



Frequently Asked Questions about Refugees and Migrants

Find them online:
www.eearefugees.org/faqs/

1. What is the difference between a migrant, asylum seeker and refugee?

These words have legal definitions. They are also connected to politics.

According to the dictionary, a migrant is someone who has moved from one country to another voluntarily for economic, political or cultural reasons. It implies free choice. However, the term is so general, it does not adequately explain all the motivations for why the individual has moved. During the present crisis, it has increasingly had a pejorative meaning and can easily dehumanise the individual person.

According to the Geneva Convention¹, a refugee is *“someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion,*

nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”

All refugees are migrants but not all migrants are refugees.

An asylum seeker is someone asking permission to be given the legal status of refugee and thus being allowed to stay in a certain territory. The decision process varies from country to country in Europe and can take from many months to several years to complete.

An undocumented asylum seeker is someone who has not yet registered for asylum or whose asylum process has ended. This is common among displaced people who are trying to reach a destination where they can reunite with family/friends or find a language they speak. It is also increasingly common because governments are beginning to reject asylum seekers on mass, despite knowing it is unsafe to return these people home. So they become undocumented, in limbo, and incredibly vulnerable to exploitation.

At times of war and humanitarian crisis, the UNHCR states that migrants should generally be considered to be refugees. This means that, for example, most Syrians would surely therefore count as refugees.

Refugees have legal rights. Once someone gains the status of refugee, then a country has a duty to allow them to remain.

EEA and the Refugee Campaign tend to use the term “refugee”, not because all the individuals have gained this status, nor because we dismiss the idea that, among the crowds, there are economic migrants. We have chosen generally to use this term because we would rather communicate in a way that errs on the side of grace than of refusal to want to help.

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>

2. What is causing the present exodus? Why are so many people coming now? Where do they want to go?²

The simple causes are war and/or oppression and/or a failed state and/or religious extremism and/or the inability to survive with adequate food, shelter & medicine. People are fleeing for their lives to find safety and protection.

Refugees have been struggling to get to Europe for many years. However, it is in the last eighteen months that the numbers have mushroomed. Well over a million refugees arrived into the EU in 2015, but only 292540 were given official refugee status. The majority of refugees coming into Europe in 2015 were from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia.

In 2016, with restrictions blocking refugees from travelling from Turkey to Greece, the numbers of refugees in Turkey has risen to at least 2.2 million. Also, the Central Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy has become more important. In the first half of 2016, the top nationalities for this route are Eritrea, Nigeria, Gambia, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Sudan, Mali, Senegal, Morocco, Egypt and Syria.

Politicians will argue over the reasons people risk their lives to come to Europe but the following are all likely to be contributing.

1. The underfunding in the UNHCR camps in the Middle East which make survival almost impossible.
2. The spread of barbarism and the intensification of fighting in Syria and elsewhere.
3. People smugglers being well-organised.
4. Social media giving advice and encouragement on how to get to Europe.
5. A perception that it is possible to succeed in relocating and that some countries will welcome you.
6. Poverty and family encouragement to make the journey for economic reasons.
7. A sense that there really is no other choice but to leave everything and everyone and take the perilous journey to Europe

Where do the refugees wish to go? They want to go to a place of peace, safety and freedom and where they perceive that the nation will welcome them and help them to settle. If given a choice, many seek to go to a country where they have contacts. Many will choose a country whose economy is strong enough to cope with new people and where they can find work and/or education.

Nearly two-thirds of asylum applications have been received by Germany and Hungary, with Sweden, Italy and Austria also receiving large numbers. In 2015, Germany received more than 476000 asylum applications but more than a million people in total. Hungary received 177130 applications.

² Sources: UNHCR, Global Trends 2014 (<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&query=global+trends+2014&x=0&y=0>); EU, Migration and Home Affairs (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7105334/3-10122015-AP-EN.pdf>); IAFR, Refugee Realities (<http://iafr.org/refugee-crisis>)

3. Are the migrants really so desperate?

The most desperate Syrians, Afghans, Eritreans, Nigerians, Somalis etc. have not come to Europe. They are too poor, traumatised, oppressed, old or ill to travel. Some have reached relative safety in refugee camps in the region but often do not have adequate supplies to maintain life. However, this does not mean that those coming to Europe are OK and simply coming in order to find more comfortable, prosperous lives.

Our media and politicians tend to categorise the migrants as all the same. However, this is foolish. Are all migrants escaping appalling lives? No. That is naïve. Are they all economic migrants? No. That is the attitude of those who do not want to look closely at reality.

How do we work out who is who? There is no simple, fool-proof system but doing our best to check where people have come from and the circumstances in which they lived is the only thing our governments can do. There are then international legal requirements which will dictate who should be allowed to stay.

Yes, most migrants have spent a lot of money to reach Europe. That does not necessarily mean they have any money left. Most have mobile telephones. Of course they do. They would never have been able to travel without them. Many of the migrants, especially the Syrians, are well-educated and had good jobs in the past. That underlines quite how awful life back home must have been that they would choose to give it all up and risk everything to come to Europe.

4. Our country is a “Christian nation”. How do we make sure it stays a “Christian nation”? And what about prioritising helping Christian refugees?

