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Report on the visit to Malta by the American group “New Sanctuary Movement” from Tucson / Arizona (26/4/2009 – 1/5/2009)

1. Preliminary information about the visit by the American delegation

In November 2008, I was part of a group of 6 people from the ecumenical federal study group “Asylum in the church” and the “International Fellowship of Reconciliation”. We went from Germany to Tucson, Arizona, to study the migration situation on the US-Mexico border. The trip came about at the invitation of members of the American "Sanctuary Movement" in Tucson, near the border to Mexico, and the organizations "BorderLinks", “No More Deaths” and “Samaritans” who offer concrete humanitarian support to the refugees on both sides of the border.

Thanks to their personal involvement, these groups can meet some of the needs of refugees who are crossing the border through the Sonora desert, and thus prevent the deaths of many migrants. In addition, they are involved in awareness-raising and educational work, and they invite groups from the USA and other countries, to see for themselves the problems faced by refugees, and the political and economic background of the migration issue on the US-Mexico border.

In April 2009, a delegation of seven members of the US "Sanctuary Movement" came from Tucson on a return visit to Germany and Malta, to get to know the situation of refugees on the European Union's external borders and to meet representatives of various political and religious organizations.

The schedule was:

Berlin: 15/4/2009 – 21/4/2009

North Rhine-Westphalia (Duisburg) and Hannover / Hamburg: 22/4/2009 – 25/4/2009

Malta: 26/4/2009 – 1/5/2009

As part of the preparation, I went to Malta for a week at the beginning of April. With the help of pastor Ahmed Bugri, I got a first impression of the refugees' situation when I visited some open refugee camps (Open Centres) and spoke with some migrants. In addition, I was able to talk to some state authorities and representatives, as well as representatives from religious and political organizations.

2. Participants of the Malta trip

- Heide Wöske, Germany / Berlin; member of the “International Fellowship of Reconciliation”, leader of the travel group
- John McMillan Five, USA/TUCSON; founder of the “Sanctuary Movement” in the USA, member

of "BorderLinks"

- Anthony J. Damelio, USA/TUCSON, member of "BorderLinks" (Social Year)
- Walt E. Staton, USA/TUCSON, member of "No more Deaths"
- Maryada Esther Vallet, USA/TUCSON, member of "No more Deaths"
- Mary Kathryn Ferguson, USA/TUCSON, member of "Samaritans" and "No more Deaths"

The group stayed in the apartment of Ahmed Bugri's "New Life Christian Centre" in San Gwann, Malta. Ahmed Bugri let us use the church minibus and driver throughout our visit.



Members of the Malta trip

Photo (from left to right): Heide Wöske, Walt Staten, Maryada Vallet, Anthony Damelio, Kathryn Ferguson, John McMillan Five and our bus driver.

3. Meetings with Maltese representatives and organizations, and inspection of refugee camps

- The first exchange of information with Ahmed Bugri, pastor of a church municipality and Manager of the biggest open refugee camp in Malta (Marsa Open Centre)
- Meeting with Jesuit Refugee Services: Malta - Father Joseph Cassar with his coworkers
- Meeting with Alexander Tortell, manager of the "Organization for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers" (OIWAS), Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs Malta
- Meeting with Andrew Seychell, Police Assistant Commissioner (preliminary talk)
- Meeting with the Franciscan Father Dionysius Mintoff, Peace Laboratory
- Conversation with Col. Brian Gatt, manager of the Closed Centres
- Conversations with different migrants
- Inspection of Closed Centres (Detention Centres): Closed Centre Safi, Closed Centre Lyster Barracks
- Inspection of Open Centres: Marsa Open Centre, Tent Village Hal Far, Hangar at Hal Far

The details of our schedule can be found in the appendix, along with some photos of two Open Centres. No photos are allowed in the Detention Centres.

4. Information and data about the situation of refugees in Malta

I have gathered information and data from the following sources:

- Inspections of closed and open refugee camps with the American delegation to Malta
- Conversations between the American delegation and representatives from the Maltese state authorities, as well as from religious organizations in Malta
- Report by the LIBE Committee delegation on its visit to the administrative detention centres in Malta (Brussels, 30 March 2006)
- “Resolution of the European Parliament on the situation of the refugees in Malta” from 11 May 2006
- Talk by Jesuit Father Martin Stark, leader of the Jesuit Refugee Service: Berlin (Berlin, 18 February 2006) in the Holy Cross church about “Refugees in Malta”

The information in the next section was not gathered personally.

