



18 December 2017

**International Migrants Day, 18 December:
Churches in Europe call on EU to protect migrants' rights and end suffering in Libya**

“Thousands of refugees and migrants trapped in Libya are at the mercy of Libyan authorities, militias, armed groups and smugglers often working seamlessly together for financial gain,” states a recent report by Amnesty International, alerting the international community on the situation of migrants in Libya. At the beginning of December, news reports showed how migrants in Libya are traded and treated as slaves.

“Over the past months we have learned how EU support for the Libyan coast guard and Italian initiatives have led to even worse situations for migrants trapped in Libya. The European Union policy aim is solely to reduce numbers of migrants crossing to Europe – disregarding the consequences for them in Libya,” Doris Peschke, General Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, stated.

“The EU institutions need to critically assess their actions. The EU and the member states ought to assist international organisations, the UNHCR and IOM to bring migrants to safety,” Peschke continued.

UNHCR has called on the EU to resettle at least 40,000 refugees as one important step to ease the situation in the region.

“In this time of advent when Christians all over the world are preparing to celebrate this feast with its focus on a pregnant woman and her husband desperately looking for shelter, we wish to call on the people and the governments of Europe not to ignore the refugees and migrants in a similar situation. Let us hear God's call for peace and justice which comes to us through people at the margins,” Fr. Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches pleaded.

18 December was declared International Migrants Day by the UN, following the adoption of the International Convention on the rights of all migrant workers and the members of their families in 1990.

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