



Civil MRCC

Coordination and documentation platform for people in distress in the Central Mediterranean

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N°9

November 2023



Commemoration in Lampedusa, October 11, 2023, Credit: Maldusa

ECHOES

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NEVER FORGET, NEVER FORGIVE

On 11th of October 2023 an impressive commemorAction took place near the port of Lampedusa to remember the victims of the big shipwrecks ten years ago and at the same time to point out the responsibility of the European border regime in the ongoing death at sea that continues to this day. According to IOM figures, in 2023 another 2480 people died adding to the 17,000 deaths and disappearances recorded by MMP since 2014.

As safe passage was denied to people on the move, they were killed by a racist policy of migration control, determent, and externalization. We will never forget and never forgive those state border crimes while we continue our support for and our solidarity with all people on the move.

Since the beginning of the year 2023:

- 144.675 people arrived in Italy by boat, a significant number of whom **arrived autonomously** (UNHCR figure until November 5)
- 10.693 people were **rescued by the civil fleet** from more than 200 boats in distress (CMRCC figure until October 31)
- 14.894 people were **pushed back** to Libya after they were intercepted by the EU-supported so-called Libyan Coast Guard (UNHCR figures as of November 4) and 44.092 people were intercepted by the Tunisian authorities (FTDES figures until October 31)
- 2.188 people have been reported **dead** or **missing** on the Central Mediterranean Route (IOM figures until November 18) including 1.293 people who fled Tunisia (FTDES figures until October 31).

“As safe passage was denied to people on the move, they were killed by a racist policy of migration control, determent and externalization. We will never forget and never forgive those state border crimes while we continue our support for and our solidarity with all people on the move.”



Picture: Aurora ship, Sea-Watch International

LATEST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

THE DYNAMICS OF STRUGGLES FOR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN ITALY

By *MEDITERRANEA Saving Humans*

ALBANIA: THE BIG STRATEGY AND THE SMALL DIRTY MARKET

Three levels of interpretation must be considered in the face of the “surprise move” announced by Italian Prime Minister Meloni together with Albanian Prime Minister Rama November 6th in Rome. They presented a memorandum that envisages, by late Spring 2024, the opening on Albanian soil of an identification and registration center in the port of Shengjin and a detention center for the subsequent examination of applications for international protection in the old air force base of Gjader, for 3,000 places (up to a maximum turnover of 36,000 per year) dedicated exclusively to migrants rescued in the Mediterranean by Italian military units.

The first interpretative key lies in the obsessive search for ever new ways forward for the worn-out strategy of outsourcing the management of the European Union's external borders: after the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement, the Spanish deals with Morocco and Mauritania, the 2017 Italian memorandum with Libya, the efforts towards Sahel countries and the more recent fatiguing negotiation with Tunisia, this step represents a further - negative - quantum leap. In the sense that, for the first time, zones of extraterritoriality are defined with the sovereignty of an EU member state in a third country, to which detention and possible refoulement are subcontracted.

The second level of interpretation is the explicit brutality inherent in the intentions of this move: as has already happened in the past in the face of the risks of crossing and the very serious omissions of rescue by European authorities, a desire for

“deterrence” is openly asserted with regard to the people on the move. Showing the interest of Germany, but also of Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands, in the path opened up by Meloni, German government advisor Ruud Koopmans said: “*If people know that they will have to wait in Albania if they are rejected, it becomes less attractive for them to pay big money to smugglers.*” Once again, European states posing as a gang of cut-throats.

The third level of interpretation finally speaks to us of a “small dirty market” of converging political interests: on the one hand, in the face of a number of arrivals in Italy that by the end of the year will touch 160,000 landings, in the face of a deteriorating economic and social situation with welfare cuts and trade union strikes, the need for Prime Minister Meloni to make a propaganda coup in view of the upcoming European elections in May 2024, in direct competition for who shows the fiercest face against migrants, between the post-fascist Fratelli d'Italia party and its allies of Salvini's Lega and the more centrist Forza Italia. On the other side of the Otranto channel, Prime Minister Edi Rama's long-cherished goal of obtaining Albania's full entry into the European Union, even at the cost of contributing to a compression of fundamental human rights and the dismantling of the yet claudicant asylum and international protection system.

