

Open Arms: Europe surrenders human lives to mafias



Madrid, August 11 (RHC)-- The director of the Spanish NGO Proactiva Oscar Camps said Saturday that the European Union (EU) is surrendering lives of Africans to human trafficking mafias by not allowing them to navigate through safe ports.

"This forgetful Europe does not allow these people, whose lives are in danger, to use safe ports [to reach the continent]. What Europe is doing is giving all those lives to organized crime," Camps said.

The Spanish charity held a press conference on Lampedusa island, the closest safe harbor to international waters, where its rescue vessel, the Open Arms, is waiting that the Italian authorities allow it to dock 160 shipwrecks, among whom there are four minors and three pregnant women.

Camps asked European politicians to be "honest" and not rush to qualify those who are rescued from shipwrecks as "migrants."

"A very biased opinion trend is being created. In international waters there are no immigrants. For international waters belong to everyone," the Proactiva director said and explained that international maritime law does not speak of immigrants but of "lives in danger."

In an indirect allusion to the "Decreto Sicurezza," an anti-migrant law whereby the far-right Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini seeks to consolidate his "Closed Ports" policy against rescue vessels, Camps said that humanitarian NGOs will not be intimidated and will resist.

"No decree, no fine, no code of conduct, no politician will prevent us from protecting human lives at sea."

On Friday, U.S. actor Richard Gere brought water and other supplies to the African migrants who are at the Open Arms vessel. "The most important thing for these people here is to be able to get to a free port, to get off the boat, to get on land and start a new life," he said in a video posted online. "Please support us here on Open Arms and help these people, our brothers and sisters."

Shortly thereafter, the European extreme right began to make fun of Gere's solidarity gesture. "Richard Gere and Human Trafficking Arms. The philanthropic theatricality once again touches on the spooky. A billionaire surrounded by alleged refugees," said Vox, the Spanish nationalist party which openly confesses that it is against migration, feminism and abortion.

For his part, the Italian Interior Minister, who expects the U.S. actor to "tan a little" during his stay in the rescue ship, has also mocked the situation. "Since his NGO friends have 180 immigrants on board, I am sure the generous millionaire will receive them all in his villas. Am I wrong???", Salvini tweeted and recommended ironically that migrants be transferred to the Balearic Islands in Spain, the country where the rescue ship's flag comes from.

"Why can't these poor migrants be taken to Ibiza and Formentera? So, at least, they will take advantage [of the trip] and have fun." At the Lampedusa press conference, after comparing Italy with the U.S., Richard Gere accused politicians of demonizing migrants.

"This has to stop everywhere on this planet now. And it will stop if we say stop," he stressed and explained that he only wanted to help people and not get into a political fight.

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