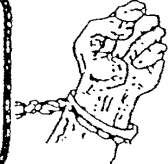




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SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)



June 11/2009

ITALY SHOULD STOP DEPORTING REFUGEES TO LIBYA

The leader of Libya Muammar Gaddafi is visiting Italy and there are reports that relations between the two countries are going to improve considerably. This does not at all augur well for refugees who are being deported by Italy back to Libya. Hundreds of refugees from Iraq, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, North Africa, etc have lost their lives trying to make it to Italy from Libya. Recently, the government of Silvio Berlusconi deported many refugees without even considering their asylum request. This is a clear violation of the rights of refugees to which Italy is a signatory.

The deportation of refugees is not only illegal by itself but also cruel and inhuman in that Libya does not at all respect even minimum human rights of asylum seekers. In the deserts of Libya, hundreds of refugees are imprisoned in containers and inhumane conditions thrown to the mercy of unscrupulous policemen. Refugee women have been raped, ransomed for cash, beaten and tortured and even killed by Libyan police guards. Deporting back refugees to such a situation and exposing them to being deported to their countries of origin is a travesty of justice and a brutal violation of the rights of refugees. It is known that the UNHCR presence in Libya is less than nominal. The government of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy is against the presence of immigrants and asylum seekers and has recently more or less legalized vigilante militias to act against foreigners from Africa and the Middle East mainly. Thousands of asylum seekers are languishing in Lampedusa and other detention centers awaiting an uncertain fate. of these many hail from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.

SOCEPP calls on the Italian government to cease the deportation of refugees back to Libya, a country whose authorities do not at all respect the rights of refugees.

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