It is already evident that this new memorandum presents enormous problems both from the point of view of International law compliance and its practical implementation, including transfers, procedures and deportations. But it is equally true that “they” will try, and this will be the ground for a new social, political and legal battle, to be fought to the bitter end.



Boat on the beach in Vlorë, Albania, April 2021, Sophie-Anne Bisiaux

DISSEMBARKING RESCUED PEOPLE IN TUNISIA OR LIBYA: ITALIAN GOVERNMENT'S DREAM, MIGRANTS' NIGHTMARE, HARASSMENT OF THE CIVIL FLEET

At the very moment when the spread of the global state of war with the tragedy in the Middle East distracts public opinion attention from the permanent humanitarian crisis in North Africa and the central Mediterranean sea, a new offensive by the Italian government against the ships of the Civil Fleet has begun.

Three clues make more than one proof: this is the case with last August detention of AURORA SAR, the fast asset of Sea-Watch in October, and more recently with the ships MARE JONIO of Mediterranea and SEA-EYE 4 of the German organization of the same name last October.

In fact, in August, AURORA had been assigned Trapani by Italian authorities as Place of Safety (PoS), but the remaining fuel was not enough to reach Sicily from the location of rescue operation: the only option was Lampedusa. Italian MRCC Rome then instructed them to ask for a PoS in Tunisia, but AURORA denied. This seemed immediately as an attempt to legitimize the EU-Tunisia agreement. AURORA proceeded to Lampedusa and she was then detained for a second time, with reference to the Italian law "Piantadosi Decree" with the formal motivation of "*putting the rescued people in danger by not disembarking them in the closest port of Zarzis, Tunisia*". They did not find any other reason to detain the ship.

Sea-Watch appealed the detention: "*According to the Italian authorities, they had to disembark in Trapani, where Aurora could not arrive; or in Tunisia, where human rights are not guaranteed. Landing in Lampedusa was the only possible option for Aurora given the ship's limited resources of fuel, food and drinking water to reach the port of Trapani.*"

In October came the tenth administrative detention of a civil SAR asset by the Italian authorities in 2023 with reference to the Piantadosi Decree, issued in January and validated by the Parliament on February 24th. After a second rescue of 69 persons in the Libyan SAR region, approximately 70 nautical miles off Zuwara, MARE JONIO was detained by the Italian authorities in the port of Trapani.

Upon disembarkation on October 18th, the captain and shipowner were notified that the Italian-flagged ship would be impounded for 20 days and that the organization would have to pay the usual fine for

allegedly failing to follow the instructions of the MRCC Rome to contact the so-called "Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre" and place themselves under its authority; secondly, failing to request the Libyan authorities for the designation of a port of disembarkation.

Less than ten days later came the eleventh 2023 administrative detention: that is the third administrative detention for SEA-EYE 4. On October 27th, Italian authorities placed the ship in chains for another 20 days and fined the Organisation for allegedly "*ignoring orders from the Libyan coast guard.*"

The Italian MRCC accuses the captain of failing to follow the instructions of the so-called Libyan coast guard who, with the threat of violence, had ordered SEA-EYE 4 in international waters to move northwards and then chased a rubber boat carrying around 50 people to the point that panic broke out and some people fell into the water. SEA-EYE 4, refusing to obey the inhumane Libyan orders, was instead able to rescue and assist the people, some of them in serious health conditions, unfortunately finding four already dead inside the rubber boat.

