



Africa - Migrants & Refugees

"You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:34).



POPE FRANCIS - Call to Action

In preparation for the 2018 UN General Assembly, two new compacts, outlining countries' obligations to migrants and refugees are in the process of being drafted.

Departing from the traditional approach of calling for world unity to solve immigration issues, Pope Francis has decided to use the annual message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018 as an opportunity to offer concrete proposals for world leaders to consider when drafting the new UN compacts.

In its opening paragraph Pope Francis expresses *"the Church's concern for migrants, displaced people, refugees and victims of human trafficking ... All believers and men and women of good will, are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness, wisdom and foresight, each according to their own abilities."*

*"Our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: **to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.**"* Pope Francis

In this briefing, we look at each of these four points.

Migration Crisis

The level of forced displacement of people is at its highest since World War II due to poverty and to conflicts in Africa and the Middle East. At the same time, in Europe, populist right-wing parties have successfully scapegoated migrants and refugees and convinced electorates they must be deterred at all costs. The European Union has, as a result, in all but name, adopted a *keep them out* policy closing its borders and is funding Turkey, to keep Middle Eastern migrants at bay.

Efforts to reduce pressure on Greece, Italy and Spain who bear the brunt of migrant flows is no longer focused on burden-sharing with other European countries but rather on extending deterrents through *"cooperation agreements"* with transit countries such as Libya, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal etc.

It is in this context, where Europe is unwilling to deal with the migrant crisis internally and has abdicated its responsibility to protect the human rights of migrants, that Pope Francis calls leaders and believers to action.



AFRICAN MIGRANTS

The majority of African migrants heading to Europe through the Mediterranean are from Eritrea (fleeing repression and compulsory military service), Somalia (escaping poverty, political instability and insecurity), and Sudan (fleeing conflicts).

Others topping the migration list are Nigeria, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and, to a lesser extent, Ghana, in that order.

For most young West Africans, “few economic opportunities in their own countries and hope for a better future” are the major drivers.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION

sponsorship programs, and open humanitarian corridors for particularly vulnerable refugees. Furthermore, special temporary visas should be granted to people fleeing conflicts in neighbouring countries. Collective and arbitrary expulsions of migrants and refugees are not suitable solutions, particularly where people are returned to countries which cannot guarantee respect for human dignity and fundamental rights.”

“The principle of the centrality of the human person, firmly stated by my beloved Predecessor, Benedict XVI, obliges us to always prioritise personal safety over national security.... For the sake of the fundamental dignity of every human person, we must strive to find alternative

To Welcome

In his Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis calls for a more open and clear process for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries. “Above all, offering broader options for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries safely and legally. This calls for a concrete commitment to increase and simplify the process for granting humanitarian visas and for reunifying families. At the same time, I hope that a greater number of countries will adopt private and community



solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorisation.”

To Protect

“May be understood as a series of steps intended to defend the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, independent of their legal status.

Such protection begins in the country of origin, and consists in offering reliable and verified information before departure, and in providing safety from illegal recruitment practices.

This must be ongoing, as far as possible, in the country of migration, guaranteeing them adequate consular assistance, the right to personally retain their documents of identification at all times, fair access to justice, the possibility of opening a personal bank account, and a minimum sufficient to live on.”

Pope Francis also emphasized the need to respect the rights of children, from their right to a nationality at birth, to foster care services and access to a full education in their adopted countries. “They [children] must be spared any

form of detention related to migratory status, and must be guaranteed regular access to primary and secondary education.... and to enjoy the possibility of continuing their studies... The universal right to a nationality should be recognised and duly certified for all children at birth.

To Promote

“Means a determined effort to ensure that all migrants and refugees – as well as the communities which welcome them are empowered to achieve their potential as human beings, in all the dimensions which constitute the humanity intended by the Creator.

This means providing for freedom of religious practice, employment opportunities, language instruction, a path to citizenship, labour regulation for underage migrants and opportunities for family reunifications, which Pope Francis explicitly says includes grandparents, grandchildren and siblings.



Since work, by its nature, is meant to unite peoples, I encourage a determined effort to promote the social and professional inclusion of migrants and refugees, guaranteeing for all – including those seeking asylum – the possibility of employment, language instruction and active citizenship, together with sufficient information provided in their mother tongue.

In the case of underage migrants, their involvement in labour must be regulated to prevent exploitation and risks to their normal growth and development. In 2006, Benedict XVI highlighted how, in the context of migration, the family is ‘a place and resource of the culture of life and a factor for the integration of values’. The family’s integrity must always be promoted, supporting family reunifications – including grandparents, grandchildren and siblings – independent of financial requirements.

To Integrate

“Concerns the opportunities for intercultural enrichment brought about by the presence of migrants and refugees. Integration is not an ‘assimilation’ that leads migrants to suppress or to forget their own cultural identity. Rather, contact with others leads to discovering their ‘secret’, to being open to them in order to welcome their valid aspects and thus contribute to knowing each one better.

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This is a lengthy process that aims to shape societies and cultures, making them more and more a reflection of the multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings. This process can be accelerated by granting citizenship free of financial or linguistic requirements, and by offering the possibility of special legalisation to migrants who can claim a long period of residence in the country of arrival.

I reiterate the need to foster a culture of encounter in every way possible by increasing opportunities for intercultural exchange, documenting and disseminating best practices of integration, and developing programmes to prepare local communities for integration processes.

I wish to stress the special case of people forced to abandon their country of arrival due to a humanitarian crisis. These people must be ensured adequate assistance for repatriation and effective re-integration programmes in their home countries.