

# COLOGNE DECLARATION

**FOR A POLICY OF JUSTICE AND HUMANITY**  
**At the initiative of IIPM, #LeaveNoOneBehind, Sea-Watch,**  
**Seebrücke, ECCHR, Equal Rights Beyond Borders,**  
**medico international, School of Political Hope, NTGent**

In Afghanistan, in recent weeks, one can see what has been manifesting itself for years at the external borders of Europe: for German politics, bureaucratic procedures count more than human lives. The mantra is “2015 may not be repeated”; border fences and segregation take precedence over human rights.

Year after year, the situation at the external borders of the EU deteriorates. All means are used to prevent refugees from arriving in Europe: assistance is not omitted, and people are “deliberately drowned”, there are illegal pushbacks, torture and violence. With no access to health care, education, clean water and food, tens of thousands of people die at Europe’s external borders. Those who manage to set foot on European soil are deprived of all their basic rights and are often locked up in camps for years. Asylum applications are rejected systematically and illegally.

In June 2021, for instance, Greece declared Turkey a safe third country for people from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh and Pakistan, which de facto will lead to a direct rejection of 70% of asylum applications in Greece in the future. As a result, millions of people are driven into illegality and become pawns of a criminal economy – unable to change their place of residence or return to their countries due to the Dublin Regulation. In Italy alone, 500,000 illegalised people are exploited by a mafia that controls monocultures and the production of cheap food. In the whole of the EU, the number of these modern slaves is estimated at over 3 million. A situation that is not only degrading but also deadly, as the recent hunger strike of the “sans-papiers” in Belgium has shown.

For years, the public was made to believe that this death by the thousands and this humiliation by the millions was a tragic event, a kind of natural disaster. However, what is happening before our eyes – intensified once again since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan – are not just random human rights violations, but planned crimes that are structurally embedded in European policy. It is not a tragedy, but a deliberately designed and implemented political and administrative assault against humanity. And the parliaments and governments of the EU and the member states play a central role in this. In the German Bundestag alone, numerous votes and resolutions have blocked the chance of improving the situation at the borders. Human life and human dignity have long since become a subject of negotiation in politics, across parties and countries.

However, when crime becomes law, when death and human suffering become politically calculated normality, we are left with only two options: silent acceptance of this new kind of barbarism or political resistance. As a strong civil society, as an alliance of organisations, human rights lawyers, refugees and artists, we no longer turn a blind eye to the undermining of human rights and resolutely oppose their erosion.

The evidence is overwhelming; Frontex’s links to European and especially German politics are undeniable. The list is infinite: torture and pushbacks, violation of fundamental rights in the camps, neglect of assistance, criminalisation of sea rescue, illegal removals and rejected asylum applications. We call upon the newly elected Bundestag to return to a policy of justice and humanity and to put an end to the system of dehumanisation, illegalisation and exploitation of refugees. What we need is a discourse on the limits and erosion of the current legal system. We need politicians and experts to work together to create the cornerstones for a system that truly is based on the idea of human rights for all and provides us with the means to claim them.

## **WE DEMAND:**

- **Fleeing to Europe may not be criminalised. All refugees must receive the right to rights.**
- **The Federal Ministry of the Interior must reopen the evacuation list for Afghans who are in danger. Civilians who want to escape may not be stopped by bureaucratic hurdles.**
- **Europe must not continue to close itself off and must signal to the states along the routes that refugees take from Afghanistan to Europe that they are prepared to take responsibility and guarantee the individual right to asylum.**
- **The immediate evacuation of all camps at the external borders of the EU and a legislative basis for self-determined admission by local authorities and countries.**
- **No more German participation in all Frontex and EUNAVFOR MED operations**
- **Sea rescue organised by the state and an end to the criminalisation of civilian sea rescue**

