

## **Refugees in Malta are living in a ghetto-camp. EveryOne appeals to the UN and the EU**

To:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres,  
Rapporteur on the EU Refugee Resettlement Programme Rui Tavares,  
President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Jakob Kellenberger,  
EU Commission President José Manuel Durão Barroso,  
Human rights commissioner of the Council of Europe Thomas Hammarberg,  
Human Rights Organizations and democratic institutions.

**Milan, May 7th, 2011.** The Maltese government has reserved a poor humanitarian welcome for sub-Saharan refugees despite them being entitled to asylum in the European Union. The hangar at Hal Far airport, where the refugee camp has been set up, consists of several rows of tents and in no way does it comply with the United Nations or International Red Cross protocols. The witness accounts, including that of the young Ethiopian refugee Dawit Metamu, who has given interviews to both local and international newspapers, are very disturbing. The ground is dirty and covered in pools of dirty water, the air is stuffy and stale, there is lack of mattresses and adequate sanitation. Dawit arrived at the centre on March 29th after sailing from Libya, like the majority of sub-Saharan migrants. At first he was imprisoned, and then, after being identified and on the recommendation of UNHCR, he was transferred to Hal Far. It should be pointed out that the campaign conducted by the NGO network for the rights of African refugees (which includes EveryOne Group and Agency Habeshia) was crucial in preventing protracted detentions and the pushing back of sub-Saharan migrants from Malta. Eritrean, Ethiopian and other sub-Saharan family groups who landed in Malta were in turn transferred from deportation centres to the refugee camp. Again thanks to this campaign and the extraordinary work done by UNHCR, dozens of families have been offered shelter in Norway and other EU and non-EU countries. In the hangar, however, where no sunlight or fresh air can penetrate, there are several children (even as young as four months old) sick persons and pregnant women. The children play on the filthy ground poisoned by diesel oil, and then put their hands to their mouths and eyes.

Some of the refugees are suffering from serious illnesses and are in need of special drugs, but nobody listens to them. There are four people living in each tent, but there are only two bunks. The kitchen is dirty and the food prepared for the 400 guests in the hangar is often inappropriate as no one has studied a diet for sick people or those with problems of food intolerance. The toilets are in a terrible state, foul smelling and covered in faeces and urine: another source of germs for the refugees. According to witnesses the water, too, is often murky and foul smelling.

Despite the conditions they are forced to live in, the refugees have expressed their gratitude to the Maltese government, but they have requested, through UNHCR, the Red Cross and the European Union, urgent action to ensure the accommodation of families already tried by war and persecution is made more human. EveryOne Group has sent an urgent appeal to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Red Cross and the Rapporteur on the Resettlement of Refugees in the European Union asking that a suitable structure and

welcome be provided according to international protocols in order to put an end to the shame of the ghetto in the Hal Far hangar.

Sincerely,

Roberto Malini, Matteo Pegoraro, Dario Picciau, Glenys Robinson - EveryOne Group



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***Serious violations of refugees' rights are taking place in Libya, Tunisia and the EU.***

**Rome, May 8th, 2011.** We are publishing an email we received concerning the boat of Eritrean refugees which disappeared off the Libyan coast on March 22nd. The refugees were arrested and jailed, but they are not allowed to make phone calls or request a meeting with UNHCR. Although the Geneva Convention envisages it, both the Tunisian and Libyan authorities (after signing semi-official agreements with EU member countries) are preventing the refugees from seeking asylum or temporary protection in Europe. EveryOne Group has received information that both Tunisian and Libyan authorities have stopped Libyan boats loaded down with refugees fleeing from sub-Saharan Africa or other humanitarian crises. EveryOne Group and the network of NGOs working for the rights of refugees is once again asking the EU institutions and the UN to take action to prevent these

serious and ongoing cases of abuse affecting the refugees: innocent children, women and men who are seeking protection from persecution but who instead find an impenetrable barrier of intolerance and injustice.

Massachusetts (USA), May 7, 2011. Hello! I appreciate EveryoneGroup's call for an investigation into the disappearance of the Eritreans who departed from Libya on March 22nd, and would like to provide additional information.

An Eritrean whom I know in Asmara received the text message below from a friend of his in Libya who had received a cell phone call from an individual who reports having been a passenger on board the boat in question, and who says that all on board were captured and brought back to Libya. The text message was received on April 17th, and has been reported to the UNHCR. Below is the text of the message, which was written in Tigrinya.

wediabay: Habreta seat 12 30 am arbi leyti malt hiji kadam wegahta malet eyu zegateme koyunu ab himak kunetat alewu selzi netom kendi sebat ab un yekun gual chirum zeblewom sebat neza ab libya zelwu sebat hizoma zelu number amehalalifulna etza numebr naytom ab libya zelwu eya (omissis) tegdiskum amehalalifulna ekum nezbletse habreta mes tedlyu bezia n libya dewilkum kitrekbewom tekilu ekum netom geday zekonu hiji bezreknayom habreta kea kabatom 6 sebat tefom alewu selzi beztaklekum meten amehalalifulna ekum yeknyelna yehwat wealely hiderely zeydelyo guday eyu tnx amlak yehagezom

A different Eritrean now living in the USA gave the following translation of the above:

This happened on March 22nd around 12:30 am. Those people they get captured from the sea and they returned back to Libya, but we don't know where they are. We got this information by the phone number (omissis). The person who called said: We are in a bad situation inside Libya; we need help. If you need to contact me, night is the only time because daytime we have a bad connection. From all of us, we lost six people already. And he is begging for help.

There have been other news reports of people who were captured at sea and brought back to Libya, with which the above is consistent.

Since the above contains a cell phone number of an individual who reports being right now in a perilous situation, I would ask that the cell phone number itself not be made public, though I have no objection should it be shared with aid organizations, or should the general information be shared with others, though I ask that my name not be used.

Sincerely,  
(signed email)

Massachusetts (USA)



### **Shipwreck in Libyan waters: dozens of refugees perish**

**Lampedusa, May 9th, 2011.** For months EveryOne Group and a network of NGOs for human rights have been calling on the international institutions to set up a service able to follow, mile by mile, the boats that set sail from Libya with refugees aboard. The cost and logistics of such a service could easily be taken from the EU funds laid aside for emergencies linked to migratory flows from countries where humanitarian crises are underway. Unfortunately, our requests - which may have saved many lives - have been regularly ignored. The international institutions have often answered our requests on less important issues, but our appeals to save the lives of children, women and men in serious danger have fallen on deaf ears. Yesterday morning a boat with more than 600 sub-Saharan refugees on board was shipwrecked off the coast of Libya. Dozens of people perished in the disaster, including very small babies and their mothers, while others managed to swim to the Libyan coast. More than 20 bodies, including many Somalis, have already been recovered, but it is assumed that the number of victims is much higher. More than 30 Somalis are missing. "More than 300 people lost their lives in the shipwreck," said a young Somali who survived the accident. Another boat with 655 refugees on board arrived at Lampedusa in the night, and was rescued twenty miles from the coast by Coast Guard patrol boats.



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