

1 Europe needs open borders

2 Statement of the BDKJ General Annual Meeting 2015

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5 Week after week, thousands of people die in the “mass grave” Mediterranean Sea. In 2014,
6 219,000 refugees crossed the Mediterranean. 3,500 died during that trip. In 2015, about
7 31,500 crossings have been registered in Italy and Greece, the two countries where the
8 majority of refugees land after the crossings¹. This week alone, about 1,100 people died in
9 several tragedies at the Libyan coast.

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11 After the death of 366 refugees off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013, politicians were
12 alarmed and everybody said that such a tragedy should not happen again. However, the
13 political actions taken since this disaster have aggravated the situation (e.g. missing support
14 for Italian rescue programme “Mare Nostrum”). The following mission, “Triton”, saves
15 European borders in the first place, not the people being in danger. The result of all this are
16 the current disasters. We haven’t learned from the tragedies before. Pope Francis called the
17 death of migrants “shameful”².

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19 Every human being does have the right to asylum. This right can be exercised if your basic
20 human rights are not secure in your country of origin. But the right to asylum always needs
21 someone guaranteeing asylum to the refugee. Otherwise, the right to asylum is of no value.

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23 We must question critically if we actually guarantee the right to asylum as a “progressive”
24 Europe. Border fences around “Fortress Europe” are forcing people into danger of death and
25 illegal status, way before they are granted the right to asylum.

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27 We are asking how many refugee disasters have to happen before European policies are
28 changed. In view of the current incidents, we strongly refer to our resolution of the General
29 Annual Meeting 2014. In point 3 “For an open Europe”, we stated:

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31 „Every year, thousands of people are searching their way towards Europe. In most cases, they
32 undergo great risks, as for example the so-called “boat-people”. Those who, in their
33 desperation, decide for “human trafficking”, also have to face great risks, and they often
34 need years of work or begging until they are able to pay the smugglers. [...]

35 Therefore, we demand:

36 [...]

- 37 • **To guarantee migrants a secure, transparent and fair access to the asylum system in**
38 **the European Union, to open the fleeing ways towards Europe and to use the**
39 **opportunities of “humanitarian visas” and “resettlement”.**

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41 Following our Christian faith, we do not accept the described disastrous circumstances, and
42 we therefore demand that politicians need to act.

43 More demands on the topics asylum and refugees regarding our vision of an open Europe can
44 be found in the resolution cited above (2014) and in the resolution on domestic and
45 development policy called “Welcome! – Opening perspectives for refugees now”, adopted at
46 the General Annual Meeting 2015.

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48 Pope Francis says: “We must face the problem with the logic of hospitality”. Hospitality starts
49 with an open door. So let’s pull down border fences and earnestly guarantee the right to
50 asylum to those in need. People who need protection shall get it.

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52 *Let’s think big and open our borders!*

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55 Adopted unanimously at the BDKJ General Annual Meeting, held from 16th to 19th April, 2015, at Burg
56 Rothenfeld.

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/552e603f9.html> , 15/04/2015

² <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-migrants-deaths-are-shameful> , 03/10/2013