4.1 Facts and figures about illegal immigration in Malta (during 2001-2009)

In all conversations with Maltese authorities and with refugee organizations in Malta, the special geographic characteristics of the island were pointed out:

Malta is, at 316 km², the smallest country in the EU, the island being only 28 km long and approx. 15 km wide. With 1300 people per km², it has the highest population density of all EU member countries. The south of the island is the most highly populated, with one town merging into another, without recognizable town borders.

These facts were mentioned repeatedly, to point out the fact that the growing number of migrants demands too much of Malta, and it is not able to cope with refugee flows that grow every year, or to integrate the migrants coming into the island. In addition, the limited economic resources of the small state were pointed out over and over again.

Until 2002, the number of migrants in Malta was relatively low, generally less than approx. 100 migrants per year. From 2002, the new refugee routes of the “Boatpeople” from North Africa drastically changed this. Malta is approx. 300 km by sea from Libya, from where most migrants (approx. 95 %) begin their boat journey across the Mediterranean Sea. They mostly come on old, small boats, which are unsuitable for such a long crossing and are overloaded with people – and often do not have enough food and water. Every year, hundreds of migrants die during the voyage, from dehydration or illness or when the non-sea-worthy boats sink. The number of migrants who died in the Mediterranean Sea can be only estimated, in 2006 some 400 to 700 deaths.

The report of the delegation of the EU parliament from March 2006 contains numerical data through 2005; Alexander Tortell (OIWAS) provided numbers for the following years (2006 until the beginning of 2009).

Annual number of the refugees

Year	Number of Refugees
2001	57
2002	1668
2003	502
2004	1388

2005	1822
2006	1780
2007	1702
2008	2775 (in 84 boats)
2009	768 (Jan – March, in 4 boats!)

95% of the migrants come from Libya to Malta, of whom approx. 90% are men, mostly between 25 and 30 years old.

Mr. Tortell gave me the following figures for the number of the migrants through April 2009 in the Detention Centres and Open Centres:

Detention Centres: 1855 migrants

Open Centres: 2273 migrants

According to official figures provided by Mr. Tortell, from 2001 to 2009, a total of 12 423 illegal migrants have come to Malta. Indeed, all officials stress over and over again that there are no dependable figures about the precise number of refugees presently in Malta.

4.2 Internment of the migrants in Detention Centres

The names "Closed Centres" and "Detention Centres" designate closed, institution-like facilities. Immediately upon their arrival, all migrants who come illegally to Malta are put into closed prisons, which are guarded by police or the military. These Closed Centres lie in remote areas of the island near the airport. The director of these camps is the high military, at present Col. Brian Gatt, who is also responsible for approving access to the Closed Centres.

In recent years, most migrants reached Malta from Libya over the Mediterranean Sea, coming from the northeast crisis areas of Africa; the biggest number is from Somalia, followed by Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan. Refugees also come from West-African countries, e.g. from Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, the Ivory Coast.

Upon arrival, all migrants, regardless of nationality, are given questionnaires in English, which they must fill out without any official help.

While originally migrants could be held in the Closed Centres for any length of time, on average up to 22 – 24 months, in 2005 the maximum duration became 18 months. According to official information this time serves for the ascertainment of their personal identities, countries of origin, reasons for fleeing – and finally, the determination of refugee status. The largest category of migrants - single men - is accommodated in separate prisons. Single women, women with children, married couples and families with children live in special Closed Centres and are transferred earlier than usual to the Open Centres. It still happens, however, that single women are accommodated together with married couples.

Especially protective-worthy persons ("vulnerable groups"), e.g. ill or elderly migrants, those with disabilities, pregnant women or women with small children, as well as unaccompanied minors, are no longer kept in the Closed Centres. However, it still seems that they must remain for weeks or months in the prisons, until they are transferred to an Open Camp. Unaccompanied minors, between the ages of 16 and 18, are often classified as adults and remain in the Detention Centres.

A basic problem consists in the fact that there are no firmly established criteria for determining who is to be classified as an especially protective-worthy person.

Every migrant who reaches Malta has the right to apply for asylum, although many migrants are not aware of their legal situation and must wait a long time in the Closed Centres until they receive their first interview – approx. 5 to 10 months. The interviews are conducted by a state institution (“the Office of the Refugee Commissioner”), which decides on the refugee status of every migrant. The state does not have sufficient employees for this, which is why migrants must wait so long before the first interview. Also there are not enough interpreters for the different nationalities, so often other migrants must serve as translators for these interviews.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is the only NGO that has unlimited access to the Closed Centres and can give legal advice to themigrants. JRS has few employees for this difficult task - 7 full-timers and 6 part-timers - and they can barely cope.

