



Refugees Digest 11 January 2017

Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Persons

Toward the end of 2016, the contested discourse around displaced persons seemed to be as sharp as ever. The election of Mr Trump to the Presidency of the USA and his many comments on questions of displaced persons has kept the spotlight on the issue and in many quarters his statements have increased anxieties around the future of people in this category. His forthrightness on the issue is also seen to have given permission for other negative voices to make negative, even, threatening statements in this regard. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center in July 2016 found that in 8 of the 10 countries surveyed, at least 50% of those surveyed believed that migrants increased the likelihood of terrorism in their countries. Likewise the crises narrative in the world of displaced persons has fuelled many anti-immigrant political rhetoric. The Brexit campaign poster of Mr Nigel Farage is cited as one such example. Voices in the faith community and the development sector, on the other hand, have repeatedly reminded world leaders that commitment to development issues and reducing poverty and inequality are key to dealing both with problems of migration and terrorism. This link is evident also in the deliberations of the World Forum for Development and Migration. That meeting noted that in times of crises, migrants are often even more invisible than normal. It is a simple fact that people living in decent, just situations where their dignity and needs are met, are less likely to be tempted to either migrate or join extreme groups. Pope Francis has repeatedly called for the church to be at the service of creating an environment of encounter and to build bridges and not walls and barriers. He also asked the Mayors of 80 European cities to take particular care of the migrants and refugees in their cities and to ensure that their dignity is respected.

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