Some argue that their nation is ‘Christian’ and therefore cannot and should not allow too many non-Christians to settle. Much of Europe has been profoundly shaped by the Bible and the influence of Christianity. But this has never meant that all the peoples have had a living Christian faith and have always lived out their faith as Christ would want us to. And increasingly, our nations are pluralist with many worldviews and faiths.

If we wish to live up to our Christian heritage, then the Bible repeatedly commands us to welcome and assist the vulnerable foreigner. Having done so, we will then need to face the challenge of helping those of different faiths and cultures to integrate well. This is a dual responsibility both on the host to welcome and the foreigner to integrate. As our nations face this challenge, there is an opportunity for Christians to enter the discussion about what our nations are asking newcomers to integrate into. What are our nations’ values and culture? Can we seize the opportunity to promote a stronger, biblical vision for society that seeks the wellbeing of all, with freedom of conscience for all, regardless of their faith?

What about just helping Christian refugees? No! Most Syrian Church leaders insist that Christians should not be given special treatment. Assigning refugee status or offering asylum must be on the basis of vulnerability and need. To do otherwise not only violates international refugee and humanitarian law, but also the teaching of our Saviour. (The Good Samaritan looked beyond religious and ethnic labels to show genuine neighbourliness to the one in need).

Are there some Christian refugees who are particularly vulnerable? Undoubtedly – let us welcome them! And are there legitimate security concerns concerning some refugees? Of course – appropriate safeguards must be put in place! However, let us be clear that we accept refugees on the basis of their need – not their religion. And we exclude those deemed to be a security threat on the basis of evidence – not their religion.

Christians from some areas are certainly among the most vulnerable. Heinous atrocities targeting Christians and other religious minorities have been committed, especially by Daesh (so-called “Islamic State”). Christian refugees who have fled from areas controlled by extremists have a strong case for asylum, based on vulnerability. But a balanced assessment must recognize two important factors.

Firstly, many Christian refugees have not fled from areas overrun by Daesh and have not been under direct threat on account of their religion. Of course, many have a genuine fear of extremists, and especially of an Islamist power-grab if the current Syrian government were to fall. The threat they feel is commonly on account of their perceived political affiliation (Christians are assumed to support the regime) rather than because of their religion – threats also felt by other groups.

Secondly, it is not just Christians who have fled from areas controlled by extremists – the majority who have left these areas are Muslims whose values and ways of life differ from those of the extremists. They too have fled because of their extreme vulnerability. While the danger of ill-intentioned infiltrators amongst asylum applicants must be taken seriously, it would be perverse to label all non-Christians who have fled extremist threats as suspected extremists rather than to recognize their vulnerability.

Providing asylum in the West might meet the immediate need for a place of safety (though don’t underestimate the challenge of integration, including for Christians). However, what about longer-term aspirations? What about the future of the Church in the home country? Christians long to be able to stay in their homelands. Church leaders are grieved that so many are leaving, even while they fully understand the desperation of those wanting to get out.

5. What does the Bible say about foreigners and integration of foreigners?

There are broadly two terms for immigrants in the Bible. The *ger*, often translated ‘alien’ or ‘sojourner’ was typically someone who came to Israel without resources of their own, and who were dependent on others for support. They were usually willing to integrate fully with Israelite life and religion, and were to be treated the same as native Israelites under the law. The *ger* appears repeatedly alongside other vulnerable groups who lacked family and land, such as orphans and widows. The Israelites were commanded to love the alien and not mistreat them, ‘because you were aliens in Egypt’ (Leviticus 19:34).

Then there was the *nokri*, the ‘true’ foreigner, who was economically independent, who had different values and who did not integrate into Israelite life. The Israelites are repeatedly warned about the *nokri*, because they represented a threat to Israelite culture and religion – Solomon’s many foreign wives being the most notable example (1 Kings 11:1-13). All the same, if a *nokri* showed willingness to convert then they were also to be welcomed.

It was therefore the duty of the Israelites to welcome those who genuinely showed an openness to integrating, and to protect the vulnerable, but also to treat with caution those who did not share their faith and ideals and who would potentially undermine their society and economy as a result.

Twenty-first century Europe, with its many faiths and worldviews, is so different from Old Testament Israel but can we extrapolate some helpful guidance from the biblical principles?

Modern-day equivalents of the *ger* would include the asylum-seeker/refugee and arguably the low-paid economic migrant, who has travelled to Europe to escape serious hardship. Equivalents of the *nokri* would include those who are self-sufficient but choose not to integrate meaningfully in terms of maintaining religious and cultural customs contrary to the laws of their host country (e.g. Sharia law or honour killing).

Biblical wisdom indicates that, if they want full rights, then there is a duty upon the foreigner not just to follow immigration and asylum procedures but to integrate into society. But actually the greater biblical duty is on the host community generously to welcome and care for the vulnerable foreigner, to facilitate their inclusion and to treat these newcomers as full citizens.

6. The refugee crisis is sad but what can I do?

Pictures of distressed children and desperate adults and terrible conditions in camps upset us. Statistics overwhelm us. It can be hard not to look away because we simply don't know what to do or it just seems frightening.

Can an ordinary individual make a difference?

We believe that the answer is yes. Here are some ideas. Our contexts and opportunities vary but focus on what you can do and don't worry about the rest.

Pray. Pray for hope, protection, provision, fairness, compassion. Pray for those who are afraid. Pray against xenophobia or abuse and those who would seek to exploit people's misery for profit. Pray for those who care for refugees and are worn down. You probably cannot go to the worst places and help but you can support and encourage those who do work there.