Sea Eye released video footage of the incident that clearly shows the Libyans performing dangerous maneuvers in the immediate vicinity of the inflatable boat. "*The captain of the Libyan coast guard vessel dangerously pursued and harassed the rubber boat while his crew simultaneously stood by the railing smoking cigarettes and filming on their mobile phones. This has nothing whatsoever to do with sea rescue,*" says Jan Ribbeck, head of mission of Sea-Eye e.V. Due to the reckless and aggressive behavior of the so-called Libyan coast guard, at least four people lost their lives. "*If the SEA-EYE 4 had left the sea area, even more people would have died and no one would have known about this tragedy.*"

Commenting on its own appeal against the detention, filed on November 2nd in the Court of Trapani, and the other two cases, MEDITERRANEA claims:

The motivations for the measures affecting the MARE JONIO are shown to be totally "illegitimate" in the appeal presented to the judges in Trapani: the Captain and shipowner are accused of 'not having informed' the Libyan coordination center and, above all, of not having asked Libya for a port of disembarkation.

In essence, the Italian Government wanted us to be complicit in the deportation of the shipwrecked

people to Libya, the very country from which the 69 women, men and children were fleeing.

In fact, the appeal quotes the most significant excerpts from reports by United Nations bodies and agencies describing and documenting "the conditions to which migrants are forced in Libyan detention centres, which constitute torture and inhumane and degrading treatment" and the proven complicity of the so-called "coast guard" and other Libyan state authorities with human traffickers and those responsible for abuse and violence against migrants, who are detained and obliged into forced labour and enslavement.

For this reason, the appeal insists that "Libya cannot be considered a safe place to land shipwrecked persons and its authorities cannot therefore be considered legitimate interlocutors when it is necessary to receive instructions regarding the landing of shipwrecked persons."





“They order us to deport people to Libya”

Mediterranea takes the Italian Government to Court

#LibyalsNotSafe

The captain of the MARE JONIO has instead done his duty in full compliance with Italian and International law, obeying not only sound ethical and moral principles, but also the Hamburg SAR and Geneva Asylum Conventions, refusing instead to submit to instructions that would have been extremely serious violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Fundamental Charter of the European Union, as well as our constitutional principles.

Our lawyers also recall the numerous, now definitive, pronouncements of the Italian Justice in this regard: from the cases of the MARE JONIO herself in March and May 2019, to the sentence of the Highest Court for the Captain Carola Rackete in June 2019 to the conviction of the Captain of the ASSO 28 off-shore supply-ship for having brought a group of shipwrecked people back to Tripoli.

Illegitimate, therefore, is the Italian Government's demand that the MARE JONIO hand over to the "Libyan authorities" the 69 people rescued on board, and illegitimate are the sanction and detention that affected the ship. Even more serious is the attempt - evident in the similar measures that hit SW AURORA SAR and, more recently, SEA-EYE 4 - to impose Libya and Tunisia as "safe ports" when it is under everyone's eyes how handing over people rescued at sea to the militias and military of those countries would mean condemning to a tragic fate women, men and children who are seeking protection in Europe.

MEDITERRANEA does not stand for this, and the proceedings against the detention of the MARE JONIO that will open in the Court of Trapani will be an opportunity for us to obtain not only the cancellation of the measures that have affected our ship, but also an unequivocal condemnation of the violations of fundamental rights that take place, with the complicity of the Italian Government, in the Mediterranean.

Since the disembarkation in Tunisia or Libya of persons rescued at sea is the worst nightmare for the people on the move and the obsessive dream of Italian and European governments, this renewed offensive against the Civil fleet must not be underestimated: any attempt to do so must be beaten in every possible way.

BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND EUROPEAN INTERFERENCE: THE AMBIGUITY OF TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES ON THE ISSUE OF MIGRATION CONTROL

By Alarm phone Tunis

In recent months, Tunisia has come under increasing scrutiny from European countries. Faced with the increase of crossings along the Tunisian route, particularly active between Sfax and Lampedusa, the EU and its member states have stepped up their outsourcing policies in an effort to reduce the number of arrivals on the Italian coast. Facing increasing pressures, President Kais Saied has adopted an ambiguous attitude: reiterating his determination to avoid turning Tunisia into Europe's "border guard," he is nevertheless steadily stepping up cooperation with European countries on migration control, and continuing to fan the flames of hate speech against Tunisia's Black population.

