



**CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE
QUARANTINE-SHIP SYSTEM
FOR MIGRANTS:
ANALYSIS AND REQUESTS**

10 december 2020

Document on the use of the quarantine-ship system for migrants rescued at sea or landing in Italy: critical analysis and requests

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Following the declaration of a state of emergency (31 January 2020) and the following inter-departmental decree¹ – by which the Italian authorities essentially closed Italian ports to the rescue ships (7 April 2020²) – the Italian Civil Protection department adopted a further provision on 12 April 2020 to discuss the use of ships during the period of ‘health monitoring’ of migrants rescued at sea, for whom no ‘place of safety’ (PoS) can be identified.

More generally, the emergency measures establish that their health should be monitored through the practice of confinement in centres (not only on ships but also in asylum seeker hostels, ‘hotspots’ and detention centres across Italy) where migrant must pass the period of quarantine, a time period which we have noted systematically goes beyond that established by Italian law (previously 14 days, now reduced to 10 days).

Detention on board ships and in quarantine centres more generally is a violation of the prohibition of discrimination, representing an act of exclusion in relation to migrants who, in this manner, are placed in a “grey zone” – for the most part, at sea – based on a logic of ‘safeguarding public health’ and ‘security’. Quarantining is, of course, a legitimate tool for preventing contagion and protecting public health. Its differential application to foreign nationals arriving in Italy in various ways has, however, redefined this instrument – and without transparency or public information – as a discriminatory practice in the context of a health emergency, representing an unacceptable privation of personal freedom.

Since May this year, around 10,000 people³ have been confined at sea on such ships. This figure includes both those who have landed autonomously on the Island of Lampedusa and other parts of Southern Italy, as well as those rescued in the Central Mediterranean by other vessels, and includes men, women and children, alone and/or in families.

To execute the decree, the Head of the Civil Protection department, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport signed contracts to hire vessels from private companies, following fast-tracked tendering enabled through special powers delegated to the Civil Protection in order to manage the health emergency. The ferry vessel Rubattino was the first ship to be employed in this manner, from 7 May of this year. Since then – with new and simplified procedures – the Ministry of the Interior has hired further ships and made

¹ On 7 April 2020, an inter-ministerial decree adopted by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, in agreement with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Interior Minister and Health Minister, established that “for the entire period of the national health emergency deriving from the spreading of the Covid-19 virus, Italian ports cannot ensure the necessary requirements for their classification as a place of safety, as defined by the Convention of Hamburg on search and rescue at sea, for cases of rescue effect by vessels acting under a foreign flag and acting outside of the Italian SAR zone.”

² Decree of the Department Head, n. 1287, 12 April 2020. It names the enacting subject for the emergency activities connected to the assistance and monitoring of the health of migrants rescued at sea or arriving in national territory following autonomous landings, within the remit of the emergency related to health risks connected to the arrival of pathologies deriving from transmittable viral agents. The decree indicates the Head of the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration in the Ministry of the Interior as the Enacting Subject, to act in collaboration with the Italian Red Cross, USMAF (i.e. the office for maritime, air and border health) and volunteers from the Civil Protection department.

³ Article published 9 November 2020: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/11/9/italy-migration-ferries-coronavirus-quarantine-health-asylum>

them available to relevant authorities in order to manage the health measures imposed by the Covid-19 epidemic. At the time of writing, there are currently 5 active vessels (Adriatico, Allegra, Azzurra, Rhapsody, Suprema) docked at different ports on the island of Sicily, currently hold 2,448 people on board, of whom 197 have tested positive to the new corona virus (according to a note issued on 20/11/2020 by the National Guarantor for the Rights of Persons Deprived of their Personal Freedoms)⁴. Staff from the Italian Red Cross have been charged with monitoring the health situation. Those on board include both those who have tested negative to an initial screening and have to complete a period of quarantine (who are then disembarked after the absence of the virus has been confirmed) as well as those who, having tested positive to the virus, are placed in isolation on board the ships until they finally test negative.

