

84-year-old Norwegian bishop convicted for immigration activism

People in the [January 29, 2020](#) issue



(Church of Norway Communications)

On December 19, Gunnar Stålsett, a retired Lutheran bishop of Oslo, was convicted for continuing to employ Lula Tekle, an Eritrean asylum seeker, as a housekeeper after the Norwegian government revoked her legal status in 2011.

The 84-year-old peace advocate told local media that by refusing to dismiss Tekle, he was practicing a form of civil disobedience against “an immoral law” and that he would take full responsibility for his actions.

“I’m willing to take on that burden,” he said. “It’s nothing compared with what undocumented immigrants have gone through for decades in Norway. They live in

fear every day.”

Stålsett was given a suspended 45-day jail sentence, meaning he will not actually spend time in jail. Instead, he will have to pay a fine of \$1,100.

In 2011, as part of an effort to beef up its immigration rules, the Norwegian government withdrew the tax cards of would-be refugees like Tekle whose asylum applications had been rejected but who could not return to their homes for various reasons. Previously, they had been able to use the tax cards to gain legal employment. —*Christian Century* staff