

World Refugee Day Statement – 20 June 2025

“From Denial to Dignity: Reclaiming Rights and Building a Future with Refugees”

As we mark **World Refugee Day 2025**, the world stands at a critical crossroads in its treatment of those who are forcibly displaced. This day is not just a moment of remembrance, it is a call to action, a political imperative, and a moral obligation to challenge systems of exclusion, abandonment, and violence that millions of refugees face every day. Today, [more than 110 million](#) people worldwide are forcibly displaced due to war, persecution, climate crises, and systemic inequalities. Among them, just [36.9 million](#) are officially recognized as refugees. Yet instead of protection, they are too often met with walls, pushbacks, and silence. Recent funding cuts, such as those initiated by the US administration and still felt across global humanitarian programs, have jeopardized essential refugee services. This lack of political will and financial commitment is leaving countless people without access to food, healthcare, education, or safety. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe joins all those who stand in solidarity with forcibly displaced people and strongly denounces the current global and European response to the refugee situation. Policies of deterrence, externalization, and forced return dominate the agenda, while protection and integration are sidelined. This is not only a policy failure, but also a failure of humanity.

Europe’s Dangerous Course: Externalization and Exclusion

In this respect, the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** is being presented as a “*solution*” to the migration challenge. It entrenches a system that prioritizes border control over protection, deterrence over dignity. JRS Europe has consistently raised concerns about the emphasis on fast-track border procedures, limited safeguards, and increased use of detention, especially for vulnerable groups and opposed to the Pact. The **Return Directive**, revised under the new Pact, reflects a logic that assumes people arriving in Europe are not in need of protection. It reinforces mechanisms of detention and rapid deportation, rather than upholding international obligations to assess asylum claims with care and justice.

As [our latest “Detention Under the Spotlight” report](#) highlights, the use of immigration detention across Europe is increasing, often arbitrarily, and in violation of fundamental rights. Less coercive measures and alternatives to detention, community-based models, and legal safeguards exist and should be prioritized.

At the same time, **externalization policies**, from EU funding to Libya and Tunisia to migration partnerships with authoritarian regimes, shift responsibility away from Europe and expose refugees to grave human rights violations. This is not migration management; it is rights abandonment.

The Alternative Is Possible: Hospitality in Practice

In the face of these dangerous trends, JRS Europe affirms that another path is not only necessary, but possible. Through our programs across Europe, we see daily the impact of policies that prioritize **inclusion, education, and employment** over exclusion and marginalization.

Our recent [Livelihood Report](#) shows how access to work, training, and education fosters resilience, reduces dependency, and builds stronger host communities. As **our director, Alberto Ares**, affirms in the report: *“When we support refugees to become economically independent and participate in society, we do not only contribute to transforming individual lives, but we also strengthen the common good.”*

The data is clear: when refugees are offered pathways to employment, language learning, and social inclusion, they also contribute economically, socially, and culturally to the societies that host them. Denying them this opportunity is not only unjust, but also economically shortsighted. **Creating such opportunities benefits both refugees and the economies of host countries.**

From Policy Denial to Political Vision

The global refugee situation is not a crisis of numbers. It is a crisis of political responsibility. JRS Europe calls out the hypocrisy of governments that speak the language of human rights while funding regimes that violate them, building fences while claiming to protect, and promoting fear rather than fraternity. We must reclaim the narrative: **Refugees are not a threat, they are individuals with dignity, agency, and potential. The solution does not lie in outsourcing our responsibility but in embracing shared humanity.**

Our Demands: A Call to Global and Civic Responsibility

Considering this situation, and inspired by our work on the ground, **JRS Europe calls** upon the international community, the European Union, and civil society to take the following urgent actions:

To Global and European Governance Bodies:

- **Implementing the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** to ensure protection, not punishment.
- **Stop externalization** of migration policies and uphold the EU’s legal and moral obligations under the Geneva Convention.
- **End immigration detention** of asylum seekers and investing in community-based alternatives.
- **Promote social inclusion** by ensuring that all refugees have **access to livelihoods**, language training, housing, and education, fostering long-term integration and cohesive communities.
- **Reverse funding cuts to humanitarian and refugee programs.** The lives and futures of millions depend on it.
- **Use EU funding to genuinely protect fundamental rights** by investing in dignified reception conditions, adequate accommodation, and robust, independent monitoring mechanisms.

To Civil Society and Local Communities:

- **Speak out** against dehumanizing narratives that stigmatize refugees.

- **Promote local initiatives** that support refugee inclusion through employment, housing, and cultural exchange.
- **Build alliances** across faith-based organizations, NGOs, trade unions, and municipalities to protect the rights and dignity of displaced people.
- **Educate and mobilize** citizens to demand political change and reject fear-based migration policies.

At JRS, our mission has always been to **accompany, serve, and advocate** for refugees and forcibly displaced people. This mission is rooted in values of **human dignity, justice, and fraternity**. These are not abstract ideals—they are the foundation of peaceful, pluralistic societies.

On this World Refugee Day, let us reject the politics of fear and build the politics of welcome. Let us move from denial to dignity, from exclusion to encounter. A future with refugees is a future of hope, for them, and for us all.

JRS EUROPE, 20 JUNE 2025