Since the beginning of these operations, there have been a range of doubts expressed by experts in different fields regarding the measures, both in terms of the protection of the rights and dignity of those confined on board, as well as in terms of the measures' effectiveness at containing contagion. All of this should also be contextualised within the related economic costs, first and foremost the hiring of these private vessels, a cost which is far higher than those involved in carrying out the same quarantine period in structures on dry ground that have been identified for this purpose. The story of Abou Diakite, a teenager from the Ivory Coast who died in hospital in Palermo after being disembarked from the quarantine ship Allegra⁵ has put further attention on these inaccessible locations of human and juridical limbo. Prior to Abou's death, we also note the tragic deaths of Bilel Ben Masoud, a 22 year-old man originally from Tunisia who died after jumping from the quarantine ship Moby Zazà, and of Abdallah Said, a Somalian teenager who died on 15 September at the Cannizzaro Hospital in Catania, after a period of confinement on the quarantine ship Azzurra⁶, anchored just outside the port of Augusta.

We are of course aware of the difficulties presented by the current situation. Nevertheless, the protection of public health must not be used as a pretext for violating fundamental human rights. What is required are rational, dignified interventions that designed not as emergency measures, and that are not discriminatory towards anyone. In this moment, the number of people hosted across Italy in the full range of centres for migrants and refugees is at the lowest it has been in many years. There are, consequently, safer alternatives which have nonetheless not been taken into proper consideration, wilfully or otherwise.

There is a near-total absence of official information about what is happening on board these ships in terms of the sanitary, psychological and legal support provided to foreign nationals, the possibility of their being able to communicate with the outside world, as well as in terms of the staff operating on board. This represents an extremely serious lack of transparency and an additional source for concern in terms of the safeguarding of human rights, especially – if not exclusively – those of women and children.

The following document brings to light different aspects of the management of the system of isolation on board the quarantine ships, as well as a correlating series of practices that have no legal foundation and, indeed, run the risk of worsening health and social conditions more generally. In the conclusion we make some specific requests of the Italian government, with the aim of installing appropriate measures that respect the safety, health and rights of everyone.

Criticisms of the use of the quarantine ships have focused for the most part on health aspects.

4 Article published 20 November 2020: <https://www.garantenazionaleprivatiliberta.it/gnpl/it/ilpunto.page>

5 Article published 20 November 2020: https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/10/20/news/morte_di_un_ragazzo-271134315/

6 Article published on October 19, 2020: <https://www.isiciliani.it/un-minorenne-somalo-muore-a-catania-nella-totale-in-differenza/#.X8VG3M1KjIW>

1. The health aspects.

According to a range of experts⁷, it is an error to keep a high number of potentially-infected persons on board a ship in close quarters, in a situation where distancing and proper isolation of positive cases is impossible, and in which it is uncertain that there are the necessary resources for treatment, or for an immediate recovery in hospital in case of the need for assisted ventilation. The best solution would be to provide migrants with testing in the shortest possible time period, and then to disembark people in appropriate locations on dry ground.

The case to which reference is made most frequently is that of the cruise ship *Diamond Princess*, which was blocked in quarantine in February this year at the Japanese port of Yokohama, with 619 infected people on board out of a total of 3,700. According to research published in the *Journal of Travel Medicine*, an analysis using mathematical models of the development of the epidemic on board the ship confirms that an immediate evacuation once in port would have led to one eighth of the cases that were eventually discovered at the end of the period of on-board quarantine⁸. The authors of the study confirm that “cruise ships carry a large number of people in confined spaces with relative homogeneous mixing over a period of time that is longer than for any other mode of transportation. Thus, cruise ships present a unique environment for transmission of human-to-human transmitted infections.” Similar conclusions have been reached by a following research paper that compared the measures taken on board the *Diamond Princess* with those adopted ten years’ earlier in the case of an outbreak of H1N1 influenza on board a military vessel⁹.

These considerations imply that the strategy being adopted is completely incorrect from a health point of view, as emphasized by Dr Claudia Lodesani, an infectious disease specialist and President of Doctors Without Borders, Italy¹⁰. To this one can add the concerns regarding the worsening of previously health situations and the psychological damage that the quarantine measures on board invoke for people who have already been subjected to traumatic events of different kinds including violence, material deprivation and forms of torture.

The dramatic and most well-known case is that of a young Tunisian man, quarantined on board the ferry ship *Moby Zazà*, who jumped overboard on the night of 20 May, and died in circumstances that are yet to be clarified¹¹. Bilel Ben Masoud, originally from Tunisia and only

7 Among others, Massimo Galli, Professor at the State University of Milan and Director of the Department of Infectious Diseases at the Sacco Hospital in Milan, maintained in an interview that detaining people on board the ships is a “colossal error”. Interview published 5 August 2020: https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/massimo-galli-la-nave-quarantena-non-funzione-fara-la-fine-della-diamond-princess_it_5f2a8386c5b6e96a22abb4d1.

