

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends who are currently in limbo in Choucha (without any hope of either staying there or of leaving the camp) told me that they were staging a protest in Tunis addressing the UNHCR as well as the embassies of the US and the EU.

They criticise the system of Refugee Status Determination, which was carried out in a very unprofessional way by the UNHCR in Choucha. Regarding the translation, the impartiality and the intimacy of asylum claims, there were major shortcomings in the work of UNHCR staff.

I was shocked to learn about the unbearable living conditions inside the camp and the fact that people feel left alone and socially excluded. In addition, people living inside UNHCR camps are denied access to food and medical treatment since October 2012. The UNHCR's 2012 budget for the camp in Choucha has been cut. However, it is intolerable to leave rejected asylum seekers, who can move neither forward nor backward, without access to food and medical care. Even infants are not being given milk. According to your definition of course, the UNHCR is not responsible for these migrants: however, it might have come to your attention that these people do not have the option to go back to Libya or to return to their countries of origin.

As they have no regular residence permit or the right to move within Tunisia, they are practically trapped inside the camp whilst being starved and thus put under pressure to accept "voluntary" return to countries where they believe they will be threatened by persecution. To deny them humanitarian aid in these circumstances is completely unacceptable.

The Choucha camp will continue to exist until June 2013. This gives the UNHCR an opportunity to make amends for existing shortcomings and, above all, to respond to the protesters' more than justified demands for a reopening of their asylum applications under more appropriate conditions.

For these reasons I support the demands of the striking friends from Choucha which are as follows:

- To reopen the asylum cases of all rejected asylum seekers!
- The recognition of everybody's right to stay at the camp, including:
 - Access to food and medical care for everybody!
 - Access to the resettlement procedure for everybody!

I kindly urge you to take these demands into serious consideration and to help find solutions for the protesting refugees from Choucha refugee camp!

Sincerely Yours,