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Stories of Migrants. Building Memory, Learning Peace. The Storm Project



**Stories of Migrants.
Building Memory, Learning Peace**

THE STORM PROJECT

COPIA GRATUITA



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STORM

STORM ARCHIVE
Edition 2025/2026

First Edition
2025/2026

Credits

Authors:
Stenfort Julia; Kaur Gurpreet;
Vitullo Alessandra.

Content Creators:
Senatore Bianca, Fusco Mariasole,
Ponticelli Rita Gina, Saccone Carlotta,
Siniukova Evgeniia.

Graphics:
Maghweb

Publisher:
Com Nuovi Tempi

Stories of Migrants. Building Memory,
Learning Peace. The Storm Project

© 2026 edizioni com nuovi tempi
via Firenze 38 - 00184 Roma

Logo casa editrice: Takoua Ben Mohamed

www.confronti.net

ISBN: 978-88-89193-59-4

Finito di stampare nel mese di giugno
2026 da Digitalia Lab S.r.l.
- Via di Cervara 10, 00155 Roma

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STORM – Building Memories, Learning Peace

STORM is a participatory research, educational, and museum initiative that engages with one of Europe's most pressing and transformative realities: migration.

Emerging from the collaboration among three universities within the CIVIS European University Alliance, Sapienza University of Rome, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and the University of Bucharest, the project reimagines the university as a living laboratory, a space of encounter, and a catalyst for civic transformation.

Within the CIVIS framework, STORM contributes to the construction of a shared European cultural heritage grounded not in abstract values, but in lived experiences, memories, and stories shaped by mobility. Europe is thus approached not as a fixed political or geographical entity, but as a space historically and continuously produced through encounters, crossings, and migrations.

At the core of the project lies a clear conviction: migration is not an emergency to be managed, but a constitutive force of European history. The cultural heritage produced, comprising stories, voices, objects, images, and digital traces, forms an archive of migration memory that functions as a space of recognition and belonging.

WHAT

STORM aims to develop both a digital and a physical archive dedicated to contemporary migration to Europe, through the collection of personal narratives, life stories, and oral histories. These accounts are accompanied by a selection of everyday objects carried, used, or preserved throughout migratory journeys.

The project is designed both for migrants and their descendants, offering a space to encounter their own histories, reconnect with fragmented roots, and transmit memory across generations, and for wider European societies, by providing tools to challenge exclusionary narratives and foster a shared understanding of migration as a generative social process.

HOW

The STORM methodology is grounded in the co-production of knowledge rather than the extraction of information. The collection of stories is therefore conceived as a participatory process. All content is generated through encounters and dialogues with individuals who carry migratory experiences, allowing memory to emerge as a collective construction rather than a resource to be extracted.

WHY

The STORM approach is based on the understanding that memory is not neutral. Remembering is an act of agency, and preserving stories becomes a form of resistance against silencing, injustice, marginalization, and erasure. By recognizing migration as a foundational dimension of Europe's past and present, the project seeks to challenge and transform dominant exclusionary narratives.

Ultimately, STORM is not only a project about migration; it is a collective effort in memory-making, where remembrance becomes an act of peace.

WHO WE ARE

Project Coordinator

Alessandra Vitullo – *Sapienza University of Rome*
alessandra.vitullo@uniroma1.it

Project collaborators:

Abulfazil Fakhrunisa, Briatore Samuele, Caruso Salvatore,
Fusco Mariasole, Ponticelli Rita Gina, Gorokhno Kseniia,
Gurpreet Kaur, Ilyas Sandugash, Imordi Hannah, Kubasova
Victoria, Maghweb, Mazzanti Lucia, Ocak Halil Kemal,
Saccone Carlotta, Senatore Bianca, Stenfort Julia

Partners:

Dumitrache Liliana – *University of Bucharest*
Suarez Liliana – *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*

Collaborators:

Archivio Memorie Migranti
Arci Gay Roma
Associazione Nuova Generazione Italo-Cinese
Baobab Experience
Binario15
CONNGI
Centro Studi e Rivista Confronti
COSPE
Fiorino Vito
Fondazione Pangea
IoStoria APS
Linea d'Ombra
Maghweb
Mediterranean Hope
Nove Caring Humans
One Bridge To
Radio Popolare Milano
Rete Milano
Rete contro l'odio
Rete Vesuviana Solidale
SOS Méditerranée
Sportello Intercultura Gaycenter
WeWorld - Ventimiglia

OUR CONTACTS

Email

info@stormarchive.eu

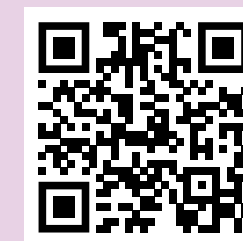
Instagram

stormarchive.eu

Visit our digital archive

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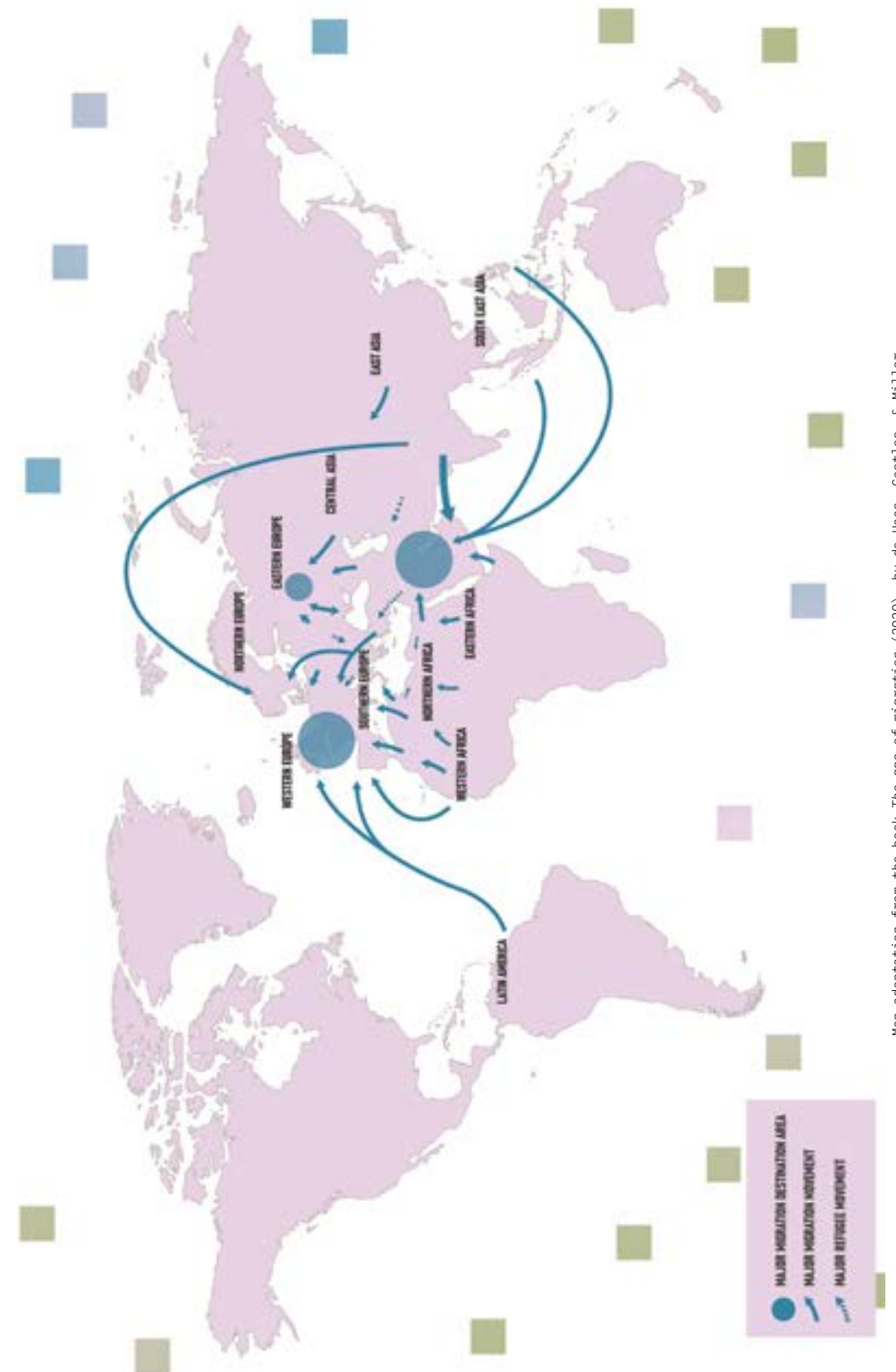
WEBSITE



STORM is the word we use when the sky shifts, when winds cross borders without asking, when what once seemed fixed begins to move. A storm unsettles, disorients, rearranges - but it also gathers and mixes; and when it passes, it reveals newly cleared horizons.

STORM is not just an acronym. It expresses how migration moves in much the same way: not as a single line, but as a force that reshapes landscapes and narratives. Yet first - and most deeply - it is a storm within those who choose to leave. The decision to migrate is itself a moment of upheaval: a crossing of inner thresholds where fear, hope, loss, and possibility collide.

Within this movement, stories do not simply arrive; they transform. And from what is stirred - sometimes painfully, always powerfully - there emerges a different Europe: not defined by borders, but shaped by crossings.



Map adaptation from the book *The age of migration* (2020), by de Haas, Castles, & Miller.



Ventimiglia "Death Pass". Photo by *Davide Primerano*.

THE OBJECTS

A museum-archive of objects and stories belonging to those who travel the migratory routes toward Europe. A place that gives materiality, form, and voice to those who, along these routes, die, hope, dream, and suffer - as all humans do.



Type of Object: *Calligraphy brush and rice paper*

Donor of Object: *Associazione Nuova Generazione Italo-Cinese*

Owner of Object: *Mrs. Huang from China*

Provenance of Object: *Calligraphy brush - Beijing, China, 2007. Rice paper - Milan, 2025*

Year of Digitalization *STORM archive: 2026*

At that time, I was in Beijing, attending a university course on teaching Chinese to foreigners. In a modest market stall, I came across this brush. It was not particularly striking, yet I was drawn to its simple and unassuming appearance. It carried a quiet dignity that mirrored how I felt as a student, full of potential, yet still unformed.

Calligraphy is not a subject formally studied at university. Yet, because it preserves traditional and archaic forms of Chinese characters, it is closely connected to the study of the language's origins. For this reason, it became a natural stimulus for my studies. I tried to practice, but in the end, between coursework and exams, I never had much time to devote to it.

When I moved to Italy, to Turin to be precise, to work as a Chinese teacher, I brought the brush with me. For me, it was not just a tool, but a fragment of my home soil. I never really used it, yet I had grown deeply attached to it. It stayed with me when I later moved to Milan. Even as my career gradually shifted away from teaching, the brush remained. Over time, it transformed from a dormant tool into a piece of my personal history, resting on my bookshelf like a bridge between the person I was in Beijing and the woman I had become in Italy.

A year ago, I took calligraphy lessons with a Chinese teacher, and the rice paper I submitted is one of the exercises I was assigned. Today, however, the brush has taken on a new purpose. I am now using it to teach my son the Chinese language.

My son was born in Milan and speaks both Chinese and Italian fluently, but I want him to learn to write Chinese from an early age. Writing is essential for truly understanding the language, for grasping the origins of words and the structure of characters. It is also important for him to understand where I come from and to remain connected to his roots.

I am no longer simply a migrant holding onto a relic. I am a mother planting a forest. Each time my son holds the brush, he is not only learning to write, but also learning who he is, carrying my story into the future, one stroke at a time.



Type of Object: *Stuffed animal / Pluchy*
Donor of Object: Baobab Experience
Owner of Object: Bahara, 6 years old from Sudan
Provenance of Object: Sudan
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

This stuffed animal arrived in Italy together with Bahara, a six-year-old girl from Sudan.

The little girl held it tightly during the sea crossing because, unlike her, the plushy could swim and would have helped her in case of a shipwreck.

The plushy was later left behind when Bahara set off again because, according to the little girl, it would not have been able to cross the Alps due to the cold.



Type of Object: *Mr. Berrad, teapot*
 Donor of Object: CONNGI
 Owner of Object: Aissa Basma from Italy-Morocco
 Provenance of Object: Morocco
 Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

The Moroccan teapot, or rather, Mr. Berrad, as I remember it, would sit in the kitchen or the living room, made of aluminum or sometimes silver-plated metal, always standing beside small decorated glass cups with colorful patterns or golden reflections.

Together, they formed something more: an invitation, a silent way of saying, "you are welcome." In my home, mint tea wasn't just a drink. It was a ritual, almost sacred. It took so little: the aroma would begin to spread, and the atmosphere of the house would change, becoming warmer and fuller.

And then there was that unmistakable sound of tea being poured from a height, cascading into the glasses... I can still hear it, as if it were marking time without haste, from morning to night, without the need for a schedule.