8 J. Rocklov, H. Sjodin, A. Wilder-Smith, COVID-19 outbreak on the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship: estimating the epidemic potential and effectiveness of public health countermeasures, in “*Journal of Travel Medicine*”, 2020, 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/taaa030>.

9 Cfr. A. Gupta et al., A comparative analysis of control measures on-board ship against COVID-19 and similar novel viral respiratory disease outbreak: Quarantine ship or disembark suspects?, in “*Medical Journal Armed Forces India*”, June 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mjafi.2020.06.003>

10 Interview with Claudia Lodesani, published 9 October 2020: https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/cronaca/2020/10/09/migranti-lodesani-msf-navi-quarantena-strategia-sbagliata-alto-rischio-focolai_L0jehx9fHjsNo5ifvs62QK.html

22 years-old, was neither the first nor the last case of this kind. In the month of October¹² alone, several cases of migrants diving overboard have been reported by the media¹³, along with reports of acts of self-harm on board the ships themselves. At the end of October, 9 people swallowed razor blades and shards of glass to protest against the conditions of prolonged detention on board the Rhapsody, docked at the port of Palermo.

The absence of precise information about the health protocols adopted on board the quarantine ships and the epidemiological data¹⁴ of those disembarked means that a more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the “quarantine-ship model” is unfortunately not possible. What has been verified by now, however, is that due to the logistical difficulties connected with the impoverishment of the migrant hostel system and the management of the quarantine ships, there have been numerous cases of migrants in quarantine who have effectively been detained in isolation for periods much longer than the 10 or 14 days established by law.¹⁵

It is clear that this system is not appropriate either for its declared objective, nor for identifying vulnerable persons. Without information, accompaniment or psycho-social support, and especially after the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea - remaining even 14 days in these conditions, for both adults and minors, can be extremely counter-productive from a psychological point of view, with an objective risk of the repetition of traumatic events.

2. Violations of human rights

Health-related isolation that limits the right to freedom of movement can be legally justified only if such provisions are proportional and reasonable, adopted in accordance with legal norms for a limited period of time, always applied without discrimination, and in full respect of fundamental human rights. In particular, the fact that the use of quarantine ships is designated exclusively for (and imposed on) non-Italians engaged in a migration project means that the

11 Article published 20 May 2020: <https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/cronaca/2020/05/20/tunisino-getta-nave-quarante-na-moby-zaza-muore-IEv8ZKpt4NBlwywzS5lpJK.html>

Article published 3 June 2020: <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2020/06/03/bilal-che-dalla-nave-quarantena-voleva-raggiungere-a-nuoto-leuropa/155705/>

12 TGR Sicilia, broadcast 4 October 2020: <https://www.rainews.it/tgr/sicilia/articoli/2020/10/sic-migranti-nave-quarante-na-disperso-si-buttano-in-mare-ff517d78-ddcc-4489-a394-5ef1cf4f8462.html#:~:text=Nella%20notte%20tra%20sabato%20e,Vigili%20del%20Fuoco%20di%20Catania>

Article published 7 October 2020: <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2020/10/07/quei-migranti-invisibili-sulle-navi-quarante-na/156901/>

13 Article published 30 October 2020: <https://www.ansa.it/sicilia/notizie/2020/10/30/migranti-9-ingoiano-lamette-su-nave-quarantena-a-palermo-8ce052c5-cb6f-41a0-af3c-e170aaae29d7.html>; <https://palermo.gds.it/articoli/cronaca/2020/10/30/migranti-9-ingoiano-alcune-lamette-sulla-nave-quarante-na-palermo-b2a39de4-fe0d-40db-a864-442773338187/>

14 The only statistical reconstruction is that produced by the newspaper La Verità, which provided the following data on 8 September: Aurelia (338 people on board, of whom 63 positive); Azzurra (770 people on board, of whom 157 positive); Al-legra (798 people on board, of whom 264 positive); Rhapsody (814 people on board, of whom 53 positive); Adriatico (500, unknown how many positive). The five ships in service were preceded by the Rubattino, which carried 183 people, and the Moby Zazà, with 862 people.

15 The prolonging of the period of quarantine is often due to the difficulties of isolation, which has in some cases forced the beginning of a period of quarantine to coincide with the arrival of the last group of migrants, when the ship's capacity is reached.

practice is de facto, strongly discriminatory¹⁶. These persons are confined in a structurally degrading condition on board the ships, worsened by the psychological damage of finding themselves yet again at sea after having been victims of dangerous and traumatic journeys in the Mediterranean Sea; some of those on board are survivors of shipwrecks. Many of them are victims of torture who require immediate assistance: instead, they are isolated from the world. Witnesses attest to a total absence of care in this sense, as well as from other shortcomings – such as an absence of legal information, the possibility to contact lawyers, to choose doctors of people’s own choosing, or contact non-governmental organizations.

