



## Charta of the New Sanctuary Movement in Europe

Since we want to welcome strangers, we have agreed upon this Charta of the New Sanctuary Movement in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

### *Europe, a Fortress*

The situation of migrants seeking asylum in Europe is alarming. The continent has been turned into a fortress to keep out people fleeing political, ethnic or religious persecution, wars and civil unrest, environmental destruction, hunger and poverty. Militarizing Europe's outer borders, creating practically unrealizable conditions for legal entry, and offering repulsive living conditions for immigrants within Europe are continually perfected methods of deterrence against refugees. Thousands of them already lost their lives in attempting to find protection in our countries. In our society, however, reports of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, suffocating in containers, or taking their own lives in deportation detention centers are met by what Hanna Arendt has called "the curse of indifference".

### *Humanitarian Traditions in Europe*

Although Europe contributes greatly to the causes of flight and migration – by delivering weapons to areas of conflict, by supporting governments that violate human rights, by its agricultural and fishing policies, and by forcing climate change through its CO2 emission – the European contribution to a solution for the worldwide refugee problem is shamefully meager. The predominant concern of safeguarding affluence at any cost betrays Europe's best humanitarian traditions – its commitment to universal human dignity and human rights, to freedom, Equality, and solidarity. The failure to uphold these values undermines Europe's credibility and endangers peaceful cohabitation on our globe.

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<sup>1</sup> This charta is intended to renew and adapt the Charta of Groningen to the new conditions of asylum seekers in Europe. The Charta of Groningen issued from a conference held in 1987 in the Dutch city of Groningen, in which churches and faith groups pledged to "take in and protect" refugees threatened with deportation, if it is expected that they will not receive humane treatment and that the quality of their lives will be seriously impaired.

### ***Taking Sides with People in Need***

As Christians we are unwilling to accept this way of dealing with people in need. We have to stand together united. After all, refugees are made in God's image just as we are. Therefore, we as members of churches, parishes, cloisters, communities, and solidarity groups are called to bear responsibility and to take sides. This applies not only to refugees and asylum seekers living among us, but also to those we will never set eyes on since they already stranded on Europe's outer borders. The right of asylum is worthless if those seeking protection are denied entry.

### ***Our Pledge***

Therefore we pledge:

- To use every opportunity to help refugees in need.
- To provide sanctuary in our churches wherever deportation impends and human dignity or lives are threatened. We will not cease until acceptable solutions are found. If necessary, we will not even shy away from open confrontations with civil authorities.
- To do everything to make public the scandalous practices in repelling refugees at Europe's outer borders as well as harassing them inside the countries with deportation detention and discrimination in almost all areas of life. We will persistently publicize those manipulations in order to raise public awareness and social consciousness.
- To advocate asylum rights and immigration policies that are guided by and oriented on human dignity and human rights. We will strive for those policies at the local as well as the European level.
- To help make refugees feel welcome and be able to participate with equal rights in our society.
- To promote these objectives in our churches and among our fellow Christians.
- To seek cooperation with like-minded people of different faith communities or with different world views.
- To form European and worldwide networks and work together in solidarity to fulfill these commitments.

**All of Europe must become a safe haven, a "sanctuary" for migrants. To this we commit ourselves convicted that God loves the stranger. In her/him we encounter God herself/himself (Matt. 25, 31ff.) .**

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