Very few applicants get refugee status, approx. 1%. Most migrants from the African crisis regions receive the so-called status "Subsidiary Protection", a limited-time humanitarian protection. Migrants from West-African states are mostly rejected as refugees and can spend up to 18 months in detention. After their release, they receive no protection or financial allowance.

So far, there have been very few deportations, on the official grounds that Malta has no diplomatic representation in most African states and no financial means for return flights. The Maltese government hopes the EU will start operating more “joint flights,” i.e. collective flights to African countries for the deportation of rejected refugees.

4.3 Accommodation of the migrants in Open Centres

After at most 18 months in a Closed Centre, migrants are transferred to one of the Open Centres, from where they can move freely within Malta. The Open Centres have very different standards from the Closed Centres; they are located in different parts of the island, sometimes even in residential areas.

Migrants with “Subsidiary Protection” status receive a monthly allowance of 130 euros, with which they must provide for their food and all other needs. They must show that they are living in their assigned refugee camp, and sign-in there three times a week. If they do not follow this regulation, they lose their claim to financial support and shelter. Migrants with refugee status or "Subsidiary Protection" receive an official work permit. In practice, however, it seems that every migrant can attempt to find work, which is not easy, because there are limited job opportunities in Malta; the only openings for migrants are poorly paid positions in the building industry, or auxiliary services in a hotel or restaurant.

During our visit to Malta I received no reliable information from the authorities about the present number of Open and Closed Centres on the island, but afterwards I received the following information from JRS (July 2009):

Detention Centres

- Hal Far (Lyster Barracks): run by the military
 - Tent Compound
 - Hermes Block
- Hal Safi: run by the military
 - Block B
 - Block C

Warehouse 1

Warehouse 2

- Ta`Kandja: run by the police

Open Centres: government managed (OIWAS)

- Marsa Open Centre
- Hal Far Tent Village
- Hal Far Hangar
- Hal Far Open Centre for families
- Hal Far Reception Centre
- Centres for families and unaccompanied minors:
 - Dar Liedna (Fgura)
 - Dar is-Sliem (Santa Venera)
 - Dar Qawsalla (Birkirkara)

Church Open Centres:

different small camps with approx. 400 people all together,
e.g. Peace Laboratory (Franciscans International)

In the last few years, the number of migrants in Open and Closed Centres has likely increased. Ahmed Bugri reported that at present all camps are overcrowded.

After dismissal from the Open Centres, some of the migrants try to find work and housing on the island. Rejected refugees and those without any legal status at all, mostly from West-African countries, wait for better times, i.e. for a change in legislation either in Malta or in the EU – always living in fear of being deported to their countries of origin. For a while migrants also received temporary travel documents to visit relatives in European countries; most of these migrants did not return to the island, and live without valid documents in other European states.

Every year, an American committee comes to Malta, and selects up to 200 migrants who can officially emigrate to the USA. Some European countries also take a small number of migrants.

In the following sections, we give a more detailed description of the Closed and Open Centres which we could visit. Personal experiences and statements also flow into this part.

5. Visits to different refugee camps

During our stay in Malta we visited the following Open and Closed Centres:

Closed Centres:

SAFI Centre

Lyster Barracks Centre (Tent Compound)

Open Centres:

Marsa Open Centre

Tent Village Hal-Far

Hangar Centre Hal-Far

Peace Laboratory (Franciscans International)

5.1 Visits to the Closed Centres

To receive permission to visit the Closed Centres, I spoke personally to the Police Assistant

Commissioner in charge of immigration, Andrew Seychell, during the preliminary visit. I showed him the Malta schedule of the American group, and a list of personal details that each group member supplied. As a result, Mr Seychell sent me a mail that there were no objections from his side, and he would pass on the documents to the manager of the Closed Centres, Col. Brian Gatt.

At the entrance to each Detention Centre there are military guards, whom we provided with the written letter of approval, a list of all members present, and our passports. No photographs were allowed in the Closed Centres.

5.1.1 Safi Centre

The prison is in a remote area near the airport. It is big, and consists of several permanent stone buildings (Warehouse 1 and 2), and a closed yard surrounded with barbed wire in which the detainees played football. As we went past the yard, many men pushed toward the fence and gathered around us, to greet us and introduce themselves.

In this part of the camp there are exclusively single young men, between the ages of approx. 18 and 35 years.

