



45th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, 14 September – 6 October 2020

Item 2: General Debate

Joint Oral statement delivered by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

Title: COVID-19, migration and protection of all human rights

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Madam High Commissioner,

The spread of COVID-19 had a noticeable impact on vulnerable people, especially migrants and refugees. The protection measures adopted, such as confinement and isolation of migrants in detention centres, have exacerbated a pattern of violence that some States, especially along the Balkan route, were already applying. Arbitrary detentions, illegal pushbacks, and collective expulsions have operated in growing indifference¹.

The outbreak of the pandemic has considerably exacerbated the already precarious situation of thousands of migrants stranded beyond European borders. Migrants often live in inadequate conditions because of the lack of food, water supplies, health care and safe social distance. Their human rights are not guaranteed. Structures are overcrowded, tests and protective devices are not enough or even absent, increasing the risk of coronavirus hotbeds among migrants and locals.

In Lesbo, the recent humanitarian catastrophe in the Moria camp, an overcrowding facility designed for fewer than 3,000 people, left 13.000 asylum seekers without shelter because of fire. Such a situation is, regrettably, emblematic of Europe's migration's facilities.

We urge the Greek Government and the European Union to respond to the tragic events in Lesbo by activating humanitarian corridors for those stranded asylum seekers.

As article 13 of the UDHR enshrines the right to freedom of movement², we strongly believe that States, instead of approaching migration through a security-oriented lens, should give greater prominence to a human rights-based approach, eschewing additional barriers to migrants' freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

We urge the States to recommit themselves to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants. We can no longer remain silent and wilfully ignore the violence and abuses perpetrated on EU's external borders, allowing and even encouraging the perpetration of these abuses.

Thank you!

¹ <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/february-22-2020-0500-katinovac-croatie/>

² <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>