



Refugees Digest 21 December 2017

Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Persons

The UN has recently published *'The Global Compact of Refugees'*. This Compact seeks to improve the international community's response to large movements of refugees and to various long-standing issues surrounding refugees. A series of meetings and consultations have already begun in order to address these issues comprehensively. The Church has signalled support for this initiative and has taken part in various conversations highlighting aspects of vulnerability and the importance of human rights. The Compact is based on the 2016 *New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants*, which amongst other issues seeks to reduce the burden borne by less developed countries in responding to the ongoing and increasing crises. For example, Uganda and Bangladesh have had to carry huge responsibilities in this regard recently.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/amanda-clarkson/new-york-declaration-on-refugees-one-year-on>

<https://migrants-refugees.va/2017/11/21/towards-global-compact-refugees-u-n-geneva/>

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/safepassages/cameron-thibos-michele-klein-solomon/interview-is-rights-based-good-migration-governan>

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/pia-oberoi/protecting-human-rights-of-migrants-in-time-of-fear>

As part of the discussion on the Global Compact, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has discussed ways in which responsibility, in this time of an unprecedented number of refugees, can in fact be shared. There was much discussion around harnessing the goodwill and compassion that exists in individuals and communities.

<http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2017/11/5a0c88234/harnessing-citizens-goodwill-help-solve-refugee-crisis.html>

The link below leads to a video of rescue work being carried out in the Mediterranean by NGOs – which have largely filled the gap in this type of work, especially where the responses of states have been inadequate.

<https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/video/2017/11/29/video-aquarius-rescue-ship-mediterranean-saving-lives>

On 21st November, in their special Thanksgiving Day message, the US Bishops made a special plea for protection of refugees and migrants. They expressed a great sense of alarm at the emergence of policies in the refugee domain which just months ago would have been unthinkable; and they called for comprehensive immigration reform.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2017/11/20/u-s-bishops-release-thanksgiving-message-advocating-migrants-refugees/>

Particularly disturbing and horrific news from Libya has been about the blatant slavery sales being conducted as refugees and migrants are sold off. A recent CNN film shot undercover revealed the depravity of such practices.

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-11-29-aeu-summit-european-countries-blocking-the-migration-of-africans-blamed-for-rise-in-slavery/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=First%20Thing%2029%20November%20Exclusives&utm_content=First%20Thing%2029%20November%20Exclusives+CID_0eba9c9a68eafa40c628a225bd72597a&utm_source=TouchBasePro&utm_term=AUEU%20Summit%20European%20countries%20blocking%20the%20migration%20of%20Africans%20blamed%20for%20rise%20in%20slavery#.Wh5VfLpuI2w

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/01/the-guardian-view-on-refugees-and-migrants-solidarity-not-fear>

https://issafrica.org/iss-today/libyas-slave-trade-shocks-au-eu-leaders-into-action?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Today&utm_medium=email

EU and AU Ministers met recently to discuss plans to regularise flows of migrants from Africa, especially through Libya, to Europe; the training of naval guards; and screening processes for migrants. The UNHCR has pushed strongly for regularisation in order to put a halt to these dangerous journeys, the rise in smuggling and the strength of smugglers. It is estimated that some 300 000 Africans are presently attempting to reach Europe through Libya. One aspect to bear in mind is that it is often (almost always) the neighbouring countries that bear the brunt of migrant and refugee activities. For example, by far the bulk of the displaced persons in the Middle East land up in neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Jordan. Nearly a million refugees have arrived in Uganda from South Sudan in recent times.

https://www.africanindy.com/news/eu-un-and-african-leaders-in-emergency-migrant-strategy-12228037?utm_source=news_newsletters&utm_medium=email

<https://www.africanindy.com/news/squalid-libya-migrant-camps-in-spotlight-at-eu-africa-summit-12196091>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/24/european-african-ministers-discuss-plan-refugees-tunis>

<https://www.africanindy.com/news/calls-mount-to-rescue-migrants-from-libya-slave-trade-12189981>

Finally, Pope Francis has reminded the Church that present migratory flows offer many opportunities to be missionaries without leaving home.

<https://spotlight.africa/2017/09/25/rise-in-immigration-makes-us-missionaries-at-home-pope-francis-says/>

Peter-John Pearson
Director