I remember clearly that there were two sets: one for everyday use and one reserved only for guests. The "important" set was always ready, placed on a small side table in the living room, covered with a beige cloth embroidered by my grandmother. We were not even allowed to go near it.

And like clockwork, if my sister and I got too close while playing, my mother's voice would ring out to scold us. But the most vivid memory I have is linked to slowness. Making mint tea meant stopping, taking one's time, and savoring the moment without rushing. The teapot and the glasses became witnesses to everything: conversations, laughter, and shared silences.



Type of Object: *Tabsil Attaous*, plate
Donor of Object: CONNGI
Owner of Object: Aissa Basma from Italy-Morocco
Provenance of Object: Morocco
Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

For me, the Tabsil Attous is not just a dish. It is a living memory, something that returns every time I think of the sense of community and the weekends, when the aromas would begin to fill the house from early morning: the scent of meat with prunes, spiced lemon chicken, and freshly baked homemade bread.

The Tabsil Attous was always kept preserved in the living room cabinet, alongside my mother's most precious tableware: round, in deep shades of blue and purple, with a majestic peacock at its center, decorated with gold. It was reserved for special occasions, used only when guests were invited.

At mealtime, it was placed right at the center of the table. I can still see the hands breaking the bread and dipping it into the marqa - such a simple gesture, yet for me, it already embodied the meaning of being together.

And yet, a question stayed with me: why, in the West, is that same gesture - eating with one's hands - often seen as something improper?

Even today, whenever I long for that feeling of togetherness, the Tabsil Attous simply cannot be missing.



Type of Object: *Zif Hayati*, scarf
Donor of Object: CONNGI
Owner of Object: Aissa Basma from Italy-Morocco
Provenance of Object: Morocco
Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

The Zif Hayati belongs to my most everyday memories. I see it again, light, almost always white, resting somewhere in the house or tied with natural ease around the heads of my mother, my aunts, or my grandmothers while they cooked or did household chores.

As a child, however, I only wore it during summers in Morocco after going to the hammam with my cousins; it held in that warmth and that sense of cleanliness after a hot bath.

But the Zif Hayati was also something more. I'll never forget one particular scene: my father sitting with the scarf tied tightly around his head, holding slices of lemon against his temples. It was an ancient gesture, passed down as a home remedy for headaches.

And today, thinking back on it, I realize that within that simple, light white scarf, there was much more than I imagined: well-being, care, and tradition.



Type of Object: *Piece of wooden debris from shipwreck*
Donor of Object: Vito Fiorino
Owner of Object: Vito Fiorino
Provenance of Object: Off the coast of Lampedusa
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

A small piece of wood may seem insignificant: light, anonymous, worn by salt and time. And yet, when it comes from the wreck of the ship that sank on 3 October 2013, that fragment becomes something else entirely: living memory, conscience, responsibility.

On that night, off the coast of Lampedusa, 368 people lost their lives and around 20 were reported missing - men, women, and children searching for a chance, for a future. That piece of wood floated among screams, darkness, silence, despair, and hope.

The fragment appears in its starkest and most tangible form. It is not polished, nor immediately "narrative." It is simply real: marked, damaged, transformed. Its surface is corroded, eaten away by salt and time, as if the sea itself had carved its passage into it.

Yet this piece of wood was once part of something larger: a boat carrying lives, hopes, and bodies. Now it is an isolated fragment - broken, but still here. That physical fracture echoes the human fracture of that night: interrupted lives, broken journeys, scattered families.

And yet, in its endurance, the wood speaks of something more. It did not disappear. It made its way here. It was recovered, preserved, and donated to us by Vito Fiorino - an ordinary man who, on that night, did something extraordinary. With his small boat, the Gamar, he went out to sea and rescued 47 people.

Vito often recalls the moment he found himself before a sea filled with bodies and voices, and the immediate, instinctive decision to act. There was no time to think - only to reach out a hand. He often says he is not a hero; he was simply someone who did not look away. He stood by a choice: the choice to remain human.



Type of Object: *Family portrait*
Donor of Object: Frishta Haidari
Owner of Object: Frishta Haidari from Afghanistan
Provenance of Object: Pakistan and Afghanistan
Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

Every time I look at this photo, it brings me back to the beginning of the year 2000 to the early civil wars and the genocide in Afghanistan. I see the worry in my father's eyes, and I am taken back to my childhood and to my life as a refugee in Pakistan. It reminds me of my parents' lives, of the hardships we endured, and of our migration. I often find myself thinking about how war and displacement shape people's lives, especially the lives of children. In this photo, my parents were children too.

Childhood should be a time of peace and security, yet for many it is marked by fear, instability, and loss. This photo is important to me because it holds stories that I cannot fully put into words, yet whose impact I have deeply felt throughout my life.

After the change of government in 2021, those memories returned with force. I remember the night of August 15, when the fate of millions of people shifted once again. Days and nights seemed to blur together, reduced to alternating darkness and light. Once more, I took the path of migration, in search of a normal life and a different future for the next generation.

Now, as I study the sociology of migration at university, I find myself confronting a fundamental question: what happens to the millions of people who migrate, whether by choice or necessity? Along the way, some answers have become clearer to me.

This photo is part of my life and my destiny. It is a reminder of family, migration, and childhood, and of the enduring impact these experiences leave behind.



Type of Object: *Box of memories*
 Donor of Object: Hanna Imordi
 Owner of Object: Hanna Imordi from Nigeria
 Provenance of Object: Italy
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

This box represents the journey many migrants undertake, shaped by dreams, expectations, and the realities they encounter along the way.

Before the journey, Europe is often imagined as a place of opportunity: a “land of milk and honey”, where a better life seems within reach. Words like ‘hope’, ‘freedom’, ‘progress’, and ‘future’ define this vision. These ideas are carried at the beginning, like promises. But journeys are not always what they seem.

Inside the box, the narrative shifts. What remains is not always what was imagined but what is necessary to survive. The contents - couscous, sugar, water, and a notebook - reflect moments of waiting, uncertainty, and adaptation. They tell a story of resilience, where dreams are not lost but transformed.

This “Box of Memories” is both personal and collective. It speaks of what is carried at the start of a journey and what remains at the end - reminding us that behind every movement is a human story shaped by courage, sacrifice, and the will to begin again.



Type of Object: *Small children's hairclip*
Donor of Object: Gurpreet Kaur
Owner of Object: Gurpreet Kaur from Italy - Punjab
Provenance of Object: Italy
Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

These hair clips are no larger than a pumpkin seed, yet they feel like a heartbeat against the palm when you hold them.

