



When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33-34

Committed to Religious Freedom and the Right of Asylum

A Resolution by the General Council 2019

From our German history comes a responsibility for our actions today. 100 years ago, Religious Freedom was included into the Weimar Constitution. The National Socialists disregarded this and all other Basic Rights. 70 years after the ratification of the "Grundgesetz" (Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany) and 30 years after the Peaceful Revolution, we recall that Religious Freedom and the Right of Asylum are Basic Rights closely belonging together.

We are grateful that 100 years ago the Weimar Constitution for the first time in the history of our country comprehensively guaranteed Religious Freedom and other Basic Rights and officially declared the separation of state and church.

We recall that the National Socialists destroyed the basic democratic structures and disregarded fundamental rights like the right to life and the protection of minorities. Whoever was persecuted – like the Jews – and did not find asylum in other countries, became a helpless victim of the cruel persecution by the National Socialists.

We remember with gratitude the ratification of the "Grundgesetz" 70 years ago. After the liberation of Germany through the Allied Forces, a new democratic constitution was developed that committed itself to the Human dignity and to Religious Freedom.

We celebrate with gratitude the Fall of the Wall 30 years ago. By the Peaceful Revolution, a dictatorial regime was overcome and the gifts of freedom and unity became reality. Since then, the whole of Germany enjoys comprehensive Religious Freedom.

Our German history is an obligation for us to give protection by granting asylum to those who are threatened because of their religious convictions. People who are persecuted for religious reasons in their home countries are often severely traumatized. They are seeking asylum, hoping that they can live their faith openly and without fear for their lives. Persons who are in danger of persecution because of a religious conversion are in specific need of protection by our government – regardless of whether they have experienced their conversion in their home country or after their arrival in Germany. As a Union who considers the freedom of the individual in religious matters of highest importance, we highly emphasize that the decision to change one's religion or to be baptized is not taken light-mindedly.

We call on government agencies to have only persons qualified in that regard take decisions in asylum applications on religious grounds. Religious expertise is indispensable for these decisions that have far-reaching – and possibly existential – consequences for the applicants. Decision-makers should consult external experts if necessary. The Basic Right of Religious Freedom must not be eroded. But exactly that is happening when persons are not granted their Basic Right of asylum in cases of impending danger of persecution on religious grounds.

We are grateful for the strong commitment of our churches to refugee help and encourage them to keep up the good work. It is our desire that churches give support to converts regarding questions of their faith and their lives as Christians, as well as in legal matters.

Kassel, June 1, 2019 (English version: Thomas Klammt)