

## The first Tunisian refugees arrive in Varese

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**Twelve North-African refugees have arrived in Varese.** They are part of the first group of refugees to arrive in Lombardy. Following last week's decision, they have been distributed in a number of provinces in Lombardy, and placed in the care of the organisation Caritas. The refugees are Tunisian men, who have landed on the Italian coasts over the last few weeks.

According to the agreement reached yesterday in the Prefect's Office in Milan, 99 refugees will be taken into facilities of Caritas branches in Lombardy, or associated Caritas branches. The refugees will be divided as follows: 25 to Bergamo, 7 to Brescia, 15 to Como, 30 to Cremona, 10 to Pavia, and 12 to Varese.

The guests arrived in the early afternoon, in Bresso, where the Red Cross and the Civil Defence will allocate them around region.

All of the migrants **have received or will receive a temporary residence permit** for humanitarian reasons, which gives them the right to stay in Italy legally for at least 6 months. Room and board and social assistance will be provided, thanks to the economic resources allocated by the agreement with the authorities.

**The immigrants who have arrived in Varese have been placed in the accommodation that Caritas has in the town.** They will be free to go in and out of the centres, in accordance with the regulations of the accommodation, at which, social workers are present round the clock. "A residence permit and accommodation provided throughout the region were the requirements of Caritas right from the start, to enable dealing with the emergency of the arrivals, these months. These principles form the foundation of the action plan decided upon at the Prefect's Office in Milan yesterday," said **don Roberto Davanzo, the regional director of Caritas in Lombardy.** "Now, in order to make this reception as dignified and civil as possible, the local communities and especially the church communities must also to do their part, with that spirit that the bishops of Lombardy recently spoke of. I'm sure that the parishes and Catholic volunteer groups will provide their support."

This first group of arrivals has not filled the immediate availability of Caritas in Lombardy, who, from the beginning, have offered 180 places in structures ready to take them in, generally, in dormitories for the homeless, centres for those seeking asylum, and accommodation for social outcasts. Over the following weeks, the diocesan Caritas organisations will continue to provide support, if the need arises with new arrivals.

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