When I started elementary school in Italy, I was the “only foreign student” in my class - the one who looked different and sometimes acted differently due to cultural differences.

But it was only when a group of girls approached me, offering not a book or a drawing, but these tiny hair clips, that something shifted. It was an invitation, a hand extended in friendship, after which I never felt left out again.

Surprisingly, they left such a deep impression that the hair clips survived the chaotic depths of different backpacks, the frantic packing of several apartment moves, and the relentless shuffling of heavy luggage.

For me, it felt statistically impossible that something so small could remain. Now, whenever I reach into the bottom of my jewelry box, my fingers still graze that familiar ridged plastic.

It is as if the clips have always refused to be lost, anchoring me to the day I was first welcomed into a land that was not my own.

To a stranger, they might look like forgotten clutter destined for the vacuum cleaner, but to me they are among the “heaviest” things I own - carrying the weight of unconditional kindness and the warmth of friendship.



Type of Object: *Black winter jacket*
Donor of Object: Linea d'Ombra
Owner of Object: Unknown migrant
Provenance of Object: Balkan route
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

The jacket lies on the ground in the square in front of the station in Trieste. It is light, too light for the winter woods crossed along the Balkan route. It has faded, worn out by rain and mud; the sleeves are stiff, crusted with dry soil and filled with fine dust, as if the journey had left behind a residue impossible to shake off.

Often, the pockets still hold small traces of life: a phone number written on a piece of paper, a photograph folded over and over again, a piece of bread wrapped in paper.

This one too has a broken zipper, fastened with a safety pin. A simple, necessary gesture: along the route everything is mended, everything that can be kept together is kept together.

The fabric still carries that acrid smell of sweat and rain, a smell that speaks of nights spent outdoors, of borders crossed, of fear and stubborn determination. Yet, inside that fabric there was once a body that walked for hundreds and hundreds of kilometres. It kept warm, shielded from the snow, and served as a pillow on the hard ground. It was a blanket, a shield, at times a home.

In Trieste many garments are left like that, piled up in a corner of the square. They are no longer needed; they are too worn to carry on. They remain like shed skins after a crossing.

Every jacket tells of a crossed border, a danger escaped, a stubborn step toward a future still uncertain. It is a worn object, but also the tangible proof of a silent struggle to stay alive.



Type of Object: *Two individual shoes*
Donor of Object: Linea d'Ombra
Owner of Object: Unknown migrant
Provenance of Object: Balkan route
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

The shoes are light, almost weightless yet they carry an entire journey on them. The cloth is stiff with dried mud, with rain endured in the forest between Bosnia and Croatia, with the dust of Serbian roads. Inside, the insole is worn down: the shape of a foot is pressed into it like a cast.

The big toe has hollowed out a small cave; the heel is smooth as polished stone. When they reach the square in front of the station in Trieste, they sit down and slowly untie their shoes. They fall to the ground with a dull, weary thud.

The smell is strong – the smell of poorly healed wounds, of skin kept damp for days. The shoes tell what the boys cannot: the sprints to avoid the police, the nights in the woods, the pushbacks, the steps counted so as not to lose the group.

When they finally slip them off, their feet are swollen, cut, covered in open blisters, but the shoes remain there, beside the bench, abandoned.

They are no longer needed. In Trieste there are many like them: they are the tangible sign of a crossing accomplished, but also the mark of a price paid step by step. Every worn sole is a map.



This drawing was born from the memories that remained imprinted in my son's mind. The image perfectly represents the trauma he suffered during the evacuation.

I took the photo while my eldest son was sleeping on the drawing of the Kabul airport during the evacuation, which remained his recurring nightmare for a long time. We spent days and nights at the Kabul airport without food, water, or a place to sit.

I had only a bag with a few diapers and the hospital documents. I held my little son around my waist with a scarf because my legs could no longer take the strain. He was purple with fever, his throat was dry, while my eldest son, only six years old, tried to be as strong as a man to help me.

We were trapped: behind us the Taliban, in front of us the foreign soldiers. Amid the chaos, American soldiers fired tear gas to disperse the crowd. A tear gas canister landed right on my eldest son's feet; his legs burned, and everything around him turned red, like in a horror movie.

We couldn't see anything. I screamed at Ali to hold on to my skirt, while he cried, "Mommy, I'm burning!" Shortly afterward, they threw freezing water at us from fire hoses. My youngest son stopped breathing from the shock; I feared I'd lost him. We even spent a day and a night in the sewer drain, until the Italian soldiers spotted us and saved us. I'll never forget those scenes.

Type of Object: *Photo*

Donor of Object: NOVE Caring Humans - Taranhe Rezaei (driver Pink Shuttle Kabul - Nove project)

Owner of Object: A mother from Afghanistan

Provenance of Object: Kabul Airport

Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026



Type of Object: *Portion of concrete brick wall*
 Donor of Object: One bridge to
 Owner of Object: Barrack in Belgrade
 Provenance of Object: Belgrade, Serbia
 Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

This fragment of wall is all that remains of the “Barracks” in Belgrade, abandoned industrial warehouses behind the central train station that, between 2016 and 2017, became one of the most emblematic symbols of the Balkan route. In less than a year, more than two thousand people, mostly young men from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, lived there, stranded in their attempts to cross the border into Hungary. They were exposed to the harsh Balkan winter, with no heating, no running water, no sanitary services.

And yet, that place was not only a space of survival. Over time, it also became a space of connection. Volunteers from across Europe chose to be there, alongside those who lived in the Barracks: kitchens, showers, and chemical toilets were set up, and with organizations such as Hot Food Idomeni and No Name Kitchen, together with Serbian citizens, something was built that went beyond assistance. Even the walls were transformed, painted, marked with signs and words, to affirm that there were people there, not numbers.

On one of those walls, the words Open the Border appeared. They were signed “Yahma”, a name that echoes the Arabic word for “dove”, a symbol of peace and welcome. It is not just a signature; it is a claim to voice. A direct demand from someone who experienced that border on their own skin.

In May 2017, the Serbian government ordered the eviction and demolition of the Barracks. Hundreds of people were once again left with nothing, or transferred to government-run centers designed more to contain than to welcome, to stop the “game”. Shortly before everything was erased, the organization One Bridge To recovered this fragment of wall, saving it from total destruction.



Type of Object: *Broken Mobile Phone*
Donor of Object: Rete Milano
Owner of Object: Unknown migrant from South Asia
Provenance of Object: Croatian - Bosnian border
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

The screen of this broken phone is crossed by deep cracks, like fine fractures spreading through thin ice. It was smashed by a Croatian police officer during a violent pushback at the border with Bosnia.

