

Swedish-Eritrean Partnership for Democracy urges EU to investigate the death of 73 Eritrean asylum seekers who lost their lives in the Mediterranean, 05.10.2009

Dear Sir/Madam, We are writing to your respected Council to highlight and demand a proper investigation in the tragic death of 73 Eritrean asylum seekers who recently lost their lives in the Mediterranean while trying to reach the shores of Southern Europe (Italy) in search of protection, freedom and a dignified life.

As you are well aware these 73 asylum seekers were part of 78 Eritrean asylum seekers who sailed from Libya on board of a crowded plastic boat on July 28 July this year. One day after departing the Libyan coast the boat ran out of fuel leaving these helpless asylum seekers in distress at sea for three weeks without any rescue either from by-passing vessels or Italy which has an obligation to observe the law of seas or from FRONTEX which heavily monitors Europe's external borders.

According to accounts given by survivors from this tragedy, while the asylum seekers were in distress and fighting for their lives they saw in distance a vessel passing by and two of them jumped in the water in a desperate attempt to call for help but neither them nor help did come to their rescue.

As a result of extreme temperatures, thirst, hunger, hopelessness and unfortunately negligence these 73 asylum seekers including 25 women two of them pregnant died and disappeared in the deep waters of the Mediterranean. On the 21 August after three weeks of distress, desperation and extreme determination to stay a live 5 asylum seekers were spotted by a by-passing fishing boat and it was then that the shocking news struck us and anyone with conscience.

In light of the above and in light of the increasingly restrictive asylum policies of the EU in general and Italy in particular we strongly believe that these poor 73 asylum seekers lost their lives due to intended negligence and that these precious lives could have been saved if there was a will and they were looked upon as human beings and not as "illegal immigrants". To sit and watch while fellow human beings are in distress at sea fighting to save their lives is not only a violation of the right of these individuals to life and violation of the law of seas but an uncivilized act belonging to the dark ages.

We therefore demand a proper investigation to be carried out in the death of these 73 asylum seekers to find out why they couldn't be saved and who is to be blamed and held accountable for their death?

Expecting to see a serious action taken in this humanitarian and important issue we remain

Faithfully yours

Swedish-Eritrean Partnership for Democracy

Sweden-Stockholm

5th. October 2009

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1. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
2. Amnesty International

3. Human Rights Watch
4. European Commission for Refugees and Exile