

## CHARTER OF GRONINGEN

1. The situation of refugees and those seeking asylum in Europe is alarming. There is a general tendency for European governments to close the borders and to stop the influx of the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers. All sorts of legislative and bureaucratic measures are being taken at national and regional levels. Increasingly the refugee concept and the Geneva Refugee Conventions of 1951 and 1967 are being interpreted in a restrictive way.

As local churches, parishes, faith communities and basic groups we feel that our moral responsibility calls us to act in this situation. Refugees and those seeking asylum make it clear to us how much violence and injustice there is in the world. To avoid the burden and sorrow connected with giving protection to refugees means refusing to regard this violence and injustice as a common problem. Our faith that God wants the oneness of humankind, urges us to reject this refusal and take sides with refugees and asylum seekers.
2. Taking sides means to us in the first place that in local co-operation we wish to make efforts, to the best of our abilities, to receive and support refugees and asylum seekers. In addition it means that we must continue pressing our governments that their asylum policies be not conceived only in terms of national or European interest, but rather that they need to reflect a broad-minded interpretation of the international conventions of refugees and human rights. We pledge ourselves to urge our countries to participate in sharing the international burden in a way that corresponds to the European position in the world and its responsibility resulting from this position.
3. When we have good reason to assume that a refugee or asylum seeker, threatened with deportation, is not being given humanitarian treatment, or that decisions are being taken that may seriously affect the quality of his or her existence, we pledge ourselves to take in and protect him or her until a solution has been found that is acceptable to all parties concerned. We will not avoid open confrontation with our governments or direct action of solidarity and protest when in our opinion the situation requires it.
4. We shall continue to point out to local, national and international councils and federations of churches what we see their responsibility as being in matters and problems relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and shall urge the councils and federations to meet their responsibilities within their own means and possibilities.
5. Regarding ourselves as partners in a covenant of local faith communities and other groups that take sides with refugees and asylum seekers, we promise each other support and solidarity, and we endeavour to encourage many other churches, faith communities and basic groups to also join us as partners in this covenant.