For those travelling along this route, a phone is far more than a simple electronic device. It is a map, a compass, a flashlight. It is the essential tool for navigating through forests, checking paths via GPS, and translating words from an unfamiliar language. It is also the only link to the family left behind: a single message sent after days of silence can reassure parents, siblings, or children thousands of kilometers away.

When intercepted, migrants are often forcibly pushed back; accounts gathered along the route frequently tell of confiscated or destroyed phones, shoes taken away, and backpacks set on fire. Breaking these phones is a deliberate act to strip migrants of their ability to orient themselves and to document what happens to them.

This phone belonged to a young man who had set out from South Asia. During one crossing attempt, his group was stopped by border agents. After searches and threats, his device was thrown to the ground and struck repeatedly with a boot.

The glass cracked, the screen went dark. Shortly after, the group was escorted back across the Bosnian border. The phone's memory, however, remains intact - holding photographs, offline maps and voice messages: small fragments of a life in transit.



Type of Object: *Powerbank*
 Donor of Object: Rete Milano
 Owner of Object: Unknown Sub-Saharan migrant
 Provenance of Object: Croatian - Bosnian border
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

At first glance, it looks like a simple electronic accessory, one of the countless objects millions of people carry with them every day.

But along the migration route that cuts through the Balkans, a power bank can make the difference between finding your way and getting lost, between staying in touch and falling completely off the grid.

This device belonged to a Sub-Saharan migrant travelling the Balkan route, and it served one purpose: keeping his phone alive during the long walks through forests and mountains, often days away from any source of electricity.

For those making this journey, power becomes as precious a resource as water or food. In the informal camps and temporary settlements that spring up around towns like Bihać and Velika Kladuša, charging a phone or a portable battery can mean long waits and jostling for space at outlets shared by many people at once.

Migrants will often carry more than one power bank, knowing full well that along the way there will be no other chance to recharge.

This power bank was recovered following a pushback at the Bosnia-Croatia border. The group carrying it was intercepted in the middle of the night and forced to turn back. During the search, many of their belongings were confiscated or damaged.

In this case, the light-blue power bank was smashed and stamped on until the battery swelled and began to smoke, making also the passage of the violence visible.



Type of Object: *Rusty nail*
Donor of Object: Rete Milano
Owner of Object: A boat from the Mediterranean
Provenance of Object: Tunisia
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

This rusted nail was once part of the vessels used by migrants departing from the Tunisian coast to cross the Mediterranean Sea.

In recent years, along certain stretches of the Tunisian shoreline, a particular kind of small boat has become widespread - flat, lightweight craft made from thin sheet metal, hastily assembled with metal plates, rough welds and simple nails like this one. Among those who attempt the crossing, they are often referred to as bare - "coffins" - a blunt name born from a clear-eyed understanding of the risk they represent.

These boats are built improvised, often in informal workshops or directly on the shore. The materials are cheap and easily sourced. Metal sheets are bent, layered and fastened together with nails or rivets. The result is a fragile structure, built to carry far more people than it could ever safely hold.

This nail held together one of the sheet metal joints along the side of the vessel. Its function was simple yet critical: to bind two thin pieces of metal that were under constant strain from the weight of the passengers and the battering of the waves.

Out in the open sea, the structural integrity of a vessel like this depends on tiny elements - even a single piece of iron.



Type of Object: *Beaded Necklace*
Donor of Object: Rete Vesuviana Solidale
Owner of Object: Ali, 40 years old, Kurdish migrant
Provenance of Object: Idomeni Refugee Camp, Greece (2016)
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

In 2016, the border between Greece and North Macedonia became the symbol of a Europe that was closing its doors.

In Idomeni, an informal camp born out of mud and waiting, among cockroaches, asbestos and rats, about 15,000 people arrived there at the same time. Entire families, single people, and unaccompanied minors lived in summer tents, exposed to the rain and to the denial of fundamental rights, dreaming of continuing along the Balkan Route.

Ali was one of them. He was 40 years old and carried his whole world with him: his wife and three young children, aged seven, five, and four. After seeing Kurdistan devastated and losing all his material possessions, Ali had invested the savings of a lifetime to pay for a clandestine and dangerous journey, hoping to offer his children a future without the sound of bombs.

Rete Vesuviana Solidale met him there, between the food lines and the barbed wire. They started playing with his children, and from that moment a friendship grew. When our paths finally separated, Ali gave to them this necklace.

It was not just an object. It was the last fragment of his homeland, a piece of identity that had survived kilometres of roads, deprivation, fear, and violence. A gift to thank those who, in that chaos, had recognised his dignity as a human being - and which, at that moment, was all the material wealth he had left.

He told them: "To get here we paid with everything we had. In the end we found nothing. Europe closes its doors. Our sons and daughters have the right to live, not to die here. But the most important thing is that we have not lost the strength to remain human." They said goodbye with a hug, a hug as wide as the world.



Type of Object: *Drawing on A4 paper*
Donor of Object: Rete Vesuviana Solidale
Owner of Object: Fatima, 5 year old orphan migrant from Afghanistan
Provenance of Object: Along the Balkan Route, Bosnia (2021-2022)
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

Along the Balkan Route, between the mountains of Bosnia and Europe's fortified borders, human rights often stop at the barbed wire. Here, thousands of people live in what migrants bitterly call the "Game": the desperate attempts to cross the border through violence, cold, and exhaustion.

Here Rete Vesuviana Solidale met Fatima. She was only five years old and had already lost her parents, killed by the bombs of the Afghan regime. She walked holding tightly to her aunt's hand, the only link left to her past.

They had no toys to give her, only a few pens and some coloured highlighters. Yet those simple tools were enough to rekindle a light. Fatima began to draw. She did not choose the war scenes that had destroyed her life; instead, she filled the page with hearts.

She gave them to the operators with a smile that seemed to challenge the cruelty of the world, to defy every form of barbarity. In that gesture, there was innocence that refuses to disappear, the powerful desire for a just future, and the plea for a world where a child can grow up without the fear of falling or dying under a bomb.

"A drawn heart is the first brick of a world without borders".



Type of Object: *Identity bracelet*
 Donor of Object: Rete Vesuviana Solidale
 Owner of Object: Mamadou from Mali
 Provenance of Object: Italy. Sportello Diritti, SmallAxe collective
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

A plastic bracelet with an identification number, the kind they give people during migrant landings. This belongs to Mamadou, a survivor of the hell of the desert and the Libyan detention camps.

