

»... and you invited me in.«

TEN  
CONVICTIONS  
REGARDING  
REFUGEES  
AND INTEGRATION  
FROM AN  
EVANGELICAL  
PERSPECTIVE



Evangelische Kirche  
in Deutschland

**Jesus says: »For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.« (Mt 25:35, NIV)**

## WITH CONVICTION

In 2017, Evangelical Christians celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Concerned with the relationship between every Christian and God, the Reformation changed the Church and also the world. Luther formulated the new interpretation of the Christian faith thus: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.” Therefore, all Christians freely live in God’s unconditional love. Relationships between people are also affected by this belief, since the freedom given is also a responsibility and requires us to love our neighbour. In Luther’s words: “A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant to all, subject to all.”

In light of the many who seek refuge from war, persecution and hardship, the issue of neighbourly love becomes concrete and tangible. Countless Christians are actively engaged in working for the common good; the tangible result of their faith being solidarity in action. Real and marvellous things are being accomplished, particularly in the area of support for refugees.

At the same time, political solutions are required. The undertaking is enormous and both the options and financial means are limited. Many are concerned about the consequences that migration and integration might have upon our society and upon social cohesion; and the discussions about

these issues are greatly polarised. Many are optimistic and welcome refugees, whilst others fear that excessive demands are being placed upon society; some even envisage political failure.

From an Evangelical perspective, it is possible for there to be divergent opinions concerning ethical questions. Every Christian is expected to sharpen his or her conscience through the application of the biblical message, and to find their own position. This statement on the present situation in German society describes some convictions which one can deduce from the Christian faith.



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# GOD'S LOVE IS GLOBAL

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**G**od's love is for the whole world and does not stop at national borders. God is close and he is merciful to each person in the same manner – regardless of the colour of their skin, their gender, nationality, religion or financial position.

During these times of international crises, many are responding in ways of thinking that stops at their nation's borders. In discussions concerning refugees and the political issues surrounding refugees in Germany, Europe and elsewhere, the national state often becomes the decisive standard.

**The German government is committed to human rights.** All political decisions must, at all times, take into consideration the potential effects of policies upon human rights, as they affect the people amongst us, those still fleeing turmoil and those in other states.

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**G**od created all people in his image and has thereby given each and everyone inviolable dignity. No-one has to earn this dignity. Everyone is different and yet as valuable as the next. Their origin, religion, looks, sexual identity, or situation in terms of their rights of residence, has no bearings upon this premise. This fundamental insight of the Christian faith finds its secular legal form in human rights.

War, hardship and persecution cause people to leave their homes. Globally, this affects more than 65 million people. Approximately 890,000 of these were taken in by Germany in 2015, and in 2016, the number of people arriving was about 280,000. At the same time, many standards in German and European refugee law – upheld until this point –

deteriorated and a further tightening of the laws was discussed.

**Human dignity is non-negotiable**, which is why the individual right to asylum must also be safeguarded. Those who are seeking refuge must have secure escape routes. In addition, the European Union requires an immigration law which offers legally acceptable routes into Europe in sufficient measure. Alongside refugees, those entitled to subsidiary protection, such as people fleeing from civil wars, also require protection. Jesus Christ is on the side of those whose dignity has been violated or is being challenged.



**HUMAN DIGNITY  
IS  
INVIOABLE**



## LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOUR IS AN OBLIGATION

**W**e are to love our neighbour as ourselves; on this the Bible is very clear. This is the unlimited obligation to champion the dignity of all our fellow men and women. Love of one's neighbour does not distinguish between people, rather, it requires that every person in need of help is to be taken into consideration.

Deportations into crisis areas return people to mortal danger. Declaring a country, such as Afghanistan, to be safe will not change this. Capping the number of refugees and increasing the amount of barbed wire on border fences will only result in even more people without protection. It is claimed that these suggestions for better management are justified on account of the organisational problems connected with the admission and accommodation of refugees, the great cost involved and problems with integration.

