



**PUB 15**

## **Together for Justice: Justice means Togetherness in Public Action for All – Including People on the Move**

### **COVER NOTE**

This statement was developed by the ACT Alliance Reference Group on Migration and Displacement, in collaboration with the Reference Groups on Climate Justice and Gender Justice, as well as the ACT Forums in Africa, MENA, Asia-Pacific, and the ACT Regional Community of Practice on Climate Change and Human Mobility for LAC. The statement concerns the ongoing crisis of solidarity and welcome and how it affects people on the move, and it proposes commitments to ACT members to effect meaningful change, as well as calling on governments and other duty bearers to respect and fulfil related human rights.

### **TOPIC**

Migration has traditionally been a model for adapting to changes in living conditions, contributing to human development in both origin and destination countries. However, there is a profound crisis of solidarity and welcome, pushing many migrants to the margins of societies. Ongoing conflicts and climate change exacerbate humanitarian emergencies, compelling more people to leave their homes. Forced movements have doubled in the last decade. Limited migration pathways and restricted asylum access force people into dangerous routes, risking trafficking, human rights violations, and violence. Child detention and family separation remain common, alongside growing racism and xenophobia in immigration policies and host societies globally. ACT members are called to reject the exclusion of migrants, advocate for their rights, and provide humanitarian assistance. The goal is to enable people to choose to migrate or to stay, in each case ensuring their dignity and full access to their rights. Members should strengthen solidarity, change narratives, engage in global processes, and mobilise support for long-term responses addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This includes advocating for multi-year, flexible funding models, strengthening partnerships, investing in evidence-based approaches, and exploring innovative financing mechanisms. By doing so, we can shift focus towards sustainable solutions addressing root causes of crises.

# STATEMENT

## Together for Justice: Justice means Togetherness in Public Action for All – Including People on the Move

About 281 million people worldwide are currently living outside the country in which they were born. Migration has traditionally been a model for adapting to changes in living conditions. It can contribute to human development in the countries of origin and destination. Remittances from migrants often complement local livelihoods and make households more resilient. While it might be accurate to say that there is no migration crisis, there is indeed a profound crisis of solidarity and welcome. This has led to a situation in which large numbers of people on the move are being pushed to the margins of countries and societies. Ongoing conflicts are on the rise, including known crises as well as “forgotten (or rather “neglected”) crises” such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and others for which there is a lack of political will and financial support. Frequent and intense extreme weather events and environmental degradation caused by climate change, such as prolonged droughts and severe flooding, threaten people's livelihoods and exacerbate humanitarian emergencies. This is particularly acute in the Global South. Especially affected are agriculture-based economies, compelling people to move to other countries. Global refugee movements have doubled in the last decade. The lack of regular migration pathways and tightening access to asylum are increasingly forcing people to take life-threatening routes, putting them at risk of smuggling and trafficking of persons, human rights violations, exploitation and violence, and resulting in an increase in protracted displacement situations worldwide. At least 63,000 migrants have lost their lives since 2014. Although women, children, and LGBTQI\* people are disproportionately at a higher risk of being exposed to physical, psychological, sexual or gender-based violence during displacement and migration trajectories, men also face terrible conditions.

At the same time existing international protection agreements and obligations are increasingly ignored by states. People on the move are violently prevented from seeking protection at borders. Many countries have implemented restrictions on access to their territory ignoring actual labour market needs and demographic realities. Migration detention including children, and the separation of families remains, and there is a growing expression of racism and xenophobia in immigration policies. In general, migrants and asylum seekers experience human rights violations such as xenophobia, discrimination, gender-based violence, and labour exploitation.

**In Africa**, internally displaced persons and refugees flock to the poorest parts of urban areas where conflicts escalate due to competition for scarce resources. Competition for these limited resources affects rural areas just as much, as global assistance to refugees across the continent continues to shrink. Weak governance exacerbates internal and cross-border displacement through inadequate response to crises and the absence of infrastructure and basic services.

**In Latin America and the Caribbean**, smugglers and cartels have consistently taken advantage of vulnerable people along migration routes, and migrants' access to rights, opportunities, and assistance are often dependent on citizenship, language proficiency, and ethnic or other origins. State and non-state violence is rampant, and disappearances of migrants in transit are widespread.

Structural poverty, lack of decent employment, and inequalities in access to basic services such as education, health and housing are persistent factors that force people to migrate

We call attention to Haiti, where the frequency and intensity of extreme phenomena are destroying livelihoods and food sources, forcing the Haitian community to move.

**In Asia and the Pacific**, labour migration is especially widespread, and migrant workers are afforded very few rights by destination country governments. They are subjected to recruitment systems that force many of them into debt bondage, keeping them in exploitative working arrangements. Climate-driven displacement is also an increasing challenge. Refugee protection across most of the region is handled in an arbitrary and unpredictable manner.

