



**Jesuit Refugee Service Europe  
Regional Office**

Rue du Progrès 333/2  
1030 Brussels, Belgium

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Brussels, 10 September 2015

Dear Mr President of the EU Council,  
Dear Mr Tusk,

We take this opportunity to remind you that not so long ago Poland was a major refugee producing country during the Second World War and then in the long years of the Cold War. Today, people from Poland enjoy freedom of movement across Europe as European citizens. **As the first Polish leader of the European Council is it not time for you to lead Europe to take united humanitarian action and help refugees fleeing war and oppression?**

Despite previous initiatives, the EU-level migration policy is sadly failing those seeking international protection. In the meantime, grass-roots mobilisation of European civil society shows that **our citizens wish to welcome, accompany and help people in need**. Asylum seekers are greeted with kindness at German train stations, they are helped in Hungary by volunteers, they are welcomed by French families and churches.

For our country offices, opening the door to protection for asylum seekers and refugees is not only a religious principle, but it is a universal human value, which should be applied regardless of faith or nationality. Sadly, these past few months only showed that some European political leaders prefer to barricade the door, rather than to open it to people in need. **We want to bring to your attention voices of those who are today in need of international protection.**

It is up to the European Union to show **political courage and humanitarian leadership by taking responsibility for asylum seekers and refugees** as well as by offering permanent resettlement schemes. Civil society's actions **must be supported by** urgent political, EU-level measures:

- In order to save more lives, the European Union must create more safe and legal routes to protection, including a common humanitarian visa system and measures that truly enable families to reunite in Europe as well as other measures.
- Reception facilities need to be improved and made fit to welcome the most vulnerable men, women and children. Refugees arriving in Europe must be treated with humanity and dignity.

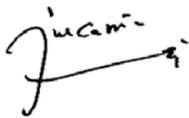
Given the current situation we also take this opportunity to remind Member States that international human rights norms must be upheld:

- **Saving lives and protecting people fleeing war and oppression are our States' moral and legal responsibility.** All 28 EU Member States are signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Governments must respect the *non-refoulement* principle: a person cannot be returned to a country where he or she risks to be persecuted, where his or her life is under a direct threat from the authorities or individuals, or where his or her human rights are going to be violated. This principle applies both to the countries of origin and transit as well as to some European countries that are unable or unwilling to treat asylum seekers with dignity.
- **All Member States must guarantee and respect the human rights of every asylum seeker** in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter.

Europe, because of its history and traditions, should not turn a blind eye to those most vulnerable and in need in protection. Hospitality is one of the most well-known Polish traditions. It can be easily transformed into European value.

Yours faithfully,

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JRS France  
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JRS Germany  
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JRS Malta  
Katrin Camilleri



JRS Ireland  
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**“Some people” by Wislawa Szymborska**

Some people fleeing some other people.  
In some country under the sun  
and some clouds.

They leave behind some of their everything,  
sown fields, some chickens, dogs,  
mirrors in which fire now sees itself reflected.

On their backs are pitchers and bundles,  
the emptier, the heavier from one day to the next.

Taking place stealthily is somebody's stopping,  
and in the commotion, somebody's bread somebody's snatching  
and a dead child somebody's shaking.

In front of them some still not the right way,  
nor the bridge that should be  
over a river strangely rosy.  
Around them, some gunfire, at times closer, at times farther off,  
and, above, a plane circling somewhat.

Some invisibility would come in handy,  
some grayish stoniness,  
or even better, non-being  
for a little or a long while.

Something else is yet to happen, only where and what?  
Someone will head toward them, only when and who,  
in how many shapes and with what intentions?  
Given a choice,  
maybe he will choose not to be the enemy and  
leave them with some kind of life.