

# **Day of Intercession and in Memory of the Dead at the Borders of the EU**

**Information, Intercession and Procedures**

**Published by  
CCME – Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe  
German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum**



## Preface

We ask all European Churches:  
Respond to this call!

Out of concern for our own future and the future of our countries: Let us remember those who have died on the run, on their way to us, on the way to Europe – and those who within our countries die of cold, of indifference, and of despair.

There will only be a future in Europe if we learn to share amongst ourselves and with the foreigners amongst us.  
This is the promise of the Old and New Testaments.

“I was a stranger and you invited me in.” (Matthew 25 verse 35)

Let us organize church services, make intercessions and light candles for the victims amongst us and for the many - without names.

Let us remember those who have died as victims of our border security, as victims of the protection of our wealth and our egotism.

Let us join in remembering  
that we too have been refugees since time immemorial,  
that in many of our countries our own past as migrants and refugees has not yet been forgotten.

And let the deepening of our Christian faith be measured in how we remember, commemorate and put into practice.

This is not an action or a campaign.  
This is for us to pause and think.  
Herein lies the power.

This is not an action or a campaign.  
This is an act of worship.  
The place,  
Where we are searching, struggling for the Word.  
If we take this seriously  
Our words will have the power to heal.

Fanny Dethloff, German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum, March 2010

**As a date we suggest one annual Sunday around the 20<sup>th</sup> June, the International Day of the Refugee (In 2010: Sunday, 20.06.).**

There are other possible occasions: During the Intercultural Week in Germany with the Day of the Refugee in October; Human Rights Day (10<sup>th</sup> December); during Lent or during November, when many churches have weeks dedicated to peace activities.

## Day of Intercession and in Memory of the Dead at the Borders of the European Union on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010

In July 2009 the Conference of European Churches declared in Lyon: "As churches in Europe we commit ourselves: to commemorate those who have died on their journey to find a dignified life in Europe through an annual day of prayer." Churches and civil rights groups in several European countries will, for the first time, on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010, which is also the UN Day of the Refugee, jointly commemorate the lethal consequences of the sealing off of the outer borders of the EU. The sealing off is done through a highly developed technical border security, through the removal of and dislocation of border security into the neighboring and transit states of the EU and through legal agreements on refugee return with neighboring and transit states even if this violates human rights. Churches and human rights groups in the United States of America, where also countless migrants die at the border with Mexico, want to join in this initiative.

The churches want to commemorate in prayers the nameless dead who died at sea or in the desert without leaving a trace. Their lament, not heard by the people, should be brought before God. What takes place at the borders – far away from public knowledge or control – should be brought to the attention of the public. Background reports should inform about the state of human rights at the borders. Politicians should be reminded of their responsibility to guarantee at long last effective protection measures for people and their human rights.

### Demands of the Protestant Church in Germany

- The European Commission should promote sanctions if EU member states violate European or International rights in the treatment of refugees.
- The German government shall promote solidarity with states at the outer borders of the EU and stop the return of refugees to states where the asylum system is overburdened. Care shall be taken especially that
  - Asylum seekers and migrants on the high seas are treated according to International Law and are not returned to places where they are threatened with human rights violations;
  - Refugees in the EU get access to fair and effective asylum procedures;
  - The work of the border agency FRONTEX is monitored by an independent organization to prevent human rights violations;<sup>1</sup>
  - A long-term resettlement programme with an annual quota for accepting very vulnerable migrants from states at their first point of entry in co-operation with the UNHCR (proposal of the EKD synod Oct. 2009).

The day of Intercession and commemoration should be held annually, on a Sunday around the 20<sup>th</sup> June. Parishes, human rights organizations as well as refugee protection organizations are invited to participate with their own events.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation from the local synod of the Protestant Church in Berlin-Brandenburg-Schlesische Oberlausitz, November 2009

**Suggestion for a prayer of intercession in memory of the dead at the outer borders of the European Union.**

**Lord,**

**We bring before you the crying and laments of the mothers of this world,**  
Who wait for their children whose traces vanish into the sea, the desert and into uncertainty:

Refugees,  
Men, women, children,  
From the war zones of this world,  
Who have escaped from hunger and poverty  
in the hope of a better and more secure life.

**We bring before you our laments for the dead**

Stranded at our borders,  
Who have died on the run  
Through deserts, mountains and seas.  
We call upon you and join the cry of those  
Who lost their lives seeking justice and a better life.

**Lord, we bring before you our shame**

At our turning away and our silence  
In Europe we are satiated – and we do not see that we are the cause of hunger.  
We are insatiable – and we do not see that this is the cause for many wars.  
We are silent where we should engage.

**Lord, we bring before you the political decision-makers,**

Who not only decide about numbers but about the fates of many real people.  
Focus their vision on the connections.  
Keep their consciences awake.  
Let them find rules which are guided by humanity and far-sightedness.

**Lord, give us the power to be witnesses**

Of the pain of your children on the run,  
On the way to us,  
At our borders  
In refugee camps and with us,  
In detention centres prior to deportation  
In fear of the dangers  
In mourning for the dead.

**Help us up, Lord.**

**Amen.**

## Suggestions for designing the church service

You can read out news and reports and sing or speak the words of psalms in between.

You can commemorate the dead in silence.

In some church services we put photos of the stories of boat people on a long black cloth and everybody had the opportunity to light a candle, to put it on the cloth and to make a prayer for intercession.

You could light tea lights and silently or accompanied by a prayer, these could be placed into a font or bowl of water.

We took liturgies and songs from Taizé to give expression to our silent shock.

Some people wrote down their prayers of intercession and attached them to a kind of 'Wailing Wall'.

