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Krisztina Barcsa
University of Szeged (Hungary)

András Máté-Tóth
University of Szeged (Hungary)

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THE HUNGARIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS' STATEMENTS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE MIGRATION

By Krisztina Barcsa and András Máté-Tóth

Krisztina Barcsa, M.A. student in Religious Studies at the University of Szeged. B.A. in Library and Information Science at the University of Szeged (Hungary).

E-Mail: krisztina.barcsa7@gmail.com

András Máté-Tóth, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Szeged. Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Science. Ph.D. in Practical Theology at the University of Vienna and Ph.D in Communication Sciences at the University of Pécs (Hungary).

E-Mail: matetoth@rel.u-szeged.hu

Introduction

Since May 2015, the issue of migration to Europe has become a determinative topic in the Hungarian and international news. Almost everyone, from political leaders to non-governmental organizations, has taken a position on this matter. Leaders of different religions have expressed their opinions to the media and have tried to provide guidance to religious people on this topic. In this paper, we will present some Hungarian religious leaders' opinions and statements based on online resources posted in the Hungarian language.

The Roman Catholic Viewpoint

In order to fully understand these opinions, we have to take a closer look at the statements of Pope Francis.

Pope Francis, worried about refugees, has called on openness and helpfulness towards them since becoming Pope. He stated, "Faced with the tragedy of tens of thousands of refugees who flee death from war or hunger, on a journey towards the hope of life, the Gospel calls to us and asks us to be close to them, to the smallest and the abandoned; to give them

real hope. Not merely to say; be brave, be patient. Christian hope is assertive, with the tenacity of those who go towards a certain destination.”¹ He has spoken about a Third World War many times, noting that these bad occurrences were pieces of it.²

Perhaps his most important guideline³ on the topic was on September 6, 2015, when he said, “May every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary of Europe, take in one family.” Many people agreed with him, and did what he asked, but a fair number of religious leaders have refused to respond to this request literally.

In September, Pope Francis noted that Europe has become like a grandmother’s age, and in this situation was “Europe’s greatest challenge to go back to being a mother Europe.” He then called on Europeans to welcome the refugees.⁴

Cardinal Péter Erdő, archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and Primate of Hungary, was one of the first who commented on the migration issue in Hungary. During a radio interview in May,⁵ he talked about the Christian teaching about loving your enemies. Presently, he states that it means a true Christian sees the needy and the persecuted in the refugees, and helps them, if she/he can. He notes you cannot judge anyone based on their way of thinking and the main goal is to eliminate the causes of the migration and create the opportunity for everyone to be able to live in their countries in peace. He notes, until that happens, solidarity needs to prevail.

¹Schwartz Rafi, “Pope Francis to Shelter Refugees in the Vatican, Urges Catholics Across Europe to Do the Same,” GOOD Magazine, 2015 <<https://www.good.is/articles/pope-francis-welcoming-syrian-refugees>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

² ‘Ferenc Pápa: Bizonyos értelemben Ez a Harmadik Világháború’, Hirtv.hu, 2015 <<http://hirtv.hu/hirtvkuifold/hatalmas-tomeg-fogadta-a-papat-szarajevoban-1289569>> [accessed 6 March 2016]

³HVG Kiadó Zrt, ‘Ferenc Pápa: Minden Európai Katolikus Templom Fogadjon Be Egy Menekült Családot’, Hvg.hu, 2015 <http://hvg.hu/vilag/20150906_Ferenc_papa_Minden_europai_katolikus_temp> [accessed 6 March 2016].

⁴HVG Kiadó Zrt, ‘Ferenc Pápa Rátett Egy Lapáttal Korábbi Nyilatkozatára a Migránsok Befogadásáról’, Hvg.hu, 2015 <http://hvg.hu/vilag/20150914_Ferenc_papa_meg> [accessed 6 March 2016].

