



To CEC and CCME Member Churches,
Councils of Churches
and Organisations in Partnership

Brussels, 25 November 2017

Invitation to CCME and CEC members to engage in the struggle against statelessness

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Dear Friends,

The CCME ExCom and the Governing Board of CEC would like to bring to your attention the situation of stateless people. Statelessness affects more than 10 million people around the world and at least 600,000 in Europe alone. To be stateless is not to be recognized as a citizen by any state. It is a legal anomaly that often prevents persons from accessing fundamental civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights. In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees had launched a decade to end statelessness by 2024. In this context, the World Council of Churches and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands had organised a consultation on statelessness in September 2014, resulting in the "Den Dolder outcome document". CEC and CCME had in December 2014 endorsed the document and pledged to

- Engage the member churches and organisations of CEC and CCME and raise awareness on statelessness in Europe and possibilities to overcome statelessness; they will seek engagement of the churches, particularly in the 3 countries which have not ratified either of the statelessness conventions to support the signing of the conventions by the governments of these countries;
- CCME and CEC commit themselves to participating in the UNHCR Decade to eradicate Statelessness in the coming 10 years. Appropriate awareness raising will be undertaken in cooperation with the churches, and instruments explored particularly to avoid and overcome statelessness of children in the coming 5 years.
- CCME and CEC hope to contribute to the eradication of statelessness in Europe in the coming ten years to ensure that every person's right to citizenship and documents will be achieved.

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In the last three years, many activities have been undertaken nationally, as a European regional consultation of WCC and Bread for the World in Berlin in September 2017 has shown. At European level, the European Network on Statelessness has organised several conferences and meetings, and together with the International Detention Coalition, provided information on the detention of stateless persons. Still, work remains to be done, also in Europe. We therefore encourage churches in Europe to take up the issue.

Valuable material has been produced by WCC. On <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness/statelessness>, bible studies on statelessness as well as information material and ecumenical resolutions on statelessness can be found. A webinar on statelessness is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OETukOIBkUM>.

The booklet "I Belong: Biblical Reflections on Statelessness" compiled by WCC programme executive Semegnish Asfaw offers 12 biblical reflections on statelessness, particularly fitting for the advent time (available under ISBN-13: 978-2825416860).

The European Network on Statelessness, of which CCME is a member, is providing important updated information and resources on the situation in Europe at:

<https://www.statelessness.eu/>

For the coming year, several national events are planned by UNHCR and NGOs involving churches. In addition, churches can launch their own activities, notably

- to inform themselves and others about the issue of statelessness
- to pray for those experiencing statelessness and recall their fate, e.g. in thematic services
- to advocate for the rights of stateless persons, notably for statelessness determination procedures and procedures to (re)gain citizenship
- to consider how church records of life events (birth, baptism, marriage) might in the specific national situations help to establish the identity of stateless person.

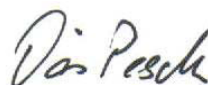
This way churches can help to make the eradication of statelessness by 2024 a reality.

Please keep us informed about your activities and experiences.

With our best wishes,



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General Secretary
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