

Archdiocese of Southwark
Commission for
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation



2016 SPRING ASSEMBLY

Refugees and Migrants: How are people reacting?

The situation in Calais - *Phil Kerton (Co-Director, Seeking Sanctuary)*

The situation beyond Europe - *Alan Thomlinson (Emergency Programme Manager, CAFOD)*

Resettlement in the UK - *Bekele Woyecha (Community Organiser, Citizens UK)*

The Assembly took place at Aylesford Priory on Saturday 21 May. After a welcome and introduction to the day, Fr Arbo Lekule led us in an Opening Prayer. The first item was a brief update about progress on initiatives arising from the Assembly held a year earlier. A list of the ideas for initiatives that then emerged from "reading the signs of the times" can be found in the report on the

JPIC website www.southwarkjandp.co.uk/newsletters_files/Report%20Spring%202015.pdf

This led into table discussions for people to exchange news concerns and events in their local areas. After this, everyone then contributed to a SWOT analysis on "What do people think and feel about migration", introduced by Alison Gelder of Housing Justice. The results appear at the end of this report.

The Situation in Calais

Phil spoke movingly about the work of Seeking Sanctuary and his own experience of visiting the "jungle" camp in Calais and of providing practical help to the people there. He began by grounding his presentation in quotations from *EXSUL FAMILIA NAZARETHANA*, written by Pope Pius XII in the aftermath of WWII¹, saying that all migrants should be welcomed and the doors of countries should not be closed to them ("provided of course, that the public wealth, considered very carefully, does not forbid this"); and from the Bishops' Conference 2008 statement, *Mission to Migrants*, urging us all to welcome the stranger and to work to manage the problems of migration.



The talk was illustrated with powerful photographs of the 'jungle' at Calais, just over 20 miles from the Kent coast, including shots of the results of the demolition and destruction of 50% of the area that has taken place and the appalling conditions in which people are living. At the time of the Assembly there were more than five thousand people living there, including at least 135 unaccompanied minors with relatives in the UK. The only international Aid organization with a presence in the camp is Médecins Sans Frontières

¹ www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/p12exsul.htm

² www.cbcew.org.uk/content/download/34852/258845/file/mission-to-migrants-2008.pdf

The big charities we normally associate with humanitarian aid say that they do not have a mandate to operate in Europe. This led on to the need for people to donate money and things to support the people in Calais. Phil made the point that donations really need to be sorted and labelled so that they can be distributed to the needs as rapidly as possible. Anyone wanting to find out more about how to help should access the Seeking Sanctuary website: <http://seekingsanctuary.weebly.com/> and also sign up there for regular email updates.

In conclusion, we can take heed of the declaration signed by Archbishop Peter and other Church leaders in Calais in September 2015. "People of all faiths and none can assist by providing financial and material support, time and skills, shelter and accommodation. Above all, we can pray and gather information to support pleas for better treatment in our nations and across the European Union. We wish to counter the myths that lead to prejudice and fear and urge politicians to envisage new policies that go beyond merely closing frontiers and employing increased numbers of security staff. We resolve to work together to encourage residents to create a climate of welcome for strangers and we trust that we will be joined in this by all who gather in places of worship along the frontiers of the European Union."



The situation beyond Europe



Alan explained how CAFOD works in emergencies - and, in particular, in the emergencies that are currently producing numerous refugees. "Unprecedented" is a justified adjective! More than half the population is displaced. The country presents us with the largest displacement crisis globally: 4.8 million people have been forced to leave the country, and 6.5 million are internally displaced - and the figures are rising at a rate of about 850,000 annually.

Turkey has the largest number of official camps (near big cities), with more in Iraq and some other neighbouring countries. Over a million have sought refuge in neighbouring Lebanon, which has only 5 million citizens, and half million are in Palestine.

The situation is complicated, with no obvious geographical location, such as is created by an earthquake, flood, or other natural disaster. Various armed groups block the delivery of aid and the lives of aid workers are at risk.

Nevertheless, efforts have to be made to apply the general strategy for intervention.

- Assess needs
- Design and mobilise a response
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Coordinate work with other NGOs, the UN and national governments
- Manage Security

- Financial management
- Ensure quality and accountability.

