



Conference of European Churches
Conférence des Églises européennes
Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen
Конференция Европейских Церквей



churches' commission for migrants in europe

Public Issues Statement

Adopted by the Conference of European Churches Governing Board and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe Executive Committee November 2018

All are born free and equal

Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948-2018)

On 10 December 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in Paris (France). This historic milestone in international human rights law continues as a source of inspiration for states and people in the fight for the dignity of all.

“The Universal Declaration has helped countless people gain greater freedoms and equality,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein. “Violations have been prevented; independence and autonomy have been attained.”

The 70th anniversary of the declaration reminds us that human rights are universal, belonging to every human being. This same yearning is found throughout the deep and rich traditions of Christianity. The opening passages of our Holy Scriptures affirm this equality in dignity and support the idea of rights that all enjoy by virtue of their common humanity as all are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). The fundamentally equal dignity of different ethnicities, genders, and social groups is further emphasized in the letter to the Galatians where the Apostle Paul proclaims that “there is no longer Jew or Greek, no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

These fundamental messages are under pressure in Europe today. Recent years point to a time of rising populism and intolerant nationalism. The promotion and protection of human rights is as urgent as ever before. Maintaining what was created and inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an ongoing task for the churches and global actors, including the United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe, and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The Conference of European Churches and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe are deeply committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. In our European context, this includes advocating for more robust implementation of existing laws and continuing our fight for freedom of religion or belief inside and beyond Europe, Christians and other religious groups. Our human rights horizon also extends beyond European borders, with repeated calls for migrants

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and refugees to have safe passage¹ and warm welcome here. Human rights exist for all humanity and can only be effectively advanced when we see ourselves as part of this bigger picture.

On this occasion we recognise the value of the declaration and human rights law, and their role in combatting ongoing violations. The CEC human rights education program continues its theological and advocacy work to help churches use legal instruments in support of those facing human rights violations.

The Governing Board of the Conference of European Churches joins with all people of goodwill in working to promote, engage, reflect on, and advance the achievements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We recall in all our work, as simply stated in Article 1, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right.”

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1. Compare Public Issues Statement CEC Novi Sad Assembly 2018, which called “for safe and legal access to Europe, taking up the positive examples given by churches in Italy and other countries which have facilitated safe access to their countries” as well as http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/20_Areas_of_Work/01_Refugee_Protection/2014-11-20_Christian_Group_Recomm_for_safe_legal_paths_to_protection_final.pdf 23.11.2018

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