



Church and Peace

International Office

Church and Peace - the ecumenical peace church network of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies in Europe

Coronavirus: Church and Peace cancels conferences and calls for solidarity with people at the EU's external borders

Wethen, 25 March 2020: In order to slow down the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), increasingly strict precautionary measures have been imposed worldwide in recent weeks. As a result, it will not be possible for the Church and Peace conference on 'Images of God and Nonviolence', planned for 15-17 May in the Netherlands, to take place.

On 23 March the Dutch government banned organised meetings until 1 June. This also applies to the Church and Peace conference. The situation is currently too uncertain for new plans to be made.

None of the events planned for June in Paris - the francophone regional meeting, the conference on 'Rethinking Security', and the inter-religious protest against the Eurosatory 2020 arms fair - will take place either.

Instead, intercession for each other and solidarity are now called for from everyone. In our own community first of all, and then further afield.

In these times it is especially important for Church and Peace to keep a watchful eye on the borders of the European Union and beyond:

People at the Croatian stretch of the EU's external border, who despite miserable conditions and threats to life and limb do not give up hope of finding security in the EU, are exposed to winter temperatures and the danger of falling ill. They urgently need protection and the prospect of a better future.

The same applies to the many refugees not only in Greece, but also in Turkey, Syria, and Libya. People living in overcrowded camps, on the Greek islands for example, now have no protection from the pandemic apart from the pitiful conditions in which they are living.

'First of all, the decision of some EU member states to evacuate unaccompanied and sick children from the Greek islands must be implemented immediately,' demands Antje Heider-Rottwilm, chairperson of Church and Peace. 'Just as exemptions are obviously possible for thousands of holiday returnees in this special situation, this must also be possible immediately for children and particularly vulnerable people among the refugees.'

In solidarity with Greece, the overcrowded refugee camps must be evacuated. The people there must no longer be left to their fate. If the epidemic breaks out in one of these camps, it will be almost impossible to break chains of infection and provide medical care.'

Church and Peace calls on the European institutions as well as the Member States to show solidarity and humanity in and despite the Corona crisis and to take the necessary measures immediately. And to save lives.