For the authorities it is just a procedure: a circle of plastic tied around the wrist of those who step off rescue ships. For Mamadou, that bracelet was for years the only trace of himself he had left. He arrived from Mali, fleeing civil war and political persecution. He crossed the desert before falling into the hands of traffickers in Libya.

In Libya, a country where migrants are systematically tortured with the tacit complicity of international agreements, Mamadou remained imprisoned for twelve months, a victim of torture and systematic exploitation. When he finally managed to go out to sea, he watched his travelling companions swallowed by the waves before being rescued.

Once in Italy, he was placed in a CAS (Extraordinary Reception Centre) without any legal protection and he turned to our Sportello Diritti of the SmallAxe collective.

He was still wearing that bracelet. He said he could not take it off: "It reminds me of where I come from and the friends the sea took from me." That number was his only link to those who had not made it.

After three years of legal struggle, Mamadou finally obtained international protection. Only then, freed from the fear of deportation, from the nightmare of being sent back and from unjust laws, did he decide to give to Rete Vesuviana Solidale his bracelet.

It was no longer a chain. It had become a testament to someone who had resisted death despite everything: "I am no longer a number".



Type of Object: *Kids' red T-shirt*
Donor of Object: Rete Vesuviana Solidale
Owner of Object: Rayan, a Bangladeshi migrant died in the Mediterranean Sea
Provenance of Object: Libya
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

Libya, 2021. After a year of imprisonment, violence, abuse, and threats, a group of friends from Bangladesh was ready to leave for Europe. But freedom has a price not everyone can afford: Libya is a country emptied of its humanity. Rayan did not have the money demanded by the smugglers and, despite the violence he had suffered, had to stay behind, watching his friends go toward what was their dream of a better life.

Before boarding the boat, Hassan took off his red shirt and gave it to Rayan. A quick gesture, like a talisman to remind him not to give up, a promise that they would soon hug again in Europe.

Hassan said: "Keep it. It will bring you luck. I'll see you on the other side, brother."

A few days later, the sea turned to silence and death. Hassan and almost all of his companions died in the Mediterranean when their boat, carrying about seventy people, capsized. Only one person survived. Meanwhile, Rayan remained on the wrong shore - where the torture never stopped - with a broken heart and that red shirt in his hands: the only piece of Hassan that the sea could not take.

Today, this shirt is no longer just a piece of clothing. It is the weight of a broken promise, the symbol of those who stayed, and the silent scream of those who never made it.

Rayan carried it with him to our Sportello Diritti at the SmallAxe collective of the Rete Vesuviana Solidale, donating it so the world could know that behind every number counted at sea there was a human being capable of love, and with the right to live.



Type of Object: *Silver Bracelet*
Donor of Object: Mr. Avtar Singh
Owner of Object: Mr. Avtar Singh from Punjab
Provenance of Object: Punjab, India
Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

This bracelet's story began in a dusty shop near my village, just days before the departure that changed my life forever. I bought it with the money I had left after purchasing all the essentials I would need to survive the journey.

As I crossed the border, the silver felt cold and heavy against my skin, but I promised myself that no matter how far the currents of the world might carry me, I would always carry a piece of my origin with me.

I have never taken it off for nearly three decades; it has become part of my silhouette. The silver has absorbed my sweat over the years, back when my only means of survival was a bicycle. I remember clearly the clicking of the metal against the handlebars as I pedaled through rain and grit, chasing a future that felt miles out of reach.

This bracelet was there when my hands were calloused and cold, and it was there years later, resting against the steering wheel of my first car, a shining symbol of the long road traveled.

It has witnessed moments of prejudice, the long winters of loneliness when I spoke a language no one else understood, and the stability I slowly built, along with the citizenship I finally earned.

It holds a thousand unspoken prayers and fulfilled hopes. Every time I look down at my wrist, I do not see a piece of jewelry, but the dream that has finally come true.



Type of Object: *Rubber boat fragment*
 Donor of Object: SOS Méditerranée
 Owner of Object: SOS Méditerranée
 Provenance of Object: Central Mediterranean Sea
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

Since its founding in 2016, SOS MEDITERRANEE has saved more than 43,000 people. Rescue operations often take place in international waters off the coasts of Libya or Tunisia, bringing migrants from various countries to safety.

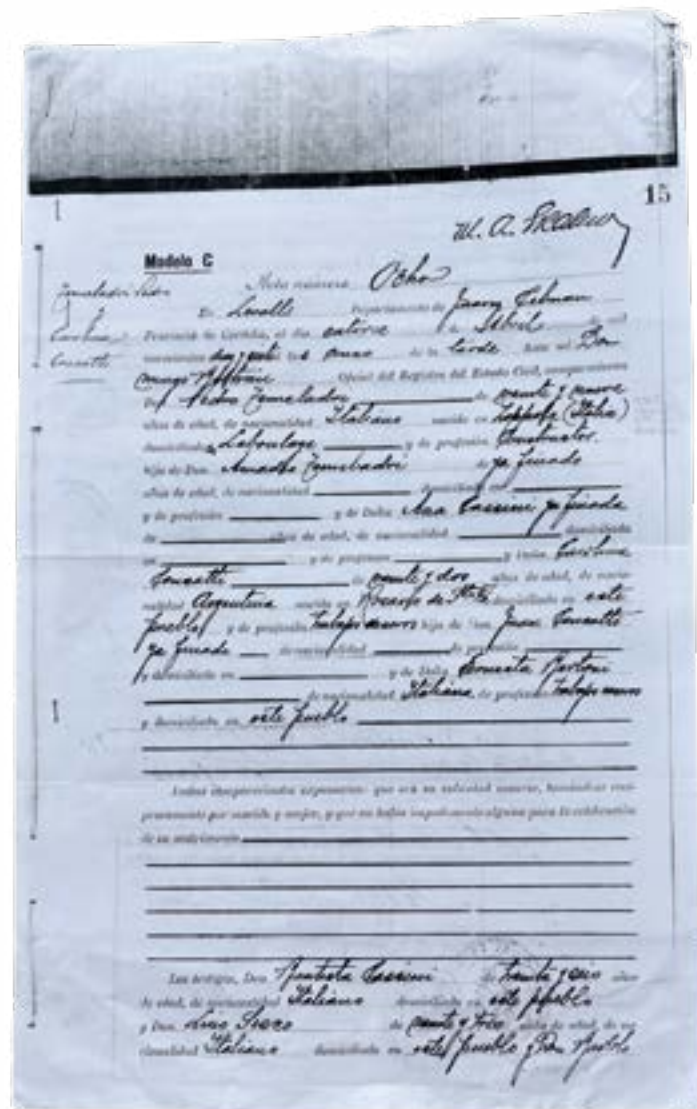
These fragments of a rubber boat were collected during a rescue operation on the night of May 4 to 5, 2025, while the Director of SOS MEDITERRANEE, Valeria Taurino, was on board the ship.

