

COLOGNE DECLARATION

FOR A POLICY OF JUSTICE AND HUMANITY
At the initiative of IIPM, #LeaveNoOneBehind, Sea-Watch,
Seebrücke, ECCHR, Equal Rights Beyond Borders,
medico international, School of Political Hope, NTGent

In Afghanistan, in recent weeks, one can see what has been manifesting itself for years at the external borders of Europe: for German politics, bureaucratic procedures count more than human lives. The mantra is “2015 may not be repeated”; border fences and segregation take precedence over human rights.

Year after year, the situation at the external borders of the EU deteriorates. All means are used to prevent refugees from arriving in Europe: assistance is not omitted, and people are “deliberately drowned”, there are illegal pushbacks, torture and violence. With no access to health care, education, clean water and food, tens of thousands of people die at Europe’s external borders. Those who manage to set foot on European soil are deprived of all their basic rights and are often locked up in camps for years. Asylum applications are rejected systematically and illegally.

In June 2021, for instance, Greece declared Turkey a safe third country for people from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh and Pakistan, which de facto will lead to a direct rejection of 70% of asylum applications in Greece in the future. As a result, millions of people are driven into illegality and become pawns of a criminal economy – unable to change their place of residence or return to their countries due to the Dublin Regulation. In Italy alone, 500,000 illegalised people are exploited by a mafia that controls monocultures and the production of cheap food. In the whole of the EU, the number of these modern slaves is estimated at over 3 million. A situation that is not only degrading but also deadly, as the recent hunger strike of the “sans-papiers” in Belgium has shown.

For years, the public was made to believe that this death by the thousands and this humiliation by the millions was a tragic event, a kind of natural disaster. However, what is happening before our eyes – intensified once again since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan – are not just random human rights violations, but planned crimes that are structurally embedded in European policy. It is not a tragedy, but a deliberately designed and implemented political and administrative assault against humanity. And the parliaments and governments of the EU and the member states play a central role in this. In the German Bundestag alone, numerous votes and resolutions have blocked the chance of improving the situation at the borders. Human life and human dignity have long since become a subject of negotiation in politics, across parties and countries.

However, when crime becomes law, when death and human suffering become politically calculated normality, we are left with only two options: silent acceptance of this new kind of barbarism or political resistance. As a strong civil society, as an alliance of organisations, human rights lawyers, refugees and artists, we no longer turn a blind eye to the undermining of human rights and resolutely oppose their erosion.

The evidence is overwhelming; Frontex’s links to European and especially German politics are undeniable. The list is infinite: torture and pushbacks, violation of fundamental rights in the camps, neglect of assistance, criminalisation of sea rescue, illegal removals and rejected asylum applications. We call upon the newly elected Bundestag to return to a policy of justice and humanity and to put an end to the system of dehumanisation, illegalisation and exploitation of refugees. What we need is a discourse on the limits and erosion of the current legal system. We need politicians and experts to work together to create the cornerstones for a system that truly is based on the idea of human rights for all and provides us with the means to claim them.

WE DEMAND:

- **Fleeing to Europe may not be criminalised. All refugees must receive the right to rights.**
- **The Federal Ministry of the Interior must reopen the evacuation list for Afghans who are in danger. Civilians who want to escape may not be stopped by bureaucratic hurdles.**
- **Europe must not continue to close itself off and must signal to the states along the routes that refugees take from Afghanistan to Europe that they are prepared to take responsibility and guarantee the individual right to asylum.**
- **The immediate evacuation of all camps at the external borders of the EU and a legislative basis for self-determined admission by local authorities and countries.**
- **No more German participation in all Frontex and EUNAVFOR MED operations**
- **Sea rescue organised by the state and an end to the criminalisation of civilian sea rescue**