⁵HVG Kiadó Zrt, ‘Erdő Péter: „Ha Találkozunk Az éhezővel és Tudunk Enni Adni Neki, Tegyük Meg”’, Hvg.hu, 2015 <http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150522_Erdo_PeterHa_talalkozunk_az_ehezovel_es> [accessed 6 March 2016].

In the fall of 2015, the topic of migration became much more serious, with the media and people expecting more serious statements from leaders. On September 3, after the fall consultation of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Péter Erdő held a press conference, where he spoke about the Caritas Hungarica's assistance, but his words about their inclusion became the focus of attention, causing indignation for many people. Reacting to the news that the Catholic Church in Vienna gave shelter to refugees, he said that Hungarian churches were not allowed to accept them. He stated, "It is prohibited, and if we do that, we would be human traffickers."

After the conference, the Bishops' Conference published their statement "The Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference, in order to help the needy people—in unity with Pope Francis—asked the Caritas Hungarica look for the most effective ways to help in cooperation with public authorities. We are conscious of the seriousness of this historical situation and we worry about the fate of our Christian brothers in the Middle East. At the same time we emphasize that countries have the right and duty to protect their citizens."⁶

Shortly afterwards, Index.hu, a Hungarian news site did an interview⁷ with Erdő where he said, "My words were taken out of their context. The Catholic Bishops have already designated two buildings to accommodate refugees, but due to legal obstacles they are still not available." In addition to this, he highlighted that, "The Church is making various efforts in order to help refugees, such as food aid, medical assistance, psychological assistance for the children; we offer a lot of things. The Church is, indeed, standing by on the streets via the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service, the Community of Sant'Egidio, and the Caritas Hungarica. But these organizations do not like to be in the spotlight."

⁶ Az MKPK Közleménye', 2015 <<http://uj.katolikus.hu/cikk.php?h=2215>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

⁷ József Spirk, 'Erdő Péter: Az Egyház Emberei Inkognitóban Voltak a Keletinél', 2015 <http://index.hu/belfold/2015/09/06/erdo_peter/> [accessed 6 March 2016].

The Benedictines in Pannonhalma were the first, or one of the first who opened their gates to the refugees. Abbot Asztrik Varszegi said that if anyone came to them, they would be accepting, and ensure open doors⁸. When Index.hu asked Erdő about this offer, he replied, "This is also a credible measure of our Church. Everyone is looking for the best way to help."

After the Pope's request in which he called churches to take in one family, Péter Erdő and András Veressent wrote him the following letter:⁹

"Our Holy Father, we are grateful for your words before Sunday's Angelus. Your request about receiving and helping refugees will be followed by us with happiness and keenness. Your words provide great fortification and encouragement to us in our ongoing efforts. We thank you for leading us on the Gospel's path and setting the direction of righteousness. We ask your prayers for justice and peace, and for the needy as well as for all those who are helping them."

Veres, who became the new president of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference after Erdő in September, also offered the following opinion:¹⁰ "Christians must help people who are in a difficult life situation, irrespective of gender, age, nationality or religion. There was no disagreement within the Church about supporting refugees so far. A Christian cannot do anything else than help people who are in need, distress and difficulty. As can be seen, the refugees do not want to stay permanently in Vas County and Körmend. Therefore our first mission is helping their migration, so in the next few days Caritas will set up mobile toilets and give them water, food, blankets, warm clothing."

⁸ Ádám Kolozsi, 'A Pannonhalmi Apátságban Is Menekültek Vannak', 2015 <http://index.hu/belfold/2015/09/05/a_annonhalmi_apatsagon_is_menekultek_vannak/> [accessed 6 March 2016].

⁹ Erdő Péter Bíboros és Veres András Püspök, Valamint Az MKPK Tagjainak Levele Ferenc Pápának', 2015 <<http://www.magyarokurir.hu/hazai/erdo-peter-biboros-es-veres-andras-puspok-valamint-az-mkpk-tagjainak-levele-ferenc-papanak>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

¹⁰ 'Veres András Püspök: Segíteni Kell Az úton Lévőket', [Http://keresztény.mandiner.hu/](http://keresztény.mandiner.hu/), 2015 <http://keresztény.mandiner.hu/cikk/20150911_veres_andras_puspok_segiteni_kell_az_uton_levoket> [accessed 6 March 2016].