In September, for instance, Tunisian authorities halted the visit of several members of the EU Parliament for meetings with civil society over the political situation in Tunisia. In early October, Kais Saied also rejected the financial support announced by the European Union in September, complaining that the amount was too small and went against the spirit of the deal signed three months prior. This deal, which had been agreed upon in July, included a pledge of 1 billion euros in aid to Tunisia to purportedly support its economy and state finances and deal with the so-called "migration crisis."

According to a press release from the Tunisian presidency, the President stated that "*Tunisia, which accepts cooperation, does not accept anything resembling charity or favor, because our country and our people do not want sympathy and do not accept it when it is without respect.*" The money that was rejected by the President was, however, coming from an old agreement with the EU and not from the recently signed memorandum.

At the same time, as Austria's Minister of the Interior Gerhard Karner (ÖVP) said on Thursday November 16, 2023 during a trip to Tunisia, "*the migration agreement concluded this summer between the European Union (EU) and Tunisia 'is slowly beginning to produce its effects'*". On the occasion of this trip, a training center for Tunisian border guards was inaugurated, financed by the European Union as part of a project coordinated by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)[1].

A few weeks earlier, in September 2023, several media reported that the EU was actively working to set up a SAR zone in Tunisian waters as part of the implementation of the memorandum of understanding recently signed between Tunisia and Europe. This project, which is accompanied by the setting up of an MRCC in Tunisia and the strengthening of capacities of Tunisian coastguards, follows the model of the "refoulement by proxy" system that the European Union has had in place in Libya for several years. These plans are being pursued despite the fact that Tunisia can in no way be considered a safe country, neither for Tunisians nor for migrants trying to flee the country, and despite the numerous rights violations committed by the Tunisian Coast Guard against people on the move that have been reported by civil society actors.

Meanwhile, the situation of migrants on Tunisian soil continues to deteriorate. According to various testimonies collected by Human Rights Watch, Alarm Phone and other civil society actors, practices of refoulement at the Algerian and Libyan borders have become systematic. Since September 2023, anyone intercepted at sea by the Tunisian National Guard appears to be immediately deported to these desert areas. These practices also affect survivors of shipwrecks, as well as people of nationalities likely to receive international protection in Tunisia via the UNHCR.

After peaking again in September 2023 (following the July peak), deportations continue on a daily basis. At the Libyan border, an agreement seems to have been reached between Tunisian authorities and Libyan militias, whereby some migrants report being handed over to the Libyans in exchange for oil and other goods from Libya. The migrants then report being taken to the Al-Assah center, a military base around thirty kilometers from Zuwara, before being handed over to various militias. For their part, the Libyan Border Guard announced the activation of electronic surveillance observatories on the border with Tunisia in the Al-Assah sector[2].

At the Algerian border, people being turned back are caught in the crossfire between Tunisian and Algerian authorities. As reported by the Alarm Phone Sahara network, a series of people have been turned back from Tunisia to Algeria, and then from Algeria to

Niger. After being expelled to Algeria, other people try to cross the Moroccan border, but here, too, they encounter numerous obstacles and violence from the Moroccan authorities. As a result, many people on the move fall victim to this game of ping-pong between the authorities, who turn them back from one country to another.

Most of those who are still in Tunisia are in an extremely precarious situation. Many migrants are homeless, have been evicted from their homes and have lost their jobs. In front of the IOM office in Tunis, hundreds of people continue to gather, forced to demand their "voluntary" return to their country of origin. In Sfax, the face of the town has changed, after many migrants were rounded up by Tunisian forces and taken by force to olive groves further north.

After a record number of arrivals in Lampedusa in the second week of September, from October onwards the number of people leaving Tunisia to reach Italy by sea has plummeted. Although the causes of this fall in the number of crossings are varied, it is clear that migration control is being used as a lever by President Kais Saied in his negotiations with the European Union.

As underlined by the organization Maldusa, Kais Saied's attitude can also be interpreted as an *"intention to control Tunisian territory and any form of organization that escapes state control, whether political (political opponents, activists, NGOs) or economic (smuggling networks). Sovereignism - the*

monopoly of the state in controlling the territory - rather than political opportunism, is the filter through which to read Kais Saied's political intention at the same time the point of convergence with Giorgia Meloni's political vision and justification for the repressive and dictatorial nature of the political system orchestrated in recent years."[3]

The drop in the number of boats using the Tunisian route in October should not obscure the autonomy of migration and the ability of people on the move to invent new strategies to overcome borders. As we have seen for a long time, reinforcing borders does not stop the movement of people, but only diverts the routes and often makes them more dangerous.