### **For Christians however, the love of one's neighbour is the highest commandment**

and help is therefore given wherever there is a need. This indispensable conviction cannot be directly transferred to the realm of politics. However, from a Christian perspective, it is both a central position and a point of reference. Therefore, the Evangelical Church demands that Germany help people seeking refuge – even beyond its own national borders and the EU's external borders. It will require the support of the international community to solve the global refugee crisis. In this, wealthy states can admit more refugees and adequately support receiving host nations such as Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon and other states.



**T**he state must safeguard the security of all people in the nation. It is free, open societies in particular which require security. However, the desire for security must also be carefully balanced against the rights to freedom and tolerance, which are the very foundations of an open society.

**This balancing act is never easy.** In some situations, the security of all citizens requires measures which curtail individual freedom. The proportionality of these restrictions is examined by the courts and, in a state under the rule of law, this is done on the basis of the human rights.

In many places across the globe, states are failing to meet these core responsibilities. Wherever a governmental authority that protects the population is lacking, people seek other places of refuge from violence and lawlessness. This is why attempts to promote the rule of law, as well as democratic, participatory structures and social justice are worthy of support. All of these are necessary for beneficial, social co-existence – in Germany and elsewhere.

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**PEACE  
AND  
SECURITY  
IN  
HARMONY**  
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## FELLOWSHIP WITH JUSTICE

**F**aith in God, who judges the peoples with equity (Ps 9:8), means that justice and peace are the guiding principles for our responsibility towards the world.

People who live in a form of prosperity that is based upon unjust structures, are living at the expense of others. Income and wealth are most unequally distributed across the globe and only a few possess the greatest proportion of this world's riches.

As a rich and influential nation, Germany is contributing to the factors which cause refugees to flee their countries: German policies permit the export of weapons and armaments to crisis regions. Consumers in Germany are not only profiting from conflicts concerning raw materials, but also

from inefficient or unjust rules of international trade.

**Christians are opening their eyes to the injustices and their role in combating such inequalities.** This is why many Christians create new opportunities to promote global justice: through fair trade, emergency relief and sustainable development.

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**T**hrough the unification of Europe, it has been possible to overcome historical enmities after two world wars. The European Union brought to participating states an unprecedented phase of peace, friendship, prosperity and democratic, as well as constitutional, structures.

The idea of Europe however, and its success story, is currently falling into oblivion. Instead, parties and political movements are increasingly emphasising national self-interests. Even when the concern is the admission of refugees, the limits of European solidarity and Europe's community of shared values are becoming visible.

**It is in keeping with the European and Christian spirit to open oneself up to others with confidence.** Recent decades have proved the relationships of one state with another, and the mutual dependence of nations within Europe, to be fruitful. Given these experiences, Europe can make a contribution towards the securing of peace in the world.

In terms of policies made towards refugees, the European response may not amount to much more than deterrence and seclusion. Fending off victims of violence and terror at our borders, or allowing them to drown, flies in the face of the European Convention of Human Rights and damages the soul of Europe.

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## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS FOR EVERYONE

**F**aith is founded upon an individual assurance of one's beliefs; this is one of the central insights of the Reformation. For this very reason, we treat the religious convictions of others with respect. Every person has the right to have a faith – or none – and to live according to their convictions. No-one may be marginalised, maligned or condemned on account of their faith.

Violence in the name of religion and Islamist terror are part of our times and frighten us. However, they should not cause us to become fearful of religion or of Muslims in general. This fallacy endangers social cohesion and religious freedom.

**As Christians, we advocate religious freedom.** We see the unifying origins and commonalities of the diverse religions just as much as we see the differences. The dialogue between religions and confessions is not always easy but, where there is openness and respect on all sides, it is indeed fruitful. Tolerance ends where religion and religious freedom are abused in order to insult people and their dignity. This is why we stand at the side of all the oppressed and persecuted Christians across the globe.

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It is whilst fleeing that families often become separated. While some have the strength and the means to flee, other family members have to stay behind. Whoever is granted asylum in Germany has the right to family reunification with their spouse or life partner and younger children. The reality however, is that the waiting time for an appointment to apply for family reunification with a German Embassy in the Middle East amounts to more than a year. In addition, those entitled to subsidiary protection – which, at present, mainly concerns refugees fleeing civil war in Syria – are not able to be reunited with their families in Germany until March 2018 or later.

