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The World Association of Cultural Psychiatry:

Position Statement; EUROPE Migrant Crisis.

Global Challenges & Cultural Psychiatry:

" Natural Disasters, Conflict, Insecurity, Migration, and Spirituality"

Puerto Vallarta; Jalisco; Mexico.

29th October 2015 to 2nd November 2015.

Preamble:

Careif is an international mental health charity that works towards protecting and promoting mental health and resilience with a special focus on young people, to eliminate inequalities and strengthen social justice. Our principles include working creatively with humility and dignity and balanced partnerships in order to ensure all cultures and societies play their part in our mission of protecting and promoting mental health and well-being. We do this by respecting the traditions of all world societies, whilst believing traditions can evolve for even greater benefit to individuals and society

The World Association of Cultural Psychiatry was founded to encourage international collaboration, friendship, scholarship, research and compassionate care around the world. Sharing and exchanging best practice, and improving the safety and quality of mental health care as a priority, whilst working with diverse cultures, legal systems, commissioning processes and the wider political and social issues like stigma and funding that affect the quality of care. During the past several decades, there has been a steadily increasing recognition of the importance of cultural influences on life and mental health. Culture impacts mental illness so that culturally relevant care is needed for patients of diverse ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. From a social point of view, there has been rapid social and cultural change happening in the ever changing political and media world, as well as migration within and between nations. Societies are becoming multi-ethnic and poly-cultural in nature worldwide. From a clinical perspective, there is a need to improve cultural competence to provide proper psychiatric care of each patient, considering the ethnic/racial/cultural background, regardless of minority or majority status.

The theme of this 4th Congress is appropriately: **Global Challenges & Cultural Psychiatry: Natural Disasters, Conflict, Insecurity, Migration and Spirituality**; happening at a time of inexorable intensification of violence and turmoil, causing widespread destruction, increasing numbers of displaced people and refugees in particular from parts of the Middle -East and Africa. The European Migrant Crisis is happening as a results of this intensification of conflict and the mass movement of people moving at great risk into and through Europe.

This Position Statement on Europe's Migrant Crisis prepared and presented by careif, to WACP, 4th Congress as a resolution for discussion, open debate and progressive actions.

Background:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)¹ estimates the number of people forcibly displaced worldwide in 2014, to be, 59.5 million. These figures are made up of Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Internally Displaced People (IDP) and Stateless People. War, conflict and political turbulence in many regions of the world has increased the number of displaced people fleeing complex emergencies and disasters. They often end up in large camps with low and middle income countries host over 86% of the world's refugees, compared to 70% ten years ago.

The countries currently hosting the vast majority of refugees from Syria are reaching breaking point. and even experiencing food shortages, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, sheltering 3.6 million Syrian refugees between them, are overwhelmed and international humanitarian funding are falling far short of the need and indeed, were promised. Many would rather attempt the dangerous journey to Europe than exist in impoverished, overcrowded refugee camps for many years, where they can experience even more violence, rape and death.

There were 19.5 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2014, 14.4 million under the mandate of UNHCR, around 2.9 million more than in 2013. The other 5.1 million Palestinian refugees are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

In 2014, the country hosting the largest number of refugees was Turkey, with 1.59 million refugees- now it is nearly 2 million. By the end of 2014, Syria had become the world's top source country of refugees, overtaking Afghanistan, which had held this position for more than three decades. Today, on average, almost one out of every four refugees is Syrian, with 95 per cent located in surrounding countries. Last year, 51% of refugees were children, the highest figure for child refugees in more than 10 years.

About 38.2 million people were forcibly uprooted and displaced within their own country and are known as Internally Displaced People (IDP). Continued fighting in the Syrian, brought the number of IDP in that country to 7.6 million. Iraq witnessed massive new internal displacement as a result of the Islamic State (or 'ISIS') offensive across multiple parts of the country. Renewed fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo displaced 1 million people, bringing the total number of IDP in that country to 2.8 million. The conflict in South Sudan, which erupted in December 2013, displaced more than 1.5 million individuals within the country. In addition conflict in The Central African Republic (611,000), South Sudan (200,000), and Yemen (85,000) has added to crisis.

Statelessness refers to the condition of an individual who is not considered a national by any state. Although stateless people may sometimes also be refugees. Syria have more than 300,000 denationalized Kurds, Kuwait have 93,000 Bidoon (*bidoon jinsiya*), Dominican Republic have an estimated 900,000 to 1.2 million undocumented individuals of Haitian origin, many of who are stateless or at risk of statelessness².

