



IFRC | Red Cross Red Crescent calls for respect of the dignity and rights of all migrants

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On International Migrants Day, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is calling for the respect of the dignity and rights of all migrants.

Migrants arrive at international borders for multiple reasons and with different vulnerabilities. They should always be treated with humanity, regardless of their legal status. They should receive information about their rights in a language they understand. People fleeing conflict and persecution must have access to fair asylum and humanitarian protection procedures. Measures to prevent irregular entry endanger the safety and security of vulnerable migrants.

It is urgent to address the challenges linked to protecting refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people and migrants travelling by sea. Desperate people risk their lives by taking unsafe boat trips. Increasingly, they also face exploitation, abuse and violence during their journey. According to UNHCR, between January and 21 July 2014 over 154,075 people arrived in Italy by sea. Eritreans and Syrians are among the two top nationalities, and most have been rescued by the Italian Navy. It is estimated that over 800 people have died in the Mediterranean since the beginning of this year.

Human migration is a fundamental part of the human condition, and migrants will continue to take hazardous journeys where they have no other options; they will continue to put their lives at risk despite all efforts to stop them. We need to do more to ensure safe journeys, and we need to do more to ensure safe arrivals of all migrants not only on the Mediterranean Sea but globally along the migration journey and at international borders.

The Vice-President of the IFRC and President of the Italian Red Cross, Mr Francesco Rocca said: “The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, recognizing the multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder nature of the migration phenomenon, encourages cooperation among different actors involved and advocates for policies that safeguard humanitarian principles and respect the dignity of migrants and refugees, regardless of their legal status in order to ensure improved protection and living conditions.”

There are many measures that can be taken by Governments to reduce the numbers of people dying in this most distressing way. The Red Cross Red Crescent call upon States, within the framework of applicable international law, to ensure that their national procedures at international borders – especially those that might result in denial of access to international protection, deportation or interdiction of persons – include adequate safeguards to protect the dignity and ensure the safety of all migrants. The Red Cross Red Crescent also calls upon Governments, in line with such relevant international law and national legislation, to grant to migrants appropriate international protection and to ensure their access to relevant services, such as health care, shelter or simply making contact with their families.

In order to protect the rights of migrants, with the support and financial assistance of the EU, IFRC and 15 national societies around the world have launched ‘Rights of

Migrants in Action', a project which seeks to promote and protect the rights of migrants, especially migrant domestic workers and victims of human trafficking. Thanks to the project, direct social assistance and protection will be provided to many migrants and their families. This support may include access to healthcare, legal assistance and social inclusion measures like training, or interpretation services. The project also aims to help civil society organisations (CSOs) to better protect the rights of these migrants by creating a network where all the CSOs can share best practices.

Yet, more needs to be done to save lives along the hazardous routes, at sea, in deserts and mountainous regions. Safeguards with regard to the human rights of migrants should not only be guaranteed in principle but must be properly implemented, especially with regard to the specific needs of the most vulnerable.

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