During the two rescue operations, 108 people were brought to safety, including one woman, 25 unaccompanied minors, and an 11-month-old baby girl. The survivors came from several countries, including Bangladesh, Somalia, Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Eritrea, and Sudan. The team welcomed them, exhausted from the long journey and suffering from seasickness, hypothermia, and fatigue, and provided immediate assistance. Our midwife immediately took care of Zahra, the only young woman on board, and Naima, her 11-month-old daughter.

The stories they shared about the detention conditions they endured for weeks and months, both in the hands of traffickers and in Libyan prisons, were horrifying: they were crammed together like animals, with no possibility to wash, often without even access to a toilet, and with wounds from beatings and torture left untreated and prone to infection. Scabies was among the least severe of their afflictions.

On the deck of the Ocean Viking, little Naima took her first unsteady steps. With her innocence, she smiled at everyone and quickly became the ship's mascot. She was a burst of energy, life, sweetness, and carefree joy, despite everything.

At dawn on May 9, the 108 survivors finally arrived at the port of Ortona, where they said goodbye to the team that had cared for them in the previous days and began a new life.



Type of Object: Photocopy of Marriage Act
 Donor of Object: Carlos Torres
 Owner of Object: Pietro Temeladri from Italy
 Provenance of Object: Villa Maria, Cordoba - Argentina
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

Imagine leaving a poor land, where you cannot envision a future, or rather, where the present itself makes clear that it will not be a happy one.

You board a boat with thousands of others, migrants as desperate as you are, with little or nothing, often alone. You arrive in a foreign country, the so-called "land of opportunity," where many before you have chosen to go. You do not speak the language, you do not have a home, in fact you have nothing, and you possess only a few skills: manual labor. And so you begin again, with your hands.

It was 1914 when Pietro Temeladri decided to leave Zoppola, a small town in the province of Pordenone in Italy, little more than a road and a few scattered houses. He was 27 when he arrived in Argentina and began building houses, like many Italian emigrants of that era.

He settled in Laboulaye, in the province of Córdoba. After a few years, he married, as this marriage certificate records, Carolina Concati, who was born in Argentina but was the daughter of Italian migrants. In this document, Pietro became Pedro.

By that time, Pedro was no longer just a worker. He became the owner of a construction company. In Laboulaye, he financed the construction of the monument to Christopher Columbus, the Italian Society building, and the local church, which he never saw completed. Another document records his death, which occurred far from both his homes, in Buenos Aires.

One hundred and thirty-one years after Pedro's birth, I, his great-grandson, was able, thanks to these documents and a birth certificate, to apply for Italian citizenship and build my future in Europe, perhaps the same future my great-grandfather had once imagined.



Type of Object: *A Setar hardcase*
Donor of Object: University of Bucharest
Owner of Object: Amir from Iran
Provenance of Object: Iran
Year of Digitalization STORM archive: 2026

This instrument case, owned by Amir, an Iranian musician, arrived empty, but its interior held the outline of his Persian Setar, central to the classical musical traditions of Iran.

For Amir, his Setar is not simply an instrument, but his most precious possession and the core of his artistic identity. He carried it across borders, airports, and checkpoints, from Iran to Romania, protected by this hardcase.

Before leaving Iran, Amir worked as a music teacher and performer in Esfahan, until censorship made it impossible for him to teach or perform freely in Iran.

In 2011, he was invited to Romania for the George Enescu Festival, where he could return to the stage after years of silence. He later returned to Iran but worsening repression forced him to leave the country permanently.

The Setar, held close during each crossing, accompanied him throughout his migration journey to Europe.

What Amir donated is not the instrument itself but its hardcase. It symbolises protection: of the instrument, of memory, of the freedom to keep making music across borders.



Type of Object: *Phone*
 Donor of Object: University of Bucharest
 Owner of Object: Cédric Yves from Cameroon
 Provenance of Object: Greece
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

Cédric is a 35-year-old man. He is from Cameroon, but he had to leave his country in 2019. He traveled first to Turkey, then to Greece by boat, where he lost all his belongings. He spent four difficult years in Greece without documents, working to survive and starting to write books.

Later, he was relocated to Romania through a European program, obtained legal status in five months, and now lives and works in Bucharest. When arrived in Greece, on the Island of Kos he was not in touch with his family for 4/6 months. With his first earnings he managed to buy a 50 euros phone. The black device is small, plenty of scratches, ruined, with a damaged princess sticker on the rear panel.

It may seem old-fashioned, it may appear as a basic object. But the phone was the only way to reconnect with his beloved ones, with his past. At that time, this amount of money carried an overwhelming emotional and material weight, as Cédric explained that it felt equivalent to hundreds or even thousands of euros.

The phone itself was likely a very basic, low-cost device, chosen not for its features or performance, but for its sole practical function: communication. Most importantly, the phone represented far more than a simple object. After months of complete isolation, it became his first real link back to the outside world.

The device symbolized emotional survival and continuity: bridging the gap between displacement and belonging. For Cédric, the phone was not a consumer good but a lifeline: a fragile yet essential tool that restored a minimal sense of stability, presence, and connection to his identity and past. A symbol of survival, dignity and resilience.



Type of Object: *Bible*
 Donor of Object: We World - Ventimiglia
 Owner of Object: Unknown migrant from Kerala
 Provenance of Object: Ventimiglia
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

The Malayalam Bible found along the “Death Pass” of Ventimiglia is an object that holds within it a story of faith, pain, and resistance. The volume, blackened and corroded, with pages that are loose, stiff, and warped by water, bears witness to a long journey, not merely physical but also spiritual.

It is written in Malayalam, the language of Kerala, a state in southern India where religions, languages, and traditions have long coexisted, and where Christianity has roots stretching back to antiquity. In Kerala, Christian communities of Syrian and Latin rite have existed for centuries, and the Bible is not simply a book but a domestic and intimate presence, a symbol of belonging and protection.

But this Bible did not remain within the walls of a church or a home. It was carried away, perhaps tucked inside a migrant’s backpack, perhaps held tightly to someone’s chest through nights of fear. Its journey became a forced pilgrimage, a crossing of seas and borders that transformed it from a sacred text into a relic of survival.

Scorched along its spine by fire, perhaps from an attempt to stay warm or from a makeshift flame, and soaked in smoke and mud, its rippled and stained pages reveal a use that was at once desperate and tender. There are traces of fingers, flakes of ash, and scratches, as though the ink itself had been shaped by fear and faith in equal measure.