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## SIGNED BY

**Tareq Alaows**, lawyer and activist  
**Maya Alban-Zapata**, actress  
**Verena Altenberger**, actress  
**Parwana Amiri**, activist and author  
**Jasna Fritzi Bauer**, actress  
**Mark Benecke**, scientist and author  
**Sibylle Berg**, author  
**Luise Befort**, actress  
**Arne Birkenstock**, director and producer  
**Thelma Buabeng**, actress  
**Ali Can**, social activist and initiator #MeTwo  
**Stefanie Carp**, dramaturge  
**Max Czollek**, author  
**Fatih Çevikkollu**, comedian  
**Amelie Deuffhard**, artistic director Kampnagel Hamburg  
**Katja Diefenbach**, cultural scientist, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)  
**Yilmaz Dziewior**, director Museum Ludwig  
**Maria Ehrich**, actress  
**Mohammad Murtaza Farooqi**, activist, Munich Refugee Council  
**Pegah Ferydoni**, actress  
**Luisa-Céline Gaffron**, actress  
**Kübra Gümüşay**, author  
**Annie Hoffmann**, moderator  
**Rahel Jaeggi**, philosopher, Humboldt University Berlin  
**Elfriede Jelinek**, author  
**Wolfgang Kaleck**, Secretary General ECCHR  
**Jasmina Kuhnke**, author  
**Şeyda Kurt**, author  
**Shermin Langhoff**, artistic director Maxim Gorki Theater  
**Stephan Lessenich**, sociologist, director of the Institute for Social Research, Goethe University Frankfurt  
**Igor Levit**, pianist  
**Matthias Lilienthal**, dramaturge  
**Boniface Mabanza**, philosopher and cultural scientist  
**Robert Menasse**, author  
**Robert Misik**, journalist and author  
**Ersan Mondtag**, director  
**Hans Mörtter**, priest  
**Maximilian Mundt**, actor  
**Maximilian Pichl**, University of Frankfurt/M  
**Thomas Oberender**, author and artistic director of the Berliner Festspiele  
**Thomas Ostermeier**, director and artistic director of Schaubühne Berlin  
**René Pollesch**, director and artistic director Volksbühne Berlin  
**Carola Rackete**, activist and captain  
**Milo Rau**, director and artistic director IIPM and NTGent  
**Angela Richter**, director  
**Merlin Rose**, actor  
**Kathrin Röggla**, author  
**Thomas Rudhof-Seibert**, philosopher, medico international  
**Mithu Sanyal**, author  
**Stefanie Sargnagel**, author  
**Kais Setti**, actor  
**Omer Shatz**, lawyer  
**Saša Stanišić**, author  
**Joulia Strauß**, artist and founder Avtonomi Akadimia  
**Corinna Ujkašević**, lawyer  
**Andres Veiel**, director  
**Julia von Heinz**, director

**Harald Welzer**, sociologist and publicist  
**Hengameh Yaghoobifarah**, journalist and writer  
**Andrea Ypsilanti**, Spokeswoman of the Board of the Institute for Solidary Modernity  
**Anbid Zaman**, human rights activist and artist  
**Jean Ziegler**, sociologist and UN special rapporteur

## **SIGNED BY MEMBERS OF THE ACTION ALLIANCE COLOGNE**

**Laura Beische**, biologist  
**Georg Blokus**, organizer, School of Political Hope  
**Anne Brüning**, social worker  
**Franco Clemens**, social worker and street worker  
**Julia Dick**, performance artist  
**Gaby Gehlen**, activist, Mosaik Cologne Mülheim e.V.  
**Max Gede**, designer  
**Kalle Gerigk**, city activist  
**Clemens Holtmann**, activist, DiEM25  
**David Häußer**, designer and photographer  
**Franziska Heinisch**, activist, Justice is Global Europe  
**Steve Hudson**, actor and director  
**Klaus Jünschke**, activist, Action Alliance against Housing Shortage and Urban Degradation  
**Manuel Moser**, actor  
**Zandile Ngono**, anti-discrimination trainer and Die Urbane  
**Behshid Najafi**, activist, agisra e.V.  
**Noelle O'Brien-Coker**, journalist and radio author  
**Anja Plemper**, urban activist  
**Ahmet Sinoplu**, social worker, Coach e.V.

## **ORGANIZATIONS OF THE ACTION ALLIANCE COLOGNE**

Association for the Design of History  
Autor:innenkollektiv "Mal nach den Rechten schauen"  
ArtAsyl e.V.  
DEMASK  
fakE – für anticlassistisches Empowerment an der Uni Köln  
Integrationsrat der Stadt Köln  
Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie e.V.  
Köln spricht  
Netzwerk Rechtskritik  
Rainbow Refugees Support – Group Cologne e.V.  
ROOTS & ROUTES Cologne e.V.  
Solidarity City Cologne  
SoliMed Köln  
Tatort Porz – Keine Ruhe nach dem Schuss