

## STATEMENT BY THE COMMITTEE FOR THE RECEPTION OF REFUGEES IN CATALONIA

Europe is witnessing a grave humanitarian crisis as a result of the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people caused by poverty, war and violence in their home countries and they seek a place of freedom, security and the respect of human rights.

This exodus has already cost thousands of lives and in view of this humanitarian catastrophe it is the ethical, moral and legal obligation of all public institutions and citizens to aid and host refugees and respect the fundamental rights of asylum and international protection enshrined in international conventions, chiefly Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the Protocol of 1967. The countries that have ratified the Convention, among them the Spanish State, are obliged to protect refugees in their own territory, in accordance with the terms of the Convention itself.

We, the institutions and actors of the Committee for the Reception of Refugees, have shown from the outset our predisposition to contribute to the actions of European governments to receive, resettle and relocate refugees across the territory, given their commitment in defending peace, respecting human rights and guaranteeing their safety.

In this regard, on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Catalan Government approved Catalonia's International Protection Plan, which was drafted with contributions from various institutions and social entities and includes the right of asylum, sanctuary and subsidiary protection and defines a series of measures to be implemented within the next four years.

Subsequently, the Government Agreement of September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015, resulted in the creation of the Committee for the Reception of Refugees in Catalonia as a transversal body of coordination, composed by social organizations, local administrations and the Government of Catalonia.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Committee for the Reception of Refugees in Catalonia is addressing the citizenry and the public institutions of Catalonia, Spain and Europe to declare the following:

## STATEMENT

- We denounce that European states are not responding to the current humanitarian crisis, as well as the paralysis and inability of the EU to lead and coordinate the aforementioned crisis in accordance with their own principles.
- We consider that the policy of asylum should be a common policy within the EU framework and must involve the commitment of all Member States.
- We require compliance of international and human rights treaties for migrants fleeing from countries at war, violence or human rights violations, and who are in need of international protection.
- We demand that the states of the European Union support the need for permanent aid and rescue operations with the aim of preventing human losses and upholding the physical integrity of persons trying to reach the European Union, particularly of those who are most vulnerable. Therefore, safer routes must be immediately opened with air and maritime transport provided to all refugees travelling to European states with the capacity to receive them.
- We call on the EU to initiate the necessary steps in order for President Bashar Al Assad, the leaders of the Islamic State and all those responsible for crimes against humanity to be tried by the International Criminal Court, in accordance with the provisions established in Article 5 of the Statute of the ICC, which empowers it to judge war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression.
- We express our opposition to any agreement that can be formalized between the European Union and Turkey that involves the possibility of proceeding to the collective expulsion of refugees to Turkish territory. Any agreement must respect the right of non-refoulement and protection under the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
- We call on the Government of Spain to admit the quotas determined last September by the European Union and increase the number of refugees in accordance to the scale of the humanitarian crisis.
- We ask for the establishment of protocols for action between European states, as well as the Spanish state and the autonomous communities, local administrations and social entities for the suitable coordination and reception of refugees.
- We declare the willingness of the government of the Generalitat and Catalonia's local governments to:

1. Carry out the necessary actions and provide adequate and sufficient resources within the territory to efficiently relocate and resettle asylum seekers or refugees in the Spanish state in a supportive manner.
2. Carry out the necessary actions and provide adequate and sufficient resources to increase aid to those in need of international protection who are in other states or transit countries.
3. Encourage actions to inform and sensitize civilians
4. Promote the training of professionals and organizations to facilitate the detection, accompaniment and support of people in need of international protection
5. Promote, through the various European institutions and bodies in which members of this Committee participate in, all actions that ensure compliance of international law and the dignity of refugees.
6. Propose, in accordance with specialized organisations, an increase of resources and more flexibility in the State's reception and integration programme.
7. Carry out the relevant actions to establish co-finance protocols with the State based on the funding Spain receives from the EU so that, once social entities complete the accompaniment period, Catalonia's public administrations can continue to support them until full autonomy is achieved.

Lastly,

- We call for special sensitivity among opinion leaders, political leaders and the media in order to prevent acts of xenophobia, racism and islamophobia.
- We thank the volunteers, activists, refugee aid organisations and the citizens and fisherman of the Aegean and Mediterranean islands, such as Lampedusa or Lesbos, for their efforts to aid, support and rescue refugees.
- We recognise the good work, often done with insufficient resources, that specialist organisations have carried in attending refugees, as well as the entities supporting actions to increase civilian awareness and mobilisation.
- We recognise the contribution made by refugees in our country and, above all, uphold democratic values throughout the world.
- We are grateful to the citizens of Catalonia for their display of solidarity.