Find out more. There is a lot of fear. There is a lot of misinformation. So make a decision to find out reliable information and share it in your conversations and on social media. Be an advocate for truth. Reassure. Ask questions to help friends consider what is right. Challenge falsehood. If politics is your thing, look at our advocacy materials and get ready to speak up. Pray for the politics of the situation.

Are there refugees or asylum seekers living near you? Can you befriend them? Can you volunteer with a local NGO or persuade your church to get involved? If not, be sensible and don't act alone but you and a friend can still say hello to refugees (of your gender).

What simple things will make a difference? Helping someone understand the bus timetable or how to find what they want in the supermarket or how to fill in a form. Encouraging them in their language learning. Enjoying the local park / museum together. Accompanying a mum and child to a parent and toddler club. Playing sport or games together. Cooking for one another and sharing meals.

Look at the other FAQs and resources on this website and you will gain many ideas. These include getting to understand Islam.

If getting to know refugees personally is not an option, can you contact a ministry working with refugees (at home or abroad) and ask how you can pray or collect items needed? Can you raise money? Could you get sponsored e.g. for camping under a plastic sheet? OR invite friends to pay to come to a Middle Eastern meal?

But of course, there are other needs. There are many other people in need of support all around us. It is right that Christians respond to the refugee crisis. Let's keep working to bless other vulnerable people who are struggling with material or relational poverty or other needs. If this is your focus, that's fine.

The scale of the refugee crisis is indeed overwhelming but that does not mean we are powerless. As Christians, we are all invited to offer our few loaves of bread and fish to Jesus and see what He can do with them. So let's be encouraged by what we can do with His help, and pray and leave to God the things that are beyond us.

7. Government and or church responsibility: What is the difference between the government's responsibility in this refugee crisis, and our responsibility as churches?

The biblical role of government can be summed up as ensuring peace, justice and a society where the vulnerable are protected and can flourish. Of course, that does not give us all the details, especially on how the vulnerable might be helped. That's where politics and also circumstances influence the situation. People will also argue over what is the responsibility of local or national government or indeed the European Union or United Nations.

Christians have responsibilities too, with complementary but different roles between the local church and Christian aid/development agencies (who are committed to industry best quality standards such as the Red Cross Code of Conduct and SPHERE standards). We should all pray for our politicians, urge them to do the right thing and to speak up for justice and righteousness if they do wrong. We should pray for our neighbours who are afraid and for the refugees themselves. But we have other God-given tasks too. This FAQ looks at the role of the local church.

Churches are called to love the vulnerable and minister to their needs in a holistic way. This includes caring for physical, emotional and spiritual needs regardless of someone's faith or any other criteria. It is perfectly appropriate for church members to discuss faith where opportunity naturally arises, provided it is done sensitively and respectfully and the refugee does not feel compelled in any way. While Europeans tend to be reluctant to talk about faith, in Middle Eastern culture it is very normal to talk about religion. Many refugees expect and welcome the opportunity to talk about spiritual matters. The Church has a specific biblical mandate to share the good news that all can enter into relationship with God through Jesus Christ, whatever their religious background. This should of course always be done in a way that never exploits tragedy or vulnerability for proselytism purposes. We should minister to all the refugees' needs.

Politicians need to bring order out of chaos, to ensure fair, safe and compassionate systems to assess all the refugees' needs as well as their backgrounds. Politicians and public administration will decide who is allowed to transit through a territory or to stay temporarily or permanently. There are international laws to guide these decisions. It is not acceptable for refugees to be treated in inhumane ways, for unaccompanied children or the sick to be ignored or for all refugees to be seen as a threat.

It is not that simple. When the numbers of refugees are overwhelming and resources are totally inadequate, how are the authorities supposed to cope? But there is a huge difference between doing one's best to assist and only seeing the crowds as a problem to be gotten rid of as quickly as possible. Is this not just a political issue but a humanitarian crisis overwhelming our capacity, or more simply, purely a political problem to be dealt with as firmly as possible or ignored completely?

In the emergency phase, churches help to feed, clothe and simply show compassion to the refugees. We should also speak up where necessary to challenge unfair or inadequate treatment of the new arrivals. Once it becomes clear where refugees are likely to settle, our role can change. The State will do their best to offer basic housing, education, medical care and job opportunities. In many places, especially less prosperous regions, these are things which churches can do in the name of Christ—and many other things too. For example, can Christians offer accommodation or language classes / support? Can we offer to help refugees understand forms or how the medical system works, find their way around the supermarket or understand the basics of the culture? Do we have counsellors who can help them process some of the trauma they have been through? Can we be their friends and commit for the long term, sharing lives together? Can we offer hope? If they need it, can we offer legal advice regarding their asylum application? And we need to continue to pray.

The Church can also help wider society as it reacts to the arrival of refugees. Some are fearful, others are resentful. We have a pastoral role, listening, providing opportunities for people to express their concerns and seek answers, being hope bringers and peace makers. And we have a prophetic role to speak out whenever hatred is fostered.

The government will organise and provide, and Christians can encourage them to do these tasks well. The Church's job is to love unconditionally and serve on behalf of Christ whom we love and serve, with our head, hearts and hands.