László Kiss-Rigó's (bishop of Szeged-Csanád) allegation caused indignation in the media. *The Washington Post* published an article where he stated,

They're not refugees. This is an invasion. They come here with cries of 'Allahu Akbar.' They want to takeover. I'm in total agreement with the prime minister [Viktor Orbán]. The Pope doesn't know the situation which is that, Europe is being inundated by people who are posing as refugees but actually present a grave threat to the continent's Christian universal values. Most of them behave in a way that is very arrogant and cynical. They leave rubbish in their wake, he said, and refuse when offered food.¹¹

We should also note an interview Kiss-Rigó gave to *Civilhetes.hu*, where he refined, concretized, and elucidated his words:

They distorted my words. Actually I did not instigate against the refugees and I fully agree with the Pope's calling. Catholics have duty to help the refugees. We are offering humanitarian assistance to everyone constantly and unconditionally. The competent institutions of Szeged-Csanád Diocese are ready to take in everyone who registered as a refugee and would like to settle in Hungary after they obtained the necessary papers. Another point is that we did not meet such a person yet in the current flood of migrants. The current situation is a kind of intrusion. They aren't refugees, they are economic immigrants, provocateurs, and who knows what kind of strangers. They refuse to get help and they have a half-year salary of a Hungarian policeman in their pockets. The reason why I said 'the Pope doesn't know the situation' is that you cannot judge from that distance what kind of people come across the border. The Pope is not and should not be an expert in the Hungarian conditions obviously. I totally agree with the content of the letter which Péter Erdő and András Veres sent to Pope Francis. It entirely corresponds with my words and our Diocese's acts.¹²

Kiss-Rigó also said that he agreed with Viktor Orbán's migration policy, noting that the prime minister was one of the few people who can find the "rational and Christian" solution. Béla Balás, bishop of Kaposvár, published an apocalyptic letter in a magazine called *Heti Válasz*,¹³ where its title is both flabbergasting and telling: "Evening news from the European caliphate in the first century after Christianity." In this letter, Balas envisioned churches that were blown up and destroyed, the persecution of Christian believers and priests, beheading of political leaders, banning pork and wine, censorship, and the European citizens

¹¹ Griff Witte, 'Hungarian Bishop Says Pope Is Wrong about Refugees', *The Washington Post*, 2015 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/hungarian-bishop-says-pope-is-wrong-about-refugees/2015/09/07/fcba72e6-558a-11e5-9f54-1ea23f6e02f3_story.html> [accessed 6 March 2016].

¹² Kiss-Rigó: „Eltorzították a Szavaimat!”, *Civilhetes.net*, 2015 <<http://civilhetes.net/kiss-rigo-eltorzítottak-a-szavaimat>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

¹³ Béla Balás, 'Esti Híradó Az Európai Kalifátusból a Kereszténység Utáni I. Század Idején', *Heti Válasz*, 5 November 2015, 56.

migration. At the end, he closes his letter with a prayer, called “Evening prayer from the last one of the continent's Christians” where he prays for Europe's future in it.

Gyula Márfi, bishop of Veszprém, also had a strong opinion on the topic which can be read on Veol.hu.¹⁴ He stated, “In my view Europe is becoming enslaved by Islam with faith instead of guns. It is a holy war for the Muslims. They are ready to risk their lives in order to arrive to their new home, Europe. If European Christians would have similar faith, Christianity would prosper and they would not want to come here.” Márfi believes the main cause of the migration is *Jihad* and any other reason is secondary. He noted, “I would like to highlight that some of the migrants are real refugees and according to the teachings of Jesus we have to help those who need it. (I also sent money and blankets through Caritas Hungarica.)”