Alarm Phone has been able to observe that in October, for instance, departures from Libya, especially around Zuwara, increased: several boats carrying around 50 people arrived in Lampedusa, with an average travel time of 24 hours only. Also remarkable were the 3 big fishing vessels with several hundreds of people on board which landed in Lampedusa recently.

[1]<https://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2023/11/20/lutte-contre-la-migration-illegale-la-cooperation-tuniso-europeenne-va-bon-train/>

[2]<https://twitter.com/rgowans/status/1724760069235990993?s=09>

[3]<https://www.maldusa.org/l/the-arbitrariness-of-control-and-the-border-regime/>



Picture One of the fishing vessel from Zuwara arrived to Lampedusa, October 2023, Credit: Maldusa



Picture: RESQship

GERMANY: CALL TO STOP THE CRIMINALISATION OF SEA RESCUE AND SOLIDARITY!

By Hagen Kopp

In Germany, the Federal Ministry of the Interior has presented a draft law which, among other things, could penalize sea rescue with up to 10 years in prison. The paragraph is embedded in further tightening of asylum law. This must not happen!

After the first protests, the current Interior minister, Nancy Faeser, stated that criminalization of sea rescue is not the intention. However, the new law would nevertheless create the base for this and would also affect other practices of solidarity. Last but not least, this draft law seems to be directed against migrant communities who live in Germany and might help their relatives and friends overcome the border regime.

The paragraph 96 of the Residence Act as written currently stipulates that people who derive a personal benefit from the "smuggling of foreigners" - for example, if they receive money for it - are to be punished.

This paragraph is now to be amended so that the mere bringing ashore of several people rescued from distress at sea or the repeated bringing ashore of

people rescued from distress at sea would already be a criminal offense. In addition, other forms of support for people fleeing could also be criminalized.

Depending on the interpretation, anyone who gives undocumented migrants a lift in a car within the country, buys them a public transport ticket, distributes food or water, or offers them accommodation could be punished. The maximum penalty is 10 years in prison! This inhumane paragraph is embedded in a draft law that criminalizes people on the move and tightens deportation measures.

In a joint statement, over 50 organizations are calling on the government factions to stop the law. Sea rescue and movements of refugees should be supported, not penalized!

Common call and further information (in German)

<https://resqship.org/kriminalisierung-seenotrettung/>

Petition (in German)

<https://weact.campact.de/petitions/keine-haft-fur-zivile-seenotrettung>

IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

A DIARY OF RESCUE COORDINATION BY CIVIL ACTORS IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The following section provides an overview of the level and impact of rescue coordination by civil actors in the Central Mediterranean Sea, using brief reports and Twitter extracts.

SEPTEMBER 2023

Louise Michel (LM) rescues 24 people from an unseaworthy wooden boat then spends the next 12 hours searching for a second boat with 44 people in coordination with **AlarmPhone**. They are finally found late in the night, many hours after losing contact with AlarmPhone. Weather conditions cause the LM to seek shelter in Lampedusa, though the 68 people onboard are forced to spend another 3 nights onboard the LM in difficult weather conditions for disembarkation in Trapani a few days later.

4 September

Nadir and **Mare*Go** assists 2 unstable boats with around 100 people. In worsening weather conditions, one of the boat sinks as survivors are being transferred to the authorities; luckily everyone is retrieved safely from the water.

AlarmPhone receives a distress call from 31 people in the Libyan SAR zone. **Geo Barents** locates the boat and brings everyone safely onboard. The distant port of Bari is assigned.

AlarmPhone shares information about a distress case with 68 people that had departed from Zuwara. **Ocean Viking** finds the wooden boat and is assigned the distant port of Ancona, requiring another 4 days of navigation.

