

Press release: situation in Ventimiglia

Caritas warns: human dignity threatened in Ventimiglia

Caritas Europa, together with its members Secours Catholique-Caritas France and Caritas Italy, calls on the EU and in particular on the French and Italian governments to take action to respect the human dignity and fundamental rights of migrants stuck in Ventimiglia, Italy.

On 24 June, at Caritas Ventimiglia-San Remo's 25th anniversary celebrations, the youngest person in the audience was Sharifa Maria, a baby girl only a few days old. She is the first baby born in the "camp" opened by Caritas Ventimiglia-San Remo to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in Ventimiglia. But she will certainly not be the last one as several pregnant women live in the camp.

Migrants, mostly Sudanese, Eritreans and Ethiopians, arrived from Sicily to Ventimiglia with the hope of continuing their journey to France and northern Europe. However, they were blocked at the border between Italy and France. Stuck in Ventimiglia, with no access to any type of services or any proper reception centres, the families, pregnant women, children and babies are forced to sleep outside.

On 31 May, Mons. Suetta opened the church Sant'Antonio to provide a safe haven for 5,000 exhausted migrants, a place of respite for the people before they reattempt to cross the border. To further ease their suffering, Caritas Ventimiglia-San Remo, with the support of the Nice delegation of Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Caritas Monaco and other Christian and Islamic organisations, is distributing food, hygiene kits and clothes. The migrants also have access to a few showers in the basement of the church. In addition, Caritas has successfully advocated for the reopening of the reception centre in order to cover the basic needs and ensure respect for the human dignity of the migrants. The centre will finally open in a few days.

Yet, the situation remains dire and requires immediate action. Caritas Europa, Caritas Italy and Secours Catholique-Caritas France urge the EU and the Italian and French authorities to:

- Provide for the basic needs of migrants, including those in transit, to guarantee their human dignity and refrain from using arbitrary detention or arrest;
- Guarantee solidarity and responsibility-sharing among EU Member States and between the EU and non-EU countries; Italian and French governments must agree on a common response to the situation, respecting the fundamental rights of migrants;
- Give priority to protecting people instead of protecting borders, with particular attention to women and children;
- Open more safe and legal paths to come to Europe.

For more information, please contact:

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