Márfi adumbrated the slow islamization of Europe and the step-by-step marginalization of Christianity. He also called the migration “a punishment from God” in the interview. In addition, he said, “The Pope is only infallible when he gives mandatory teaching in morality and faith for the entire Church. That is not the question here. Numerous Hungarian parishes cannot maintain themselves without outside help. The Pope's utterances are influenced by the fear that the Christian persecution may intensify in the Muslim countries. He said that his parents were immigrants in Argentina, but there are huge differences between immigration and migration. His parents went to a Christian country as Christians, because of that they could adapt to the new environment easily. The Muslims cannot and do not want to adapt. As I said, they came to conquer, not to adapt.” Hirado.hu asked Miklós Beer, bishop of Vác, about the situation.¹⁵ He said that we cannot decide whether a migrant is a refugee or only a ‘carpet-bagger’, but it is an important question.” He called for long term thinking, stating, “We have to be thinking how are we going to settle into our empty villages and houses, those,

¹⁴Bernadett Németh F., ‘Isten Helyét Elfoglalták a Bálványok - Márfi Gyula Veszprémi érsek Az Iszlám Térhódításáról és a Kereszténységről’, 2015 <<https://veol.hu/hirek/isten-helyet-elfoglaltak-a-balvanyok-1734794>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

¹⁵Beer Miklós: A Migránsügy Is Lakmusz’, Hirado.hu, 2015 <<http://www.hirado.hu/2015/09/23/beer-miklos-a-migransugy-is-lakmusz/>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

who want to live here? How can we teach them to be living here? If they want it, of course.” While he understood those who stood against accepting them, he stated, “we have to ask then: why are we Christians? What was Jesus’ life?” Beer also mentioned Pope Francis, who called to “open your doors!” Additionally, he pointed out another problem: “Here is this Charlie Hebdo’s liberal, atheist spirituality. Aren’t we afraid of this? Much farther away from us and far more villainous than a Muslim who prays every day and wants to live by the Koran. I know they identify the Muslims with the terrorists. That is wrong!” In the end, Beer noted, “This divided mentality, typical in Hungary, is terrible. It should be very important that we change this.”

In the next part, we will take a closer look at the other Hungarian religious denominations.

The Greek Catholic Church

Fülöp Kocsis is the exarch of the diocese of Hajdúdorog. He published a public summons in September,¹⁶ which stated the following:

It is painful to be facing those charges which requires us ‘why don’t we fulfill this command of Christ against the migrants.’ It is a flood of people who arrived, and we are unable to accept them with sufficient love. When we feel the limits of our holding capacity maybe it is right to being upbraided. If we have infinite love, we could take action without any problems. [...] Our life, faith and Christianity is missing this love. If love could us fill in sufficiently, it would be unnecessary to fear for our Christianity and our Europe which is based on Christian roots. In this case nothing could carry away these, neither a wave nor religious violence. Faith and Christian unity are necessary. Many Christians arrive. They need our sympathy, sometimes our bread or clothes. We shouldn’t welcome them with swords and shields, we have to welcome many of them with open arms. It is really hard to see what should we do. Therefore the biggest task now is faith and Christian unity. If in the twenty-first century migrations sweep away Europe, the only reason will be that our faith has become weak and we lost our love. We cannot defend our country or our culture with fences, closed border or police intervention. These provisions are necessary to keep the order, but the final solution is only the inner strength.

¹⁶ ‘Imádság a Menekültekért – Kocsis Fülöp Metropolita Felhívása Az Országos Imanapra’, 2015 <<http://www.magyarkurir.hu/hirek/imadsag-menekultekert-kocsis-fulop-metropolita-felhivasa-orszagos-imanapra>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

Beyond these words, Kocsis also noted that this situation was the fault of Satan and called for prayers.

