



3 June 2019

Issued by the Press Office of the
Evangelical Church in Germany
(EKD)

Herrenhäuser Str. 12
30419 Hannover

T. +49(511) 2796-264/268
F. +49(511) 2796-777

pressestelle@ekd.de
www.ekd.de

Call for European distribution mechanism for boat refugees

Palermo's mayor and EKD Council chair issue joint declaration

Everywhere in Europe cities, municipalities and citizens are very willing to assist. However, there is no Europe-wide distribution mechanism to accommodate refugees rescued in the Mediterranean in the European Union. "We need a political emergency solution this summer," say Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, and Palermo's Mayor Leoluca Orlando in a joint declaration. Orlando and Bedford-Strohm add: a group of EU member states must act as a "coalition of the willing" and "develop a sustainable migration policy". Bedford-Strohm is currently in Sicily on a fact-finding visit to church and civil society aid projects for refugees.

The text of the whole declaration:

Palermo-Appeal

Europe has voted. The European Union will reposition itself in the coming months. We want to seize this moment to give a voice to those who are in the shadow of international politics. People are still trying to cross the Mediterranean. Migration movements are a historical phenomenon originating in the fundamental human right to mobility. People move in search of better living conditions, or flee from war, poverty and climate disasters.

In view of the expected rise in refugee flows during the summer it is essential for the European Union to remember its fundamental values and to find solutions for the individual states so as to prevent more deaths in the Mediterranean. Such solutions must also enable the creation of humanitarian passages and give priority to rescuing shipwreck victims and saving human lives.

The Mediterranean continues to be the deadliest border in the world. Over 2000 people drowned there in 2018. We know of hundreds of deaths so far in 2019. And many more have died in the last few days - unseen, without being recorded in the statistics. Europe now faces the choice: Do we want to help in 2019 or look the other way?

Together with many leaders from cities and municipalities, churches and civil society, we state clearly:

1. 2019 must not become a lost year for search and rescue in the Mediterranean.
2. The criminalisation of civil search and rescue operations must stop. Now!

3. Saving lives at sea must remain a public responsibility. What has become of the European search and rescue operations? Germany should send a strong signal here and send out ships.
4. This summer we need a European emergency solution, a provisional distribution mechanism for boat people. Many cities and municipalities all over Europe want to be “safe havens”. Let’s make this happen!
5. Within the EU we need a “coalition of the willing” – i.e. Member States that start acting now and are keen to develop a sustainable migration policy. Letting people drown or sending them back to the camps in Libya cannot be options for Europe.

The turnout in the European elections was encouragingly high. We appeal to you: Make an issue of our five demands! Invite your newly elected Members of the European Parliament to your local public or town hall meetings, into your churches, schools and sports clubs! Europe: We have to talk!

Hanover, 3 June 2019

EKD Press Office