

European Call for Refugee Protection (EUCAREPRO): Public statement by academics working in the field of migration and refuge

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Essay | 17.02.2016

European Call for Refugee Protection (EUCAREPRO)

Public statement by academics working in the field of migration and refuge

The challenge of refugee protection is one of the most complex and serious issues currently facing the European Union. In 2015 more than one million refugees were seeking protection in the EU, the majority fleeing war and violence in the Middle East and heading towards a few EU-member states like Austria, Germany and Sweden. This is a small number compared to the overall problem of persons being forced to leave their homes because of war and persecution. In 2016 the pronounced refugee movement towards the EU, mainly via Greece, is expected to continue. Accepting that the EU will not be able to resolve all international conflicts and problems, the following points need to be underlined:

1. International and humanitarian law, human rights and the Acquis Communautaire, especially the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) oblige the EU as a whole and its member states to give protection and a safe harbour to all those fleeing their countries. The EU will not be able to receive all refugees, many of them find protection also in neighbouring countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.
2. These legal, moral and political commitments of the EU and its member states are not negotiable or terminable based on possible economic or political costs, abandoning them would damage much more than the rights of hundreds of thousands of refugees.
3. The core of modern refugee law and norms was developed on the basis of disastrous experiences of World War II and its aftermath – when tens of millions of refugees, former soldiers, migrants and displaced persons were looking for protection and reception. The historical and societal project of the EU as such will be damaged seriously if the fundamental norms of refugee protection are not re-established.
4. The causes of people seeking refuge (underlying armed conflicts, destabilised states and legal orders, direct persecution for reasons of political, religious, ethnic or gender orientations) are not external to politics and behaviour of the EU and its member states – we are an inextricable part of the origins of violent conflicts and refuge, and we cannot deny our responsibility to be part of its solution.

Therefore, the undersigned academics of migration studies, intellectuals and persons engaged in the cultural sector call upon politicians and civil society to take seriously our common responsibility for refugee protection. We claim that

1. The standards and provisions of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) have to be taken seriously by all EU member states and put in practice;
2. Raising internal border controls is no alternative and should immediately be replaced by a system for legal routes to Europe for persons seeking protection from war and persecution;
3. Politicians and media should stop blaming those countries that share the most burden as this is mainly an unfair way of distracting from own responsibilities;
4. Sharing of resources and responsibilities between EU member states must be established immediately (e.g. by joint financing of European reception centres, fair distribution of refugees by countries, joint efforts to support external border control);
5. Efforts to improve refugee's situation in the neighbouring countries of war have to be strengthened in order to give safe and humane living conditions for refugees and their families;
6. Strong and sustainable European initiatives need to be undertaken to help to resolve the causes of the creation of refugees and to improve societal development in the areas where refugee emigration originates.

Signers (of all 28 EU member states and the Dublin area):

Peter Alheit, Berta Álvarez-Miranda, Remus Anghel, Joaquín Arango, Klaus J. Bade, Gabriel Badescu, Roman Balaz, Vedrana Baričević, Sigrid Baringhorst, Jürgen Bast, Harald Bauder, Pieter Bevelander, Ursula Birsl, Sabine Bohne, Mathias Bös, Saša Božić, Michael Brumlik, Jasna Čapo Žmegač, Jiri Cenek, Simone Christ, Ružica Čičak-Chand, Ondřej Daniel, Petra Dannecker, Hein de Haas, Sybille De La Rosa, Marcella Delle Donne, Jeroen Doomernik, Magdalena Elchinova, Susen Engel, Marcus Engler, Benjamin Etzold, Tamirace Fakhoury, Anuscheh Farahat, Heinz Faßmann, Margit Fauser, Claudia Finotelli, Naika Foroutan, László Fosztó, Anne Friedrichs, Heidrun Friese, Katharina Fritsch, Markus Gamper, Rainer Geißler, Birgit Glorius, Mechtild Gomolla, Thomas Groß, Sonja Großmann, Margareta

Gregurović, Petra Guasti, Franz Hamburger, Vera Hanewinkel, Levke Harders, Dirk Hoerder, Tina Hollstein, Christine Horz, Roland Hosner, Bertold Huber, Lena Huber, Christine Hunner-Kreisel, Krystyna Iglicka, Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky, Damir Josipović, Serhat Karakayali, Biljana Kasic, Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, Radka Klvaňová, Harlan Koff, Kira Kosnick, Myrto Kougievetopoulos, Anna Krasteva, Elena G. Kriglerova, Zuzana Kusá, Simona Kuti, Nadia Kutscher, Andreas Landes, Christine Langenfeld, Lena Laube, Barbara Laubenthal, Hans Dieter Laux, Ilse Lenz, Walter Lesch, Maggi Leung, Aleksandra Lewicki, Isabella Löhr, Doris Lüken-Klaßen, Marina Lukšič Hacin, Dušan Lužný, Jürgen Mackert, Marco Martiniello, Thomas Matthies, Melanie Mbah, Viktoria Metschl, Silva Mežnarić, Sorin Mitulescu, Dubravka Mlinarić, Elaine Moriarty, Selma Muhic Dizdarevi, Ruxandra Noica, Claudia Olivier-Mensah, Ovidiu Oltean, Andra Panait, Ciprian Panzaru, Alena Parizkova, Ferruccio Pastore, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Edith Pichler, Lydia Potts, Patrice Poutrus, Karin Pries, Ludger Pries, Marijeta Rajković Iveta, Eveline Reisenauer, Marina Richter, Spyros Rizakos, Regina Römhild, Christof Roos, Stefan Rother, Monika Salzbrunn, Marcia C. Schenck, Albert Scherr, Werner Schiffauer, Petra Isabel Schlagenhauf, Andrea Schmelz, Caroline Schmitt, Antonie Schmiz, Michael Schönhuth, Christoph Schroeder, Axel Schulte, Helen Schwenken, Cornelia Schweppe, Senada Šelo Šabić, Monica Serban, Kyoko Shinozaki, Ronald Skeldon, Ilka Sommer, Lena Stehle, Anna Marie Steigemann, Marek Tamm, Blanka Tollarova, Andreas Treichler, Vassilis Tsianos, Zusana Uhde, Bogdan Voicu, Maria Alexandra Voivozeanu, Albrecht Weber, Anja Weiß, Silke Wenk, Stefan Weyers, Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, Nils Witte, Stephan Wolff, Erol Yildiz, Karolis Zibas, Drago Župarić-Iljić

Responsible according to the (German) press law:

Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 44780 Bochum/Germany.

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