**Affected families must be able to live together again.** Whoever lives in fear for their own family abroad is not able to fully adjust to life in Germany, to learn German and to find the strength to begin anew in this country. Integration is best done with the family. In addition, it is the weaker family members – often women and children – who are in particular need of a safe refuge.

# PROTECTING FAMILIES





## LIVING TOGETHER WITH CONFIDENCE AND HOPE

**S**eeK first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, then all these things will be given to you as well, it says in Matthew 6:33. Christians live out their faith in this great confidence. Their diaconal work and pastoral care for society are founded upon this hope.

Many in Germany feel threatened by certain people and certain people groups. This is also one of the reasons why rejection and hatred is currently directed against those seeking refuge. Daily, there are attacks on refugees and refugee accommodation which, in turn, put great fear into the hearts and minds of refugees. Even people who help refugees are treated with hostility.

**Social cohesion requires the courage to remain well-meaning**, rather than succumbing to feelings of fear and defeat towards those who have found refuge in Germany. The more that people encounter one another with confidence, the less room there is for prejudice. True encounters become possible where people are able to actively participate in a conversation on an equal footing. Political involvement in a society has a part to play in this, which is why access to German citizenship should remain open for people who permanently establish themselves in our nation.

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**D**emocracy thrives upon debate. In particular, we need to discuss the fundamental questions as to how we intend to shape our social co-existence within society.

Currently however, immigration and integration policies are not often discussed in an objective fashion. Racism and unjust demands are highly polarising the political and social debate. This can be seen in Germany, just as much as it is visible in other nations.

**Responsibility for the common good begins with our choice of words.** Debating does not mean turning everything into a topic for debate. If the language which is used is aggressive, a respectful culture of debate dissipates and a radicalisation of thoughts and actions are liable to develop. The distance between hatred and violence is then not very far.

Encounters with others and an exchange of opinions can break up hardened frontlines in an argument – and thus strengthen social cohesion for the benefit of all people living in this nation.

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# LEADING DEBATES

# FACTS & FIGURES



## The Terms “Migration” and “Refugee”

Differentiating between flight and migration is not clear-cut. There are legal categories and the life situation of those concerned is often very complex. Frequently, there are many factors which contribute to a person finally fleeing their home. They include poverty, political unrest, imminent danger, threat or violence, war or the loss of livelihood, e.g. through environmental disaster or landgrabbing. The status of most refugees will change several times during the course of their lives: Refugees may become successful migrant workers whilst migrants may become refugees, as a result of an erupting civil war, for example.

## Migration is Global Normality

Across the globe, more than 230 million people live as migrants outside of their home countries. This corresponds to approximately 3.2 percent of the world’s population – a figure which has virtually remained stable for decades, even if absolute numbers are rising. Migration is a fact of global everyday-life affecting seasonal workers, professionals, people who move on account of their families, and students who move abroad to study. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 90 percent of all migrants across the globe are either working or being provided for by a working family member.<sup>1</sup>

## How Many Have to Seek Refuge?

Globally, about 65 million people are currently fleeing their country. This number has never been higher. 40.8 million of these people remain within their own country whilst fleeing a particular situation – and are therefore internally displaced persons. 21.3 million people have to leave their country. A further 3.2 million people are currently in the process of asylum. Only those who have been recognised as refugees within the asylum procedure are entitled to receive protection, according to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Internally displaced persons are not able to benefit from this possibility and are therefore particularly vulnerable in areas where there is conflict; and difficult to reach with humanitarian aid.<sup>2</sup>

## Where Do People Go?

The destination is not the same for everyone. 82 million people (about 36 percent of all migrants across the globe) migrate within the global South. They wander, for example, from Indonesia to Saudi Arabia, or from Nicaragua to Costa Rica. The second largest group of migrants (35 percent); are made up of those who relocate from the global South to the North; for instance from Morocco to Spain, or from the Philippines to South Korea, making the North their main place of residence. By far the largest group of refugees seek protection in states which immediately neighbour their own. Globally, nine out of ten refugees live in developing nations; a large proportion of these in Africa. These facts are often overlooked.<sup>3</sup>

