

Italy expels boat-people, the EU turns a blind eye

Press release

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Once more, the Italian authorities undertook a massive return of migrants, including potential refugees who had landed by sea on the island of Lampedusa. It is the third time in less than six months that Italy has openly violated international regulations – non-refoulement, prohibition of collective expulsion, banning from submitting anyone to inhuman and degrading treatments. Moreover, these returns are carried out towards Libya, a country known for regularly violating Human Rights.

These abuses are committed in total impunity : the European Union, which ought to guarantee the respect of basic rights on its territory, in particular the right to asylum, remains quiet. Questioned on the October expulsions by European NGOs¹ and by the European parliament, the European Commission assessed that the Italian Government did not violate any rule and above all that this question is not a matter of its competence. Despite the deep concerns formulated by UNHCR and Amnesty International about the last removals from Lampedusa, the European Commission is again supporting the Italian authorities.

The EU's disinterest in the fate of expelled people is not accidental : the European asylum and immigration policies that have been implemented in the past five years, and the proposals for the externalization of the border controls suggested by the Hague program of November 2004 are the main sources of inspiration for an Italian government that is only anticipating the future. Driving back and locking up migrants and exiled people are indeed situated at the core of communitarian projects.

In the opinion of our organizations, it is time that the European institutions put into place mechanisms of control and sanction that prevent a Member State from violating the basic Human Rights principles to which the Union is committed.

First signatories

Amnesty International, section française, *France* ; **Anafé** (Association nationale d'assistance aux frontières pour les étrangers), *France* ; **APDHA** (Asociacion Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucia), *Espagne* ; **ARCI**, *Italie* ; **ASGI** (Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione), *Italie* ; **CEAR** (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado), *Espagne* ; **Cimade**, *France* ; **Fasti** (Fédération des associations de solidarité avec les travailleurs immigrés), *France* ; **FIDH** (Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme) ; **FIDH-AE** (FIDH-Association Européenne) ; **Gisti** (Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés), *France* ; **ICS** (Consorzio italiano solidarietà), *Italie* ; **LDH** (Ligue française des Droits de l'Homme), *France* ; **SOS-Racismo**, *Espagne* ;

Puis

APSR (association d'accueil aux médecins et personnels de santé réfugiés en France), *France* ; **Las pateras de la vida**, *Maroc* ; Forum Réfugiés, *France* ; **Mrap** (mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples), *France* ; **AFVIC** (Association Amis et Familles des Victimes de l'Immigration Clandestine), *Maroc* ; **Syndicat de la magistrature**, *France* ; **ACAT-France** (Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture), *France* ; **L'ACAT-Luxembourg**, *Luxembourg*, **December 18**, *Europe*.

¹ <http://pajol.eu.org/IMG/pdf/complaint-lamp-en.pdf>