



The continuing need to address the root causes of forced displacement

By the end of 2014, over 59.5 million people had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence, or human rights violations. In 2015, UNHCR¹, the UN Refugee Agency, anticipates that approximately 400.000 new arrivals will seek international protection in Europe via the Mediterranean. In 2016, this number could reach 450.000 or more.

Confronted with dysfunctional asylum systems and barriers to normal onward travel routes within the European Union has forced thousands to take the Balkan route from Greece through Serbia and Macedonia to Hungary in order to reach some EU countries that show commendable humanity and leadership when it comes to hosting refugees and migrants needing protection. Unfortunately, these days hundreds of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers are blocked at different borders across the Balkan Route. As expected they cross now the borders via Croatia in the direction of Slovenia which is a member of the Schengen Agreement.²

The commitment of Pax Christi International on migration, asylum seekers and (internally) displaced persons is in the field of advocacy and awareness raising campaigns worldwide.³ Pax Christi International highlights the deeper causes of migration and displacement and focuses on the root causes of (violent) conflicts.

There is a critical need to address the core issues which affect forced displacement around the world. The massive flow of people will not stop until the root causes of their plight are addressed. Much more must be done to prevent conflicts and stop the ongoing wars that are driving so many from their homes. There should be far greater concern for the protection of civilians, as laid down by international humanitarian law. There should be an immediate end to the devastating obstruction of humanitarian aid to the people in need, such as in Syria.

A consistent and global response to refugee situations needs diplomacy, political will and concerted action for the prevention, as well as resolution, of conflicts that force people to move. Such a comprehensive approach is essentially absent in the wars going on in Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan and others. Greater investment in conflict prevention and resolution as well as durable solutions should therefore form an integral part of a diplomatic and political approach to addressing forced displacement. The lack of political commitment on the international level is unacceptable and morally irresponsible!

Some countries in the Middle East such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey show admirable humanity and leadership when it comes to hosting refugees and migrants needing protection. The countries neighbouring war zones, which shelter 9 in 10 refugees worldwide,

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Agreement

³ This is done via publications, statements, interventions, letters, blog articles and more.

must be more strongly supported, including with the necessary funding. The annual budget for the UNHCR is less than the monthly budget of the European agricultural policies. The UNRWA⁴, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East, is perpetually struggling to get the necessary budgets to assist the needs of the Palestinian refugees.

Efforts to address the root causes of the refugee crisis should then increase funding for humanitarian assistance to stabilise forcibly displaced populations in the region of origin, most notably countries around Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and others.

More robust, timely, and sustained structural support for the most-affected refugee-hosting countries is essential, which requires enhanced operational linkages between humanitarian and development actors from the very beginning of a crisis. It is then essential that development cooperation policies are reoriented with the objective of giving people the opportunity to have a future in their own countries.

Restoring peace, security and human rights in war affected countries will take long and focused work. It is true that the people most responsible for the victims of war and migration are those leaders who have failed to uphold human rights, and robbed their people of hope. The international community, and specifically the UN Security Council, has significant power and influence over terrible conflicts such as Syria and Iraq, and it must now urgently find the consensus to act.

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⁴ <http://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>