

Date 17/10/2024

JRS CALL AHEAD OF EUROPEAN COUNCIL: MAKE EUROPE HUMANE AGAIN

Dear Heads of States and Governments of the EU,

25 years ago to the date, your predecessors had just agreed to work together “towards a union of **Freedom, Security and Justice**” in the **Conclusions of the Tampere Council**. They committed to do it by common policies that uphold our **shared values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights**. They, and their successors, worked **together** to harmonize the way we extend protection and the enjoyment of human rights to those who are forced to flee from violence and persecution.

Upholding such high standards is not easy. It takes courage and strength to commit, even when the situation around us seems to become more challenging.

In recent years, we have witnessed the weakening of this commitment. In recent weeks even more so. **At JRS, we voiced our opposition to the recently adopted Pact on Migration and Asylum. A Pact that chooses the detention and segregation of people seeking protection at the EU external borders. A Pact that allows for plenty of national derogations from the common policies in times of so-called crisis. A Pact that promotes the outsourcing of the responsibility to protect people to countries outside the EU.**

Unfortunately, these choices are already bearing rotten fruits. Increasingly, Member States are announcing changes to national legislation and policies that depart from EU common legislation.

The Netherlands wants to opt out from the Common European Asylum System, Germany introduces internal border controls, Poland wants to suspend the right to claim asylum at the Belarus borders, Italy started taking people rescued at sea to a detention centre outside the EU, in Albania. We also see how ill-invested European funds in third-countries lead to severe violations of human rights, such as in the removal centres in Turkey.

On top of this, governments continue to look into ways to keep migrants away, or return them even before they set foot here, conceptualizing ‘return hubs’ in third-countries that are questionable from an ethical perspective, and a feasibility one.

As the commitment to our shared values crumble, injustice and suffering increase. At JRS, we see this every day, listening to people in detention, supporting those left destitute without reception, accompanying those whose asylum request was unjustly refused. All of this, while **none on of the initiatives mentioned above has really any effect to prevent people from migrating to Europe.**

It does not have to be this way. The generous and unanimous response of the EU to the Ukrainian displacement crisis has shown that we can achieve when we act together and

according to our values. **The European Union can still change course and choose unequivocally to act according to its founding values.**

Choose to work together to **design innovative ways to ensure safe and legal pathways for people fleeing violence and persecution.**

Choose to **actively search and rescue people at sea**, and **work together to bring them to the closest safe port in Europe.**

Choose unequivocally to **respect all people right to liberty**, and **refuse the use administrative detention as a necessary evil.**

Choose for hospitality and accompaniment from the moment people arrive and **design together dignified reception models that allow for encounter with the local community.**

Choose to **build meaningful partnerships with third countries that aim at truly strengthen their protection systems and support their developments**, not to make them satellite executors of EU inhumane policies.

Ahead of this European Council, we ask you to believe in our values and choose to **Make Europe Humane Again.**

Sincerely,



Jesuit Refugee Service Europe