8. Is it appropriate to share the Gospel with refugees coming to Europe? Would that be exploiting vulnerability?

The Refugee Campaign's partners are resourcing Europe's churches to reach out to refugees. Europe's Evangelicals are offering hope. For the Church – that is, all genuine Christians –, this hope includes the eternal dimension. Sensitive sharing of faith is absolutely appropriate.

In Europe, especially more aggressively-secular Western Europe, many object to churches' alleged lack of neutrality, equal treatment of others, or legitimacy in serving others when they have a religious motivation. Religion is supposedly a bad motivation and may lead to exploitation. (See below).

Actually, the Refugee Campaign sees faith in Jesus as an excellent motivation for providing help to the vulnerable. We believe that churches should do what they can, despite their limited resources. And as a general rule help should be given regardless of age, gender, religion or any other criteria. Practical support should be given unconditionally and never simply as a platform to proselytise. No one should exploit the vulnerability or tragedy of others.

Churches are called to love the vulnerable and minister to their needs in a holistic way. This includes caring for physical, emotional and spiritual needs. The Church has a specific biblical mandate to share the good news that all can enter into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ, whatever their religious background. It is perfectly fitting for Christians to discuss faith where opportunity arises, provided this is sensitive and respectful and the refugee does not feel coerced or manipulated in any way. The Refugee Campaign is promoting resources which will help Christians to share their faith appropriately.

Would sharing faith be exploiting vulnerability?

Especially in Western Europe, which is more influenced by more aggressive forms of secularism, objections abound due to the prejudice that churches are not necessarily 'neutral,' that they are discriminatory, exploiting others, that they should not be as involved or if they are, they should not 'proselytise.'

"Our Christian missions' history has occasionally included crusades, religious wars, forced conversions, inquisitions, and inappropriate connections between missions and colonisation. Of course we have long rejected such practices, but not everyone knows that," said Thomas K. Johnson commenting³ on the 2011 remarkable joint statement by the World Evangelical Alliance, World Council of Churches and Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, *Christian Witness in an Multifaith World*⁴.)

Although it is unnecessary and impossible to confess and ask forgiveness for these sins committed by others, we should acknowledge these facts of Christian history explicitly as much as our rejection of these past errors. This is especially important because not doing so helps breed prejudice and rumour about continued bad intentions and abuses among churches and Christians.

However, most of these present day accusations are unverified or simply not valid. In their work to serve the needy and vulnerable, including refugees, Christians will choose to operate in various ways, from local and informal initiatives to involvement with the authorities and non-religious organisations to church action to work with Christian aid and development organisations.

³ http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_299_link_1310653627.pdf

⁴ https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world/@@download/file/ChristianWitness_recommendations.pdf

Christian aid and development agencies complement the work of the local church. They are motivated by their faith, and in disaster situations respect and sign up to best quality standards of their branch, such as the Red Cross Code of Conduct, and SPHERE standards. This means they will not withhold aid to anyone in need, regardless of age, gender, or religion. They respect and often work with local churches, but see their mandate as different and complementary.

Like Christian development organisations, the Refugee Campaign's partners believe firmly in and therefore subscribe to universally recognised standards of Human Rights, especially respect for religious freedom. These standards imply that, in general, we should "impose no religious obligations on beneficiaries" of aid and ministry and that in all cases, "the use of any form of coercion or manipulation is excluded." (See the excellent Code of Conduct for Christian Development Organisations⁵ drafted by a platform within the Swiss Evangelical Alliance.) Likewise, any abuse of authority, especially when it comes to religion or belief, must not be permitted: people who benefit from services are often vulnerable, yet are to be put on an equal footing and treated on that basis. That may mean that certain aspects of the ministry are made accessible only to believers.

⁵http://www.evangelique.ch/sites/default/files/Code%20de%20conduite_Verhaltenskodex_Code_of_Conduct.pdf_0.pdf

9. Is it OK to talk about Jesus to Muslims? Would that offend them?

In Middle Eastern culture it is very normal to talk about religion. Many refugees expect and welcome the opportunity to talk about spiritual matters. Secular Europeans should not imagine that refugees share their cultural squeamishness about religious discussion.

Refugees should have their religious freedom protected. This means enabling them to practice their Muslim / Christian / Yazidi / other faith or not to practice any. This also means ensuring they have the chance if they wish to explore other faith perspectives and to change faith if they choose. Wherever they are, Christians should indeed remain “free to talk about their faith, in accordance with their own religious freedom. They do this carefully, with sensitivity and respect for others.” See the “Engaging with Muslims” resource page and the excellent Swiss Code of Conduct⁶.

⁶http://www.evangelique.ch/sites/default/files/Code%20de%20conduite_Verhaltenskodex_Code_of_Conduct.pdf_0.pdf

10. My church is small, we can't do much. But what could we do to help?

Remember the boy with the bread and fish and what Jesus could do when the boy made them available. So prayerfully consider some of these options.

Make prayer your focus.

- Pray for all who are trying to help refugees and find solutions in an impossible situation.
- Pray for the refugees themselves, for safety, for hope, for just decisions about their futures and for successful integration.
- Pray for your nation. Pray for those who are afraid. Pray against any effort to stir up fear and even hatred and violence. Pray for good patriotism to win out over any toxic kind of nationalism. Pray that the people of your nation will dare to welcome and to help newcomers fit in. Pray for the authorities, that they will manage complicated situations wisely and with compassion.
- And pray that the Lord would use this time of turmoil for His good purposes to bring life and hope to many.

