

## Resource materials for the keynote paper

I was a  
stranger

and you  
welcomed me

# Human rights are at stake

## Refugees – ambassadors for human rights!

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### The issue and why it is worth exploring

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” is the title of the keynote paper. Just before this verse in Matthew’s gospel we read: “For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.”

Hunger and thirst are – still today – two reasons among many why people leave their home countries. They want to satisfy basic needs and enjoy their rights in a foreign country. The Bible also reports on other reasons for fleeing: political and religious persecution, war and violence, slavery and forced labour.

Human rights violations through many forms of violence are grounds for fleeing. In a certain sense, they make people ‘ambassadors of human rights’.

- The church does not exist for itself alone but to serve God’s righteousness. Its participation “in missio dei [God’s mission] and Christ’s reign of peace is expressed in how we... shoulder responsibility” (ibid.)
- “Human dignity is inviolable” (article 1, German constitution): “Human beings are made in the image of God. That is the basis of their inalienable dignity. Because commitment to human rights is important, we in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia position ourselves for humanitarian international law and the human rights foundations of the European Union. Consequently our church advocates in many different ways for the rights of refugees, migrants and people with a migration history. In doing so, we uphold the principle that all members of society have a right to participation and just life prospects” (4.4 Taking a position, PDF page 52).

### Propositions and text modules from the keynote paper

- “For people who have been driven away from their homes, or have been forced to flee ‘You welcomed me’ means: I have been saved” (Introduction, PDF page 6, LF Seite 4).
- “Refugees are a particularly vulnerable group of migrants, who had to flee on the basis of political, religious or ethnic persecution, or also due to ongoing war” (2.1 A league match of hearts, PDF page 22).
- People are frequently forced to migrate from sheer hardship, e.g. poverty arising through no fault of their own, or environmental crises. The “drastic prosperity gap” is a root cause of migration. (2.2 Germany as a country shaped by migration, PDF page 24–27)
- Biblical stories like that of Jacob the refugee, Joseph the slave, or Ruth tell of very different reasons for fleeing and migrating, and how people survive and cope with them (1. Biblical and theological reassurance, PDF page 11 ff.).
- “Love the alien as yourself.” Compassion means the unlimited obligation to stand up for the dignity of all our fellow humans.
- Jesus “arouses enthusiasm for quest for truth and justice” (1.4 The church of Jesus Christ in God’s mission, PDF page 20 f.).

### Questions for group discussion

#### Personal or biographical starting point:

- Do you know people who had to flee their country?
- What countries do they come from and what were their reasons?
- Has anyone in your family ever had to flee? How did (do) you talk about it? What role did faith play in these situations?

## Sociopolitical starting points:

- What causes of displacement do you know about? Where are human rights violations involved?
- To what extent do Germany and Europe share some of the responsibility for people having to leave their home countries?
- What has to be changed in order to make the world more just?
- How do you become aware of the human rights situation worldwide?
- How are you personally – or your congregation – involved on behalf of human rights and a more just world?
- What other possibilities of action do you see?
- Many people are coming to Germany because they think this is the only place where they have a future. They would like to work here. Do you know people with this goal? How do you assess this motivation? How should Germany handle it? What negative or positive consequences does this form of labour migration have for the countries of origin?

## Materials and media

- Dossier on refugees and migrants, [www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/hintergruende-zur-flucht](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/hintergruende-zur-flucht)
- Short films on refugees and migrants, [www.suedwind-institut.de/index.php/de/audio-video-386.html](http://www.suedwind-institut.de/index.php/de/audio-video-386.html)

## Practical ideas

- Hold a talk and discussion on the reasons for fleeing and human rights (mentioning e.g. arms exports, trade and resources policy, land-grabbing, climate change, business responsibility).
- Hold an information evening on the human rights situation, in e.g. the country in which your congregation has a partnership or countries refugees come from (e.g. Eritrea, Sudan, Syria).
- Invite people working with refugees to a discussion evening and talk about the motives for fleeing and migrating.
- Take part in campaigns and actions for human rights, e.g. with the United Evangelical Mission or Bread for the World.
- Show films on the reasons why people flee, their routes and on migration in general (see choice of films).
- Display the interactive exhibition “Want to live – welcome” by Bread for the World (suitable from age 14), which can be borrowed from MÖWe.

## Contacts

- MÖWe regional pastors, [www.moewe-westfalen.de/ueber-uns/team](http://www.moewe-westfalen.de/ueber-uns/team)
- Staff of SÜDWIND Institute, Bread for the World, UEM (human rights desk)
- Promoters of the One World network in NRW,
- Staff from Amnesty International, Pro Asyl, FIAN etc.



