



**Comune di Palermo
il Sindaco**

**NORTH SOUTH PRIZE
LISBON DEC. 2ND 2020
LEOLUCA ORLANDO SPEECH**

- Mr. President of the Republic
- Mr. President of the Assembly of the Republic
- Mr. President of the Assembly of the Council of Europe
- Madam Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Mr. Chair of the North-South Centre
- Mr. Ambassador of Italy
- Madam Vice President of the Municipality of La Marsa

Today's ceremony is a source of great honor, emotion and hope.

It certainly is for me, but also for all those who for years and especially in recent difficult months have been committed to promote and protect the rights of all, of all



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men and women, of children, to the guarantee of human and civil rights, of fundamental and inalienable right to life.

This ceremony is also the confirmation of the leadership role of the Council of Europe in the continental and world panorama, for the promotion and protection of human rights, well beyond the geographical borders of Europe and of the member states of the Council itself.

This ceremony with the presence of the President of the Republic Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and the President of the Assembly Mr. Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues with the institutional leaders of Portugal and together with the Secretary General Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council Mr. Rik Daems with the leaders of the Council of Europe and its North-South Center, testifies Portugal's essential contribution to building a Europe of rights.



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The presence today at this ceremony and the conferral of the North-South Prize to Mrs. Amza, Vice President of the Municipality of La Marsa, to whom I extend my sincere appreciation, is further confirmation of the attention of the Council of Europe to the rights of all, beyond the geographical borders of Europe and with particular attention to the rights of women and their democratic participation in civil and institutional life.

This ceremony is a reason for hope because it proves the commitment of national and international institutions to reaffirm the culture and practice of human rights after extremely difficult years even in Europe.

In fact, in recent years we have witnessed the return and strengthening of cultures and policies that have built and fueled social division and fear. Fear of the different, fear of the new, fear of the foreigner.

In many countries, even in Europe, anti-democratic positions have emerged building their own narrative and



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setting their own internal and international policies precisely on the limitation of fundamental rights, even if recognized by the Treaties and the founding Charters of European Law.

But and well before the verbal and material extremisms of some political positions, we have witnessed more widely the denial of fundamental rights, the construction of too often timid policies in the defense of the weakest, sometimes to choices that have led to death and mourning along all the borders of Europe, from the Mediterranean to the Balkans.

When did migration stop being a right for a better life for yourself and loved ones? When did it become a concession or even a crime?

When the word "castaway", which for centuries has been synonymous with "person in difficulty, to help" has turned into "dangerous person to be rejected".



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How is it possible, in the world of total globalization and freedom of movement of goods, capital and data (and today also of the virus) that the only ones whose mobility is controlled and curbed are human beings?

Today, however, we all have clear in mind that defending the rights of the individual, all the rights of each one, means defending our own right to affirm that we are all part of the global human community.

Starting from a milestone awareness raising campaign conceived by the Council of Europe in the 90s, in my city we created the "Charter of Palermo" approved in 2015.

“All different, all equal”. That was the campaign of the Council of Europe which affirmed with great foresight the need for a globalization of rights and for equality that was not stereotyped, that was not a denial of everyone's identities.



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With the "Charter of Palermo" we have chosen to affirm that "I am a person, we are a community".

I am a person, each of us is a "person" bearer of individuality, rights and duties, of their own history, their own culture, their own identity.

But I am also a community. I am part, always and in any case, of the community in which I choose to live and the community exists only as a union of minorities, a union of many identities, "all different and all equal".

As never happened before, the virus taught us that we are communities on a global level, that to the many and serious global challenges there can be no response from individuals, be they individual states or, even worse, individual groups.

Never as today, it has been clearer that the primary rights related to peace, health, freedom from hunger, freedom of expression are either guaranteed everywhere and to everyone or not guaranteed to anyone.



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This is, despite efforts by some to hide rights violations behind physical or virtual walls.

This is, despite the fact that some are still convinced that they can create, in this globalized and interdependent world, a separation between "us" and a "them" that lasts over time.

For this reason, in the Charter of Palermo we launched the proposal, also juridical, that international mobility should be recognized as an inalienable human right. That the right to choose where to live should be recognized, as well as the right to choose where to try to build own and loved ones' future.

In Palermo, in our small way and with the legal limits of a city that cannot legislate, we already apply these principles.

If someone asks me how many migrants there are in Palermo, I don't answer fifty or a hundred thousand. I



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reply that there are no migrants in Palermo, that all those who live in Palermo are Palermitans.

Obviously they are not legally, they do not have Italian citizenship or passport, but everyone has the right to access the services that the municipality offers to citizens, regardless of their legal status.

Once again, the very hard experience of the health emergency for Covid-19 and the very hard one of the lockdown, showed the supportive and welcoming face of Palermo: during the explosion of the social crisis, the doors of the Catholic churches and the volunteers of Caritas, as well as the Waldensian Church, they welcomed the many Muslim Palermitans from Bangladesh or Tamils from Sri Lanka; the associations of Muslims who work in the historic center districts have welcomed and helped the many small Italian professionals who have lost their jobs or their income overnight.



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Palermo has known the fear, the blood and the shame of the mafia and its system of power, and has fought - paying very high risks and prices - to first affirm the legality of law; now and for some years in Palermo we have been claiming and pursuing the legality of the law but also the legality of the rights of every human being, confirmed by the democratic Constitutions and the Universal Declarations of Human Rights even if sometimes mortified by the law, by the laws of the States.

But, and today's ceremony confirms this, the Palermo experience is not isolated.

With many other mayors of Italian and European cities, we have built the network of safe cities, of open ports. We have said that a city, to be safe, must take care of its citizens, of all its citizens.

We have affirmed and every day we put into practice that insecurity is not fought with fear, but with the care of people: a material care, made up of services, and an



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immaterial care made of a culture of hospitality and solidarity.

It is certainly task of the Mayors, and not only of the Mayors, to pursue freedom from fear, from the fear of the new, from the fear of the different; taking care of the new and the different.

Taking care, to be free from fear.

Today, thanks to this Award, which I repeat is not a prize to me but to the many who have shared and share this path, the journey of Palermo and of many other cities becomes even stronger, having once again in the Council of Europe a cultural and material lighthouse and a reference point.