



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Committee on migration issues

Statement on world refugee day

Upholding fundamental principles of protection in a context of tightening migration policies

20 June 2026

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, the Committee on Migration Issues of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe wishes to recall the fundamental importance of the right to asylum, international protection and the effective respect of human rights, at a time marked by rising forced displacement, multiplying conflicts and evolving migration policies in Europe and beyond.

This day is first and foremost an occasion to recall the presence, in our countries, of millions of people forced to flee war, persecution, violence or serious human rights violations.

The Committee recalls that fundamental rights are not granted based on a person's administrative status. They stem from the inherent dignity of every human being and constitute a universal protection whose preservation remains essential to the maintenance of democratic societies.

The Committee notes with concern that public and political debates increasingly tend to present the protection of refugees and respect for fundamental rights as incompatible with security imperatives or the management of migration flows. Such an approach does not reflect the complementarity that exists between effective migration governance and the effective respect of the fundamental rights of every person. The protection of fundamental rights is not an obstacle to effective migration governance; it is one of its essential conditions.

The Committee also notes with concern the deteriorating climate surrounding migration issues in the Western world. Stigmatising discourse and conflation between migration and insecurity contribute to heightening social tensions and can fuel acts of hostility against migrants and refugees, as recent serious incidents have again demonstrated. This trend also affects civil society actors, volunteers and humanitarian organisations working with people in vulnerable situations; their criminalisation is unacceptable: respect for civic space, freedom of association and humanitarian action is an essential component of any democratic society founded on human rights.

In this context, the Committee recalls that no person may be returned to a country where they would risk being subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, persecution or other serious human rights violations.

The Committee also stresses that the externalisation of asylum or return procedures, transfers to third countries with which the persons concerned have no genuine connection, and certain proposals currently under discussion at European level, call for particular vigilance to ensure effective respect for procedural safeguards, the right to an effective remedy and the obligations arising from the European Convention on Human Rights.

People in vulnerable situations must continue to benefit from enhanced protection at every stage of migration procedures.

It is in this spirit that the Committee reaffirms its commitment to the integrity of the European Convention on Human Rights, to the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, and to respect for the principles that form the democratic foundation of Europe.

On the occasion of this World Refugee Day, and at a time when many voices are calling for a redefinition of the balance between migration control and the protection of fundamental rights, the Committee recalls that the strength of the European project lies precisely in its capacity to reconcile security, the rule of law and respect for human dignity.

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