The Reformed Churches

István Bogárdi Szabó, the bishop of the Hungarian Reformed Church's synod, held a consultation with the Church's concerned leaders on September 3, 2015. He asked the participants for the expansion of the Refugee Mission's activities. After the synod, he said, "In this critical situation the most important thing is ensuring the most basic rights and making available correct and accurate informations for the citizens of Hungary and the refugees. However, we have to see that the refugee issue is being used for internal political struggles this is a sad act. We ask and call everyone to peace."¹⁷

The Reformed Church of Csongrad diocese also provided their thoughts on four points.¹⁸ First, they declared that they believed that "God determined the time and place of the nations. It follows that the leaders of the countries have to protect the area and the people, which God has assigned them." The second point focused on the persecution of Christians. Migrants come from those countries where they are persecuted. This point called for solidarity and protest against their manhunt. Their third point stated their belief that God is behind the migration: "Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor—therefore we help the refugees. Although this does not mean we agree with Islam, because it rejects Christ as the messiah." The support in the Hungarian Reformed Charity's and the Refugee Mission's work was noted. On their fourth point, they believed the events of the migration to be a warning. European countries—including Hungary—strayed from the basics of the Christian faith over the past centuries, therefore they have to seek and believe in Christ as soon as possible.

¹⁷ 'A Magyarországi Református Egyház Közleménye a Menekülthelyzet Kapcsán', 2015 <<http://www.reformatus.hu/mutat/a-magyarorszagi-reformatus-egyhaz-kozlemenye-a-menekulthelyzet-kapcsan/>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

¹⁸ 'A Csongrádi Református Egyházmegye Közleménye', 2015 <<http://reformatus.hu/mutat/a-csongradi-reformatus-egyhazmegye-kozlemenye/>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

The Evangelical Lutheran Church

After Péter Gáncs, a Lutheran bishop, visited the refugee camps, he made a commitment. He said the camps were overloaded, volunteer workers tried very hard to help, and the migrants were full of frustration and uncertainty. Gáncs emphasized, “Instead of the poster wars, it is time for everyone to do what they can.” He also talked about the Hungarian National Consultation. He believed the most important question in the consultation was about the development of the countries from which the refugees came—it would be the real solution for this problem’s roots. He noted, “Until then, if we really want to thinking and acting on the basis of Bible, there are no alternatives to giving solidarity assistance to the victims.” Additionally, the Hungarian Evangelical Lutheran Church donated one million Hungarian forints to the Hungarian Interchurch Aid, which was used to help migrant children.¹⁹

The Hungarian Baptists

The Hungarian Baptist Charity published a statement on their official website.²⁰ Focusing mainly on physical assistance, they noted they have contributed to caring for refugees, including giving them food, donations, medical attendance and assistance in finding accommodation to those with refugee status. They also felt that it was very important to help the refugees as closely as possible as in their homeland—it could subvert the possibility of their return home. This is why the Lebanese Program was created; they opened schools for Syrian kids in cooperation with local organizations. Additionally, they gave food and clothes to families and also started a program called Adopt a Child! which became a symbolic adoption action.

¹⁹ ‘Gáncs Péter: Plakátháborúk Helyett Tegye Mindenki, Amit Tud Bevándorlásügyben’, [Http://kereszteny.mandiner.hu/](http://kereszteny.mandiner.hu/), 2015 <http://kereszteny.mandiner.hu/cikk/20150701_gancs_peter_plakathaboruk_helyett_tegye_mindenki_amit_tud_bevandorlasugyben> [accessed 6 March 2016].