We came to small room where we had to wait for a watchman to accompany us through the house. Apparently there had been a lack of good communication in registering our visit for the appointed day. When we entered the big space, there was an overpowering noise and stench, a mixture of dirty air and sweat. Adjacent to the long hall, there are big open dormitories, divided off with partitions, with more than 20 people in narrow bunkbeds next to each other. The rooms are not heated; in winter it can be cold and humid in Malta. We could not see the shower rooms and toilets, but they are reportedly in a very bad state. The prisoners may move freely on the court from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Other Detention Centres have more restrictive regulations.

From everywhere the prisoners came up to us; groups of men formed around every visitor, telling us about their problems and speaking about mismanagement during their long imprisonment. They seemed mostly desperate and tired. We heard the same problems and criticisms over and over again, also from prisoners in the other Closed Centres:

- We are not criminals, but refugees who had to leave our native countries.
- Why are we held here so long?
- There is very little information and legal consultation. We do not know how our case is proceeding, whether it has been rejected, when we will be released, and what our future will be.
- We do not know when the first interview will be, and we have to wait too long for it.
- We spend the days doing nothing, there are no books, newspapers or opportunities for relaxation.
- Our general living conditions are unbearable, especially for 18 months: bad food, no privacy, no work, bad hygienic conditions, absolutely insufficient medical care.
- And over and over again the same question: What can you do for us, to improve our general living conditions here in the prison, and after release?

I spoke a bit longer with a man from Ghana, who has already spent about a year here in detention, and who looked very tired. He reported that for a long time he has been unable to sleep, and suffers from constant headaches. He knew that as a West African, after being released he has little chance of getting refugee status and is at risk of deportation. And this after suffering for so long! We left the prison feeling helpless and sad. How can we as a small group help the refugees in their current situation, and in view of European legislation?

5.1.2 Lyster Barracks Centre

The Lyster Barracks gave a better first impression than the Safi Centre: a compound with green

areas and old trees, and two big buildings which were formerly military barracks. One serves as a prison for migrants, but we could not visit it because of construction work.

Here we happened to come across the manager of the Closed Centres, Col. Brian Gatt, with whom we had a short conversation. What he told us about the situation of refugees in Malta is in line with other official statements, and follows in a later part.

In the same compound nearby, there is a tent village, in which only men are accommodated. The dry area consists of a large space in the centre, which is surrounded by military tents, in which approx. 20 men are living.

Here we experienced the same situation as in the Safi Centre. The men ran up to us, gave us a friendly greeting and told us about their problems, which they gave us to take with us on our way – with the request that we do something “outside” for the improvement of the camp. They reported the same problems and mismanagement which we had heard about in the Safi Centre.

We looked in some tents: bunk beds close to each other, some with covers to create a small private space.

Some men showed me the washroom, a row of approx. 10 wash basins, in which only 2 faucets were functioning. In the next room was a space with showers whose stone bottoms are so fractured that they often cause foot injuries.

However, we all had the impression that in this camp the mood was a little better, probably because the prisoners within the “tent village” can move freely, and besides the spring weather on that day was nice and sunny. This can change quickly, when the temperatures in the summer rise above 30 C, and the winter brings cold, rain and storms. We left this camp as well with a feeling of dismay and the question: How can we help once we are back home?

5.2 Inspections of Open Centres

5.2.1 Tent Village Hal-Far

The Hal-Far Tent Village is near the airport, and can be reached by bus, although the service is not very frequent. The camp inhabitants can move freely on the island, however, they must walk or cycle long distances to get to the next town. This is one example of the challenges they face when trying to find and hold a job. Besides, in the evening they must appear again in their tents, or risk losing their claim to a sleeping place.

Vegetable sellers park their vans near the tent village and sell daily necessities, such as fruit and vegetables. The camp residents must pay for these from their monthly state allowance of 130 euros, and are dependent upon possibilities to purchase things at a good price.

The tent village consists of big military tents, fastened to raised concrete platforms. In each tent there are bunk beds for about 20 people stacked near each other. Last winter, some tents were so damaged by storms that they were no longer inhabitable.

As we made our way through the tent village, migrants came up to us to tell us about their problems and ask us how we could help them. Overall the mood was better than in the Closed Centres, because the most difficult time in the Detention Centres and the hard winter were over, but we heard them worrying repeatedly about their future, and the uncertainty about whether they would be able to move to other European countries.

