ‘cry’ to him and people’s cry because of their oppressors, whether the innocents are at home or emigrants (e.g. Genesis 4:10, 9:5-6, Exodus 3, Deuteronomy 21). Some of Jesus’ most powerful words ring poignantly as he identifies himself with the destitute. Our passion to worshipfully serve God should therefore lead to **no hesitation to do good to people in need of support and shelter** (see Matthew 4 & 5 or Luke 10:25-37). We are to follow in Jesus’ way of sacrificial charity (1 Peter 2:21-25).

Long-term solutions dealing with growing immigration involves difficult political considerations, including issues such as employment, housing, and education. **The Bible’s call to help those in need does not provide a complete answer to the question of how the EU or individual countries should design their migration policies**. Here Christians will come to different conclusions, insofar as they are compatible with biblical ethics. Political demonisation or glorification of different standpoints creates polarisations rather than a constructive public debate. Although policy considerations of a just help to refugees are difficult, the Christian Church has a moral responsibility to extend welcome and help those in need, irrespective of their world-view or convictions.

We cannot be governed by fear, mere emotion or naïveté. So we pray fervently for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Churches must be united in their compassionate service to Christ and Christians must see this crisis response as an opportunity to grow together as disciples of Jesus. **We claim for justice and compassion to guide the decisions of our political leaders and for evangelical churches of all European lands to be exemplary, united and prophetic in their actions and advocacy on behalf of the common good**.

- To inform the EEA about your work: [office@europeanea.org](mailto:office@europeanea.org)
- About the work in the Middle East and how to support it: [Integral Alliance](#), [EU-CORD](#)
- About welcoming and helping refugees: [#WeWelcomeRefugees](#), [Home for Good \(UK\)](#)
- Further queries: [office@europeanea.org](mailto:office@europeanea.org), [brussels@europeanea.org](mailto:brussels@europeanea.org)

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*This statement, drafted by the EEA Socio-political Team, is approved by the EEA Public Policy Authorisation Team.*

The EEA, originally created in 1846, is a pan-European movement representing more than 50 national and international evangelical Protestant organisations from all traditions in 33 nations, and 20 million citizens in the EU. The Brussels office of the EEA promotes active citizenship of its constituency and represents it to the European Institutions.

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