



***Jesuit Refugee Service  
-Europe-  
Service Jésuite des  
Réfugiés***

Chaussée d'Haecht 8  
1210 Brussels, Belgium.

**News Release – World Refugee Day – June 20<sup>th</sup> 2004**

**IMMEDIATE**

- ❖ **EU must address root causes**
- ❖ **Tackle irregular migration in a realistic way**
- ❖ **Serious work on integration needed**

***Page 1 of 2***

---

For world refugee day 2004, JRS-Europe expresses concern about many aspects of EU asylum and immigration policy. Over the past years it has become more and more restrictive. What was initially meant to be 'minimum standards' in legislation have instead become minimal and governments tend not to go beyond them.

'People are dying every week in the Mediterranean as they try to reach the countries of the EU' said JRS Policy and Advocacy Officer for Europe Cornelia Buehrle. 'Asylum seekers are being detained often in inhumane conditions. We risk being so fixated with asylum numbers that the root causes are not being given attention. In fact instead of tackling root causes, it is the refugees and migrants who are being victimised. Is this the kind of Europe we want?'

The theme chosen by UNHCR this year is integration of refugees, or 'finding a home'. JRS highlights the problem of integration especially in our large cities. Refugees and asylum seekers are increasingly being marginalised, feel excluded and not wanted. Strong gains in the recent elections in several EU member states by anti immigrant parties show the extent of the problem. Politicians are tending to take on some of the agenda of these far right parties while at the same time trying to ignore or exclude these parties. Those who voted for these parties then feel disenfranchised. Politicians must educate people about the issues of asylum and migration. They must also come up with coherent and workable plans, enter into genuine and robust dialogue and find real solutions.

As a Christian organisation we are in touch day by day with people in some of the poorest quarters of European cities and where some of the deepest tensions exist.

'Ongoing, long term and intensive work for solidarity in our societies is a must' said JRS Europe Regional Director John Dardis. 'The situation in some places is critical. We question if enough is being done.'

Europe often does not wish to face the fact in a realistic way that irregular migrants are present in its societies. It is notable for example that EU funding is usually available only for work with legal migrants. Yet it is a reality that irregular migrants are present in all our societies. Ignoring the issue, with occasional high profile deportations, is fruitless and dangerous.

‘Within EU borders people without visas or passports are in danger of being regarded as having less human rights or in a subtle way perhaps even as less human than others’ said John Dardis. ‘People still have entitlement to human dignity and to basic human rights regardless of their legal status.’

We call on EU governments to engage in serious research and to devise a humane plan for dealing with the issue of irregular migrants as well as with the issue of integration. The EU Commission Paper COM (2003) 323 on irregular migration provides an important starting point for discussion as does the paper on Integration COM (2003) 336 but a fundamentally new approach is needed. The current strategy on irregularity which amounts to tightening borders to keep people out and of sending them back if they do arrive is not working and cannot work in the long term. More is needed.

For world refugee day 2004 JRS-Europe appeals to governments, legislative bodies and international organizations in Europe

- to respect and protect the human dignity of refugees and other forced migrants, be they in a regular or an irregular situation
- to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to the territory. There is now such concern over illegal migration and over terrorism that in the tightening up Europe now risks excluding genuine asylum seekers
- not to make international terrorism a pretext to reduce their rights.

**ENDS**

### **More details**

John Dardis SJ. Mobile +32-494-307476

Cornelia Buehrle rscj +32-2-2503220

For parish resources on refugee useful for Sunday June 20th see

<http://www.jrseurope.org> and click on ‘Prayer Resources’

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw.htm>

[http://www.ncca.org.au/christian\\_world\\_service/at\\_work\\_with\\_refugees/educational\\_resources](http://www.ncca.org.au/christian_world_service/at_work_with_refugees/educational_resources)

**JRS** study on irregular migration: *Leben in der Schattenwelt*, Karlsruhe 2003 by Dr Joerg Alt SJ.

*JRS Europe is a network of 20 offices working in Europe with and for refugees and displaced people. It is part of the JRS international network and a project of the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials.*

Tel +32-2-250-3220. Fax +32-2-250-3229.

Web: [www.jrseurope.org](http://www.jrseurope.org) E mail: [john.dardis@jesref.org](mailto:john.dardis@jesref.org)

‘Serving Forgotten Refugees’