

Echoes Migrants from Nouadhibou—Mauritania

For many years, a group of migrants of Nigerian, Ghanaian, Ivorian and Senegalese nationality have been living in Nouadhibou. After several unsuccessful attempts to enter Morocco and the Canary Islands illegally, they finally decided to give up illegal immigration from Africa to Europe and to engage in salting and drying fish on the coast adjacent to the artisanal port of Nouadhibou as a way to make a living. The fish they dry are mostly sold locally in Nouadhibou, Nouakchott and sent to Senegal, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several NGOs have had to close their offices and interrupt field projects. The overcrowding of the camps, illegal immigration from Africa to Europe, armed conflicts in the sub-



region, the closure of land borders and the curfew from 9pm to 6am, made the local authorities aware of the large fish market initiated by young migrants in Nouadhibou, so they decided to chase them away and close the site. The resulting vacuum has increased the exposure, vulnerability and unemployment of these young migrants. This dispersal has led to a lot of frustration for many of them, who only had this to live on and meet their needs: food, health and payment of their housing.

These young migrants, unable to bear this crisis, mobilised themselves to come and seek help and emergency support from the Caritas in Nouadhibou (food, sanitation, hygiene, housing, etc.).



A few months later, the Daniel Brottier Association, Nouadhibou branch, thanks to its partners, was able to grant 23 migrants a sum of 3,000 euros to work and undertake an income-generating activity in Nouadhibou to earn a living. As a result, these 23 migrants mobilised to continue salting and drying fish, this time not in the artisanal port of Nouadhibou but in an area located 22 kilometres outside Nouadhibou, which was given to them by the local authorities, in order to continue this income-generating activity. Given the distance and all the difficulties of accessing it, these migrants named this place: Guantanamo Bay. The new site is deserted and located on a coast of the sea. However, at this site they are confronted with all sorts of difficulties such as: lack of drinking and cooking water, lack of adequate shelter to protect themselves from the sun and to spend the night. The biggest difficulty is that now, in order to dry the fish, they are forced to go to the port, in the city centre, often



on foot, to look for fish, pay taxes, and then find a vehicle that will allow them to transport the fish from the artisanal port to Guantanamo Bay, about 22km away, to start working under an oppressive sun in the middle of the sandy wind.



Today, with the closure of the borders, this income-generating activity is attracting more migrants. They are becoming more and more numerous on the site, with the presence of other migrants of Guinea Bissau, Mali and Togo nationalities.

Moreover, if we look closely at this beautiful initiative, the courage they have taken, they are faced with a financial difficulty to buy fish at the artisanal port and transport it to Guantanamo Bay, to provide food, drinking water, masks, hydroalcoholic gel, medicines against headaches, fever and pain. It is therefore important to welcome this initiative. Their efforts are to be supported and encouraged.

Faced with this difficult situation, the team from the



Daniel Brottier Association in Nouadhibou went to the site to discuss and share with these migrants. The team brought them basic necessities, food, masks and hydroalcoholic gel, drinking water, drinks and medicines. The team, in its fight against illegal immigration and to protect lives, would like to continue to financially support these migrants, men and women of various nationalities, in this activity, in order to help them to stay and work in Nouadhibou, to find in Nouadhibou what they want to go and look for in Europe (work, enough to meet their needs) by means of often dangerous routes, in short, to favour their integration in Nouadhibou or a voluntary return to their country of origin. This is why we are launching a vibrant appeal to all people of good will to pay much attention to these brave migrants. Assist them and encourage them to pursue this income-generating activity.



This visit, initiated by the head of the Daniel Brottier Association Antenna of Nouadhibou, Father Florian Pachel MBABE, had the objective of welcoming this initiative, encouraging and reminding all these valiant migrants, dryers and fish sellers, that they are not forgotten, and that we pray for them, we will assist them and accompany them as much as possible, in this initiative. Another important dimension of this visit was to promote mutual aid and solidarity among all the people working on the site. To sensitise them to give up their

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Fr. Pachel MBABE