Find out what is happening in your town. Can you offer to support what the authorities, other churches or charities are doing?

Consider the bread and fish within your church community. Could your children / youth / old people's ministry be adapted so that refugees could join in? What are the things that would come naturally to individuals? Teaching a refugee your language? Helping them navigate themselves around the supermarket? Providing haircuts or transport to a hospital appointment? Inviting a family for a meal? Inviting refugees to come to your home or church and cook a meal for you? Just being a friend?

Once you know what you have to offer, prayerfully approach the authorities / refugee centre and let them know. Or look for natural opportunities to get to know refugees.

And, if you know people who are afraid, worried about change, frustrated because they face their own challenges and don't think anyone cares, take time to listen. Don't judge or push your views on to those with genuine concerns. Potentially provide opportunities to express and explore fears and frustrations appropriately, and seek answers together.

Look on the resources pages on this site to help you: <http://www.eearefugees.org/explore-resources/>

11. How can our church decide what to do?

1. First things first

Look at the resources on these pages. Ask God to shape your thinking and heart towards the refugees. Fear and other concerns should not be ignored but can be alleviated through prayerful and informed discussion, training, literature and testimonies of how God is at work among the refugee community.

2. Research/discover what is already happening in the area.

- Don't re-invent the wheel... Ask the local Evangelical Alliance or other churches for information on who is doing what, where, with whom.
- Ask aid organizations, or agencies like OM or YWAM what they are doing.
- Find out what the authorities are doing.

3. Go and look. Go with those who already have access to where the refugees are, and who are already doing something to see/experience what they are doing, and be on the lookout for **3 things**:

- What are the needs?
- Where do you see your church contributing to what is already happening?
- Is there something that is missing, a niche your church could fill?

4. Assess the gifts and abilities of those in your church that desire to be a part of this ministry, and **match these gifts to the needs**/ministries you noticed in the point above. If church members cook, play football, can cut hair, have a car and could offer lifts, run a children's club, are lawyers, could give basic language lessons, enjoy showing people around... all these things give a hint at where you might want to start.

5. Try to **learn a few greetings and words** in Arabic or Farsi or other languages, perhaps from a refugee friend.

6. **Begin going, serving, building trust, and building relationships**... Just join in with what is already happening but with eyes wide open to other needs needing to be filled, and to God's guidance in the process. Then recruit church members who can meet those needs.

Here are needs refugees often have:

Legal/advocacy needs

- Registration, staying permits, citizenship
- Family law, rights of families, benefits, legal representation
- Knowing/understanding laws of host country (This comes up all the time!)

Medicinal needs: Many are tired and sick, even traumatized (needing counsel)

Educational needs: Integration isn't possible without education

If we want them to participate in society and join the workforce, refugees will need education

- Local Language
 - Customs/mores
 - Tips on host country customs & culture (many have used this as a means of introducing the Bible, saying: “just as the Koran has great influence on the thinking and customs/culture of your country, the Bible has greatly impacted out culture/customs... the Bible will help in your understanding of this your host country.
 - Kindergartens: get their children in kindergartens or involved in children’s / youth clubs to learn local language + customs/mores, then pass on to parents
 - Learn about the public institutions
 - Have the opportunity to convert their professional qualification into one that will be accepted in the new country. Or learn a new trade.
1. **Social needs:** Community Building...Help fit into society. There is so much churches can do to befriend and to provide interaction opportunities with locals for families together or for women, men, children, young people and the elderly.
 2. **Spiritual needs:**
 - Culturally relevant forms of evangelism and discipleship
 - Small group “planting”/Church planting
 - Training of pastors/leaders among those that stay in country
 - Training of those that return home as disciples of Jesus to return as disciples sent by him ...with sustainable subsistence strategies

Perhaps these tasks can be carried out as a movement of several churches (e.g. in a local Evangelical Alliance) and/or in partnership with specialists, Christian ministries and other organisations.

7. Have a few **tools in your pocket** when the inevitable question comes: “why are you doing this, why are you helping as you are?” Know what to say and know that it is clear and simple. Have sensitive literature, ideally in the refugees’ language. You may wish to get training, eg from Sharing Lives⁷
8. **Reflect**, process, pray and plan as you go, serve, build trust and relationships.
9. **Pray!** Pray for the refugees themselves to find hope. Pray also for their successful integration into society and that the host population will welcome them. Pray for protection against all who would want to stir up division, hatred and even violence.

⁷ <http://www.sharinglives.eu/>

12. How to get funding for your refugee work?

You have a great project and you are expecting a great work among refugees. Your job now is to convince people who don't know you to believe that your work will be great. So answer these questions.

- Who are you? What have you been doing with refugees? What has the impact been?
- What do you plan to do and that needs funding?
- Why do you believe that these plans are the best thing to do? Who will you benefit and how?
- How much money do you need? Include a simple budget.
- What are you doing to raise this money?
- Provide contact info in case people want to know more. Provide bank account details.

Get a friend who does not work for your project to read your text and comment on how clear, interesting and convincing it is and then make any changes that you both agree on.

Now who can help you?

Funding is never easy to find but these are people who may have ideas of funding sources.

- The Refugee Campaign country point person for your country. See <http://www.eearefugees.org/who-can-help-you/>
- Your national Evangelical Alliance
- Your denomination or mission agency
- Partner agencies working on refugees in your nation.

