

From Libya via Lampedusa, migrants languish in an Italian ski resort

More than 100 Africans who fled the war in Libya have been settled in a hotel by the Brescia police authority

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Tunisian migrants in Lampedusa. Photograph: Alberto Pizzoli/AFP/Getty Images

In the dark, the hotel that loomed after the last hairpin bend looked rather like *Overlook* in Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining*. But that's where the resemblance ends. Montecampione, altitude 1,800 meters, is a ski resort at the end of the road winding up the Camonica Valley in Lombardy. The most striking thing on arrival here is being greeted with the faces and voices from another continent.

Since the end of June, more than 100 Africans who fled the war in [Libya](#) have been settled in this hotel by the Brescia police authority, in line with the Italian government's policy of spreading the [Lampedusa migrants](#) around the country. In most places the local authorities have been required to house them, but here private enterprise has also been asked to contribute. The hotel in Montecampione houses and feeds the migrants for €40 a head per day.

The nearest village in the valley is more than 20km away, so the migrants are cut off from the outside world while they await a decision on their fates. The monotony of their days is broken only by meals and their turn to use the internet and telephones, which gives them a few minutes' respite from tedium and isolation. "We live in a strange situation here," admitted a lively young Ghanaian called Michael. "We've got absolutely nothing to do, but we're all impatient to find work and start our lives again."

For now, all the migrants have is the piece of paper they were given in Lampedusa stating their date of arrival. To obtain temporary resident's permits and, if they are lucky, refugee status, they have to go through a complicated procedure, and the authorities are massively overworked.

At very best, most migrants will have to wait several more months. But for a dozen of them, things started to move when volunteers from a co-operative assisting the migrants came to collect the information required for filing asylum requests.

The migrants were obliged to relive the painful events that took them from Libya – where some have worked for years – to Montecampione. "They've been abandoned with no support from the government. We have to act as substitutes for handling their asylum applications, giving them psychological support, and finding solutions to

improve their living conditions," said Carlo Cominelli, head of the K-Pax co-operative. When the co-operative applied to the Red Cross for help, it was told that it was impossible for logistical reasons, so the volunteers have to make do on their own with the means available to them.

The hotel director, Giuseppe Crucitti, is also doing his bit. "My staff and I are doing more than what was asked in the agreement with the police department. You only have to look at them to understand what these men have been through."

Crucitti also distributes the clothes donated by the inhabitants of the valley. Many migrants arrived in only T-shirts and flip-flops, and up in the mountains the heating is already on full blast at night and you need a spot of sun to thaw out in the daytime.

A doctor from a local medical centre comes by once or twice a week. The hotel director told us that many people ask him for something to help them sleep, because they are still traumatised by the events they have lived through. A young Nigerian called Kelly, who was arrested and manhandled by Gaddafi's troops before managing to escape, told us sadly, "I have no more hope. When I arrived in Italy I tried to explain my situation, but no one seems to understand what I've been through."

The last five migrants to arrive in Montecampione are equally bewildered. They reached Lampedusa early in August, and were taken across Italy. They have got plenty of time to find out about where they have ended up.

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