



Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

When we heard the news that many migrants living in the refugee camps in Greece have experienced an encounter with the Lord “in unpredicted, supernatural, miraculous ways in massive numbers.” ([Canopy 129](#)) we rejoiced at God’s gracious intervention. God’s heart is for every nation, tribe, people and language, and all will be represented before His throne (Rev. 7:9) But how do we respond when representatives of other nations, tribes, people and languages appear on our doorstep uninvited? Are they purely a political problem to be solved, or should we do as the Israelites were told in Deut. 10:19, “you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”?

Migration: the political response in Europe

The problem of illegal migration and large numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Europe has caused a political headache for our leaders. Since the migration crisis of 2015, when about one million (mostly Syrian) migrants came by sea and by land via Turkey, solutions to the problem have been sought.

The latest policy from the UK government to deter illegal migrants is to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, an idea which raised concerns from church leaders and charities involved with refugees, who called it “immoral” and said it could be a cause of fear and trauma to people who have, in many cases, fled dangerous and life-threatening situations and so deserve our care.



However, the UK is not the first to use the outsourcing of migrants to poorer countries with significant human rights failures. The EU has already instigated migration and border security partnerships with Turkey, from 2016, and with Libya from 2017. These agreements

involved the exchange of hosting asylum seekers by poorer states in return for financial incentives from richer ones. Alexander Faludy, writing in the [Church Times](#), said: “When individuals monetise migration, it is trafficking; when states do so, it is diplomacy.”

The arrangement with Turkey was in response to the migration of Syrians displaced by civil war, with the Turkish government agreeing to restrict crossings to Greece and allowing Greece to return failed asylum seekers to Turkey, which now hosts some 3.6 million of them. This was in exchange for €6 billion of humanitarian assistance from the EU, the prospect of visa-free travel in the EU for Turks and a promise to admit selected Syrians to the EU. According to the [International Rescue Committee](#), this was “a stain on the EU’s human rights record” and the IRC went

on to say that “outsourcing the EU’s migration management to non-EU countries is neither a humane, sustainable or workable solution.”

The Greek asylum system was unable to cope with the numbers seeking refuge, leading to severe overcrowding of camps in Greece. The pushing back of asylum seekers at sea has been one response by Greece, as well as other EU states overwhelmed by the numbers, a move which has been supported by the European Border and Coastguard Agency, Frontex. However, it has been reported that this policy has resulted in about 2000 deaths since 2015.

In Libya, a country without a functioning government, it has been claimed by various organisations that large sums of money received from the EU have been diverted to networks of militiamen, traffickers and coastguards who exploit migrants and that Libyan militias “torture, extort and otherwise abuse migrants for ransoms in detention centres . . . often in compounds that receive millions in European money”. ([Associated Press](#)) Frontex denies the involvement of its staff in these centres, but their drones and spotter planes co-ordinate with Libya’s coastguards in operations which lead to the placing of migrants there.

At this point, it has to be noted that the hostility towards those fleeing Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan is in stark contrast to the response to those fleeing Ukraine. The number of people in the wave of refugees in 2022 was 8 times higher than in 2015 and yet it has largely been hailed in the media as a “humanitarian challenge” and not an “existential crisis” for Europe. Of course, it is easier to accept those who are closer to “us”, both geographically and culturally, but does the colour of their skin or their religion also alter our perception?

Let’s pray

- For our political leaders to adopt just and humane laws when dealing with asylum seekers
- For all those fleeing dangerous or precarious situations in their own countries, that they will find shelter.
- For us as the church to look on our fellow human beings with compassion and not judgement, whatever their background.

Update:-

Last week in Tirana during the Europeans United in Prayer meeting, a Zoom call was arranged to discuss the ongoing situation of legal action being pursued against Christians. We had the privilege to have Akil and Linda Pano in the room with us and Dr. Päivi Räsänen joined us by Zoom. They explained how their court cases are still ongoing; indeed the Panos have been in court this week and Päivi will have another hearing in August. Dr. Felix Boellmann of ADF explained how the number of these types of cases are growing at an alarming rate. Let us continue to pray for justice for those who stand up for God’s truth in society.

Additional Prayer Points:-

1. The presidential election in Turkey could bring to an end the authoritarian, Islamist rule of President Erdogan. Pray that there will be no interference in the voting and democratic process.
2. The European Parliament will be voting soon on regulations covering Artificial Intelligence; pray for good checks and balances to be put in place.

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