What are good fundraising options?

- Mailings (paper and digital) to a specific group of people who could be interested.
- Contact to Christian and other philanthropic foundations to present your project.
- Contact Christian businesses to present your project.
- Present the project on a crowdfunding platform like (<http://www.crowdfunding.de/plattformen/>) (Try to fundraise a part of your costs or tell the people that you will start working when all is funded.)
- Events in churches, neighbourhoods etc. to present your project and to collect money. Be as creative as you can be. Never make people feel pressurised to give.
- Invite friends and family to a dinner or other event with the clear purpose of raising funds for your project.

Members of the Refugee Campaign community may well be interested in your project. So try uploading your funding document with a word of intro to <https://www.facebook.com/TheRefugeeCampaign/>

EEA staff cannot help you with fundraising matters. So please use the channels suggested in this FAQ rather than connecting with them.

13. How many of these people are Muslims? What about Islamic terrorism?

There are no exact figures available regarding how many Muslims are among the refugees, but the majority belong to the Muslim community. However, it is important to acknowledge the sizeable number of Christian refugees arriving, especially from Iran, and also Yazidis. In some places, churches have doubled in size because of refugees joining them.

Of course, there is the possibility that so called Islamic State (IS) or other extremist Muslim organisations will be smuggling terrorists to Europe. There is also some evidence of attempts to radicalise alienated refugees once they have reached Europe. The Würzburg train attack was carried out by a refugee, the Reutlingen attack by an asylum seeker.

On the other hand, IS does not have to take the risk and smuggle terrorists to Europe by making them risking the dangerous trip over the Mediterranean Sea: In our big cities in Europe radical movements are fishing for their clients among the deprived third generation Muslim community for a long time already; youth who are in search for identity and belonging. The Brussels, Paris, Nice & Rouen attacks were all carried out by Europeans or those who were already settled here.

Studies have shown that most violent Muslims, bent on holy war / Jihad, share a similar background. They are not devout believers, neither are they poor or brainwashed. Most are middle class, educated, married parents. Many are converts to Islam. The journey towards radicalisation begins with feeling humiliated and unwanted by society. A radical Muslim usually starts by feeling humiliated and angry that society would not accept him/her. The next stage of the journey is to find a group of likeminded friends who provide acceptance, security, meaning, a sense of family. The group meets in private and members feed each other's sense of bitterness towards wider society. Then indoctrination takes place where it becomes believed that to hit back violently at Western society / the "infidel" is a justifiable act of defence. At this stage, an individual may well cut themselves off from their family and other friends. And then finally, the group's leader will swiftly prepare the individual for their act of terrorism.

You can read more about political and radical Islam in Christine Schirmacher's Political Islam – when faith turns out to be politics⁸.

When we consider these common background factors of Islamic terrorists, it becomes plain that wider society has a huge role to play to prevent radicalisation. The more we can help Muslims to feel accepted, while of course expecting them to make efforts to fit in, the less radicalisation there will be. The converse is also true. If we fail in our responsibilities and allow Muslim refugees to feel unwanted, then we should not be surprised if they find their way into radicalising groups.

It is our task to become bridge builders to the Muslim community so that, not only are they not alienated and vulnerable to radicalisation but also so that our societies are happy and healthy.

Could an individual refugee who comes to your project be dangerous? This is a tiny possibility so be sensible. A woman should never be alone with a man in the same room with the door closed (and the other way round). Never insult by implying you think all Muslims are dangerous. Nevertheless, if somebody is unwilling or gets angry if the subject of political Islam or radicalism comes up, and if he/he does not want to distance him-/herself from political Islam or radicalism, be concerned. This implies that the person just sees Islam and political Islam as one and the same thing. If project workers ever feel threatened, uneasy or directly attacked (verbally or physically), look for professional help and security people. Never try to downplay or excuse such an event or solve it yourselves.

⁸ https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/Buecher/WEA_GIS_16_Christine_Schirmacher_-_Political_Islam.pdf

14. How much religious freedom should be granted to people of other faiths? What about harassment of Christian refugees?

There are things almost all of us used to take for granted before the refugee crisis became a major topic of attention for the media and for politicians. Various political figures and parties in Europe have now overtly challenged the Geneva Convention on Refugees⁹, signed in 1951 (after the horrors of World War II), whereby more than 145 countries have committed to protect people who are persecuted, including on religious grounds, and lost their home country's protection. Some claim we should simply stop welcoming people who seek protection. Some claim that only people persecuted because they were Christians deserve protection in 'Christian' European countries (see FAQ 7). The crisis is challenging our political values and principles of freedom, human dignity, equality, the rule of law as well as respect for human rights, including for minorities.

The settled opinion of the Christian religious freedom community—certainly so in Evangelical circles—is that *religious freedom is for all*. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief (aka 'FoRB'), just like any universally recognised human right (including the right to be protected from persecution), should be respected for everyone everywhere. These rights and freedoms are tied to our recognition that, although imperfect, all human beings are created in the likeness of God and possess inalienable dignity. As much as God is seeking and saving those who are lost, God calls people to seek him and find him; forced worship stinks to the nostrils of God.