Many of those on board have later received either a ‘deferred refoulement’ paper or an expulsion order once their period of on board isolation ends. The blanket issuing of these rejection papers implies that the individual situations of those in quarantine are not taken into consideration, and that they are not put in the condition to present a request for international protection, or for family unification, in accordance with the Dublin Regulation. Despite reassurances, a range of independent bodies – such as the Association for the Study of Immigration Law (ASGI), Doctors Without Borders, and local NGOs – have gathered accounts, including of migrants with significant issues of vulnerability, that demonstrated a lack of legal information on board, difficulty in accessing asylum procedures, and immediate transfers to deportation centres (CPRs), above all among citizens from countries that have signed readmission agreements with Italy. Other migrants, following the period of on board isolation, have received an expulsion order without any way of understanding or accessing asylum procedures.¹⁷

A range of accounts represent the quarantine ships and other quarantine centres as a further instrument for enacting policies of selecting and rejecting migrants. Maritime vessels appear to be used as ‘floating hotspots’ – i.e. platforms at sea on which to carry out a preventative and arbitrary division between asylum seekers and economic migrants – and as detention centres inasmuch as transfers to airports are carried out, followed by deportations.¹⁸

The situation of migrants from Tunisia is emblematic, the deportations of whom¹⁹ (governed by recent agreements between Italy and Tunisia²⁰) have increased, with regular flights departing up to three times each week. There has thus been a long series of deportations, including the repatriation on 3 November of 40 Tunisian migrants²¹, hosted on board the *Rhapsody* and then transferred to the detention centre at Gradisca without any access to legal protection.

In many cases, migrants have been forced to endure a quarantine period that lasts months – even despite testing negative to the corona virus – followed by deportation,²² without the possibility of formalizing a request for international protection.

16 The Minister of the Interior, Lamorgese, on the quarantine ships, 8 September 2020: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/ministro-lamorgese-sulle-navi-quarantena-sorveglianza-sanitaria-dei-migranti>

17 Article published 28 October 2020: <http://www.arciporcorosso.it/gli-sbarchi-a-palermo-e-le-navi-quarantena/>

18 Report published on 18 November 2020 by Borderline Sicilia: <https://www.borderlinesicilia.it/monitoraggio/i-migranti-in-quarantena-e-le-vite-inequali/>

19 25 Tunisians rejected by the police station in Ragusa: article published 28 November 2020: <https://www.ragusa.gds.it/articoli/cronaca/2020/11/28sbarcati-a-pozzallo-dalla-nave-azzurra-25-tunisini-respinti-alla-frontiera-15653777-4879-4f95-b667-c0eeae6cd2b1/>

20 Interview with the Minister of the Interior, 31 July 2020: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/procederemo-rimpatri-migranti-economici-dalla-tunisia>

21 Accounts collected by LasciateCIEntrare, 3 November 2020: <https://www.facebook.com/504727586219120/posts/4910568698968298/>

22 Article published 9 October 2020: <https://www.lasciatecientrare.it/dalla-quarantena-al-rimpatrio-forzato-abusi-e-violazioni-sui-migranti-trattenuti-nelle-navi/>

Another serious violation of human rights is the practice (continuing at least up to the first half of October 2020) of detaining unaccompanied foreign minors on board, by the hundred. Minors have been kept on board without appropriate divisions between them and adults, as laid down by law, nor in conditions that meet the criteria that have been established for their care. In the early period of the operating of the quarantine ships, none of the minors present had a named legal guardian during the period of isolation, whereas by law this should have been the practice followed as soon as their presence in Italian territory was noted. It is worth noting at this point that the quarantine ships are, to all effects, in Italian territory and that Italian law applies on board, including the constitutional principle of safeguarding fundamental human rights.