The camp residents try in small ways to make everyday life more tolerable. Just as in the Closed Centres, they cover their sleeping places with covers and cloths to create a small private space. On some of the concrete platforms on which the tents stand, they put TV dishes which connect to TV sets in the tents.

We were invited into a tent, and could recognize in the darkness a running television set, and a few

men on the floor, using a campstove to cook some lunch together.

5.2.2. Hangar Centre Hal-Far

This open camp is likewise in the vicinity of the airport. There is an administration building, the big hangar, new mobile homes, and one wing of the centre for washing and cooking. The hangar can accommodate approx. 800 people. When we visited the camp, the hangar was only half full with bunk beds, because the camp has new mobile homes, which offer families and married couples more space and seclusion. The camp leader made a friendly impression, as he led us through the area. At present approx. 400 to 500 persons live there.

5.2.3 Marsa Open Centre

This centre lies on the edge of the town called Marsa, in the immediate vicinity of the Marsa industrial harbour. Already as one approaches the centre, one sees single Africans standing in the surrounding streets waiting for jobs. The area consists of several groups of houses, which used to be part of a school. It is bordered on one side by a canal which flows into the harbour. The migrants sit in groups on the canal wall, which is obviously a meeting place and communication centre. The area is freely accessible to the migrants, but every visitor must announce himself in the office and receive a visitor's identity card.

The manager of the centre, Ahmed Bugri, is an African from Ghana, who has lived for approx. 20 years in Malta. He tries to improve the general living conditions in his camp. In addition he enjoys the trust and respect of the authorities, which is obviously beneficial for his work.

In the camp there are approx. 1000 men, mostly from the crisis areas from north-east Africa. At present the Somalis form the biggest group. Ahmed Bugri encourages and supports the inhabitants to search for work outside and also to create workplaces within the camp.

There is thus a row of small businesses: several small restaurants, a food store, a little store with mobile phones, an Internet cafe, lounges with television and billiards tables, as well as stands with different bargains, which are built in the courtyard during good weather. In addition, a prayer space is available for the Muslim migrants, and another one for Christian services. Recently an "Education Centre" was created - a newly built house, with modernly furnished classrooms, equipped with new computers. Here English courses and computer courses for migrants and professional development courses for the camp employees take place.

In the Open Camps the mood is altogether better, because the hardest time in the Detention Centres is over for the migrants and they can now move freely on the island. Nevertheless, the worry remains about how their life will continue, because there are only few, badly paid possibilities for work on the island. In addition, most migrants do not want to remain in Malta, and hope for the possibility of leaving the island and reaching other European countries or emigrating to America.

5.2.4 PeaceLaboratory (Franciscans International)

After the inspection of the camps at the airport, we wanted to make one more visit to the "Peace Lab", a small refugee camp created by the Franciscan Father Dionysius Mintoff. The "Doctors Without Borders" clinic is located there too, in a small house in the extensive, overgrown garden. Between the trees, there are houses and mobile homes, in which about 50 migrants live. In the nearby back garden area there is a small open air theater.

After all the congested refugee camps which we had visited, this small refuge appeared to us like a heavenly island in the midst of need and misery.

In the evening a desperate African family with a small child was coming, who had to leave their home in an Open Centre because of time restriction, and in their desperate necessity they asked Father Dionysius for lodging, which he gave them on his compound

It was an important experience for us, at the end of our stay in Malta, to get to know this gentle 80-year-old Father, who helps in his way, to relieve the needs of refugees. He told us how important it is to help others, even in small ways.

Maybe that was a tip to the open question of how we can help, collectively and individually, in view of the need and desperation which we witnessed in the refugee camps in Malta.

6. Statements of different institutions

6.1 Statements of ecclesiastical side on Malta

During our study trip we had the opportunity to talk with the following representatives of religious groups:

- Pastor Ahmed Bugri, pastor of a free-ecclesiastical municipality
- Father Joseph Cassar, leader of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
- Father Dionysius Mintoff, leader of the Peace Laboratory, member of the order Franciscans International

Ahmed Bugri performs excellent organizational and social work as the leader of the "Marsa Open Centre" and has integrated a number of migrants into his free-ecclesiastical community. His work is supported by Christian thought, to give help to those in need.

The work of Father Dionysius is to be understood also in this Christian perspective and he is not afraid of helping needy migrants at his own expense.

Jesuit Refugee Service works energetically with a small team of 7 full-time staff and 6 part-time employees; it is the only NGO which has free admission to the Closed Centres. Here the employees, among them young law students, perform the urgent juridical and social consultation for refugees in closed camps. In addition, Father Joseph Cassar holds services on Sundays and holidays. The work of Jesuit Refugee Service is carried by the Christian message.

