

Humanitarian Aid for Refugees

Information of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany



Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Norddeutschland



Foto: Thomas Panzau

How did the African refugees come to Hamburg?

The African refugees who currently stay in Hamburg had originally left their West African home countries in order to make their living in Libya. In 2011 they fled from the war in Libya and crossed the Mediterranean to Italy. There they found temporary shelter in refugee camps that were closed in the beginning of 2013 because the European Refugee Fund had expired. The Italian authorities provided the Africans with papers and - according to some refugees - with a small amount of cash and asked them to travel further to the North. In doing so, the Africans arrived in several European cities, among others in Hamburg. There they were first included in the winter emergency shelter programme. Since these emergency shelters were closed in the middle of April, most refugees must live on the streets. The Hamburg Kirchentag at the beginning of May, with its motto "As much as you need", has prompted them to address people and offices from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany (Nordkirche) and ask for help.

The refugees have a residence status on humanitarian grounds in Italy and thus enjoy the freedom of travel within EU countries for three months within a six-months period. They do not have a regular legal claim to accommodation, social benefits or work permit.

Why does the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany support refugees?

The mission to accommodate refugees and to help the homeless has been deeply rooted in the Christian faith. „**I was a stranger and you invited me in**“, is written in the Gospel of St. Matthew (25:35). The Bible tells many stories of refugees and Jesus also was a refugee child.

We are furthermore convinced that the Human Rights apply to everyone. Every person has a fundamental right of provision for his or her basic needs like food, basic health and shelter.

Therefore, the congregations of our Church have often accommodated refugees and have provided help for them. The situation that we are facing now is, however, a special one.

We are observing with concern that European regulations for the accommodation of refugees do no longer work. Increasingly, European states are anxious to shift people and the responsibility for them from one state to the next. We live in the middle of Europe and due to its history we believe that Germany has a special responsibility to bear, also due to its size and economic strength.

Also therefore we urge for effective protection of the refugees and for a political solution of the refugee problem.

Aid organisations and parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northern Germany and the Church's Diaconical Ministry (Diakonie, the social welfare work) are providing humanitarian emergency aid. The first idea to run a shelter together with the city of Hamburg had to be dismissed, because here the plans were linked to prepare for a general deporting without case-by-case review.

It is not a case of church asylum where Africans are currently looked after and / or accommodated.

Plea to the parishes and institutions of Hamburg

Rt. Rev. Kirsten Fehrs, Bishop of Hamburg and Lübeck, is asking for support:

„My thanks to all who were fully committed to help during the last weeks. We ask you to please further support the refugees, also in respect to their accommodation. Everyone of them has their own destiny. They need time and protection to calm down and clarify their situation. After the provision of humanitarian aid and medical support the independent clarification of the residence status of every single refugee is tackled.“

Not only Christian, but also Muslim communities look after the refugees and seek to provide sleeping accommodation.



Foto: Simone Viere

What is church asylum – what is humanitarian emergency aid?

“Church asylum“ means refuge for a person whose body, life and freedom is threatened due to an impending deporting. The churches and their parishes consider this temporary accommodation as a last legitimate attempt to provide the possibility for a careful re-examination of the refugees' state guaranteed protection claims.

“Humanitarian emergency aid“ is meant to provide a person with essentials long before and absolutely independent of any asylum procedure. Also the names of those concerned need not be known

source : Evangelischer Pressedienst (protestant news agency)

How can you help?

Donations and collections:

Bank details: Hauptbereich 4
Evangelische Darlehns-genossenschaft
Account no. 400 10 006
Bank identification no. 210 602 37

Keyword: Libyen-Flüchtlinge KSt. 31000101

(please give your address for receipts of charitable donations)

In-kind donations and volunteer work:

First please ask in the office of the Commissioner for Refugees of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northern Germany what kind of support is currently needed:

Phone: 0 40 - 36 900 262
Fanny.Dethloff@oemf.nordkirche.de
Constanze.Funck@oemf.nordkirche.de

Further information:

www.nordkirche.de

Information of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northern Germany (Nordkirche) about the situation of the refugees

www.hamburgasyl.de

Coalition of the Church Refugee Work - institutions and persons from the Church and the Church's Diaconical Ministry in the metropolitan area of Hamburg

www.kirchenasyl.de

Organisational Coalition of the movement for “Church Asylum” throughout Germany - networks of all parishes

Edited by:

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ViSdP (responsible according to the press law): the Commissioner for Refugees of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, Rev. Fanny Dethloff, Shanghaiallee 12, D - 20457 Hamburg

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