



Caritas
Germany

Diakonie 
Katastrophenhilfe

Common Statement

Caritas Germany
Diakonie Emergency Aid



The image of people and the horizon of hope of the Christian faith motivate and leave their mark on the humanitarian commitment of Caritas Germany and Diakonie Emergency Aid. They create the basis of common ethical principles that lead our action. These principles bind us permanently and beyond confessional boundaries:

- 1 God created every person to his image. Therefore – especially in cases of emergency – our highest commandment is to preserve or help restore the human dignity of every single person. This must be the starting point for any methods and ways of help.
 - 2 The human being with his or her concrete and extensive needs is the centre of God’s love and therefore of our help. Attention and support are meant especially for the weakest people and for those at risk.
 - 3 Jesus’ commandment to help people in need is an obligation for us and is meant for everyone. It does not allow any differentiation in nationality, ethnicity or religious affiliation. Just as little does it allow a differentiation of important and less important emergencies. Therefore, we also provide assistance in crisis areas that receive neither attention nor support from media or governments (the so-called “forgotten emergencies”).
 - 4 We assume that in complex and sometimes non-transparent crisis situations there are many guilt entanglements where people are both victim and culprit in one person and where they feel sorrow and guilt at the same time. We do not have the right to divide people into “good” or “bad” and to treat them differently. God alone is entitled this
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right. In his eyes we are all victim and culprit in one person and need his reconciliation. God's reconciliation enables us to reconcile among each other.

This deeper insight protects us from the erroneous belief of being able to find politically and ethically "perfect" humanitarian aid solutions in such conflict situations and gives us the courage to take chances: we try – also in politically ambiguous situations – to assist people as much as possible instead of letting them down for the sake of our own reputation. In addition, we support local efforts for reconciliation.

5

There are no "desperate" situations and no "hopeless" cases. Death, violence, hate and misery do not have the final say. For us and for many disaster victims, resurrection means the power to endure and to survive, the power for hope and a new beginning. In the intercession prayer we may ask for support and comfort from the holy spirit and that reassures us. We dare to hope for and try to achieve the seemingly impossible.

6

The knowledge that God is with us also makes us modest: it helps us to be patient and accept the limitations of our own scope of action. It prevents us from imagining we were omnipotent and from the delusion that we must influence even the most complex situations at any price. We can arrange for seeds so that the people can sow – the growing and flourishing is in God's hands.

7

Our own peace and our commitment to appease is justified in God. Economic and social justice as well as the protection of human rights belong to the Christian understanding of peace. Therefore, our aid measures must be a contribution towards social peace and the reconciliation between parties. When religious contrasts and competition aggravate violent conflicts and wars, it is our duty to build bridges between religions and churches.

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On the common ethical basis of our work, we have the same position in our aid programmes, as well as in public and with regard to politics. We follow the same approaches and goals and wish to cooperate with other humanitarian aid organizations in a harmonized way.

1 The first commandment of humanitarian aid is to protect the right to live as well as physical and intellectual integrity.

- ▶▶ We protect and support people who are threatened and persecuted by war and violence. Our engagement applies to everybody regardless of their nationality, ethnicity or religious affiliation. Our assistance does not serve to promote certain political or religious attitudes.
- ▶▶ The first priority in emergency situations is a fast, flexible and venturesome help of survival. This help makes no difference between “guilty” or “innocent” and is therefore a first step on the way to forgiveness, which is the first step towards reconciliation.
- ▶▶ We help the victims to satisfy their basic needs. This does not only include the alleviation of material needs – with respect to particular beliefs, culture and ideological orientation of the people – but also support in situations of grief and intellectual distress.
- ▶▶ Our assistance orientates itself according to the extent of the emergency and the concrete need of help, and not according to what is currently in surplus or media effective in our society.

Statement of principles of

2 People in distress are subjects of their acting in dignity and the ability to manage their lives independently.

- ▶▶ Our help respects the self-help abilities of the people concerned and begins there. Especially in situations of crisis and disaster, we believe that the will and ability to start anew are the most important resources to overcome the state of emergency.
- ▶▶ We know that emergency aid often incapacitates and overruns the people concerned. We place self-help in the centre of our efforts even in cases of immediate aid. From the outside, only the most necessary things are done, at the same time we respect and support self-help and self-organization.
- ▶▶ We do not only see the neediness of the disaster victims, but also respect their dignity, hopes and responsibility – for themselves as individuals and for their community. We support them in making use of their remaining possibilities and their own gifts and abilities for acute situations of rescue and reconstruction.
- ▶▶ Our aid programmes primarily cooperate with native staff and use local know-how, local technique, and operating supplies available in the country or region. Foreign helpers and operating goods are only resorted to when all other possibilities are exhausted.
- ▶▶ We respect the culture, habits and social structure of the population concerned and adjust our help and behaviour accordingly.
- ▶▶ In our advertising and public relations work, we respect the rights and dignity of the people who receive the help.

