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## Shipwreck off Italy: flowers adorn the small white coffins of children in the indoor sports hall

The flower bouquets that adorn the small white coffins in the indoor sports hall of Crotona might perhaps represent a small sign of hope, or a glimmer of humanity, at the very least. The city of Crotona and the region of Calabria mobilized to pay respects to the victims of the Cutro shipwreck. In the morning, Crotona local residents shared their sorrow, and grief. A perceivable fear of recognizing the faces of their loved ones is visible in the eyes of the victims' families, some of them having travelled great distances. Owing to the difficult identification procedures, a small room was set up inside the PalaMilone sports hall, where, through photos posted on the portals, family members can identify whether or not their relatives were among the deceased. They approach their loved ones in tears, embraced by volunteers from local associations who came to offer support during the most trying days. Doctors Without Borders, UNHCR, Civil Defense, came together to give a helping hand at this time of grief. "Hugs overcome all barriers," we are told by a volunteer. They do indeed, when the hearts are shattered like the timbers of a storm-battered vessel washed ashore. "We left yesterday afternoon from Germany together with my father - says a young Afghani man. - here, among these coffins, lie five of our relatives, whom we knew were due to arrive in Italy those same days." A father, his pain-streaked face, lacks the strength to speak. Another, in English, adds, "We learned what has happened only last night." Meanwhile, teddy bears and stuffed animals appear near the white coffins. The relatives are welcomed by Red Cross workers, given a cracker or a small bottle of water inside the small tent set up outside the entrance to the sports hall where they are waiting in line, waiting to go inside. Entering means risking to read on the coffin not a name, but a stony alphanumeric combination. Victims and nameless, waiting to be given an identity. A representative of the Islamic community leads them in prayer before their loved ones. Sadness is perceivable also in the faces of so many citizens who have been flocking to the PalaMilone sports hall since this morning to pay a floral tribute to the deceased. Prayer and silence, in front of the railings crowded with posters, banners, candles, and lots of flowers. Never too many: a way to say that such tragedies - as our political authorities unanimously repeat - must never happen again. The local Church is present, Archbishop Panzetta is leading the silent prayer in front of the coffins. The people of Crotona have seen many landings on their shores, and they are champions of hospitality. "Our people are good people," we are told by the Mayor, Vincenzo Voce. It is a perceivable fact. Schoolchildren also arrive, accompanied by their teachers. They silently approach the sports hall, as if tuning in to the surrounding grief. Perhaps the most beautiful image, nonetheless, is that of a child kneeling down and, although "the sea is not always blue," as reads a poster featuring a drawing of black waves, closes his eyes while tears and prayers rise from his heart. The expectation of hope, that same hope of the little girl hospitalized in the Crotona hospital, who has been walking through the corridors holding her doll since yesterday afternoon, striving to ease her bruises. Start again from here, but without "taking the spotlight off," joining forces because this sort of pain must never be felt.

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