10 September

Both **Nadir** and **Sea Punk 1** respond to a boat with 39 people in poor medical condition. Survivors inform the crews that an additional 40 people are missing from a shipwreck they witnessed. **Sea Punk 1** searches for the missing but is unable to find survivors. (1) During the night, 39 people are found on an iron boat. After distributing life jackets, the crew is ordered to accompany the boat towards Lampedusa. Soon, however, the boat begins to take on water, requiring the transfer of the survivors to the NGO vessel who are later safely disembarked in Lampedusa.

44 people are found by **Sea Punk 1** in an unseaworthy boat. **Nadir** assists in bringing aboard everyone. After receiving medical attention, all 44 people are safely transferred to the Italian authorities.

12 September

Over the course of the day, **Nadir** finds a total of 5 unstable boats and assists 239 people in distress in the Maltese SAR zone. The long mission required assistance by a cargo ship as the Italian authorities were overwhelmed with the arrival of more than 5,000 people near Lampedusa.

14 September

Aurora rescues 84 people just south of Lampedusa, 1 of 16 cases spotted by **Colibri 2** and alerted by **AlarmPhone**. Despite the nearness of the island, the distant port of Catania is assigned.

Colibri 2 cooperates with **RESQ People** who respond to a boat in distress with 96 people. All are safely disembarked in Trapani.

16 September

Over the course of 20 hours, **Geo Barents** rescues 11 boats and assists the Italian CG with an additional 4 boats. 471 people are brought onboard Geo Barents. Both **Colibri 2** and **Seabird** provided critical air reconnaissance throughout the operations. Brindisi is assigned as the port of disembarkation. (2)

19 September

Together with the help of **Colibri 2**, **Aurora** prevents a pullback to Libya and rescues 40 people. The survivors report that 4 people had drowned the night before. The distant port of Pozzallo is assigned, 370km away.

20 September

AlarmPhone and **Pilotes Volontaires** coordinate to inform **Louise Michel** of a vessel in distress with 19 people in the Maltese SAR. Shortly after this, Louise Michel finds another boat and rescues the additional 16 people. (3)

21 September

Sea Punk 1 finds 83 people on an unseaworthy iron boat. All are brought safely onboard the NGO vessel.

Colibri 2 locates a boat in distress with 28 people after several hours of searching. **Life Support** responds and takes aboard the survivors. (4)

28 September

AlarmPhone receives a distress call from 68 people in the Libyan SAR zone. **Geo Barents** locates the boat and brings them safely onboard.

29 September

During search operations, **Seabird** and **Louise Michel** witness a violent pushback by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. The pushback occurred near Louise Michel, who was responding to a distress case alerted by the AlarmPhone. The 58 people who had contacted the **AlarmPhone** were brought safely onboard the Louise Michel, however, the fate of 50 others forcibly pushed back to Libya remains unknown.

