

Open Arms rescue ship says situation on board is dramatic



Madrid, August 17 (RHC)-- The Spanish flagged vessel Open Arms on Friday called for the evacuation "with the utmost urgency for humanitarian emergency" of all 134 migrants who are still waiting on board for Italian authorities to authorize them to disembark.

"The psychophysical conditions of adults and minors are critical and their safety is very worrying," a medical report prepared by Emergency, an NGO delivering medical care to victims of war, states. "It is urgent and necessary to request immediate intervention by the competent authorities... to avoid worsening the precarious psychological state" of migrants."

The Emergency report, which was signed by Italian psychologist Alessandro Dibenedetto, specifies that the Open Arms has on board 28 minors, aged 16 to 17, from Eritrea, Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Egypt, Gambia and Mali.

The specialist recommends that minors who are not accompanied by a family member be urgently evacuated and receive psychological, linguistic, cultural and legal support. Dibenedetto also points out that the rescued migrants suffered abuse, torture and violations of their human rights in their countries of origin.

They are currently in "conditions of extreme vulnerability, both physical and psychological, aggravated by the uncertainty and stress they are experiencing, which exposes them to suffer psychopathological risks."

The Emergency report details that the majority of African migrants exhibit pathologies related to anxiety, depression, muscular tension, insomnia, tiredness, constant state of worry and even self-harm thoughts.

"Open Arms made six medical evacuations. The situation gets worse every minute. We are witnessing the deterioration of the physical and mental health of the people on board and, given the extreme situation, we urgently request a humanitarian landing in the Lampedusa port."

In response to the statements from human rights defenders, the European Parliament (EP) President David Sassoli requested Friday the Italian authorities to allow the Open Arms to disembark immediately. "The hygiene conditions are worse than ever... I hope that the Italian authorities understand the gravity of the humanitarian emergency on board the Open Arms ship and agree to allow them enter the port of Lampedusa immediately," the EP president said. "They are now giving up and are inflicting acts of self-harm, while they lose sense of reality."

Last week, Sassoli also asked the European Commission (EC) president Jean-Claude Juncker for a fair distribution of the rescued migrants among European countries. Regarding the 13 people disembarked from the ship for health reasons on Friday morning, the far-right Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini alleges that their health condition is not dramatic at all.

"Lies. We face the nth mockery of this Spanish charity, which has been wandering around the Mediterranean for days with the sole purpose of bringing as many people as possible, alone and always, to Italy," said Salvini. "These NGOs only make political battles over the immigrants' skin and against our country. But I don't give up."

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