



Witten, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2016

**Why the immigrant-political blockade of Europe is the wrong pathway. A declaration regarding current refugee policy:**

Most recently Greece deported people to Turkey within the scope of the EU Agreement with Turkey. According to reports of Greek officials, no persons were involved thereunder, who claimed any protection requirement. However local human rights organizations doubt this claim and assume that asylum seekers were also definitely among the deportees. Persons, who seek asylum in Greece, are subjected to a brief process. Thereby it is determined, whether they have already received asylum in Turkey or another form of protection – for example temporary shelter – or rather whether they came to Greece through a safe third country outside of the EU. If these questions are answered in the affirmative, their application for asylum is rejected as inadmissible. Their individual right of asylum is no longer reviewed and these persons are repatriated. However, Turkey no longer appears to be safe. Amnesty International and Human Right Watch have published reports, according to which Turkey has deported refugees to their countries of origin again—even to Syria. The agreement with Turkey is an attempt to secure the borders of Europe, so that people seeking refuge will only be permitted to enter in very few numbers. This threatens the individual right of asylum. Humanitarian and legal standards are being pulverized, where they should have been preserved. Therefore their significance is being voided.

It must be a matter of course to offer protection to people in need. Humanitarian and legal standards for the protection of refugees are written in the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, the Geneva Convention for Refugees and the European Human Rights Convention. Until now Europe has regarded itself to be a community that guarantees and secures these standards. Until now the European identity and its “soul” were existentially united with a clear humanitarian attitude and commitment to human rights. Through the agreement with Turkey this has been called into question. Europe is in danger of losing its humanitarian identity.

As Christian men and women in evangelical free churches we are convinced that it is indispensable for Europe to offer existential protection to people in need. International rights of asylum, as well as promises and obligations to protect refugees must be adhered to. Procedures that regulate the entry to Europe and promote the integration of immigrants must be safeguarded. At this opportunity we wish to refer to organizations, such as “Commission of Churches for Migrants in Europe, CCME) or “Eurodiaconia”, which recommend solutions how humanitarian and legal standards could be implemented.

We advocate that individual European national states and the community of states should valiantly open themselves to people in need and assume more responsibility, for the sake of endangered people and for the sake of their own humanity. Blockades and national egoism are not options of European identity. We want to help people in need with our church fellowships and potential, because we know that we are obligated to do so through the words of Jesus: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”  
Matthew 25: 40

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