
Humanitarian corridors, 45 refugees arrived from Niger today, 22 of them children

This was the second humanitarian corridor from Niger but the first one in post-pandemic reopening and of new-found hopes of putting an end to the disease. Forty-five refugees with eight different nationalities (Sudan, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria), many of whom survived the nightmares of Libyan prisons and were then transferred to camps in Niger through UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. All of them have experienced dramatic hardships, fleeing from Boko Haram fundamentalists, conflict and poverty. Some have attempted to cross the desert and the sea several times to reach Europe. Among them are eight families and 22 children. They arrived this morning at Fiumicino airport with two flights connecting Niamey-Tunis-Rome. A new life begins for them in Italy today in eight Caritas dioceses: Rimini, Crema, Fiesole, Rome, Bolzano, Matera, Teggiano-Policastro and Assisi. One person will be housed by the Waldensian Church in Turin. They are all complying with the Covid-19 prevention measures adopted by the local health authorities, including swab tests upon departure and arrival and a 15-day quarantine period. There has only been one case of Covid-19 among refugees in the past eighteen months of the pandemic, with the infection occurring in Italy.



[3,000 people have arrived safely and legally. Today's 45 refugees are the latest arrivals under the humanitarian corridors, resettlements and humanitarian evacuations from the Middle East and Africa organised by Caritas Italy, under a mandate from the Italian Bishops' Conference and pursuant to protocols with the Italian government. A total of 1,100 people in need of international protection have reached Italy safely and legally since 2014 thanks to this programme, as many as 3,000 including those supported by the Community of Sant'Egidio and other bodies. It is an effective procedure and an alternative to deaths at sea and refoulement in Libya. More than 800 people have been reported missing in the Mediterranean in 2021, with over 13,000 intercepted and repatriated to Libya.](#)



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. head of the immigration area of Caritas Italy, told SIR. "We have won a project that will kick off next year and will involve Belgium, Ireland and even Canada, among other countries. The purpose of the project is to enhance the quality of this service and social integration, for example by increasing job and educational integration opportunities for people with specific skills." In fact, over the years, the humanitarian corridors have proved that the community model for welcoming refugees in small groups - with the support of tutoring families and the participation of parishes, associations and schools - is efficient and successful. "Another group of refugees will be arriving by the end of the year from Niger," Forti said. "We had to discontinue arrivals from Ethiopia due to the conflict in Tigray. We will eventually see if a new protocol will be signed with the Italian government." As Caritas Italy, he concluded, "we are pleased to resume this experience, which in fact has never been interrupted, in a spirit of serenity and widespread trust. During the pandemic period we continued working closely with the local communities, albeit online."



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from Gorizia, in charge of the humanitarian corridors for Caritas Italy. "They fled to Niamey and lived there for seven years. They only speak the Hausa language and are practising Muslims. The two girls, aged 8 and 4, wear a veil, possibly as a symbol of protection from so much violence. They will be transferred to the diocese of Bolzano and will be assigned a cultural mediator who speaks their language. A parish priest who has also studied the Koran will attend to them. It is bound to be a great challenge in terms of integration."



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Asna (a fictitious name) is an Eritrean woman raised in Ethiopia. She suffered the atrocities of Libyan prisons, the acts of violence. She attempted to cross the sea on a small vessel, but it was intercepted by the Libyan coast guard and sent back. She was rescued from the inferno by UNHCR and transferred to Niger. She underwent a severe ordeal, but she is strong and confident: she is determined to try and overcome the pain and the past and start a new life here, in Italy. As a new person.



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