

Italy's ultimatum to EU - Eastern Europe must take migrants or we'll block their cash

ITALY'S former Prime Minister has delivered a furious ultimatum to Eastern Europe demanding they take a fair share of migrants or face economic sanctions.

Matteo Renzi said he would use "the iron" fist to force countries in Eastern Europe to "respect the rules" as his country takes the brunt of the escalating migrant crisis.

He said: "Those who cannot stay in Italy must be accepted in Europe, otherwise we will stop transferring money to countries that do not accept quotas."

The socialist chief's furious rant comes as Eastern European nations, including Poland and Hungary, continue to refuse to take migrants from Italy under the European Union's migrant quota scheme.

Fed up of paying for members who lack solidarity, Mr Renzi vowed to punish them by cutting their cash.

They currently receive billions of pounds a year from Western nations in what are known as 'Cohesion Funds' - a form of foreign aid designed to bring their economies up to scratch to adopt the euro.

Speaking to local radio show 'Radio Anch'io', Mr Renzi, who is hoping make a return as PM in the next election, said the migrant crisis "will last twenty years".

He added: "But there are three essential things to do: first, to really help them in their countries of origin, which means, as we did, to increase investment in international cooperation; second, ius soli; and third, the limited number on the basis of integration capacity."

In mid-June, the European Commission brought a lawsuit against Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary for refusing to accept refugees and violating EU legislation.

In stark comparison, Italy is grappling with an influx, with UN figures revealing more than 94,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean into the nation so far this year.

And more than 2,300 have died while trying to attempt the perilous crossing.

At its shortest distance, the EU country is a mere 290 miles from the coast of Libya, a largely lawless country which has seen the number of people smugglers rocket.

Given the short distance to the EU from the North African coast, Italy, is dealing with a higher number of migrants on their shores when compared to other countries on the continent, particularly northern Europe.

Rome has pleaded with Brussels and its neighbours for help in dealing with the influx, with many politicians voicing their frustration over what they see as being abandoned to deal with the issue themselves.

(Additional reporting by Maria Ortega)

Source: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/837984/Italy-EU-refugee-crisis-latest-news-migrant-quota-eastern-european-Matteo-Renzi>

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