Asylum; 1.66 million people submitted applications for asylum in 2014, the highest level ever recorded. With an estimated 274,700 asylum claims, the Russian Federation became the largest recipient of new individual applications in 2014, followed by Germany (173,100), and the USA (121,200).

Europe's Migrant Crisis:

Europe is struggling to cope with the large-scale influx of migrants making their way across the Mediterranean to Europe in 2015, the biggest since the aftermath of World War II,³ - sparking a crisis, as countries struggle to cope with the influx, and creating division in the European Union (EU) over how best to deal with resettling people. Squalid conditions in makeshift refugee camps and a heartbreaking photograph of a drowned Syrian toddler have all helped bring Europe's refugee crisis into the global spotlight. This has not stopped people making desperate bids to reach Europe. According to the UNHCR, more than 380,000 migrants and refugees have landed on Europe's southern shores so far this year, up from 216,000 arrivals in the whole of 2014. They are fleeing persecution, poverty and conflicts that rage beyond the continent's borders. The voyage from Libya to Italy is longer and more hazardous; but not all manage to reach safety - according to The International Organization for Migration (IOM)⁴, more than 2,700 migrants are reported to have died trying to make the crossing this year - altogether, 2,988 people have died in the Mediterranean in 2015.

With tensions running high, Europe's leaders remain divided and challenged on how best to respond to the crisis.; with a disproportionate burden continue to be faced by some countries, particularly in Greece and Italy. Germany has recently been more liberal in accepting migrants; promising to accept about 1 million people over the next 12 months; other countries have

began to take a more humanitarian line all be it slow and narrow in practicality. The UK will take 20,000 Syrian refugees from the UN Refugee Camps in Turkey and Jordan.

WACP call for action:

- ❖ WACP call on all European Governments to respect, uphold and administer The UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE CONVENTION (1951) with fairness and promptness. To act with humanity and compassion and to not let the evil of Europe previous history taint or threatened to repeat itself; European Governments with influence in the regions of conflict and war also with permanent positions at the UN Security Council must begin to draft solutions to resolve these conflicts and bring about an end to the crisis.
- ❖ WACP call on all European Governments to act with promptness and fairness in assessing, screening and deciding on the legal status of migrants; Prompt decisions on refugee and asylum status must be done with humanity and dignity. The host population must be reassured, their fears and concerns addressed, be involved with re-settlement programmes and importantly feel secure.
- ❖ WACP call for all basic health care to be provided to migrants, with a clear emphasis on the immediacy of physical care, (injuries from violence, war, fractures, rapes, diabetes, child birth, etc) emotional and psychological care (effects of torture, violence, rapes, deaths, trauma, the journey, etc) and additional to children health, to include basic immunisations. WACP can act as a reservoir for cultural understanding and application to increase recognition of the importance of cultural influences on life and mental health.
- ❖ WACP call for respect and protection for individual cultural, religious and spiritual dignity; Sometimes after the long haul of the trauma and the journey- these are the most revered of what people are left with as their survival and resilience; Safeguards and protection are needed so as to avoid any coercion and fear.
- ❖ WACP to consider organising a special congress on this subject of the Europe's Migrant Crisis; The purpose is to bring together European politicians, advocates, media, communities, professionals, clinicians, organisations, professional bodies (public health, doctors, nurses, etc) and others with an interest, to formulate some health actions, offer intelligence on culture and its impact on mental illness, trauma and recovery.(Should be an EU funded event and WACP may want to seriously consider partners with very strong political, academic, clinical and international influences)

*Under international law, **THE UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE CONVENTION, 1951**, refugees must not be forced back to the countries they have fled. This principle of non-refoulement (a principle of international law which forbids the rendering of a true victim of persecution to his or her persecutor) is the key provision of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which defines international law and guidelines to protect refugees. Host governments are primarily responsible for protecting refugees and most states fulfill their obligations to do so. Others, however, avoid their responsibility by pointing to a lack of resources, country is full, threats to national security, fears of domestic political de-stabilisation, or the arrival of even greater numbers of refugees. This is a violation of international law that is binding on all states.*

A note on terminology: *The BBC uses the term migrant to refer to all people on the move who have yet to complete the legal process of claiming asylum. This group includes people fleeing war-torn countries such as Syria, who are likely to be granted refugee status, as well as people who are seeking jobs and better lives, who governments are likely to rule are economic migrants. In the absence of any better clarification and definition of this complex issue, this BBC explanation is more compassionate and better understood.*

¹UNHCR: UN Refugee Agency UK. <http://www.unhcr.org.uk>

²Refugees International. <http://www.refintl.org>

³Europe Migrant Crisis. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>

⁴International Organization for Migration. <http://unitedkingdom.iom.int>

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