

Federazione Italiana Medici Pediatri

Appeal for the right to life for refugee children running away from war, disasters, famine

Sent to the Italian Republic President , to the Italian Prime Minister , to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Interior

" The child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; and the orphan and the street child must be sheltered and succoured " *Eglantyne Jebb 1919*

The road to the affirmation of children's rights has been long and made difficult by the many social and historical circumstances: however the Convention on the Rights of the Child of NY 1989 was supposed to finally ensure indiscriminately to every child the protection and care they need.

What is happening today it appears almost unbelievable: a large amount of migrants with children, including unaccompanied minors, fleeing wars and poverty seek a decent future and face extreme dangers, sometimes even death, only to be rejected and thrown out from so-called "civil" countries, concerned that their welfare acquired over time can be put at risk in this way.

FIMP pediatricians , who have for mission overall health of the child, have always been concerned with migrant children and have tried to address the possible laws toward the benefit of regular and undocumented children . The first appeal of FIMP for children displaced by war , disasters and famine was in 2007 with the "Document of Sabaudia" which required the recognition of the right of asylum for the children of illegal immigrants. FIMP has fought for the right to registration of irregular newborns, to avoid reporting undocumented patients in the best interests of the child in cases of identification of unaccompanied minors, for a welcoming respectful of childhood. We have tried to disprove the stereotype of the migrant "infectior" through epidemiological studies, noting the prevalence of diseases in young migrants based upon privations and poverty rather than on "imported" infections. The protocol for admission of young children of recent immigration has allowed to widen in each case the pediatric knowledge on foreign endemic diseases, deficiencies and genetic diseases. Today we are facing an evolution from

“ethnopediatrics” to “transcultural” pediatrics , focused on multiculturalism but facilitating the integration of different types of care and nutrition. In years of research, study, training, joint appeals with other scientific societies, NGOs, institutions, we got the recognition for the irregular migrant child's right to the best health possible with the opportunity to be cared by the family pediatrician, a guarantee of equity of treatment and preventive strategies for all children of every race and every status.

The wave of immigration in recent years will probably be remembered as the largest in history and certainly we are experiencing a momentous historical event. In the first six months of 2015, approximately 450,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean in various conditions possible, with a death toll that has become impossible to quantify: we are facing a real humanitarian emergency.

"Children and adolescents are now a quarter of all asylum seekers in Europe. According to the latest available Eurostat data, in the first seven months of 2015 nicely **133,000 children have applied for asylum in the EU**, an increase of almost 80% by 2014 "(UNICEF 22 September 2015).

The pressing diaspora of populations running away from outbreaks of war and the tragedies we observe helplessly force all of us today as pediatricians to claim the right to life for refugee children and to condemn any discrimination meandering towards those of them fleeing disasters or famine, or further outbreaks of violence and ethnic persecution.

If the right to life is not protected any other right is canceled.

As stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in New York (1989), every child by the mere fact of being a child is entitled to all the protection possible without discrimination: so we cannot not take care of all these children who arrive in our area and not feel responsible for their health, although from a regulatory standpoint no one requests to perform specific tasks. An editorial in the Lancet (www.thelancet.com Vol 386 September 12, 2015) compares the current situation to what happened in the International Conference held in Evian, France, in 1938, immediately before the Holocaust: at that historical moment the prospect of welcoming Jews out of Germany had been considered, unfortunately the great nations responded in a negative way and there was the horror that we all know.

FIMP strongly reaffirms the role of Child Advocacy by pediatricians and is calling all the scientific societies and Italian and European institutions to share an appeal for the protection of the right to life of every child

- We appeal to those who have the power and responsibility to respond to the unavoidable needs of these children, in order to put in place urgently concrete actions to prevent further unbearable losses of young lives

- We declare that we are ready to offer our assistance in all possible forms, as is happening for example in Rome and Milan, Sicily and Puglia and as has happened in Hungary, where the primary care pediatricians, contrary to policy of their country, have organized a task force of volunteers to protect the health of children and adults.
- We demand an admission plan with a clear path and a defined procedure for children, providing a kind of traceable identification for each child in order to ensure the social and sanitary follow-up.

It will therefore be necessary to keep attention focused on what is happening, responding with a sense of responsibility and generosity to the needs of these new children that we have managed and that sometimes we also need to try to find, because beyond the wave of every emotional and easy pietism, it should be clear that certain images, although we grieve, dissolve in the memory, but the children that we are helping to grow are living individuals with the full right to fulfill themselves to the best of their abilities and that will potentially be the Europeans adults of tomorrow.

Il Presidente
Giampietro Chiamenti

