

Resolution on the situation with refugee camps in Malta

2006/2558(RSP) - 06/04/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

In adopting a joint resolution on the situation of refugees in Malta, MEPs firmly believe that Malta and other EU Member States must respect their obligations under international law as regards asylum seekers. Parliament deplores the unacceptable living conditions of the migrants and asylum seekers in Malta's administrative detention centres. Moreover, the House recognises the difficulties encountered by Malta in managing the migration emergency of the last few years.

MEPs express their solidarity with the Maltese population, the asylum seekers and immigrants held, the Maltese authorities and the police forces, who are confronted with a considerable problem, in view of the size of Malta and its population and the fact that Malta is not the final destination of migrants and asylum seekers. The House commends the transparency of the Maltese authorities, who allowed the delegation from the Civil Liberties Committee and the press free access to Malta's administrative detention centres.

The House calls on the Maltese authorities to reduce substantially the length of time migrants are held. MEPs call for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and NGOs to be given total access to the closed holding centres. The House calls on the competent NGOs to ensure a permanent presence in these centres in order to ensure access to medical and legal assistance. The House urges that the Member States should establish access to the asylum application procedure and apply the provisions of the Directive on minimum standards for granting and withdrawing refugee status in a consistent and rigorous manner and that they should ensure that asylum applications are processed swiftly and efficiently. MEPs call on the Maltese authorities to apply Directive 2003/9/EC laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, especially as regards life in the holding centres. Parliament calls for a larger role for the European Union in the management of humanitarian emergencies linked to migratory flows and asylum seekers.

The House calls on the Council to hold an extraordinary meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Malta as soon as possible to take account of the need to take urgent and immediate measures to address the anticipated upsurge in numbers of irregular migrants arriving in Malta over the summer months, whilst at the same time finding a suitable solution to the current difficulties.

Parliament calls on the Council and the Member States to supply practical aid for Malta:

- by sending groups of experts, including independent experts, to provide assistance in granting asylum-seeker status;
- by sending groups of experts, including independent experts, to provide advice on compliance with Directive 2003/9/EC on the reception of asylum seekers.

Parliament calls on the Commission to propose, as soon as possible, the creation of an emergency fund to tackle humanitarian crises in the Member States and to incorporate in the new funds for the period 2007-2013 an emergency mechanism allowing financial assistance to be provided in emergency situations.

Finally, the Parliament urges the Commission to take the initiative as soon as possible with a view to revising Regulation 343/2003, 'Dublin II', by calling into question its very principle, namely that the

Member State responsible for dealing with an asylum application is the first country that applicants reach, which puts an intolerable burden on the countries situated in the south and east of the EU, and by introducing a fair mechanism for sharing responsibilities among the Member States.