²⁰ Gábor Papp, ‘Baptista Szeretetszolgálat’, Baptista Szeretetszolgálat Portál, 2015 <<http://www.baptistasegely.hu/hirek/belfold/a-baptista-szeretetszolgalat-es-a-baptistak-a-menekultek-erdekeben>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

A Baptist pastor, Sándor Szenczy, visited the refugee camp of Kiskunhalas. Afterwards, he said that the authorities were able to handle the current situation and they only needed a little additional help. He also stated that about 80-90 percent of the travellers between the ages of 18-35 had money and communication devices, and they didn't ask for or accepted help. They typically catered to 110 "real" refugees per day. The Charity worked with the Hungarian Immigration and Naturalization Service for similar issues for several decades.²¹

The Coptic Orthodox Church

Dr. Youssef Khalil, the leader of the Hungarian Coptic Orthodox Church gave an interview to mno.hu²². where he stated, "I say my opinion as a Hungarian citizen, not as a religious leader: I deeply agree with Viktor Orban and his measures which he took in connection with refugee issue. . . . Those who are coming to Europe, they aren't refugees in fact. If they were, they should go to Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar - those countries which have plenty of money."...]

When the reporter suggested these countries didn't let them in, he said, "Why don't they let in them? You know? In order they come here and invade Europe. The same is happening on the continent that happened in Egypt 1400 years ago. They invaded our country. The Copts naively believed the Arabs come in peace and wish to settle down in the country. It is like I reread the history, but now it has a much faster rhythm. Ten years, and the Europeans won't find a place for themselves in their own country. [...] The same hand which is crying for help now, grabs the knife, and is slowly turning against us. I have been saying it since I came here, and now it is happening. I have always been accused that I'm rancorous. And there you are! Now everything became reality. At the same time we have to keep in mind: the

²¹ Judit Juhász, 'Jól Felszereltek a Fiatal Utazók', 2015 <http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/30824/Jol_felszereltek_a_fiatal_utazok> [accessed 6 March 2016].

²²'Az Iszlám Terjesztése a Migránsok Célja', Mno.hu, 2015 <http://mno.hu/magyar_nemzet_belfoldi_hirei/az-iszlam-terjesztese-a-migransok-celja-1304680> [accessed 6 March 2016].

Muslims aren't our enemies, but I don't like those teachings which are calling for violence. Christ calls for peace and love, that's why we follow him. Jesus teaches, love your neighbor! Therefore I feel sorry for the Muslims and I pray for them." He also noted the terrorists had already infiltrated Europe, and photos and videos can bear witness to this.

The Hungarian Jewish Communities

Slomó Köves, the leader of the Unified Hungarian Israelite Community, also made known his opinion by the Lánchíd Radio on September 1.²³ Köves said they experienced the persecution, escapes, and the act of being outlawed many times, and therefore they can identify easily with shelter seekers and needy people. At the same time, the processes of the last one or two decades in Western Europe are a warning, because Judaism soon became the number one target of the fundamentalist Islamic terrorist groups. He said this fills them with increased fear and worry. However, he highlighted that according to their faith, they can't judge anyone for those acts that he/she did not do—even if he/she will do it later. He felt that we should find global solutions—not only Europeans—for this situation, the rich Arab countries should also be involved. He noted we have to pay attention to the refugees to adapt to the social norms, but at the same time, we cannot expect them to give up their religion.

András Heisler is the chairman of the MAZSIHISZ (Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Faith Communities). The *Magyar Idők* did an interview with him on November 13 where he talked about the refugee issue.²⁴ He said, "The strict control of immigration is needed. Churches have to help those who are in need, but the governments and the European Union must find solution to this crisis. Before the wave of migration, the security risk level of Jew-

²³ 'Köves Slomó: Furcsa Helyzetben van a Zsidóság', Lanchidradio.hu, 2015 <<http://lanchidradio.hu/lanchidradiobelfold/koves-slomo-furcsa-helyzetben-van-a-zsidóság-1302536>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

²⁴ Gyula Haraszti-Dorka Gabay, 'Szigorúan Ellenőrizni Kell a Migrációt', Magyar Idők, 2015 <<http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/heisler-andras-az-embercsoportok-tomeges-mozgasat-szigoruan-kontrollalni-kell-119131/>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

ish institutions has already increased in Europe which was caused by the spread of the extremist Islam.”