Political and religious freedoms are among the reasons that attract exiles *to Europe* as opposed to other places. Europe's understanding of religious freedom and human rights cannot differ from the universal principles. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief is in principle maximal and should be recognised equally for all human beings. The *manifestations* of religion or belief (including expressing one's worldview-based opinions and behaving according to them) can be regulated at a national or local level depending on the context, but outlawing certain expressions of faith or belief should only happen in very limited circumstances where genuine harm exists, such as threats, calls to violence, or proven danger for the rights and security of other people. Expression of faith or belief should not be banned simply because it is perceived as 'extreme,' 'radical,' 'fundamentalist' or 'foreign,' whatever the religion or belief. My belief and behaviour can always be perceived as extreme by someone else.

Diversity, however, is a challenge and needs proper governance. Europe's history, whether ancient or more recent, is a blatant reminder of that. Surely, it could be argued that mismanagement of diversity in local or national politics, in Europe and elsewhere, has led to very intricate public policy challenges today. The integration – or, better, *inclusion* – of recent migrants and their children is one of the more pressing challenges. In this effort, it is important for Christians to value a culture of hospitality, which means recognising the culture and dignity of the other, while at the same time demanding of everyone to abide by common rules.

However, much of that discussion is beyond the realm of law: alongside others in our societies, Christians, individually or in community, need to *foster virtues of civility* which will help newcomers and established residents live together in harmony, including with their differences. Rejecting what is sometimes the most precious part of people's identity – their faith or core sources of meaning, irrespective of whether that source is true or untrue – is often the best way to foster hostility and hatred.

Just as all the refugees should have their religious freedom protected, they also need help to understand that religious freedom is for all and that, in Europe, they must accept this fact. This could be a challenging truth for some Muslims. Indeed, there have been troubling stories of harassment of non-Muslims in refugee camps. And many Muslims will find it hard to tolerate those who choose to explore the possibility of leaving Islam.

⁹ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>

Christians should ask the authorities to ensure that religious freedom, including the right to change your faith is both maintained within the refugee communities but that it is also taught in a positive way to adults and also in schools. Where necessary, protection must be provided for those in danger of persecution because of their faith, be that Christian, Yazidi, different kinds of Muslim or another faith.

Christians can help by providing opportunities for people of different faiths to come together in joint activities (sport, culture, meals etc.), by encouraging mutual understanding and in being sensitive in all their conversations about their own faith. If Christian refugees of Muslim background join their church, they should understand the pressures they may well be under and also bear in mind basic security issues, e.g. not taking photos.

15. There are too many of them!! How can we possibly cope?

- The impression that the numbers of arrivals of refugees are impossible to cope with seems to be widespread. There are reasons, sometimes justified reasons, to think that way:
 - The media coverage of migration routes is often dramatic and – for good reasons – focuses on the growing number of migrants using unusual and often life-threatening routes to Europe. More significantly, the words *crisis*, *wave*, *aliens*, *threat* or *combat illegal migration* and the illegal and unsafe methods of travel of so many migrants increase the negative outlook and the impression of an invasion.
 - Migrants often travel in groups for various reasons. They often seek to enter countries through the same points. They often seek asylum in the same nations and are often grouped in the same welcome centres. This concentration is certainly a burden for the authorities in some places as well as local budgets.
- However we need to take into account several sobering other factors:
 - It should be reminded that the dramatic, fear-provoking scenes on TV of men, women and children walking, climbing and swimming across thousands of kilometres with their families, suggestive of an invasion, are the result primarily of political choices. First, the war, insecurity and failed states at home. But second, Europe's migration (or rather, *anti-migration*) policies. In other words, if thousands forcibly displaced people walk or take the boat, it is because they are denied the possibility of getting a visa and then to board a plane.
 - According to the UNHCR, there are more than 60 million exiles in the world. There are high predictions of about two million of them who will seek asylum in Europe in 2015-2016, meaning that 97% of the world's exiles will remain outside of Europe. Supposing that happened, and they were all granted asylum, the newcomers would represent an increase of roughly 0,005% of the total population if we only count "Western Europe."
- One of the founding principles in the European Union is the principle of solidarity. It basically means that a nation should be willing to meet the needs of all others, and all nations for one. It also entails meeting the need of those peoples and nations who are less fortunate and supporting them in becoming more self-reliant and stable. Where this principle applied, it should lead to a policy of burden sharing among the EU Member States to cope with the numbers of asylum and welcome procedures. It also should lead to support for solutions in countries of origin and transit. The Western European nations, who represent the wealthiest group of economies in the world and are among the strongest political influences internationally, should surely consider this as within their reach.

Many local communities have felt overwhelmed with refugees travelling through or significant numbers being placed there at least for the time being. It is not at all surprising that many have felt fearful. Others, battling with their own issues of housing or poverty, are resentful. Governments, with so many pressure upon them, have sometimes housed too many refugees in particular locations. Nevertheless, let's rejoice that our nations offer stability, security and freedom which are so attractive to these refugees. And let's work hard to welcome refugees, helping them find their place in our society, offering Christ's love.

16. We are already helping but we are exhausted! OR We want to help but what happens in a few months when we are exhausted?

Helping others can be a costly business. As Christians we are called to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 19:19). We tend to interpret that as sacrificing our own needs to those of others. We ignore the second half of that sentence “as yourself” because the word ‘love’ is assumed. The assumption built in is that we love ourselves. When you take a plane journey, the stewards demonstrate the safety code which includes the following: “In the event of a loss of oxygen, oxygen masks will drop down. The passenger should always fit his or her own mask before helping others requiring assistance”. The principle is good – to take care of others you have to take care of yourself.