Some put rubber rafts on their churchyard.

Some let candles drift on rivers.

Some arranged processions of mourning.

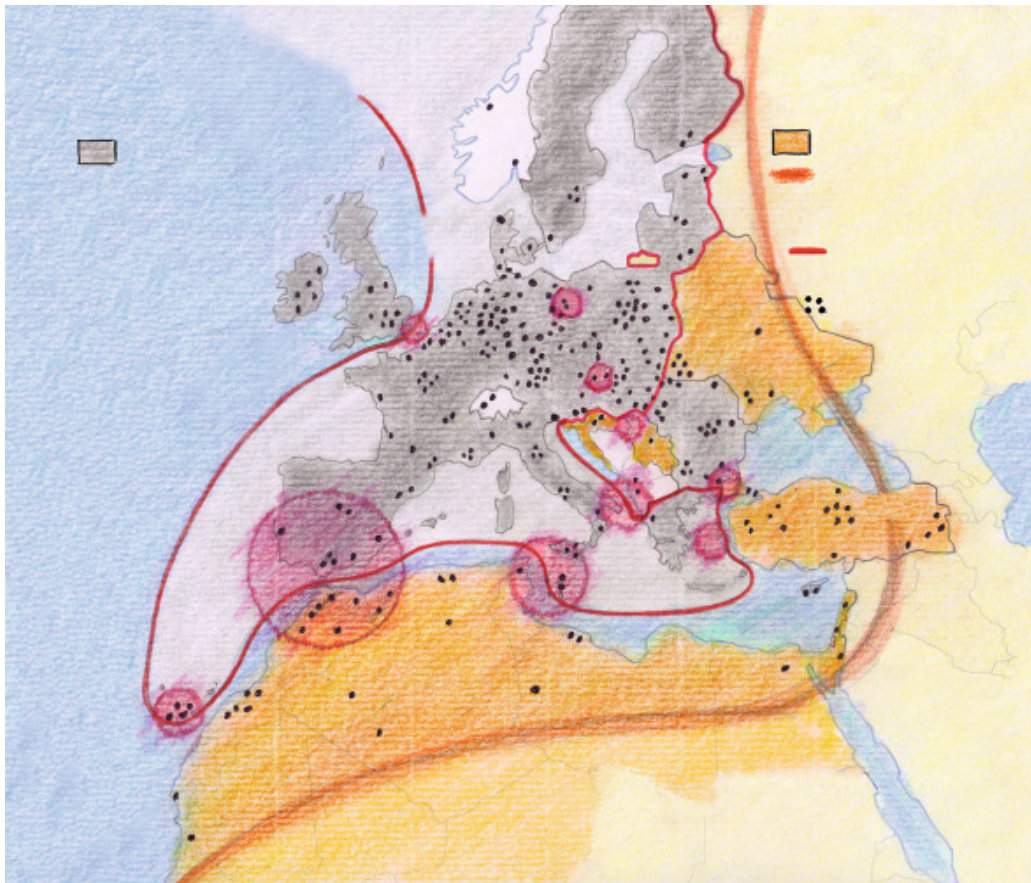
Another task can be finding an expression for the shame, the shock and the awakening to the reality.



## Summary for use in parish newsletters or notices after church services

Together with Christians from other European countries on 20<sup>th</sup> June, we specially commemorate in our prayers of intercession those migrants and refugees who have died on their way to find a humane and dignified life in Europe. We bewail the lethal consequences of the sealing off of the outer borders of the EU. The sealing off is done through a highly developed technical border security, through the removal of and dislocation of border security into the neighboring and transit states of the EU, in Africa and Eastern Europe, as well as through legal agreements on refugee return with neighboring and transit states even if this violates human rights. There are no exact figures as to how many people have died on their way to Europe. The human rights organization "Fortress Europe", from their evaluation of relevant press reports, has concluded that up to the end of 2009, 15.000 people have lost their lives along the outer borders of the EU.

[www.migration.ekbo.de](http://www.migration.ekbo.de), [www.proasyl.de/de/themen/stoppt-das-sterben](http://www.proasyl.de/de/themen/stoppt-das-sterben)



### Freedom with borders: the Schengen area and its victims

Fatalities on the high seas: The Canaries 600 dead, Gibraltar 6000 dead, Lampedusa 1500 dead, Adria 600 dead, Ägäis 400 dead.

Source: Le monde diplomatique/taz Verlags- und Vertriebs GmbH (Hgs.), Atlas der Globalisierung. Sehen und verstehen, was die Welt bewegt. Berlin 2009, S. 111.

## Additional information

- Animated file with names of dead refugees from the 'List of Death', published by the UNITED European Network against Racism. The names are slowly drifting over the screen. The file is available through [info@kirchenasyl.de](mailto:info@kirchenasyl.de)
- Borderline Europe, <http://www.borderline-europe.de>
- EKD, Erfahrungen an der Außengrenze der EU, <http://www.ekd.de/bevollmaechtigter/newsletter/63227.html>
- Fortress Europe, [http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/02/immigrants-dead-at-frontiers-of-europe\\_16.html](http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/02/immigrants-dead-at-frontiers-of-europe_16.html)
- Frontexwatch, <http://frontex.antira.info/frontexwatch>
- Pro Asyl, Campaign „Stop the Deathtrap“, <http://www.proasyl.de/en/topics/stop-the-deathtrap/>
- UNHCR, The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.ch>

## This collection of materials was compiled by and is available through:

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This collection of materials is also available in Danish, Finnish, French, German and Spanish: [www.migration2010.eu](http://www.migration2010.eu)



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