The Congregation of Faith

The leader of Congregation of Faith, Sándor Németh, had quite a strong opinion on the immigration issue, which he spoke about in September in their TV program "Happy Sunday."²⁵ He called the immigration “offensive,” noting that “a newcomer does not intrude”. He felt we had to face this challenging problem, stating, “Each country has a jealous love, they fear for their nation, culture, language, future, etc. This is a really healthy defense, particularly for small nations. Perhaps this fear contains crampedness and paranoia, it is natural, but I think this problem does not only exist in Hungary. [...] It isn’t easy that they want to settle in Europe. Europe cannot solve these problems. It is important to provide that kind of help and assistance that we are capable of.”

He also noted that it was not good that some people called upon for mercy with migrants, believing it to be wrong and counterproductive. To him, it should come from the inside, but nowadays, it has become the cause of mutual accusations.

The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship’s Announcement

According to Gabor Ivanyi’s announcement,²⁶ the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship believed that the Earth belonged to God, and none of the nations can monopolize it for exclusive use. No one can close their land to those who are seeking help and protection. They felt it was unacceptable for Hungary to reject and stigmatize those who must leave their homelands because of some threat.

²⁵ ‘Hit Gyülekezete: Ez Már Nem Bevándorlás, Hanem Offenzíva’, [Http://mandiner.hu/](http://mandiner.hu/), 2015 <http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20150907_hit_gyulekezete_ez_mar_nem_bevandorlas_hanem_offenziva> [accessed 6 March 2016].

²⁶ NOL, ‘A Föld Istené, és Nem Orbáné’, NOL.hu, 2015 <<http://nol.hu/belfold/a-fold-istene-es-nem-orbane-1535253>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

The announcement emphasized that they agree with the measures taken by the European Union. It also highlighted that Europe and the advanced, powerful nations are responsible for those countries which contributed to the strengthening and enrichment of the civilized West.

The Hungarian Islamic Community

On behalf of the Hungarian Islamic Community, President Zoltan Bolek stressed,²⁷ “we can take care of one hundred people per day in the mosques in Budapest and Debrecen. We give hot meals, clothes, and counselling for those who need.” They also provided a helping hand at the railway station; they distributed *halal* food every day and provided Arabic-speaking *imams* who could help with communication.

The Hungarian Krishna Consciousness Society

The Hungarian Krishna Consciousness Society published a statement on their website,²⁸ where they noted that providing assistance to those who were in trouble, regardless of their skin color, nation, religion, is a humanitarian and moral imperative, because they consider every living creature as souls. They also proved these words through their active involvement in the aid programs that assisted the refugees. They distributed a lot of food, collected and dispensed many donations, and tried to reduce the mental stress by musical mantra meditation and counseling help at the railway stations.

They stated, “We believe that a people or a country has right and duty to defend itself, but this shouldn’t be a reason to forget the most basic human role; we cannot fail to give assistance which arises from compassion, especially when a fellow-creature’s life is in danger!

²⁷ Tamás Koncz, ‘Alig Látszik Az Egyházi Segítség’, [Http://www.origo.hu/](http://www.origo.hu/), 2015 <<http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20150902-menekult-onkentes-segitseg-egyhazi-katolikus-reformatus-etelosztas.html>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

²⁸ ‘Menekültek étkeztetése – Két Tranzit Zónában Segítünk’, 2015 <<http://krisna.hu/2015/menekultek-etkeztetese/>> [accessed 6 March 2016].

[...] In the current conflict the churches and the religious volunteers can create a bridge and initiate dialogue between the crowds.”

Conclusion

This last sentence is a good closing for this article and serves as a great message for all. In this paper, we reviewed some of those statements made in the fall of 2015, when the larger level of migration started. We have seen very nuanced opinions. They vary widely, between complete rejection and total openness. We focused on the first period of events—maybe this is the reason why one cannot see strong, clear, concordant guidelines everywhere. It would be interesting to pay attention to the relationship between the size of the churches and the diversity of the statements, but it is outside the scope of this article.