

## Stop talking about emergency

The mayors of six cities in Italy signed a joint statement on 16 April 2023 decrying proposals to cancel the “special protection” provision of refugee protection law.

As mayors, as administrators, as citizens who engage daily in our cities to ensure that the critical issues that our communities bring to us are effectively addressed, we are very concerned about the current proposals to change the only effectively public, structured, non-emergency migrant reception system that we have in Italy.

Cities are extremely apprehensive by the amendments proposed by some parties to DL 591 [decree-law], considering the many challenges that our system has had to address in recent years. We must not take the perspective that we are in an ‘emergency’, and it is wrong to suggest the exclusion of asylum seekers from the SAI [Integration and Reception System], precluding them from any path of integration and a real possibility of inclusion and emancipation in our communities.

We do not agree with the cancellation of ‘special protection’, a measure present in almost all Western European countries, in a context in which about 50% of migrants are vulnerable and made up in large part of nuclear families. **Canceling special protection can only produce a constant violation of individual rights and countless difficulties** similar to those our communities have already had to face in recent years, **as forced migrants and refugees are increasingly condemned to invisibility.**

Meanwhile, the CAS [Extraordinary Reception Centres] system, which has never abandoned its emergency structure, is saturated and unfortunately inadequate to accommodate those coming **as of today** from the Mediterranean and Balkan routes. The system is insufficient due to the large numbers of people coming, the reception methods, and the absence of any accompaniment, protection, or inclusion service.

In this context it is also vital to rethink the reception system for unaccompanied foreign minors. It is necessary to apply distributive logics that avoid concentration only in large cities. **Our cities are in fact already committed, often beyond their capacity and frequently beyond their functions and competencies, to remedy the lack of an adequate national system with city resources.** The failure to build a single public, transparent, and professional reception system like the SAI, guaranteeing dignified and protective pathways also for people seeking international protection, cannot lead to the creation of new, large reception or detention centers throughout our territories. The history of the last twenty years of reception in Italy clearly shows that emergency models, with minimum quality standards and aimed at mere ‘food and lodging,’ have caused enormous wounds in our communities and have not guaranteed enforceable rights to the refugee population. And, above all, such models have made effective and lasting inclusion processes fail.

Signed 16 April 2023

**Roberto Gualtieri, Mayor of Rome**

**Beppe Sala, Mayor of Milan**

**Gaetano Manfredi, Mayor of Naples**

**Stefano Lo Russo, Mayor of Turin**

**Matteo Lepore, Mayor of Bologna**

**Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence**