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## **Italy urged to effectively address Tunisian migrants 'emergency'**

Amnesty International has urged the Italian authorities to deal with the humanitarian needs of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers leaving Tunisia following recent unrest.

More than 5,000 migrants have landed on the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to authorities, who have described the events as a "humanitarian emergency".

However, the country's foreign ministry has suggested that Italy and other EU countries should "stop the Tunisian wave", and recently deployed more boats to patrol the country's coasts.

Amid increasing tension over the issue, on Monday night Italian border police reportedly shot at a boat carrying Egyptian migrants and asylum seekers, wounding the vessel's pilot.

"A 'humanitarian emergency' demands a humanitarian response, not a law and order one," said Nicola Duckworth, Amnesty International's Europe director.

"This means that boats carrying migrants and asylum seekers from Tunisia, Egypt or other North African countries must not be pushed back. Everyone arriving is entitled to be treated with dignity, to be granted assistance and access to a fair asylum procedure."

Italian authorities have reinforced the patrolling of the coast following the wave of migration in the Mediterranean,

Large numbers of people were forced to sleep outdoors for several days before the Italian authorities reopened the reception centre on Lampedusa.

Italy routinely detains irregular migrants, and in the past has conducted mass expulsions, in violation of international law.

"Detention should only ever be a last resort, not an automatic response. No one should be sent back before they are able to make their case or explain their circumstances before the relevant authorities, and certainly there should not be any mass forced expulsions" said Nicola Duckworth.

Frontex, the European Union's agency for external border security, has agreed to support Italy's calls for assistance in stemming the flow of migrants from North Africa.

"The main objective of any patrolling of national or international waters carried out by Italy, Tunisia or any other force, such as Frontex, should be the safety and security of those found at sea," added Nicola Duckworth.