**In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**, countries are struggling to accommodate large numbers of displaced people seeking to escape continued violence and persecution in Syria and Sudan, as well as the resurgent human rights emergency in Palestine. Pressure on local resources and increased tensions with host communities often result. In North Africa, migrants often endure harsh conditions with inadequate access to basic necessities. Political instability and weak governance exacerbate these problems.

**In Europe and North America**, migration management has been increasingly externalised, outsourcing border control to third countries, often where human rights standards are not upheld. The mediterranean route remains one of the deadliest migration routes globally. The EU's new Migration and Asylum Pact is expected to exacerbate these issues, further endangering migrants' rights and safety.

**Raising the call to action:** Safeguarding human dignity and shaping social cohesion and cultural diversity is becoming increasingly difficult. The discourse on migrants is mostly centred around a so-called crisis, portraying them as a threat rather than recognising their rights, following narratives of hate. People have a right to move to save their lives or make their lives better for their families. Migration cannot be separated from the issues of global justice and development cooperation. As faith-based organisations, we are disturbed by the ubiquity and severity of human rights abuses faced by people on the move. Many of our members, we as well as many congregations and local communities, have been shaped by experiences of migration and plurality. Indeed, the Church has been a migrant church from its earliest stages. We are called by scripture to “welcome the stranger,” to speak out for justice, and to work together to alleviate the suffering of migrants of this world. This has been a common thread of our identity, which has been reflected in the work of ACT members, churches and their local partners, a thread which needs strengthening and support at this crucial time.

## **Commitments & Recommendations**

### **Commitments as ACT Alliance:**

**We, as ACT Alliance and all ACT members, as faith leaders and organisations, concretely commit to:**

- **Strengthen solidarity and welcome, strengthen networking, change the narrative:** Learn about migrants in your town and explore how your church or organisation can be a safe and hospitable space and welcoming community. Explore ways in your context in which you can partner with organisations that are upholding the rights of migrants or providing legal assistance to migrants. Listen to, and share with permission, diverse migrants' stories. Help amplify their voices and experiences within your local and national context to push back against narratives of racism and xenophobia.

- **Engage in relevant global, regional and national processes, promote dialogue, support funding:** Learn about and provide progressive, rights-based inputs into processes like the Global Compact for Migration. Promote research and analysis of the root causes of migration and support the development of rights-based solutions with a particular focus on the gender-specific dimensions of migration and displacement. Identify funding opportunities to increase effective collaboration on migration and displacement issues.
- **Mobilise participation and financial support for longer-term solutions:** Advocate for multi-year, flexible funding models and strengthen partnerships between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors. Ensure the participation of affected communities and emphasise the importance of strengthening broader development goals and regional stability, shifting focus to sustainable solutions addressing root causes.

### **Recommendations to other Faith-Based Organisations:**

Furthermore, in the spirit of this Assembly, we call upon all faith leaders and organisations, including all ACT members, to stand “Together for Justice” and to actively reject the exclusion and marginalisation of people on the move, which is frequently happening in the context of larger fundamentalist, nationalist, racist, and xenophobic tendencies in our societies, both overt and hidden, individual and systemic.

We call on ourselves as ACT Alliance members to continue to work with migrants and refugees and implement the vision of the joint World Council of Churches (WCC) and ACT Alliance document ‘Called to Transformation, Ecumenical Diakonia’: “In times when basic rights of migrants and refugees are threatened, churches and diaconal agents must engage in advocacy and public action, as part of their calling to defend human dignity.” (p. 58)

As faith-based organizations that are called upon to care for the “least among us”, we are very concerned about the worsening impacts of conflicts and climate change on the lives and livelihoods of marginalised and vulnerable people everywhere, including those on the move.

Our common goal must be to enable people to migrate in dignity and with protection and full access to their rights, or to stay if that is their wish. The aim is not to prevent migration, but to ensure that it is a choice and not a necessity. This includes continuing to provide direct humanitarian assistance to those in distress. For those who do migrate, ACT members and other faith-based organisations must serve as beacons of welcome through tangible acts of love and hospitality.

### **Recommendations to States:**

We are outraged by the lack of political will to provide adequate resources and legal measures to ensure the protection of migrants. We strongly condemn policies that address human mobility as a security threat. Instead, **we urge states and other duty bearers to respect the needs and dignity and protect the rights of people on the move by observing their international legal obligations and all applicable human rights standards.**

*A majority of the assembly has declared itself in agreement with the opinions expressed in this statement. While many ACT members agree with the public statement, there are members who have expressed differing perspectives on the content or tone. Their decision reflects the diverse viewpoints within our alliance, and we respect their choice to abstain or vote against. As always, we value the collective dialogue and encourage continued discussions on the matter at hand, recognizing the strength of our unity in diversity.*