

Open Arms allowed to land 27 children at Lampedusa Port



Rome, August 17 (RHC)-- Defeated by international pressure and pressured by divisions in the far-right ruling class, Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini authorized on Saturday the landing of 27 "unaccompanied minors" from the Open Arms ship to the Lampedusa port.

"Against my will and in another example of my loyal collaboration, I stipulate that there are no obstacles to the execution" of the Agrigento Prosecutor's order, Salvini said and explained that he had only agreed at the insistence of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.

A few hours earlier, Conte sent a second open letter to Salvini asking him to allow the disembarkation of minor migrants who were not traveling accompanied by parents or guardians.

The far-right League Party leader responded that his position regarding the Open Arms had not changed at all and complained that "while Madrid does not move a muscle, the pressures multiply over Italy."

On Friday, after inspecting the rescue vessel, members of "Emergency", an NGO delivering medical care to victims of war, issued a report stating that the Open Arms did not have the sanitary conditions necessary to keep 134 migrants overcrowded on deck. Once this information was released to the public, the Prosecutor's Office of the Agrigento city in Sicilia issued a direct order on Saturday to disembark the young African migrants.

After having stayed 16 days at the Spanish ship, they were transferred to the Italian Coast Guard and Finance Guard boats. This operation was supervised by Salvatore Vella, the deputy Prosecutor of Agrigento.

Before all this happened, a Rome-based administrative court ruled on August 14th that the Open Arms should be allowed to enter Italian territorial waters. However, the Italian interior minister ignored the court order, which deepened ongoing divisions among members of the far-right ruling coalition.

Salvini continued mocking the claims that human rights defenders made to him. On Friday, for instance, he lashed out against Ada Colau, the first woman to lead the mayor's office in Barcelona.

"Attention! Barcelona's do-gooder mayor said: 'Cruelty! Europe must force Salvini to allow the landing of the OpenArms!' It is a Spanish ship and a Spanish NGO. Open your port!," the Italian politician tweeted.

While the landing of these 27 young Africans alleviates the humanitarian situation within the rescue vessel, the Salvini's "Closed Ports" policy remains in force and threatens the lives of other migrants rescued by other humanitarian ships.

Such is the case of the Ocean Viking, a ship chartered by Doctors Without Borders and SOS Méditerranée, which hopes to reach a safe port with 356 migrants on board.

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