

Solidarity with the refugees in Morocco

It has now been more than 4 years since UNHCR opened a new office in Rabat, acting swiftly and promptly in response to requests from European states trying to keep asylum seekers, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa, away from their borders.

Only after several years of waiting UNHCR's presence in Morocco was officially recognised, and even after that the cooperation of the Moroccan government - a precondition for making the refugee status granted by UNHCR work in daily life - could not be guaranteed.

In fact, Morocco, despite having signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, refuses to recognise the identity card issued by UNHCR and to grant those who are in its possession the associated rights, in particular with regard to their residence in the country, access to employment and public services, and freedom of movement.

After years of waiting in absolute precarity and facing insecurity about tomorrow, refugees from a number of African countries (Ivory Coast, Congo, Rwanda, etc.), hoping that their rights will be recognised and that their situation will improve, staged a permanent sit-in in front of the UNHCR's office demanding their resettlement in other countries that respect their refugee status and the rights associated with it.

After having been driven away by force by various forces of repression in the night of 27 June 2009, after one week of continuous sit-in, the only promise they were made was that negotiations would be conducted with the person responsible for the Moroccan office of UNHCR, Mr Johannes Van der Klauw, from 2 July 2009 onwards.

We, member organisations of the Euro-African migration network, having supported the refugees and asylum seekers over the last years

- express our understanding for their desperation,
- condemn the violence exercised against them by the forces of order,
- demand that UNHCR assumes its responsibilities and carries out its mission, which is to protect refugees and guarantee a secure and decent life,
- express our solidarity with their movement and their demands and assure them of our vigilance, so that their rights are recognised in their entirety,
- demand that all recognised refugees are systematically granted full freedom of movement and establishment and protection worldwide.