



**CEC–COMECE joint statement on Afghanistan:
Call for prayer, solidarity and urgent action to protect the vulnerable**

We are deeply shocked to receive current reports from Afghanistan manifesting suffering and helplessness of the Afghan population, undeniably demonstrating their distress and existential fears. We are particularly concerned for those who still require evacuation, as well as the vulnerable groups, who remain at a great risk of losing opportunities and facing potential mistreatment. At the same time, we are immensely grateful to all who have been engaged in the evacuation and humanitarian efforts despite precarious security conditions.

We wish to express our deep solidarity with the suffering people of Afghanistan, in particular with women, girls, children and people with disabilities, among other vulnerable persons.

We call on all parties to ceaselessly work for peace through dialogue and respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights of all. We appeal to the international community to protect persons who are targets of oppression and whose lives are at risk, such as civil society actors, human rights defenders, journalists, artists and members of ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as Christians and other religious communities. We also call for an increased protection of all evacuating personnel and those involved in humanitarian operations.

We welcome steps from the European Union to increase humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. However, EU must remain attentive so that help can reach swiftly and safely, particularly the most affected, without discrimination and unnecessary administrative hurdles. The provision of assistance should also build upon the work of trustful local networks, including civil society and Church actors, that remain present in the country and the wider region, providing indispensable humanitarian and social services.

A considerable influx of Afghan refugees may occur in neighbouring countries and beyond. In this crisis, we urge the European Union and its Member States to lead common and coordinated solidarity efforts carried out by the international community to assist Afghans escaping violence and terror. While protection in the region is important, we urge the EU to be instrumental in creating humanitarian corridors, resettlement and other secure passages, to bring refugees to safe places outside Afghanistan. We also encourage the EU Member States to give security of residence to Afghans already in the EU and stop deportation efforts to Afghanistan.

It is time to show humanity in the middle of the cruelty faced by Afghans, to prove that EU values are not an empty rhetoric but are practical guiding principles that lead to actions based on ethical standards, beyond mere political or economic considerations.

Afghan refugees must not be confused with economic migrants. The decisions related to their stay should be made with discernment by the European Union and its Member States, implementing the core foundational values of the EU, upholding their commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Geneva Convention.

Once the urgency of the humanitarian situation de-escalates, members of the international community need to engage in a deep reflection on the failure of war,

drawing lessons for their foreign, security, trade and development policies. For the EU and its Member States, this above all implies a reorientation towards the promotion of human security and integral human development as key strategic objectives, while remaining true to the values that have inspired the very foundation of the European project of peace and reconciliation.

Finally, our churches wish to invite all faithful to pray to our Lord, who himself endured abandonment and suffering, for our Afghan sisters and brothers, so that their country may find stability and peace in accordance with the respect for the human dignity of all. While condemning terrorism in all its forms and expressions, we remember in our prayers the victims of the recent terror attacks and their families.

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H.Em. Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ
Archbishop of Luxembourg, President
COMECE
Square de Meeûs 19
BE- 1050 Bruxelles
Tel. +32 2 235 05 10
president@comece.eu

Rev. Christian Krieger
President
CEC
rue Joseph II, 174,
BE- 1000 Bruxelles
Tel. +32 2 230 17 32
president@cec-kek.be