

Political statement C15

Refugees

The refugee crisis has not passed, even though the number of people seeking protection at the borders of Norway and the other countries of Europe is at its lowest level since the late 1990s. Worldwide, 68 million people are currently fleeing their homes. Physicians and aid workers are reporting on unnerving, terrifying conditions in many refugee camps. In Greece, the situation is so desperate that the Doctors Without Borders organisation requests the immediate evacuation of the most vulnerable refugees from Lesbos.

Norwegian People's Aid thinks it is a shame that Norway is not making a bigger contribution to solving the refugee problem. In order to find long-term solutions to the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War, we need to implement community solutions comprising measures to improve living conditions and assure human rights in those countries people are fleeing. Financial support for local areas must be reinforced, and both responsibilities and burdens need more clearly be distributed among the countries of Europe regarding welcoming and settling refugees.

NPA has been involved in reception activities for 30 years, and our employees and volunteers know many of the people who have been forced to flee their home countries. Our local reception centres have also included numerous members of local communities to participate in the inclusion work. Through this work, they learned more about and developed an understanding of different cultures, helping create a more diverse society. Following the closure of the reception centres, we now see that we have become impoverished as a society, while at the same time the situation for refugees on the outer borders of Europe has worsened.

The national congress of Norwegian People's Aid supports the following demands:

1. Increased support in local areas:

An historically high number of people have been put to flight in the world today, and the needs for emergency aid have risen faster than the financial grants. Norway should therefore follow the recommendation of the UN High Commissioner to make more support available to poor neighbouring countries that are housing thousands of refugees.

2. Raise the quota to 5,000 resettlement refugees:

In 2019, the number of people seeking asylum in Norway fell to a record low, and the number of family reunifications for people with refugee backgrounds was also low. The local authorities have the capacity to receive quota refugees and have stated that they need a regular influx of new participants for the induction scheme, if this is to remain financially viable. Norwegian People's Aid believes that the government should raise the number of quota refugees for 2019 to 5,000. In this context, we also recommend entering into a new three-year agreement.

3. Relocation of asylum-seekers from Greece:

Greece is currently accepting an unreasonably high proportion of the refugees arriving in Europe. Norway should therefore take the lead with a policy designed to generate a fairer distribution of responsibility in Europe and should recommence the relocation of Syrian refugees from Greece, as Norway did in 2015–17. Moreover, this should not be at the expense of the number of quota refugees Norway accepts.

4. Reintroduce the “reasonableness requirement” regarding internal relocation on return:

Norway is the only country in Europe to have removed the reasonableness requirement regarding internal relocation on return in Afghanistan, which states that no-one is to be sent back for internal relocation in their home country if they will have difficulty surviving. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees believes this is in contravention with the Convention on Refugees. Norway should therefore comply with the recommendation of the High Commissioner and reintroduce the reasonableness requirement.

5. *Stop the process of retracting refugee status for Somalis:*

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees believes Norway may be in breach of the UN Convention on Refugees by retracting refugee status for hundreds of Somalis. Norway should recognise that conditions in Somalia are still unsafe, and based on the High Commissioner's objections, cease the process of retracting refugee status for Somali refugees.

6. *Necessary healthcare and measures to prevent the exploitation of working migrants without papers:*

"Undocumented" people are people who live among us year after year without the fundamental rights we others take for granted. Legislation discriminates against undocumented people and excludes them from basic healthcare, which is in contravention of basic human rights. Nor do undocumented people officially have the opportunity to work. Some live for years in asylum centres, highly pacified, and with little opportunity to contribute to society. Some survive by working illegally, where there is a high risk of being terribly exploited. The number of undocumented people who have lived under these conditions for more than ten years is on the rise. Undocumented people must be granted access to necessary healthcare, and measures must be adopted to prevent the exploitation of undocumented people on the labour market.