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## **Migrants: letter asking the EU to fund walls at borders. Card. Hollerich (COMECE), “right to asylum should be protected and respected”**

“I would like to express my concern about the situation of migrants and asylum seekers in vulnerable situation whose human dignity and fundamental rights should be uphold. Their right to seek asylum should be protected and states should respect the principle of non-refoulement of people at risk in their home country”. Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich, president of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), commented to SIR news agency on the letter from the Home Affairs Ministers of 12 EU Member States asking the European Commission to fund the construction of walls at the EU’s external borders to block migrants from entering the Union. “We believe that being European also means to put solidarity in practice. As Pope Francis stated in his 2020 message on Europe, ‘we dream of a Europe that is inclusive and generous. A welcoming and hospitable place in which charity, the highest Christian virtue, overcomes every form of indifference and selfishness’. As Bishops of the European Union, we support increasing resettlement efforts by EU Member States, civil society, and Church actors”, and the creation of “legal and safe pathways for migrants, so to avoid them from falling into the hands of criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers”. “In the context of the ongoing negotiations on the proposed EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, we call on the European Union and its Member States to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and asylum seekers, supporting a positive perception and narrative of migrants and their families”. The letter, dated 7 October and relayed by the EU Observer, was addressed to European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and to Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson. It was signed by the ministers of Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia. The ministers wrote: “Physical barriers appear to be an effective border protection measure that serves the interest of the whole EU, not just Member States of first arrival. This legitimate measure should be additionally and adequately funded from the EU budget as a matter of priority”.

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