

## Reflections and actions around the World Refugee Day

In June 2105 [the Mosaico Association](#) held an important conference in Turin within the programme of events for World Refugee Day. Understandably, in this precise moment in history, it could take no action but posed a series of questions such as: “How many casualties occur in our waters? In which way could Europe avoid this situation?” Currently migrants and refugees are compelled to place themselves in the hands of ruthless smuggling networks and consequently to put their lives at risk: this mechanism is to be stopped immediately. The conference day was opened by Yagoub Kibeida, member of [ECRE](#) (European Council of Refugees and Exiles). Kibeida illustrated the ten-points plan, compiled and promoted by ECRE, to prevent death at sea. Clearly the most effective way to put a stop to the smuggling business is to give refugees and migrants a safe and legal way to reach Europe. According to ECRE, “the use of legal channels for persons in need of international protection, the launch of a European Search and Rescue Operation, as well as building protection capacity in regions of origin and ensuring true solidarity between EU Member States, must be at the forefront of the EU’s response”. The second speaker, [Maurizio Veglio](#), lawyer and member of [ASGI](#), Association for Legal Studies on Immigration, addressed the topic by illustrating the [European Agenda on Migration’s proposals](#), as published in May 2015. According to Veglio, who has gained several years of practical experience working on the legal aspects, the main and most pressing problem lies in the [Dublin Regulation](#) which is considered a kind of “legal cage” for whoever falls into it. Veglio exemplified from his in-the-field experience at the former C.I.E. -Center for Identification and Expulsion in Milan, known as “Via Corelli” which has now been converted to a hospitality centre. Of the thousands of Syrians who have passed through that centre, only 50 applied to stay in Italy, while the others wanted to move in the direction of Northern Europe. EU member states did not appreciate such a situation and consequently created a “mos maiorum” to identify migrants and stop them from moving out of Italy. After discussing a number of well known problems connected to immigration via the Mediterranean Sea, from an international view point and on a wide scale, fresh information was introduced into the discussion by some local associations who talked about their long and hard commitment in fieldwork. Today the goal set by these associations is to improve the daily life of those who, either directly or indirectly have been involved in migration: family, friends and so on. Of particular significance were the issues introduced by two organizations, Mosaico from Turin (organizer of the conference) “[Association Psychologues Solidaires](#)”, from Tunisi, which take care, respectively, of those who leave and those who arrive. The Tunisian Association, which defines itself as a group of “supportive psychologists”, works both in the Choucha Refugee Camp in Tunisia and in assisting the relatives of people lost at sea. We were told of their connection with “[La Terre pour Tous](#)” with whom they cooperate in order to support the relatives of the “desparus” (lost at sea). Almost all of these families develop a post-traumatic stress, a type of illness connected to water: for instance, they cannot eat fish, they cannot shower. According to the psychologists these cases can be clearly defined as belonging to the clinical pattern of disappearance: it is impossible to overcome mourning if you are blocked in the first phase – the one of the “truth”. Wael Garnaoui, one of the speakers, told us of broken

families that always keep a place at the table for their “desparus” especially on important occasions such as Ramadam. For some Tunisian families the situation is even more dramatic, as the parents of 100 “desparus” at sea between 2011 and 2012 have declared to have recognized their family members on Italian TV footage (Channel 5), but despite this they have never had news of them. These associations accompany parents and friends in the search for the truth. They work to create an ideal place to listen and help them in freeing themselves from the sense of guilt (“I should have stopped him/her from leaving”) and in containing somatization such as hypertension. The truth should always be recovered and in case of bodies' impossible recovery the proposal is to create a type of symbolic death certificate. Whereas Berthin Zonza from Brazzaville Congo is one of the founders of Mosaico Association, the first organization in Italy created by refugees for refugees in 2007 with the support of the Waldesian Church. Among their major targets are emotional support, information and sensitization in the field of rights, administrative and legal procedures for refugees and their families. Sometimes, as Zonza told me during a friendly interview, details make the difference, especially when it comes to preparing the interview” for the committee that decides the fate and future of these migrants, i.e. the granting of refugee status or some other type of protection or permission to in Italy and in Europe. Many of these applicants are so frightened of receiving a denial that they often do not tell the truth, believing that their stories are not so tragic. They will often declare to belong to a country other than their own which is perhaps considered more dangerous. Sometime they invent episodes that did not happen. Mosaic prepares these people with care to avoid that due to fear they receive a refusal from the Commission and the Italian State. Among the most interesting points that emerged is how the migrant is so absorbed with daily difficulties that he can hardly find time to network, to help brethren on arrival. According to Mosaic it is rare that this can occur but their model is one to be repeated in other cities. Zonza ascertained that true social integration is possible only if you think in a space of expression beyond the mere pursuit of a roof and a job. He also reflected on the gravity of the lack of archive materials on migrants and asylum seekers in general and in particular on the value and importance connected to the memory of these movements – an issue that directly touches and summon us as researchers and people.