

The Refugee Crisis and the Ecumenical Response

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The World Council of Churches (WCC) has a long history of involvement in refugees work. In 1948 WCC has been founded also in order to respond on the disastrous humanitarian impact of the Second World War which caused massive population displacements. Throughout its history, WCC took position and action on several refugees crisis which took place in different parts of the world. Therefore, immediately after the refugee crisis broke up in Europe, the WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit issues a Statement on refugees in Europe¹ (at September 4th 2015) in which he acknowledged firstly the actual refugee crisis as being the worst since the Second World War. He called for more action from all European countries: "It is now absolutely and critically necessary that all European states take their proper responsibility in terms of reception and support for people seeking refuge, safety and a better future for themselves and their families. This cannot be left only to the states where they enter first." He also criticized the fact that some countries might reject refugees because of their religion: "We are shocked to hear of some countries rejecting refugees on the basis of their religion." While acknowledging that WCC member churches from affected countries made big efforts, sometimes even beyond their resources, he challenged "churches worldwide to rediscover their identity, their integrity and their vocation as the church of the stranger. For we are the Church of Jesus Christ, the child refugee (cf. Mathew 2:13)."

On 9 September 2015, a joint letter issued by the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe² addressed to their member churches and associated organizations, called them to mobilize their efforts in order to respond properly to the emerging refugee crisis. The letter contented also examples of policies and positions on refugees and migration as well as practical actions taken by churches and ecumenical bodies to respond to refugee crisis.

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¹ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/statements/statement-on-refugees-in-europe>

² <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/international-affairs/letter-on-european-refugee-situation>