Perhaps the person who carried it came from a Christian family in Kochi or Kottayam, where Mass is still celebrated in Syriac and homes are filled with the scent of incense. That sacred text had become a fragment of home, a talisman of meaning in a life that had been broken into pieces.

Now, the book is no longer simply a religious object but a human document, a secular relic of contemporary suffering. In its folds, crusted with sand and mold, one can read the tenacity of a journey and the echo of a prayer never spoken aloud, perhaps whispered into the noise of the sea or into the cold of the mountains.



Type of Object: *Dresses*
Donor of Object: We World - Ventimiglia
Owner of Object: Unknown migrants
Provenance of Object: Ventimiglia
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

These long dresses were found along the “Death Pass” of Ventimiglia. They are minimal, designed to be practical, easy to wash, and quick to dry. The sleeves are long and straight, without any visible decoration; the neckline is simple, barely suggested, with a small opening at the front closed by a few buttons.

On the chest, almost invisible, there are small traces - perhaps signs of wear, perhaps stains: clues of prolonged use, of days spent without the possibility of truly stopping.

These dresses were made to accompany, to cover, to protect, and they may have been packed into a backpack for exactly that reason: they are loose, designed not to cling to the body and not to draw the unwanted attention of men. One can almost imagine a woman folding them carefully into her backpack, together with just a few other things.

On the “Death Pass” of Ventimiglia they were resting on a rock, perhaps laid out in the sun to dry, and left there after a hasty escape. And just like a stone, it transformed from a garment into a trace. Today, whoever wore them is no longer there - at least not there - and perhaps, we hope, she continued her journey, or perhaps she was forced to stop again, somewhere else.

But her dresses remained, like a suspended presence, and they hold memories. It is the outline of an absence. It tells of a life in transit, of identities reduced to the essentials, of decisions made in a matter of seconds that shape entire destinies. Looking at it, one has the feeling that they were never truly abandoned, but only left behind - waiting for someone, passing by, to stop and read the story it carries with it.



Type of Object: *Prayer rug*
 Donor of Object: We World - Ventimiglia
 Owner of Object: Unknown migrant
 Provenance of Object: Ventimiglia
 Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

This prayer rug is small, lightweight, and made to be folded and carried. Its sharp creases have become something like wrinkles - the mark of daily use. But it is more than a religious object. Step by step, it became a shield against the cold, against fear, against the roughness of the ground.

It was found on the "Death Pass" of Ventimiglia, among rocks, scrub, and silences broken only by the wind. No one knows when it was left behind, or why. Perhaps it fell from a backpack during a sudden dash, perhaps it was abandoned because it had become too bulky - or too heavy for someone already carrying the weight of fear. You can almost picture the person who carried it.

A man, or a woman, who had set out from far away with only the bare essentials. The rug, folded carefully and slipped into a backpack, was something like a piece of home - likely used at night as well, to curl up against and sleep. And then to pray, of course: to pray for survival, laid out in the direction of Mecca, perhaps in search of some kind of orientation, a direction - not only geographical.

That rug witnessed brief rests and sudden departures. It gathered dust, sweat, perhaps tears. It absorbed the cold of the nights and the warmth of bodies pressed against it. It was a silent witness to a crossing made of waiting, of measured steps, of borders invisible yet brutally real.

Now it is still kept here in Rome - but it goes on telling the stories of lives held in suspension, of people who travel not by choice but by necessity. It still speaks of those who cross passes more dangerous than most - like this one through Ventimiglia - not in search of something more, but to salvage what little remains.



Type of Object: *Red sweater*
Donor of Object: We World - Ventimiglia
Owner of Object: Unknown migrant
Provenance of Object: Ventimiglia
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026

The sweater is a bright, saturated red, almost alive, despite its creases and the signs of time. It is a light sweatshirt, long-sleeved, with elasticated cuffs and a slightly pulled lower hem. The fabric appears soft but tired, marked by deep creases, as though it had been rolled up and compressed for a long time inside an overfull backpack.

It was found along the "Death Pass" of Ventimiglia. Abandoned among rocks and earth, among the traces of other invisible passages, it was a vital defense during the coldest hours. It may have belonged to a boy, perhaps young, barely past adolescence. The sweatshirt still carries the sweat and effort that accumulates along the way, even though it was lost - perhaps during a sudden escape. In a moment, it was left behind.

And yet that red keeps speaking, even without a voice. It speaks of energy, of motion, of a life pushing forward in spite of everything. And so, this sweatshirt becomes tangible proof - almost violent in its simplicity - that behind every abandoned object there are stories that do not end there.

Every trace left along that path is a missing presence, yet one that endures in the story it leaves behind.

Type of Object: *Toiletries*
Donor of Object: We World - Ventimiglia
Owner of Object: Unknown migrant
Provenance of Object: Ventimiglia
Year of Donation to STORM museum: 2026



They are small, lightweight objects: a nearly empty shampoo bottle, a tube of toothpaste, some toothbrushes, a stick of deodorant, and anti-diarrhea tablets. The colors are those of bathroom products - blues, whites, greens - but here they look faded, dulled by dust, moisture, and time spent out in the open.

Even the labels have been worn away. These are objects made for everyday use, for gestures repeated so often they become almost automatic - but outside a bathroom, far from any private space, they become something else entirely.

On the "Death Pass" of Ventimiglia, these remnants speak of an ordinary life struggling to hold on even in the harshest of conditions. Washing, tending to one's body, preserving a minimum of dignity: simple acts that here become difficult, almost extraordinary.

You can picture someone who, having found a hidden corner, uses a little water to rinse off, to shake the dust away, to feel like a person again rather than just a body in motion. Those bottles were opened carefully, their contents rationed. Every drop matters when you have no way of knowing when the next chance will come.

Then, as with so many other things, the moment arrives when even these become a burden. They break, run out, lose their purpose - or they simply have to be left behind, because space in a backpack is tight, because the journey demands that you carry only what is absolutely essential. And so they remain, scattered among the stones, almost invisible.

They don't catch the eye the way a brightly colored piece of clothing might, but they speak in a more intimate register. They tell of a daily struggle to hold onto some sense of normalcy within a condition that is anything but normal - one that is, in fact, violent in its demands.

At home, objects like these go completely unnoticed. On the route, they become something else: tangible proof of humanity. Evidence that even along a path marked by exhaustion and danger, there is still room for a gesture of care - for the quiet attempt to remain, in some small way, oneself.

