PEI Statement on Report titled “Unveiling the Unspoken Lens of Reality”

Pride Equality International (PEI) commends courageous Africans who were forced to flee their countries as a result of war, oppression, persecution and other human rights violations. The UNHCR Global Trend report states that currently 6.5 million people are forced to flee their homes.

Many of the African refugees and asylum seekers left their home countries either because of a well-founded fear of persecution or past persecution due to their religion, political strive, war, sexual orientation, gender identity and other human rights violations which are not protected. These fears reflect the multiplicity of forces which together makes daily life for many African countries unlivable. The sites and forms of persecution are varied, ranging from general societal attitudes influenced by religion and traditional values to rejection by close friends and families. Moreover, legal and political institutions often reinforce these attitudes through apathy or active persecution, which often culminates in threats of physical violence, and sometimes experiences of physical assaults.

In 2014, more than 3,400 people died trying to cross the Mediterranean, most of them asylum seekers from Syria, Eritrea and other parts of Africa. So far in 2015, more than 1,750 migrants have died. The number of victims is growing every year while European leaders turn a blind eye and give military solutions to the problem. Between 2007 and 2013, the European Union spent 93 million Euros in assisting asylum seekers and refugees against the 2,984 million Euros used in the EU agency (Frontex) for border control; which is more than 32 times the cost spent on asylum seekers and refugees. It’s worth mentioning that after the Mare Nostrum was cancelled after the operation started by Italy after the Lampedusa’s tragedy and stopped one year later due to Europe’s denial to fund. There is not any coordinated European operation to rescue people in migratory transit.

Catalan and Spanish society understood the drama of involuntary forced migration, as many Spanish and Catalans were forced to emigrate during the civil war and the fascist dictatorship period, as well as in the 50’s and 60’s with the successive economic crisis experienced in the state. Civil society is not an obstacle to the integration of refugees, but political authorities and economic powers use migrant workforce when it suits them, while applying policies that promote xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination against African asylum seekers and refugees. It is easy though to see why this report is called “Unveiling the Unspoken Lens of Reality”. It truly has been a journey for African asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in Spain; we encounter discrimination in every facet of society and this has been ignored and swept under the carpet. In Spain, asylum seekers and refugees are left out in the national agenda, we are not a
priority for the government; we live on the street, go hungry and find it difficult to get a job. The Spanish government in general is not doing enough to provide access to basic food and affordable housing as enshrined in the United Nations Refugee Convention. Asylum seekers, migrants and refugees want to work, pay taxes and integrate within the Spanish society. Should we sit down and allow this trend to continue? No. That is why we are calling on the government and everyone to debunk the negative myths, misconceptions and strive to embrace equal rights, diversity and inclusion for all asylum seekers, migrants and refugees.

For more information, please contact: Karina Mutota & George Reginald Freeman

Tel: +34 634152506