The deaths of Abou Diakite and Abdallah Said – the second of whom suffered from tuberculosis, a condition that worsened on board and which ought to have been treated, to the extent that he later died from encephalitis in Catania – constitute an unacceptable precedent regarding the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors during the pandemic. In October, after the facts emerged relating to the tragic death of Abou Diakite, a range of local NGOs lodged an official complaint with the relevant public prosecutors in Palermo and Catania, requesting the immediate disembarking of all the minors on board the quarantine ships²³. As far as we can tell, it appears that this practice has now been abandoned; we hope that this is a lasting change but, unfortunately, there has been no public announcement and therefore we cannot be certain. No minor – accompanied or otherwise – should pass even one day on board such ships without legal protection, as was the grave situation with Abou and Abdallah, about whose deaths the full situation still needs to come to light.

Furthermore, in the month of October, a range of sources exposed the practice of removing foreign citizens from asylum seeker hostels, including people present in Italy for many months or years, and transferring them to quarantine ships. This practice has no legal basis at all: it is simply illegal and represents a serious violation of human rights. Here again, it appears that this practice has been abandoned, having been described by the Minister of the Interior as an error.²⁴ Unfortunately, we are concerned that similar episodes could be repeated in the future. The need to avoid the spread of Covid-19 cannot be instrumentalized as an excuse to impose unreasonable and discriminatory measures upon already-traumatized persons.

3. Economic aspects

The quarantine ships have been sourced from the commercial market through open contracts tendered by the Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport²⁵, signed at the end of procedure by

23 Articles published 15 October 2020: <http://www.cissong.org/esposti-presso-le-procure-minorili-di-palermo-e-catania-le-associazioni-siciliane-chiedono-lo-sbarco-immediato-dei-msna-dalle-navi-quarantena/>, https://www.redattoresociale.it/article/notiziario/minori_stranieri_su_navi_quarantena_esposto_delle_associazioni e il 16 ottobre 2020: <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2020/10/16/fate-sbarcare-i-minori-dalle-navi-quarantena/157014/>

24 Article published with the statements of Minister Lamorgese, 15 October 2020: <https://www.redattoresociale.it/articoli/navi-quarantena-stop-ai-trasferimenti-dai-centri-il-viminale-rassicura-le-organizzazioni>

25 There have been various public announcements (10/09/2020; 28/08/2020; 06/08/2020; 26/07/2020; 13/07/2020; 19/04/2020); the most recent two announcements were published by the Ministry of Transport: <https://www.mit.gov.it/comunicazione/news/migranti/avviso-per-la-presentazione-di-manifestazioni-di-interesse-per-il>; http://trasparenza.mit.gov.it/archivio11_bandi-gare-e-contratti_0_253305_876_1.html

the ‘enacting subject’, the head of the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration within the Ministry of the Interior. The procedures have been fast-tracked through powers delegated to the Civil Protection department for the period of the health emergency. The ships are engaged in an expensive process of rotation between the ports of Augusta, Bari, Lampedusa, Messina, Palermo, Porto Empedocle and Trapani. The penultimate tender published on 28 August 2020 is described as being “for the selection – through a negotiated process in two lots – of two maritime vessels, under either the Italian flag or a EU member state flag, suited to providing a service prior to the disembarking of migrants at a ‘place of safety’²⁶ indicated by the relevant authorities²⁷.” The total sum dedicated to the contract represents more than €4,000,000 for each vessel, which covers the cost of holding 460 people on board each ship – of which up to 400 migrants – for a period of 40 days from the data of the initiation of the contract, and covering the period of precautionary quarantine.

Another example can be provided through the details of the contract tendering process announced on 26 July 2020²⁸, the total planned expenditure of which is c. €4,800,000 for the presence on board of between 285 and 460 people, of whom between 250 and 400 are designated as migrants, for around 92 days of initial activity, of which €3,312,000 (VAT excluded) corresponds to the fixed costs.

It is not possible to calculate the total costs of the ‘quarantine ship’ operation²⁹, not only in economic terms but also in terms of the security duties and the further tasks of health assistance deriving from the necessity of operating at sea instead of on land. Yet again, there is a lack of transparency of information concerning the real costs of the operation from the Ministry of Transport. Nevertheless, in light of the public announcements and the technical regulations that accompany the tender documents, it can be calculated that the ‘model’ of managing preventative quarantine at sea has an overall cost that is at least four times that of the most expensive models for hosting migrants on land. Hosting 400 people for 92 days – the period covered by the second of the tenders cited above – would not have a cost on land of more than c. €1,400,000. The cost of structures on land, in fact, according to the publications of the Minister of the Interior, represents between €30 and €40 per migrant per day, a cost derived from contracts tendered by a range of local prefectures. If one multiplies the most expensive such contract (€40 per migrant per day) by the minimum number of migrants and crew on board (460) we arrive at the figure of €18,400, which for 92 days of hire would equal €1,692,800. This is, clearly, well beneath the €3,312,000 of the corresponding ‘fixed costs’ for each ship, i.e. one million per month. The same service at sea, considering the maximum of 400 migrants and the connected supporting costs, equals around €200 per person per day. In the case of the Rubattino, one of the first quarantine ships, this cost (as reconstructed by the media) referred only to the support costs and health monitoring³⁰. This figure is incomparable to any of the reception centres on dry land: an evident case of disproportionality, and yet again demonstrating a clear lack of information and transparency.