Father Joseph Cassar bears the following words of Pope Benedict to the public discussion of refugees in Malta:

“How can we fail to take charge of all those, particularly refugees and displaced people, who are in conditions of difficulty and hardship?”

“How can we fail to meet the needs of those, who are defacto the weakest and most defenceless, marked by precariousness and insecurity, marginalised and often excluded by society?”

After our trip I received the following news from JRS Malta:

“The days and weeks immediately following your visit were extremely busy for us. On the very day you left, a group of 66 migrants was taken to Malta on humanitarian grounds after a dispute with Italian authorities. On 8 May we published a press statement with JRS-Italy and JRS-Europe, and took the lead to publish another joint press statement with Maltese NGOs to deplore the Italian pushbacks of boat people to Libya. In the following weeks, we have had constant visits to our office by European media, but also endless queues of migrants with protection, begging us to help them with resettlement in other EU Member States or in the USA.”

We have discussed in our group the issue of refugees, which the leadership of the Catholic Church

(the prevailing confession in Malta) up to now has evidently put off. On the other hand, there are religious NGOs which provide excellent practical support, as already mentioned above, in addition to the work of the "Emigrants' Commission" through the organization "Dar l-Emigrant", which has the mandate to provide refugees with advice and various other forms of support as well as lodging in its camps.

On 3 April 2009, the Bishop of Gozo, Mario Grech, published a statement criticizing the "detention policy" in Malta.

6.2 Statements of the Maltese government authorities on immigration in Malta

Alexander Tortell (OIWAS), Andrew Seychell (Police Assistant Commissioner), Col. Brian Gatt (manager of the Closed Centres), Ahmed Bugri (manager of Marsa Open Centre).

All the officials with whom we could speak about migration in Malta, stressed the special geographic circumstances and the extreme population density of the island, as well as the limited financial and personnel resources, which complicate the admission and integration of the growing number of refugees on a continuing basis. The following facts were repeatedly mentioned:

- Malta, with a surface area of 316 km², is the smallest Member State of the EU, and yet, at 1300 inhabitants per km², has the highest population density of all EU countries.
- The average annual number of migrants arriving in Malta corresponds to 45% of the annual Maltese birth rate.
- The arrival of 1 800 migrants in Malta in 2005 corresponds, in comparison to the German population, of an annual influx of 369,000 people.
- There are very few employment opportunities for migrants in Malta, so they are unable to build themselves a new life there.
- The Maltese government uses 1% of the budget on refugees, and this might increase if more migrants arrive. More than 10% of the police and army personnel in Malta are now employed in the admission, management, marking and care of the refugees. As the number of migrants increases, Malta does not have increasing numbers of personnel and resources.
- It is pointed out that Malta cannot send back the migrants, since most of them come from the war zones and crisis areas of north-east Africa. In addition, Malta itself can not organize return flights to African countries, and in regards to this, is dependent upon the help of EU nations.
- In addition, it was stressed that most migrants do not want to remain in Malta, but rather want to go to other European countries or to America.

The Maltese government expects help from the EU government and from the EU member states for the purposes of "burden sharing" and makes the following demands:

- Dublin II orders must be changed so that the EU Member States in the south of Europe do not have to bear the entire burden as the first country of entry, but rather that a fair distribution of refugees to the EU member countries is established.
- The EU member states should take a number of migrants with humanitarian protection from Malta, especially those who can't find work in Malta ("resettlement policy").
- The EU government should use the existing "emergency funds" to cope with the emergency humanitarian situation of the refugees in Malta.
- Rejected refugees without protected status should be sent back to their country of origin on collective flights from EU countries ("repatriation policy").

6.3 Statements of the delegation

We recognize the difficulties and problems, with which the Maltese government was confronted due to the stream of migrants, beginning in 2002, which it had to solve. We also recognize that the Maltese government has strived for transparency concerning the refugees' situation and has continued to allow foreign delegations access to the refugee camps in Malta.

The Maltese government says that, because of the increasing numbers of migrants, the "detention policy" is needed to protect itself as a state and the population. This is a policy of deterrence which also corresponds to the general trend in EU refugee policy. The representatives of the state authorities probably see the mismanagement in the camps, and regret the length of internment in the Closed Centres but, because of limited financial and human resources, do not see themselves in a position to improve the situation in the refugee camps in the near future ("emergency conditions").