The main challenges for those who have fled the country are:

- Livelihood: without a legal right to work, children are exploited as a cheap source of labour.
- Shelter, especially in winter.
- Access to services (for example, healthcare, which has to be paid for, being solely private).
- Family members are missing.

Caritas is supported in providing help to the internally and externally displaced people who are in informal settlements, rather than in official camps. This includes food, shelter and rent, along with non-food essentials such as medicines. Local partners are helped to build capacity and CAFOD carries out advocacy work with the UN and with the UK government.

The expenditure has been split as follows: Syria 38%; Lebanon 34%; Jordan 20%; Turkey 6%; Iraq 1%; Egypt 1%. 55% of the total has gone on food, 24% on non-food items (toiletries, hygiene items, etc.), and the rest on education, psychological support after trauma, and providing access to services such as health and administration.

Advocacy work covers a range of topics:

- Campaigns in solidarity with Syria's people
- Keeping Syria on the agendas of governments, encouraging them to address root causes rather than symptoms, and to include all parties in negotiations.
- Ensuring adequate responses and that governments keep their promises.
- Respect for humanitarian law.
- Addressing the situations of refugees in their host countries.
- Refugee resettlement, sharing the burden and not just relying on immediate neighbours.

There are challenges ahead:

- Displacement and fighting continue.
- Several groups believe that they can win
- Support to hosting countries.
- Eventual large-scale reconstruction.
- Providing opportunities for people to have access to education, jobs and essential services.

CAFOD sends the message that we must both pray and:

- Read and share the stories behind the "lost family portraits" by an award-winning photographer, showing families living in the informal settlements - people whose lives were shattered as they fled the conflict, with empty chairs symbolising the loved ones left behind. (<http://cafod.org.uk/News/Emergencies-news/Lost-Family-Portraits>).
- Help CAFOD's work with schools.
- Help our diocese.
- Help the Bishops' Conference.



Resettlement in the UK

Bekele explained that "Citizens" is an alliance of various institutions, now about 30 years old. It has been campaigning about the Syrian refugee situation for some 2½ years. Hopes were raised initially by the government announcement that 20,000 Syrian refugees would be admitted to the UK over a period of 5 years, but there is now frustration because very few have actually arrived. An important step is to convince local Councils to accept refugees, and the "1000 refugees by Christmas" initiative was effective. To date, about 1500 have arrived.

The scale of the problem is immense.

Some 13 million people are displaced, 8 million internally and 5 million to other countries. The UNHCR says that 320,000 are "in urgent need".

Where does the UK population stand? It seems as though a quarter are pro-immigrant, another quarter are anti-immigrants, and the remaining 50% are "anxious".

Citizens-UK has 90 local teams liaising with Councils to get them to buy into the resettlement programmes. Results can be seen in slogans such as "Refugees welcome in *Abcd*" and "Xyz - City of Sanctuary".

What needs to be done to get ready to welcome new arrivals? Each local team works out what support is needed to meet the needs for education, housing, welfare and for fair publicity in the media and to see how much of this is already available - and from what institutions. Work has to be done on the "gaps", defining just what support is missing and how it can be developed. What people, skills and organisations are absent? The next step is to list the targets for agitation - and these must not just include the like-minded "usual suspects" who are known to be sympathetic. Personal dialogue with apparent opponents is also important. And finally, to assess what the team and its allies can offer - rather than relying on other parties to step up and do all the work.

Subsequently, in July, official announcements appeared about how the refugee sponsorship scheme will work and what churches, groups and individuals now need to do to be accepted as sponsors. The Bishops' Conference has urged parishes to respond: www.catholicnews.org.uk/community-sponsorship

Our Assembly concluded with a Panel Discussion responding to questions and reaffirming the Action Points listed in the above accounts - followed, of course by a prayer and a dismissal to go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SOUTHWARK AUTUMN ASSEMBLY - SATURDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2016

**THE REFUGEE CRISIS: PRACTICAL ACTIONS at CAFOD's Head Office, The Pavillion, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB
From 10am to 4pm**

Join us to find out new ways of addressing the refugee crisis and the different positive, practical actions we can take in our parishes, schools, local groups and organisations.

To book a place please email Marie Bullard at the address below or call 020 7928 9742
All welcome. There is no charge for attending. Tea & coffee provided. Please bring lunch.

*The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of JPIC.
If you would like to get involved in Justice & Peace in your Parish, please contact Kenneth Roberts at:
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