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The situation of immigrants and asylum seekers in Southern Europe

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Wolfgang WODARG and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The situation of refugees in Southern Europe has recently grown dramatically worse. The governments in this region have made their measures against immigrants, most of them illegal, significantly more severe.

Immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are more and more often the victims of human-rights violations – including and in particular by state institutions.

Conditions in the reception centres and the treatment of the people detained there do not meet the standards set by the Council of Europe. The governments provide insufficient information regarding the number and location of these centres. Access to the centres is granted only in rare cases. Information only occasionally reaches the public, usually via individual journalists or members of non-governmental organisations.

Italy can be seen as an example of the current situation. This summer, the Berlusconi government issued an emergency decree introducing parallel legislation for illegal immigrants: while being in Italy illegally is not a crime in itself, it is considered an aggravating circumstance should the person have committed another offence. The question of whether this infringes European law is currently being examined in Brussels.

There have been an increasing number of attacks by the forces of law and order against people of colour – whether or not they hold an Italian passport, are illegal residents or asylum seekers. Insults and inhuman treatment have been reported in northern Italy, in particular. The Ministry of the Interior and the government in general have not yet launched any investigation into these cases.

The 10 reception centres for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (Centri di permanenza temporanea) were renamed "centres for identification and expulsion" (Centri di identificazione ed espulsione). The government has decided that they will be guarded by soldiers. The conditions in many of these centres have repeatedly been described as degrading. For example, a delegation of parliamentarians from the Italian Radicals party recently reported that in the centre in Cassibile (Sicily), which was designed to hold 200 people – mostly asylum seekers – currently houses more than 400 people. According to the report, the centre is surrounded by metal poles, resembles a high-security prison and is guarded by soldiers armed with machine guns. Moreover, the people living there are addressed not by name but by number. Similar reports have emerged about other centres in Calabria, Apulia and Lampedusa.

The government has now decided to build an additional ten such centres, principally in northern Italy, in order to enable it, it says, to react to the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers. However, the legislative package does not provide for any social or other integration measures.



For legal immigrants and asylum seekers, family reunification has been made even more difficult. If an immigrant wants his children to join him, he must in future – according to the decision of the Council of Ministers – have a DNA test carried out on himself and his alleged children, at his own cost. A measure which, for the vast majority of immigrants, is neither feasible nor affordable.

During his last visit to Libya, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi signed an agreement in which the Libyan government committed itself to curbing the flow of immigrants across the Mediterranean towards Italy (the route taken by the majority of immigrants from Asia, the Middle East and Western and Central Africa). Under this agreement, the Libyan government would receive, among other things, several police patrol boats and the construction of a motorway at Italy's expense. Each side currently accuses the other of failing to comply with the agreements.

Therefore, the Assembly intends to:

- urgently examine the current situation of refugees in Mediterranean Europe and whether human rights are being respected;
- analyse the role of the neighbouring Mediterranean states and propose measures to resolve the conflict in line with the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹:

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