On the other hand, we have seen the hard, partly inhumane general living conditions in the Closed Centres, and the desperate position of most migrants, who have no safe place to stay in Malta, and no future perspectives. In view of the need and fate of the migrants, the question arose within us: How could we help? First and foremost, we want to give a report about the situation of the refugees in Malta, which is probably representative of the refugee flows from Africa over the Mediterranean Sea to the southern external borders of the EU.

We see a catalog of immense tasks in view of this human tragedy, with which the Maltese government is confronted and has to solve in the near future. On the other hand, we also represent the view of the Maltese government, that Malta cannot tackle this problem by itself, and depends on the solidarity and help of the EU and the EU member states. The following points arise from the experiences of our camp inspections and from conversations with different organizations, which partially correspond to the demands which the Maltese government is making to the EU.

We also agree with the demands of the European Parliament, in its "European Parliament resolution on the situation with refugee camps in Malta" of 6 April 2006.

- Asylum seekers are detained in conditions that are far below internationally recognised standards: bad living conditions as well as inadequate or non-existent access to basic services, such as medical care or social and legal assistance. Apart from these serious conditions, the long detention period leads to the bad physical and psychic constitution of the migrants. The Maltese authorities should implement Directive 2003/9/EC (laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers), especially as regards conditions in the Detention Centres.
- As long as the Closed Centres exist, the detention period should be shortened, and better legal advice and medical care should be guaranteed. The time from the application for asylum until the first interview should be considerably shortened.
- The Maltese government should call an extraordinary conference with all EU Member States to discuss how short-term improvement in the refugees' situation can be reached through collaboration with the EU government and the EU Member States.
- The Member States should show greater solidarity towards those countries that suffer most from the EU-bound migration flows and offer practical help by receiving a number of the refugees who arrive in Malta.
- The EU Commission should provide Malta with part of the technical and financial means from the existing Refugee Fund, as a mandate of humanitarian assistance, in order to alleviate the existing actual state of emergency of the refugees (ARGO programme, the European Refugee Fund, the European External Borders Fund, the European Integration Fund and the European Return Fund for

the period 2007-2013).

•The EU Commission should take the initiative to revise the "Dublin II Regulation", which puts an intolerable burden on the countries situated in the south and east of the EU, by introducing a fair mechanism for sharing responsibilities among the EU Member States.

7. Appendix

7.1 Malta Programme of the American Delegation (April 26 – May 1, 2009)

Sunday, April 26

Departure Düsseldorf Airport: 11:40am

Arrival Malta Airport: 2.30pm

Bus transfer from the airport to the church apartment, San Gwann

First orientation

Report on the programme of the following days

Meeting with Pastor Ahmed Bugri, manager of Marsa Open Centre

Monday, April 27

Visit to Marsa Open Centre with Ahmed Bugri, Marsa

Interview with the Eritrean migrant Isana

Afternoon: Sightseeing of the old capital Mdina

Tuesday, April 28

Morning: Harbour boat tour around Valletta

Afternoon: Meet with Jesuit Refugee Service Malta (JRS), Birkirkara

Visit to Closed Centre Safi: Discussions with migrants

Wednesday, April 29

Morning: Interview with refugee Mathios Tsegaye

Afternoon: Visit to several Open and Closed Centres:

- Open Tent Village Hal Far
- Open Hangar Centre Hal Far
- Closed Centre Lyster Barracks:

Discussion with Col. Brian Gatt (Manager of all Closed Centres)

Closed Centre: Lyster Barracks Tent Village

Visit Peace Lab: Meet with Father Dionysius Mintoff (Franciscans International)

Thursday, April 30

Morning 10:00am: Visit to Mr Alexander Tortell, Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, governmental representative of the "Organisation for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers" Malta (OIWAS), Valetta

Afternoon:

Sightseeing in Valetta

Trip with Father Dionysius Mintoff to the fisher harbour Marsaxlokk

Discussions about migrants` situation on Malta with Father Dionysius

Friday, May 1

Morning: Ahmed Bugri, back from the Brussels conference, gives report on the results.