## Deaths at External Borders

In the last 15 years, more than 30,000 people have lost their lives whilst making the dangerous crossing to Europe. At least 10,000 deaths have been counted within the last three years; between 2014 and 2016 alone.<sup>4</sup> This makes the European external border the most deadly frontier in the world. Many people however, also die at national borders in other regions of the world, or are reported missing.<sup>5</sup>

## Germany is Diverse

About 17.1 million people in Germany have a migrant background. This means that 21 percent of the population have at least one parent who was not born a German citizen; and this is becoming increasingly normal: In 2015, more than a third of all children in Germany under the age of five had a background of migration.<sup>6</sup>

## Violence against Refugees

In 2016, across Germany, there were more than 3,500 attacks on refugees and refugee accommodation. According to figures provided by the Germany government, 560 people were injured in these attacks; and amongst them were 43 children. In 2015 and 2016, about 1,000 criminal offences were reported each year, in which refugee accommodation was targeted. Compared with 2014, this figure had increased five-fold.<sup>7</sup>

## World Champion in Arms Exports

Amidst the greatest global exporters of weapons and armaments, Germany is now in fifth place. In 2016, the German government approved export licences to the tune of 6.88 billion Euros – the second highest figure in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Amongst others, some of the recipients of German arms exports are: Algeria, Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates. In 2016, more than half of these arms exports were dispatched to states either outside of NATO or the EU, to so-called “third countries”.<sup>8</sup>

## Aid – Chronically Underfinanced

Wars and disasters which last for years are increasingly necessitating the ever-frequent supply of international support. However, the refugee relief organisation of the United Nations UNHCR, the World Food Programme WFP and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Unicef are permanently underfunded. Nations often pledge more support than they finally contribute. The need for assistance in Syria alone, for example, was, in 2016, estimated to be 7.73 billion US-Dollars.<sup>9</sup> However, only 57 percent was paid out by the contributing states. Wherever food rations are cut, children cannot go to school, and wherever tents are not winterproof, people will even flee from refugee camps.

## Germany is Ready to Help

Three out of four people in Germany could see themselves personally contributing to an aid programme for refugees. Regular studies conducted by the EKD's Institute of Social Research indicate that every tenth person is already active as a volunteer bringing relief to refugees. In addition, representative surveys show that the experiences of those who are in personal contact with refugees are positive.<sup>10</sup> Recent survey results can be found at [www.ekd.de/flucht](http://www.ekd.de/flucht).

- 1 [www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/hintergruende-zur-flucht/migration-alltag](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/hintergruende-zur-flucht/migration-alltag)
- 2 [www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/fluechtlinge/zahlen-fakten.html](http://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/fluechtlinge/zahlen-fakten.html)
- 3 [www.oecd.org/els/mig/GERMAN.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/GERMAN.pdf)
- 4 [data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/53720](http://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/53720)
- 5 [missingmigrants.iom.int/latest-global-figures](http://missingmigrants.iom.int/latest-global-figures)
- 6 [www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetige/StandEntwicklungErwerbstaetigkeit.html](http://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetige/StandEntwicklungErwerbstaetigkeit.html)
- 7 [dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/18/112/1811298.pdf](http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/18/112/1811298.pdf)
- 8 [www3.gkke.org/fileadmin/files/downloads-allgemein/16\\_12\\_12\\_Ruestungsexportbericht.pdf](http://www3.gkke.org/fileadmin/files/downloads-allgemein/16_12_12_Ruestungsexportbericht.pdf)
- 9 [fts.unocha.org/content/syria-regional-crisis-2016-overview](http://fts.unocha.org/content/syria-regional-crisis-2016-overview)
- 10 [www.ekd.de/presse/pm112\\_2016\\_ekd\\_studie\\_fluechtlinge.html](http://www.ekd.de/presse/pm112_2016_ekd_studie_fluechtlinge.html)

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