

Resolution 2328 (2020)¹

Prevention of violence and discrimination against religious minorities amongst refugees in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to adequate protection in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights standards. Uprooted from their home countries, these migrants may only bring with them their cultural practices, traditions and faith, the attachment to which becomes all the more important to the preservation of their human dignity, and indeed to their physical and psychological integrity.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly considers that the beliefs and religious practices of migrants and refugees need to be taken into account as an essential factor in successful reception and integration policies. The Assembly therefore calls on member States of the Council of Europe to express their political will to ensure greater protection to refugees and asylum seekers in Europe by preventing religiously motivated violence and discrimination.
3. The prevention of violence and discrimination against religious minorities amongst refugees and asylum seekers in Europe requires actions at all levels – international, European, national and, most of all, local. States should make greater efforts to alleviate tensions and to create a climate of respect and the means to live in dignity for refugees and asylum seekers.
4. The Assembly recalls its [Recommendation 1962 \(2011\)](#) on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and invites member States to promote partnerships between the Council of Europe, religious institutions and humanist and non-religious organisations, seeking to encourage the active involvement of all stakeholders to promote the fundamental values of the Organisation, particularly in the context of their asylum policies.
5. Member States should foster interreligious and interfaith dialogue in the context of asylum procedures, resolve faith-based conflicts inside refugee reception centres and temporary accommodation facilities more effectively and with greater respect for the dignity and rights of refugees and asylum seekers, and promote good practices and grass-roots initiatives encouraging interreligious dialogue and peaceful living together, in a gender-sensitive manner. Measures should include the following:
 - 5.1. fostering interreligious and interfaith dialogue in the context of asylum:
 - 5.1.1. the Assembly reiterates its call for the development of a pan-European platform on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and suggests that attention be devoted to interreligious dialogue in the context of asylum and migration policies;
 - 5.1.2. member States should set up and support the work of interreligious dialogue platforms at national and local levels and, in particular, their involvement in the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe;
 - 5.1.3. prejudice, racism and hate speech in refugee facilities should be combated, for example by the establishment of inclusive dialogue processes in such locations, using the expertise of third-party intermediaries, ethno-religious mediators and dialogue facilitators;

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 6 March 2020 (see [Doc. 15083](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Egidijus Vareikis).*



- 5.1.4. special training should be provided to mediators, community leaders and other relevant stakeholders, including volunteers, to promote interreligious dialogue and better social cohesion. This training should include a gender perspective dimension;
- 5.1.5. access to interfaith dialogue programmes should be facilitated for refugees and asylum seekers living in reception centres, thereby fostering a better understanding of the cultures and beliefs of others and creating a space in which to build trust;
- 5.2. resolving faith-based conflicts inside refugee reception centres and temporary accommodation facilities more effectively and with greater respect for the dignity and rights of refugees and asylum seekers:
- 5.2.1. to ensure freedom of religion is respected, member States should provide specific training for personnel in reception centres and temporary accommodation facilities, in order to enhance their knowledge of the different religions of residents, including information about religious celebrations, prayer times and the facilities needed in order to enable the practice of religions. Training should also include courses on interfaith mediation;
- 5.2.2. training and information sessions should be provided to residents of reception centres and temporary accommodation facilities at the time of their arrival and periodically during their stay. The sessions should cover international and national law on freedom of religion, information on religious practices in the host country, workshops to prevent religious radicalisation and arrangements for religious practices at the centre;
- 5.2.3. complaints procedures should be available in centres to enable residents to challenge religiously motivated discrimination. National hotlines for complaints regarding religiously motivated discrimination could be set up, with trained staff able to evaluate situations and react swiftly. These hotlines should be connected with interreligious mediators and the police to enable them to immediately intervene and provide support to the alleged victims;
- 5.2.4. reception centres and temporary accommodation facilities for refugees and asylum seekers should have a dedicated office for receiving complaints and provide the opportunity to file a complaint anonymously. States should also guarantee the possibility to anonymously file complaints to the police;
- 5.2.5. in cases of complaints with regard to religiously motivated attacks or discrimination, the safety of the alleged victim must be the priority. Complaints should activate a protection procedure: the victim must be immediately transferred to a safe place, such as an alternative centre, before a thorough investigation is carried out. Such procedures should be gender sensitive;
- 5.2.6. police officers should be fully trained to investigate religiously motivated crimes. Police administrations should designate contact persons in police headquarters to handle faith-based conflicts inside refugee reception centres and temporary accommodation facilities;
- 5.3. promoting good practices and grass-roots initiatives fostering interreligious dialogue and living together:
- 5.3.1. local initiatives and good practices that foster interreligious dialogue should be promoted, by connecting representatives of various religious groups among refugees and asylum seekers and putting them in contact with the local community of the host country. Such initiatives could include meetings with the leaders of the different religious communities; meetings with the members of religious faiths in their different places of worship, with the aim of promoting mutual knowledge of aspects of ritual, modalities of worship and socialisation; and participation in religious celebrations of the different communities present;
- 5.3.2. active participation by women in intercultural dialogue should be encouraged, including in its religious dimension, in the context of asylum. Women asylum seekers should be empowered to act as agents of change, in accordance with Assembly [Resolution 1615 \(2008\)](#) and [Recommendation 1838 \(2008\)](#) on empowering women in a modern, multicultural society;
- 5.3.3. children's awareness of common points shared by different faiths should be raised, thereby promoting dialogue and better understanding of other religious beliefs through education. Both formal education and non-formal learning should be provided on different religions and non-religious belief systems in classes for refugees as well as in the local schools of host countries.