BWA resolution calls border surge a ‘humanitarian crisis’

July 11, 2014

The surge of unaccompanied children from Central America into the United States “is not primarily an issue of unprotected borders but a humanitarian crisis,” according to a resolution the Baptist World Alliance General Council approved in Izmir, Turkey.

The international Baptist group passed the resolution the same week President Barack Obama asked Congress for $3.7 billion in emergency spending for the crisis. So far this year, Border Patrol has apprehended more than 50,000 unaccompanied minors, mostly from Central America.

‘Human tragedy’

The BWA resolution “acknowledges the human tragedy of the recent flood of unaccompanied minors to the United States who risk their lives in search of safety, economic resources and justice.”

It also voices concern for the children who are “victimized by separation from their families, economic exploitation, lack of medical care and education, discrimination, and who are sometimes subjected to a hostile host environment.”

The resolution calls on governments of all the nations involved to “seek together a comprehensive approach to the underlying issues across the region that contribute to this social and human tragedy.”

It also challenges churches in the region to “practice hospitality and charity as they regard each minor as (a) neighbor and child of God.”

Endorses CLC statement

The BWA resolution endorses a statement the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission issued on the subject, encouraging Baptists to "remember the many biblical injunctions about caring for the 'stranger' or immigrant."

The resolution urges BWA member bodies and their churches to provide the immigrant children spiritual support and pastoral services; create "welcoming communities" to house the unaccompanied minors; spread the word in Latin America about the dangers inherent in the journey and dispel misinformation about the situation that awaits the children in the United States; and "promote seasons of prayer for the people of Central America, for the children who are traveling to the United States and for all those responding to this human tragedy."

Other BWA General Council resolutions:

- Express sadness and concern about the political crisis in Ukraine and resultant religious persecution there, urge prayer for peace and reconciliation, and encourage churches of the Baptist Unions of Ukraine and Russia and their leaders to "overcome prejudice and misunderstanding in the situation" and work together in partnership and cooperation.

- Voice "gravest concern" about a proposed religious conversion law in Myanmar that denies individuals the right to choose a faith community other than the one into which they are born; condemn the Burmese government's forced displacement of the Kachin people; and express grief over violence suffered by Muslims in Myanmar.

- Condemn the kidnapping of more than 200 female students from a Church of the Brethren school in Nigeria by Boko Haram, along with other "targeted attacks and persecution of Christians as a minority community in North Africa and the Middle East."

- Recognize "the faithfulness of Christian disciples" in Turkey, host

country for the BWA annual gathering, and rejoice in “the courage and faithfulness of Turkish Christian disciples as they outwork their religious freedom.”