Bus transfer to Malta Airport

Departure Malta Airport: 3:20 pm
Arrival Berlin Airport: 6:15 pm

7.2 Photos

Photos of Tent Village Hal Far (Open Centre)



Tent Village

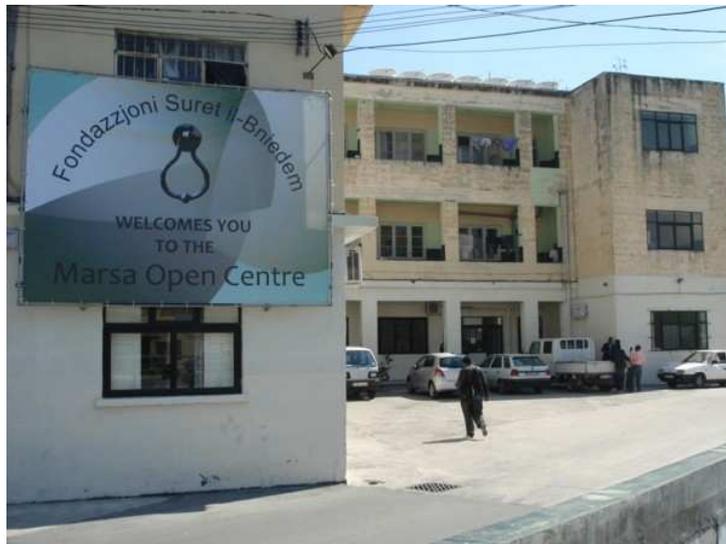


Tents on platforms



Discussions with migrants

Photos of Marsa Open Centre



Intrance to Marsa Open Centre



Shop in the Centre



Education Centre

7.3 List of addresses to Malta programmme

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (German Branch)

Ökumenereferat Uli Sonn

Pacelliallee 61

Martin - Niemöller - Haus

14195 Berlin

Tel.: 030-84 31 95 50

Fax: 030-84 31 95 60

Email: vb-ulisonn@t-online.de

Website: www.versoehnungsbund.de

Heide Wöske

International Fellowship of Reconciliation

Am Berlin-Museum 17

10969 Berlin

Tel.: 030-251 67 68

Mobile: 0170-686 0 687 (on Malta: 0049-170-686 0 687)

Email: heide.woeske@gmx.de

Website: www.woeske.de

Organisation for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers Malta (OIWAS)

Alexander Tortell

Belt is-Sebh, Block C

Floriana FRN 1700, Malta

Tel.: 25 68 72 39

Fax: 25 68 72 60

Email: alexander.tortell@gov.mt

Website: www.mfss.gov.mt

Jesuit Refugee Service Malta (JRS)

Head of JRS Malta: Father Joseph Cassar

SAC Sports Complex
50, Triq ix-Xorrox
Birkirkara BKR 1631, Malta
Tel.: 21 44 27 51
Fax: 21 44 27 52
Email: info@jrsmalta.org
Website: www.jrsmalta.org

United Nation High Commissioner of Refugees Malta (UNHCR)

Valetta, Malta
156, Strait Street
Tel.: 27 01 01 53
Email: falzon@unhcr.org

Kummissioni Emigranti (MEC)

Father Alfred Vella, Father Philip Calleja
Dar L-Emigrant
Valetta
1, Castille Place,
Tel.: 22 26 44 / 24 02 55 / 23 25 45

Franciscans International, Malta

Peace Laboratory

Father Dionysius Mintoff
Hal Far 2RQ0269
Tel.: 21 68 95 04
Email: info@peacelab.org

SOS Malta

Managing Director: Mrs Claudia Taylor - East
Valetta Office: Dar L-Emigrant, 1, Castille Place
Tel.: 21 24 02 55
Fax: 21 24 00 22
Email: info@sosmalta.org

Medecins Sans Frontieres

Doctors without Borders, Malta

St. Paul's Mansion – Block A, Flat 5
Ta' Xbiex Sea Front, XBX 1027
Tel.: 21 32 01 76
Mobile: 79 06 06 74
Email: sfb-malta@brussels.msf.org

Red Cross Malta

104 St Ursula Street
Valetta 1234
Tel.: 21 22 26 45
Email: administration@redcross.org.mt
Website: www.redcross.org.mt

Marsa Open Centre

Manager: Ahmed Bugri

Xatt il-Molliejiet
Albert Town, Marsa, Malta
Tel.: 21223671
Email: mbugri@global.net.mt

New Life Christian Centre
Pastor Ahmed Bugri
2, J.F. Mareks Sreet
San Gwann (Post code:SGN 12333), Malta
Tel.: 21 80 66 41 / 99 25 26 75

Open Centre for Women and Families
Coordinator: Hertha Trapani, Tel.: 21 48 56 61
Community Worker: Charles Zammit
Email: carmelo.zammit@gov.mt
55, Dar il-Qawsalla
Mannarino Road, Birkirkara, Malta