26 International conventions on rescue at sea establish that those rescued must be quickly taken to land at a place of safety (PoS).

27 Public announcement from the Ministry of Transport, 28 August 2020: <https://www.mit.gov.it/sites/default/files/media/notizia/2020-08/Avviso%20per%20la%20ricezione%20di%20manifestazioni%20di%20interesse%2028.08.2020.pdf>

28 Public announcement from the Ministry of Transport, 26 July 2020: http://trasparenza.mit.gov.it/archivio11_bandi-gare-e-contratti_0_252852_876_1.html

29 For a realistic overall calculation, not only the costs present in the technical annexes of the notices and relating exclusively to the procurement of ships on the market should be added, but also all costs relating to both assistance and health surveillance (for which the Italian Red Cross are responsible of) and those of security on board.

30 Article published 10 July 2020: <https://altreconomia.it/costi-silenzi-navi-quarantena/>

4. Our Requests

The fact that the quarantine ships are exclusively utilized for migrants, and above all the choice to isolate people at sea together, without distinction between those in preventative quarantine and those who have tested positive to the corona virus, has further increased the stigmatization of a specific section of the population. Of the 2,448 people on board the ships in November, only 8% tested positive to the virus. The dangerous, often alarmist and entirely misleading public debate over the risks for public health of the arrival of 'infected migrants' has been fomented by the use of a model of quarantine "with greater security" which has been touted as necessary for landing along the Italian coast. There have also been shameful reports full of populist rhetoric, without any basis in facts, of the 'privileges' allowed to migrants passing the quarantine on board the ships, e.g. bars, swimming pools, cinema, etc.

We reject any transformation of the quarantine ships from being used as a temporary solution for the management of health protocols, into a standard model for the management of sea arrivals (both for autonomous landings and for Search and Rescue operations alike). The conditions of the ships, the structural isolation, the obstacles to health monitoring, the lack of information, and the impossibility for civil society actors to have contact with people together render this formula entirely inadequate for the correct execution of reception, information, and for the definition of a clear juridical condition for foreign nationals.

For these reasons, we request that the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Health, and the Civil Protection department to:

- Dismiss the quarantine ships and reinvest the significant sums of money in adequate reception centres on land, where people can pass the necessary period of isolation in full respect of their human rights;
- Immediately provide frequent public communication regarding the full situation on board the quarantine ships, with particular attention to:
 - the number of migrants on board, with details of nationality, gender and age, and the date of landings;
 - the number of staff and health workers on board, and their specific tasks (medical personnel, nursing, psychology, interpreting);
 - the number and tasks of staff entrusted with maintaining security;
 - the number of crew;
- Make transparent and public the procedure adopted for the unaccompanied minors present up till October, as well as for those currently present with their families, and to clarify that no minor should be present on the ships, and that they should be provided instead with appropriate housing, with any quarantine period effected in appropriate locations, as established by law. We take the opportunity to note that when there are doubts about the age of a subject, the law states that the minor age is presumed to be true until further assessments can be made;
- Guarantee the provision of adequate legal and health information to all those confined on board and allow them to contact NGOs that offer legal advice. Sanitary isolation should not

in any way compromise personal freedoms, but instead be limited to protecting the right to health of individuals and society more generally;

- Guarantee that no one should be removed from reception centres in Italian territory without legal basis and transferred on board a quarantine ship;
- Immediately suspend the practice of providing decrees of 'deferred refoulement' and expulsion papers following disembarking.

The right to life and the right to health cannot be modified on the basis of nationality or country of departure. We are currently faced with the necessity of living alongside the new corona virus for months and perhaps years: an emergency system such as that of the quarantine ships – which comes at a such a high cost both in terms of rights and of public finances – cannot and must not become an system for blocking foreign nationals from arriving in Italy, whether rescued at sea or through autonomous landings. Instead, we should strengthen and improve a reception system for migrants and refugees that is both safe and dignified.