

# We speak with one voice:

**five appeals to our  
religious communities  
for the protection  
of refugees**



# Making a difference together!

This flyer has been inspired by the Inter-Religious Declaration on Refugee Issues entitled «In Front of You Is Always a Human Being». This is the first time that Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious communities in Switzerland have spoken with a single voice on the issue of refugees. They are addressing their appeals both to members of their own religious communities and to national and government leaders. The Inter-Religious Declaration on Refugee Issues serves to introduce the global dialogue initiated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) «Faith and Protection» to discussions in Switzerland.

This present flyer is intended for use by parishes, associations, and other organisations and groups from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. It does not cover the entire content of the Inter-Religious Declaration on Refugee Issues but briefly summarizes the appeals addressed to members of religious communities.

We want to make a difference together!

## **Worldwide over 68 million people are fleeing their homes. Around half of them are children.**

The countries that take in the most refugees often lack the financial resources to provide for them adequately. Moreover, in the wealthy countries of Europe solidarity with refugees is often fiercely contested. As a result, it is very difficult for refugees to find a place of safety.

## **We are all part of the community. The protection of refugees concerns us all.**

Refugees are not born as refugees; they are made refugees. Every human being is a creature of God and we are all linked to each other by the bound of human dignity. This conviction is held by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. The Islamic «Salamun alaikum», the Jewish «Shalom», and the Christian «Peace be with you» are everyday expressions that reflect this common spirit. The community embraces every human being – including refugees. God does not favor one over the other.

# The person in front of you is always a human being.

A refugee policy aimed at ensuring that refugees can find shelter and safety among us can succeed only if everyone plays their part. Hospitality is a great virtue – help for those in dire need is firmly anchored in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and is particularly relevant to refugees today.

We want to see everyone we meet as a human being, regardless of the circumstances in which we meet and face each other.

# 1. We support relief agencies on the ground.

Many relief agencies operating on the ground have their origins in Jewish, Christian or Islamic initiatives. Financial support for organisations providing aid in crisis zones also contributes to improved protection of refugees. This work deserves our support!



## 2. We promote the acceptance of Resettlement programmes in Switzerland.

Many refugees live in countries where they have little or no access to basic human rights. Very often, they are unable to go back home but at the same time are also unable to remain in the first country of asylum. «Resettlement» programmes enable refugees recognised by the UNHCR to travel safely to a third country that has agreed to admit them. Such schemes create new life opportunities for those who are the most vulnerable and in need of protection. Resettlement has been a traditional instrument of the Swiss refugee policy for several decades.

We can provide support for refugees who arrive in Switzerland by helping them in their everyday lives, for example, in learning the local language or in finding a job. By doing this, we are helping to ensure the acceptance of the resettlement programmes.



### **3. We speak out for refugees' rights and concerns.**

In 1955, Switzerland ratified the Geneva Convention on Refugees. In doing so, the state pledged, for example, not to send anyone back to a country where he or she is at risk of being persecuted.

Refugees need our voice in order to claim their rights when these are being denied. Church funding of legal aid for asylum seekers is an established tradition that must be maintained. Similarly, we must continue to support the interreligious pastoral care service in the federal asylum accomodalions.



## 4. We help refugees feel at home here.

Integration should not be a labyrinth. It is important that refugees are able to continue their training and be permitted to seek employment here. It is further crucial that they can settle here with their families and make new friends. We can introduce new projects to help refugees or support existing projects: these will pave the way to social, cultural and professional integration. And of course, refugees, like everyone else, must respect the laws of the country where they live.

Refugees bring their religion and their faith with them. As religious communities, we can offer a familiar place of worship, a home-from-home in a foreign land, where they will find help and support.



## **5. We are also there for those who must leave.**

Some asylum seekers do not meet the criteria that would allow them to stay here. They must leave Switzerland. Religious communities can ensure that such people receive adequate counselling and accompanying services whatever the circumstances. They can also insist that human dignity be maintained whenever repatriation decisions are implemented.



The full text of the Inter-Religious Declaration on Refugee Issues «The Person in front of you is always a Human Being» can be found on [ratderreligionen.ch](http://ratderreligionen.ch) and on the websites of the individual religious communities.



**sek·feps**

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CIOS – Coordination Islamic Organizations Switzerland  
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