Self-Care

What does the Bible have to say about Self-Care?

- Jesus’ example. On more than one occasion, Jesus withdrew to a quiet place after ministering to many people. He knew he needed to recharge his batteries, spiritually, physically and emotionally (Mark 6:1; 9:30; John 6:18)
- God’s ministry. The God of compassion who comforts us (2Corinthians 1:3-4). The story of Elijah (1 Kings 19)
- The Holy Spirit. We are reminded that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and as such it is our duty to care for them. (1 Corinthians 3:17)

We need to know and rely on our identity in Christ. So often we think we need to achieve in order to please God. Ephesians 1:12 says we are “to BE for the praise of his glory” not “to do”. Staying healthy in ministry and sustaining ministry begins with a right sense of our identity in Christ and taking care of our own needs.

To help ourselves, each other and refugee communities, we have to understand a number of things.

What is stress?

Stress is a force or pressure. In materials it causes metals to bend, change their shape. In humans it is a natural response to new situations. It causes us to respond to the pressure, to adapt, to anticipate problems. It teaches us to cope with trying conditions while remaining effective. Good stress is useful – it helps you get up in the mornings!

Acute stress when we experience too many demands, too many stressful experiences, and can lead to destructive symptoms, depression, exhaustion and burnout. Overload may be felt gradually but is predictable.

Why do we get stressed helping refugees?

- We are overwhelmed by the sheer numbers and the lack of immediate solutions
- There are inadequate financial resources
- We hear too many stories of atrocities, violence and trauma. We take them to heart and end up being traumatised ourselves
- We deplete our resources by being constantly available to meet the need. We think we are indispensable
- We are trying to handle too many roles – working by day, volunteering by night
- We lose perspective, a sense of balance and of connection to people and sometimes to God

How do we recognise stress?

- Before entering into stressful situations, it is helpful to know your usual symptoms of stress – physical (e.g. sleeplessness, loss of appetite), emotional (excessive weeping, irritability, anger) and behavioural (e.g. withdrawal, addictions, inability to make decisions)
- Talk to someone you trust, whom you trust when you feel under pressure. They will feed back on your behaviour

What can we do to prevent stress?

Take good care of yourself physically – healthy eating, sleeping, exercise. Create exercise opportunities if the physical environment is harsh.

- Talk to people, build a network of supportive relationships
- Set boundaries – learn to say “no”
- Have training on what to expect in the work

What is compassion fatigue?

The disturbing and stressful behaviours and emotions experienced by a helper of victims. They result from being exposed to the verbal details of the traumatic event. They lead to fatigue, weariness and some of the signs that trauma victims themselves experience.

How can pastors or organisations help?

- Train volunteers in self-care as well as refugee-care
- Control the schedule – insist on time off and model it themselves
- Train teams in listening skills and encourage them to listen to each other
- Remind them regularly of their identity in Christ
- Encourage support social networks outside of the work
- Have training themselves on staff care and specialist skills such as Critical Incident debriefing

“We are not stressed yet. But we are worried about getting deeper into refugee ministry than we can handle and so could end up in trouble.”

The fact that you have realised the danger is a good foundation for making sure this does not happen. Decide prayerfully and carefully what you can commit to doing and what you cannot do. The needs may be huge but give these needs to God for you cannot help everyone. He sees every individual and is responsible for each one. We are not. If you are reaching out to refugees on top of your normal commitments, inevitably your time is limited. Be careful not to overburden others (your fellow church members or your family) because of the commitments you accept but which will involve them.

Never feel that the contribution you can give is too small. The Lord has prepared good works for you to do (Ephesians 2:10). Do not do what He has prepared for others to do.

17. How can I get involved in Turkey?

Turkey is already hosting millions of refugees. With the EU now returning refugees to Turkey and many, many refugees still coming into the nation from the South and East, the numbers are only going to increase.

We have also witnessed terrorist attacks and political instability. Many tourists are keeping away. The pressure is on Turkey – economically, politically and from a security perspective.

The Christian community in Turkey, both indigenous and foreign, is very small in number. It is viewed with great suspicion by much of the media. There is occasional intimidation and attack.

But great ministry is quietly being done for refugees.

The first thing we can do is to pray. For the country, for Christians, for refugees.

The second thing to ensure is that we do not make life more difficult for Christians in Turkey. Be careful about information you share publicly. If Christians come to Turkey, they must be discreet. With this in mind, there are a growing number of ways to get involved.

Volunteering: A new working group in Turkey has been tasked with discovering opportunities for short term work among the various refugee ministries on the ground. If you are interested in how your church can serve these ministries, feel free to contact this working group through the Refugee Campaign's Turkey point person.

Donations: There are several ministries that are set up to receive donations for projects among refugees in Turkey. There are a number of ongoing humanitarian relief, development and other evangelical projects focused on refugees. If your church is interested in being matched with a project through our Refugee Campaign partners, please contact the Turkey point person.

Prayer: There are both general and Turkey-focused prayer networks set up for those who want to pray for refugees. From these networks you can receive regularly updated prayer requests from ministries and churches serving refugees in Turkey.

Contact: Refugee Campaign Turkey point person

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