PRESS RELEASE

Landings and Protection of Migrants: a task force of lawyers in Lampedusa will support the Municipality, the Coast Guard and NGOs for the protection of rights

A Project of the Italian National Bar Council, of its Foundation the Scuola Superiore dell’Avvocatura and the Unione dei fori siciliani

Rome 12.05.2014. Contributing to the respect of the rights of migrants.
This is the core of the humanitarian project sponsored by the Italian National Bar Council with its Foundation the Scuola Superiore dell’Avvocatura, together with the Unione dei Fori siciliani. On the island of Lampedusa the three institutions promote and organise a “Praesidium project of legal information” which operates during the summer period, from May to October, when the number of landings increase.
The Praesidium, operating from the first week in May in the Municipality of Lampedusa, is composed of a senior lawyer and one or two junior lawyers (practitioners or young lawyers); it provides legal information and information on the correct application of Italian, European and International law, updated with the latest national and international case law, aimed at the full protection of human rights on matters relating to immigration by sea, also in relation to specific cases which will be represented by the institutions responsible for the management of immigration, such as the Port Authority, the local Government and Non-Governmental Organizations.
No lawyer of the Praesidium will be able to assume specific professional mandates but will provide the initial information on relevant legal issues.

The "Praesidium project" in Lampedusa wants to help tackle the humanitarian emergency which affects the coasts of Sicily and the island, a true symbol of hospitality and humanity for millions of immigrants.
During the first week of commitment, an opinion on the regulations and practices that oversee rescue operations at sea has been drafted.

The initiative is linked to the collaborative activities set out in the Memorandum of Understanding signed last autumn by the Scuola Superiore dell’Avvocatura - a Foundation of the Italian National Bar Council, and the General Command of the Port Authority, aimed in general at promoting training activities, which provided an opportunity to develop and promote the protection of human rights in rescue operations at sea and treatment of immigrants.
"We wondered how we could contribute institutionally, representing the entire Italian legal system, on the one hand to alleviate the suffering of these migrants; on the other to provide effective support to the authorities involved in the rescue operations" said the President of the CNF Guido Alpa. "We have appealed to the institutional experience promoted in recent years in terms of human rights protection and training."

“The Project, direct explication of the most profound ethical demands of the social function of the legal system, renewed by the new professional law, lies also in the supranational perspective of the duty of the legal system itself in the implementation of Europe as a ‘space of freedom, security and justice’ (Treaty of Lisbon)”, said Alarico Mariani Marini, vice-president of the Scuola Superiore dell’Avvocatura.
"This project is the ideal consequence of the resolution adopted by the Conference of the
Mediterranean bars last September, during which the representatives agreed to a final motion to
support the candidacy of Lampedusa for the Nobel Prize for Peace", said Carlo Vermiglio, vice-
president of the Italian National Bar Council responsible for international affairs.
The recruiting of lawyers - who have joined the project in a very large number (over 100) and who
will take turns in the six months activity of the Praesidium - was effected through the network of
Bar Councils and legal training Schools. "The response received was impressive, especially if we
consider that the lawyers carry out these activities free of charge", says Mariani Marini. "We have
found not only very in-depth expertise on the subject of immigration, but also ideals of the mission
that the legal system is able to express and expresses in the most critical moments."
Coordinator in charge of the project is the Venetian lawyer Monica Gazzola, a member of the
Human Rights group of the Italian delegation to the CCBE.
The Scuola Superiore will be responsible for the continuous training of the lawyers involved in the
project and of the "scientific-operational" support to the resolution of legal questions submitted at
the Praesidium.

The "Lampedusa Praesidium" sets out to be a pilot project towards a permanent activity oriented to
support migrants: once the concrete operabilità has been tested, the project could be presented
with the programmes of social policy, immigration, training relating to human and fundamental
rights and the purpose of EU and/or national financing.

**Background.** According to data provided by the Central Director of Immigration and Border
Police Giovanni Pinto at a hearing before the Defense and Foreign Affairs Committees of the
Senate a few days ago, during these first months of 2014 25,000 migrants have arrived by sea, more
than half of those who arrived throughout 2013, when they were 43,000. Similar numbers to those
of the great exodus of 2011, due to the so-called Arab Spring, when 63,000 migrants arrived.
According to data of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights of the E.U., there were
about 10,000 landings on the Italian coasts in 2010, which increased to approximately 70,000 and in
2011 as a result of the revolutions in Turkey and Libya to settled back down, so as to say, to around
20,000 in 2012.
A second report counts the significant losses: in 25 years 19,000 migrants lost their lives, of which
about 7,000 in the Strait of Sicily.
The lastest news reported landings of more than 1,000 people per day.
As is now known to all, immigration by sea is a complex phenomenon to manage which, on one
hand, has to deal with tens of thousands of human lives and, on the other, is confronted with multi-
level legislation (international maritime law, national law on immigration - civil and criminal -, Community law), furthermore in continuous evolution.
Since October 2013 the Mare Nostrum operation is in progress, following the tragedy that took
place off the coast of Lampedusa with the sinking of a boat which led to the deaths of hundreds of
people.

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