
Umpteenth tragedy at sea. Msgr. Di Tora (Migrantes): "No more indifference, measures must be taken at global level"

Monsignor **Guerino Di Tora**, Auxiliary bishop of Rome, President of the Italian Bishops' Migrantes Foundation, calls for co-responsibility and firm action at both European and global level to prevent further tragedies at sea. Following the umpteenth shipwreck off the Libyan coast that reportedly claimed the lives of 130 people, despite SOS calls for help to the Italian, Maltese and Libyan authorities two days earlier, referred to by Pope Francis as a "moment of shame", the Auxiliary bishop, president of Migrantes, calls for a heightened "European awareness. The UN should assume the responsibility for this situation from a global perspective." IOM migration agency said that so far in 2021 more than 450 people have died at sea, a dramatic rise from 150 last year. In the meantime, migrant boats continue landing in Italy: over a hundred migrants in danger of being shipwrecked off the coast of Calabria have been rescued by the Italian Coast Guard, while other migrant vessels have reached the coasts of Salento and Lampedusa in the past few hours.



Immagine non disponibile

The latest tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea, once Mare Nostrum, and today the sea of death and divisions, challenges us all to pause and reflect on what is happening in the world. We must stop focusing exclusively on our own particular interests. The present times require us to have a broader perspective, to see the world in its entirety, to authentically embrace Pope Francis' vision of human brotherhood. "Brothers all" (Fratelli tutti) is not just about fine words in good moments. Our duty is to intervene in critical situations to counter the tragedy of so many people fleeing war, misery and numerous other tragic circumstances. There isn't only the war of weapons, there is also the war of hunger, tribal hatred and desertification. There are people without food or water. People deprived of basic necessities of life, of their fundamental rights. The whole of humanity must feel involved in order to respond. **Yet once again only Pope Francis has spoken powerful words.** Only Pope Francis' voice was heard, as he appealed to our consciences in the face of this overwhelming tragedy. We should pause and reflect: we are experiencing a time of pandemic and crisis, but this does not mean that we should withdraw from the world. We need to open ourselves up to reality and to the experience of a new world. As Christians we are called to live out our faith, to bear witness to the risen Christ in the circumstances of the present day. This is the challenge we face today and which requires us to fulfil our commitment. Our faith must be made concrete as we stand before people suffering tremendous hardships. Today we cannot fail to acknowledge that migrations are a sign of the times, of a new reality, of a world that unfolds and marks the dawn of a new chapter in history: a generation is born, a reality, a new and different world. We are called not only to understand and reflect, but to commit ourselves to translate this into reality in our history. **The few NGOs rescue vessels blamed the EU and Italy for not intervening to prevent last week's tragedy.** Rightly so. We all should genuinely feel co-responsible in this situation. Others have stepped in and taken a stand. This issue cannot be treated as a domestic problem, in fact it concerns the whole world. Migration is not only from Africa to Europe, but also from the Americas to the north, people migrating to the Far East, to Australia and New Zealand. It's a global phenomenon that requires everyone's commitment. **What should be done at institutional level?** This is not just a national phenomenon and it should not just depend on the goodwill of a few NGOs. It must involve a heightened European awareness. On a global level, the UN should assume the responsibility for this situation. **What do you picture as a possible UN operation, which already intervenes through IOM and UNHCR?** My idea is that all nations should share responsibility, both in terms of

cooperation - such as humanitarian corridors from the place of departure to the place of arrival - along with interventions in poverty-stricken countries, to allow people to remain and work on improving their situation. For obvious reasons, people will tend to migrate if they are living in situations of poverty. Trying to improve one's conditions is only human. **There are reports of 450 deaths in the first months of 2021, an increase from last year. And at least 1400 people died at sea in 2020. The numbers are shocking.** These figures should not only shock us, they should touch our consciences. We have ceased to realise that every number represents a human being. We must genuinely be aware of our co-responsibility as human beings. We are all in the same boat, which is the world today.

A new global initiative is needed in the face of these deaths, but unfortunately they are met with indifference.

This is a terrible thing. Pope Francis said: "No one is saved alone". I remember when he gave the example of the failure of a bank which upsets the whole world. In contrast, hundreds of people die at sea and nobody intervenes. **Furthermore, Italy has not even started vaccinating the most vulnerable people, including migrants in reception centres...** We are still facing a difficult situation, which unfortunately many people are experiencing. Let us hope that a greater commitment will be forthcoming also in this respect. The Pope set an example by personally visiting the poor and homeless on his name day. The most vulnerable must not be abandoned.

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