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The Regional Council of Emmaus Europe met in Lampedusa and manifests:

As representatives from 16 countries, including Finland, Italy, Portugal and Ukraine, we wish to testify about what we have seen:

A stunning small island close to the coast of Africa, an island with 6,000 inhabitants, a sheltered and pretty fishing port,
a dramatic symbol of the price paid for our comfort.

Travellers and migrants have been coming to this island since the dawn of time,
but Europe has decided to slam shut this gateway from the South.

Migrants have drowned just off the island's coast, lifeless bodies have been washed up on the beach and the residents have sought to contact the victims' families or have buried them in the local cemetery. This continued until the tragedy of 3 October 2013: 500 men, women and children became victims when a boat sank off Lampedusa, with 300 of them drowning and being washed up on the beach. The island's residents were left to deal with this monstrosity and tirelessly sought to contact the victims' families. Around ten migrants have not been identified and will be buried in the local cemetery. The Italian government and the European Commission abandoned them, just as they did when 2,500 Libyans fleeing the civil war arrived. The local people have joined forces and with dignity and respect have coped with all the misery that has invaded their island. The locals are continuing to collect the victims' personal items when they are washed up by the tide, with items including a baby's bottle, the Koran, a Bible, bottled water in bags, clothing from the Southern Sahara, cigarettes and lifejackets, with a centre being dedicated to this sad collection.

The European Commission reacted recently by strengthening Frontex, its border agency! Frontex is a paramilitary organisation that hunts down migrants, with a daily budget of €300,000, 1,500 soldiers based on the island with 11 launches, planes and helicopters. The island has become a military base, just like it was during World War II. Migrants are systematically caught before they arrive on the island and sent to detention centres on Sicily. They are less noticeable there, as the island is bigger, has more residents and the centres are better hidden.

Sleep easy in your beds, forget the deaths and disregard this scandal, or remind yourself that prejudice has no borders and denounce it! Join the Frontexit Campaign to put a stop to this war on the poor.

The agency's budget could be used to fight poverty by encouraging the integration of these human beings who come to Europe to work and live, just like our ancestors did.

In our 300 groups across Europe, we live side-by-side with these 'social rejects' and we demonstrate that we can all live happily together.

Do we want a more humane and socially responsible Europe? Or do we want a rich and mean Europe, which will end up excluding those that some people believe to be worthless? It is time to awake!

10th April 2014

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