

Immediate Humanitarian Evacuation of African Refugees

Italian NGOs appeal to European Union and member States

Thursday, 21st April 2011

The undersigned Italian NGOs, members of the National Asylum Platform, coordinated by UNHCR launch an urgent appeal for the immediate evacuation of refugees coming from Sub-Saharan countries, in particular from the Horn of Africa, who find themselves trapped in Libya and threatened by all parts in the conflict, as well as those who reached the Libyan-Tunisian border and have no possibility to obtain effective protection in Tunisia.

They have no other choice but that of embarking from Libya on unseaworthy boats and of risking their lives on the journey over the sea to reach a safe haven in Europe. Hundreds of them have died on such a journey and other embarkations there are no news whatsoever. We recall the immense tragedy occurred in the night between 5th and 6th April where at least 260 African refugees disappeared in the waters 40 miles away from Lampedusa. This and other incidents could have been avoided if these refugees had been evacuated and transferred to safe countries.

Europe should not continue to be silent and should make now a combined effort between member States of the Union to organise a transfer to their territories.

This appeal is simultaneously addressed to governments of all member States, to the European Council and to the European Commission that is called for to coordinate the operation.

It is not possible to indicate precise numbers of Sub-Saharan refugee who find themselves in this desperate situation, but we can say that it is in a magnitude of far less than 10.000 persons.

We should like to recall that the NATO military operations regarding Libya based on the UN Security Council Resolution n. 1973 (2011) of February 26th 2011 has the scope to avoid the loss of lives of civilians. Our appeal goes precisely in this direction but does not require any military operation.

We urge that member States and European institutions to act quickly in the spirit of the basic values of the European Union.

Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani – ACLI, www.acli.it
ARCI, Associazione di Promozione Sociale, www.arci.it
Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione, www.asgi.it
Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia, www.fedevangelica.it
Casa dei Diritti Sociali-Focus, www.dirittisociali.org
Centro ASTALLI – Jesuit Refugee Service, www.centroastalli.it
Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati – CIR, www.cir-onlus.org
Senza Confine, www.senzaconfine.org

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