

6 - Refugees (perhaps): resettlement as a condition

Access to protection in transit countries such as Libya is an illusion because no organisation, including UNHCR, guarantees an effective asylum procedure, making choices that appear completely arbitrary.

Audio No. 6

Annapaola Ammirati: Sara Creta, independent journalist, tells us about the illusory access to the request for protection in Libya.

Sara Creta: What we see today is that we have transformed a country like Libya into what we want to call a country of asylum. In Libya there is no right to asylum; refugee status is an illusion that is determined on the basis of criteria such as nationality or access to detention centres or the possibility of meeting a UNHCR operator, if you are lucky or if the militias running the centres let you meet them. So, I think the idea of saying that in Libya humanitarian organisations can provide protection for migrants and refugees is heresy. Today, in Libya, there is no protection of any kind: those who manage to access to the very small space that is offered, survive with difficulty. What is called an urban support or integration programme for Libyan communities is another question mark. The paradox is that we are asking to a country like Libya that is at war, to Libyan authorities that are actively involved in the conflict, to manage people within a system that is a legal limbo. There is no asylum law in Libya, so, first of all, if we talk about Libya as a country of asylum, we have to see if there are criteria for defining Libya as a country of asylum and today it is not. Only some nationalities have access to registration and among the 46.000 persons that are already registered by the UNHCR, only 0.2% are nationalities that are not within the list of the nine nationalities that have been decreed by the UNHCR as being entitled to asylum. Therefore, a lot of work must be done to protect the most vulnerable categories such as women victims of trafficking, women who have suffered violence, unaccompanied minors, etc.

I spoke yesterday with a Cameroonian family: the mother died during the journey, the two little brothers have returned to Libya and today they live with their aunt and without any support because they are not recognised by the UNHCR as nationalities that have the right to be registered because they are Cameroonians.