COLOGNE DECLARATION

SIGNED BY

Tareq Alaows, lawyer and activist
Maya Alban-Zapata, actress
Verena Altenberger, actress
Parwana Amiri, activist and author
Jasna Fritzi Bauer, actress
Mark Benecke, scientist and author
Sibylle Berg, author
Luise Befort, actress
Arne Birkenstock, director and producer
Thelma Buabeng, actress
Ali Can, social activist and initiator #MeTwo
Stefanie Carp, dramaturge
Max Czollek, author
Fatih Çevikkollu, comedian
Amelie Deuffhard, artistic director Kampnagel Hamburg
Katja Diefenbach, cultural scientist, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)
Yilmaz Dziewior, director Museum Ludwig
Maria Ehrich, actress
Mohammad Murtaza Farooqi, activist, Munich Refugee Council
Pegah Ferydoni, actress
Luisa-Céline Gaffron, actress
Kübra Gümüşay, author
Annie Hoffmann, moderator
Rahel Jaeggi, philosopher, Humboldt University Berlin
Elfriede Jelinek, author
Wolfgang Kaleck, Secretary General ECCHR
Jasmina Kuhnke, author
Şeyda Kurt, author
Shermin Langhoff, artistic director Maxim Gorki Theater
Ursina Lardi, actress
Stephan Lessenich, sociologist, director of the Institute for Social Research, Goethe University Frankfurt
Igor Levit, pianist
Matthias Lilienthal, dramaturge
Boniface Mabanza, philosopher and cultural scientist
Robert Menasse, author
Robert Misik, journalist and author
Ersan Mondtag, director
Hans Mörtter, priest
Maximilian Mundt, actor
Maximilian Pichl, University of Frankfurt/M
Thomas Oberender, author and artistic director of the Berliner Festspiele
Thomas Ostermeier, director and artistic director of Schaubühne Berlin
René Pollesch, director and artistic director Volksbühne Berlin
Carola Rackete, activist and captain
Milo Rau, director and artistic director IIPM and NTGent
Angela Richter, director
Merlin Rose, actor
Kathrin Röggla, author
Thomas Rudhof-Seibert, philosopher, medico international
Mithu Sanyal, author
Stefanie Sargnagel, author
Kais Setti, actor
Omer Shatz, lawyer
Saša Stanišić, author
Joulia Strauß, artist and founder Avtonomi Akadimia
Corinna Ujkašević, lawyer
Andres Veiel, director

Julia von Heinz, director
Harald Welzer, sociologist and publicist
Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, journalist and writer
Andrea Ypsilanti, Spokeswoman of the Board of the Institute for Solidary Modernity
Anbid Zaman, human rights activist and artist
Jean Ziegler, sociologist and UN special rapporteur

SIGNED BY MEMBERS OF THE ACTION ALLIANCE COLOGNE

Laura Beische, biologist
Georg Blokus, organizer, School of Political Hope
Anne Brüning, social worker
Franco Clemens, social worker and street worker
Julia Dick, performance artist
Gaby Gehlen, activist, Mosaik Cologne Mülheim e.V.
Max Gede, designer
Kalle Gerigk, city activist
Clemens Holtmann, activist, DiEM25
David Häußer, designer and photographer
Franziska Heinisch, activist, Justice is Global Europe
Steve Hudson, actor and director
Klaus Jünschke, activist, Action Alliance against Housing Shortage and Urban Degradation
Manuel Moser, actor
Zandile Ngono, anti-discrimination trainer and Die Urbane
Behshid Najafi, activist, agisra e.V.
Noelle O'Brien-Coker, journalist and radio author
Anja Plemper, urban activist
Ahmet Sinoplu, social worker, Coach e.V.

ORGANIZATIONS OF THE ACTION ALLIANCE COLOGNE

Allerweltshaus Köln e.V.
Association for the Design of History
Autor:innenkollektiv "Mal nach den Rechten schauen"
ArtAsyl e.V.
DEMASK
fakE – für antiklassistisches Empowerment an der Uni Köln
Integrationsrat der Stadt Köln
Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie e.V.
Köln spricht
Netzwerk Rechtskritik
Rainbow Refugees Support – Group Cologne e.V.
ROOTS & ROUTES Cologne e.V.
Solidarity City Cologne
SoliMed Köln
Tatort Porz – Keine Ruhe nach dem Schuss