3 Victims of crises and disasters need persevering and patient support – the fight against the cause of emergencies and the development of sustainable local structures belong together.

- ▶▶ Crises and disasters do not suddenly come out of the blue. Even during big natural disasters, not everyone immediately becomes a victim. Those who already belonged to the socially weak, the segregated and suppressed before the disaster are usually the most affected. From the beginning, emergency aid must consider the social and political aspects of susceptibility to disasters.

humanitarian aid

▶▶ Without a long-term perspective of assistance, there is always the danger that emergency situations will repeat themselves. We want to be reliable partners of the disaster victims and want to accompany them on their way out of the crisis. This requires perseverance and patience and the readiness to take sides with the disaster victims in the social and political context that made them vulnerable for the crisis.

▶▶ We wish to carry out integral help based on the real needs. Therefore, we do not follow the trend of specialized and merely temporary humanitarian aid. We reliably assist the needy people and communities in their efforts towards self-help as long as they need support and not only as long as media attention exists.

4 We are part of a global network of solidarity.

▶▶ Our assistance includes rehabilitation and reconstruction. By this, we also support and strengthen local labour structure.

▶▶ We primarily help local partner organizations who are autonomous in their decisions and who share our principles. This gives us the possibility to provide fast assistance adapted to the local conditions and in particular to the hardships of the people concerned. We make long-term investments in the development and qualification of these partner organizations and are in a constant conceptual dialogue with them.

▶▶ We encourage international networking and cooperation of our partners.

▶▶ By the use of preventive and precautionary aid programmes we want to help emergency-susceptible regions/disaster prone areas establish long-term sustainable living conditions and to develop native capacities for crisis prevention and intervention. In this way, we mean to prevent future disasters or at least limit their consequences. The population should receive the possibility to protect itself better and act more effectively.

▶▶ Through the ecumenical cooperation of Caritas and Diaconia in Germany, including cooperation with partners of other religions, we are deliberately setting a signal in a world that is still disrupted by religious differences.

5 Our commitment for people in need is based on our autonomy and independence from politics and conflict parties.

- ▶▶ In the context of our aid programmes in conflict regions, we highly emphasize our independence and impartiality regarding all conflict parties, governments, armies and pressure groups.
- ▶▶ We urge governments to respect the neutrality and independence of aid organizations as internationally codified principles of humanitarian aid and that they do not interfere with the activities of the organizations or try to take them in for their political, military or economic interests. In conflict situations we can not cooperate with armies that are a war party.
- ▶▶ For the benefit of the people concerned and to facilitate assistance, we cooperate with all governments as well as with military who respect our humanitarian objectives, our autonomy and our independence.
- ▶▶ Regarding the financing of our work, we make sure that our autonomy is not endangered and that our freedom of choice is guaranteed.

6 We guarantee that the donations and other financial resources that are confided to us are earmarked and used in an effective and economical way.

- ▶▶ Our assistance is effective and economical because we utilize and accompany local structures and resources in a suitable way.
- ▶▶ We guarantee an adequate control of the application of funds.
- ▶▶ We use accepted standards for the administration, application and accounting of our financial resources.
- ▶▶ We try for the greatest possible transparency and inform the public as well as our donors about our work and its results. We account for the use of all resources that were entrusted to us.



Caritas
Germany

Diakonie 
Katastrophenhilfe

Joint assistance

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Caritas Germany
International Department
P.O. Box 420 · 79004 Freiburg
Fon +49 761 200-0 · Fax +49 761 761 200-730
contact@caritas.de
www.caritas-international.de

Diakonie Emergency Aid
Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany
P.O. Box 10 11 42 · 70010 Stuttgart
Fon +49 711 2159-0 · Fax +49 711 2159-422
kontakt@diakonie-katastrophenhilfe.de
www.diakonie-katastrophenhilfe.de