

Fleeing the war, 39 refugees in the Province

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The emergency concerning refugees from the Middle East and from Africa has also reached **Varese Province; 39 people have been transferred to three different places**, Saronno, Gallarate, and Marzio, a small village, whose hotels have provided accommodation for refugees for some time now (archive photos, Libyan refugees in 2012). **Among them, there are also Syrian refugees, who are fleeing the extremely violent conflict**, which has caused thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of evacuees. **Margherita Silvestrini**, the Councillor for Social Services in Gallarate, told us, **“These people have just arrived in Italy, and they’re completely disoriented.”** The refugees were distributed by the Prefecture, in accordance with availability. In Gallarate, for example, Exodus welcomed them into their new premises in Villa Calderara, on the hill in Cedrate (these facilities receive economic resources from the Government, to keep each refugee).

The official numbers for Varese Province speak of 39 refugees, and there are also families in flight. **Simona Bordinali, the Councillor for Immigration in Lombardy Region, controversially defined them as, “Presumed refugees.”** She harshly criticized “the arrivals established by central government and by the Prefectures,” which she defined as “useless and harmful organisations.” According to Bordinali’s data, 60 refugees will be going to Bergamo, 50 to Brescia, 50 to Como, 50 to Cremona, 30 to Lecco, 50 to Mantua, 50 to Monza, 50 to Pavia, 50 to Sondrio and 40 to Varese; the data for Milan and Lodi is “not available yet”.

Most of the refugees were transferred from Syracuse Airport to Malpensa Airport, most of them do not speak English and have never been to Italy before (unlike the refugees who arrived in 2012, for example). They are extremely disoriented; this is the first place they have come to in Italy. **In Gallarate, there are 10 people**, “3 Nigerians, 2 Pakistanis, 2 Syrians, 2 Somalis and 1 Ethiopian,” the councillor explained. They will stay in the villa on the hill until the end of May, depending on the **willingness of Exodus** (who have yet to start the complete refurbishment of the villa, which is going to become a social area for families and for the neighbourhood). “We’ve informed the people who live in the borough, who have

asked us to guarantee supervision, with the local police, however, there is a certain willingness, as a result of the experience of two years ago.” At that time, the old villa in Gallarate, which was rearranged as best could be, housed some refugees from Libya for a few months: some of them were subsequently expelled, while for others, their political refugee status was recognised, and they’ve continued their lives, in some cases, outside Italy (several had relatives abroad).

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