

EUROPE IS LIVING ITS DEEPEST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN DECADES

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The number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe continues increasing daily. Migrants are coming from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia due to different social, economic and political challenges, including war and persecution.

According to the International Organization for Migration over 250,000 migrants have crossed the Mediterranean Sea since the beginning of the year and more than 300,000 are expected to start that journey before the end of this year. More than 3,000 have died trying to reach the Southern European shores since January.



Tens of thousands gather in dramatic conditions at the Greek islands of Kos and Lesbos or at Lampedusa in Italy, waiting for an opportunity to continue travelling North through the Balkan countries. According to the UN refugee agency around 2,000 people arrive every day in different Mediterranean spots from Algeciras in Spain to the Greek islands.

This situation - familiar since many years in several Southern European countries - is now having a deep impact across Central, Western and Northern Europe. Thousands of people continue gathering in the French port of Calais and are desperate to get to Great Britain. We see similar situations at the borders of Macedonia or Hungary and hear news about the dramatic conditions in which refugees travel after paying high fees to criminal organizations taking advantage of thousands, including families.



Far from a short term solution, it is expected that this issue will have an impact on almost every nation in Europe from Germany to the Scandinavian countries and from the UK to the Eastern European countries, as it has impacted our Southern regions in recent years.

The YMCA movement cannot remain silent as we face the worse humanitarian crisis in Europe since

World War II. In the frame of the Strategic Plan that YMCA Europe is presently designing, we strongly stress that this becomes a key issue for all of us as a collective Movement and also on the National and Local levels according to each reality. YMCA Europe is determined to provide spaces for analyses that will lead to concrete actions on all levels.



But this is also a global issue. This migration crisis cannot be understood or tackled without our joint approach to situations in our neighboring regions : Africa, the Middle East, South Asia.

Therefore we will also work in order to contribute to a global response as there are examples of deep and effective work with newcomers both in Europe and in other areas of the world.

On behalf of YMCA Europe's Executive Committee and Staff Team,

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