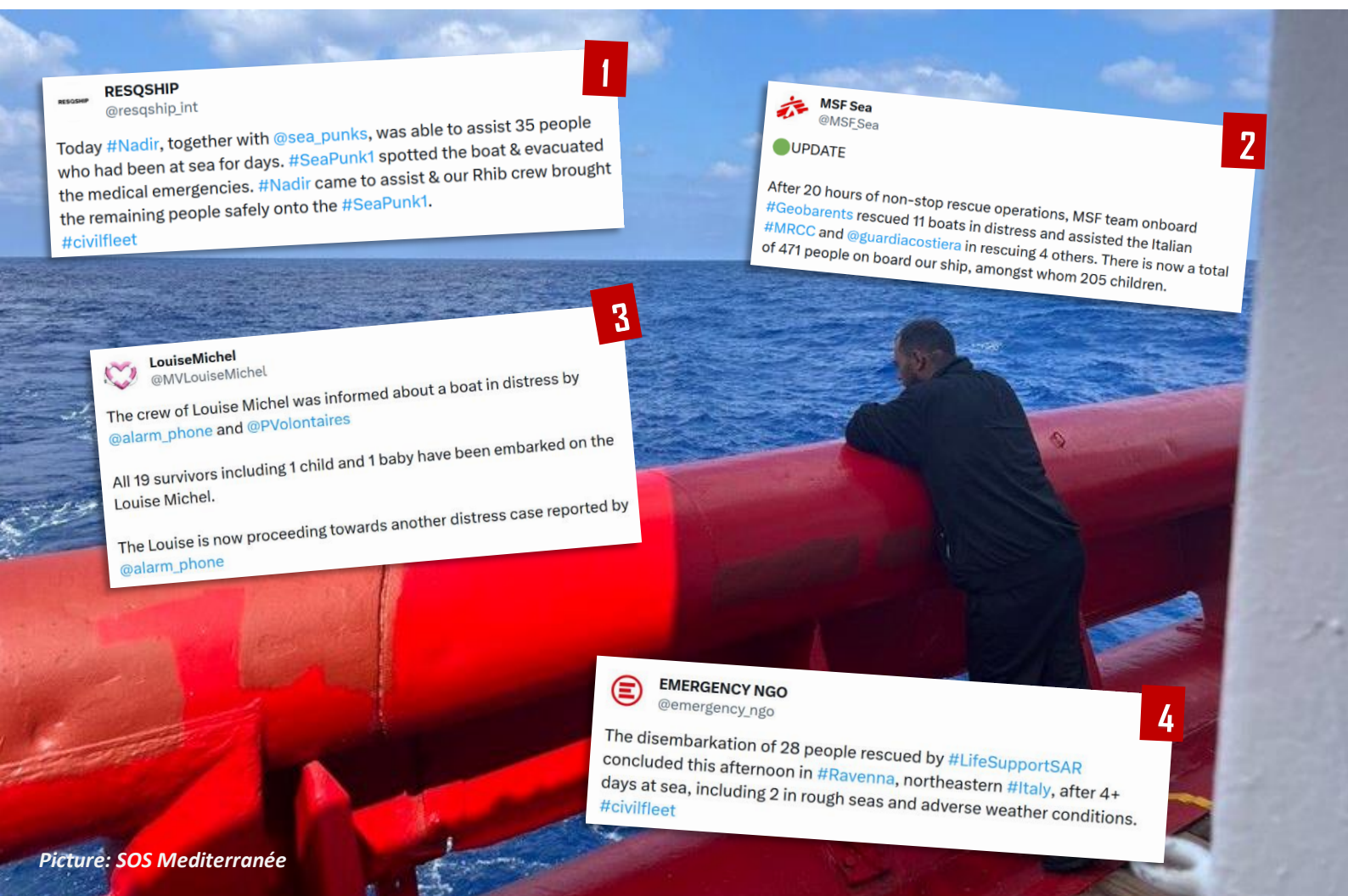
41 people fleeing Libya contact **AlarmPhone** asking for help. Nadir coordinates with AlarmPhone and finds the wooden boat. After providing life jackets, the boat is accompanied to Lampedusa.

Trotamar III comes across two boats, one of which had lost a motor. After stabilizing, the people are transferred to the Italian authorities and brought safely to Lampedusa.

Over the course of the day, **Open Arms** performs 3 rescues and welcomes 178 people onboard in coordination with **AlarmPhone**, which had been contacted by two of the boats, and **Seabird**. The distant port of Genova is assigned, however those rescued are eventually disembarked in Carrara.

30 September

Nadir responds to a mayday relay and takes onboard 22 people near Lampedusa. The distant port of Porto Empedolce, 40 hours and 215 km away, is assigned. Deteriorating weather requires Nadir to seek shelter in Lampedusa anyhow, which is where the survivors are eventually disembarked.



1
RESQSHIP
@resqship_int
Today #Nadir, together with @sea_punks, was able to assist 35 people who had been at sea for days. #SeaPunk1 spotted the boat & evacuated the medical emergencies. #Nadir came to assist & our Rhib crew brought the remaining people safely onto the #SeaPunk1.
#civilfleet

2
MSF Sea
@MSF_Sea
UPDATE
After 20 hours of non-stop rescue operations, MSF team onboard #Geobarents rescued 11 boats in distress and assisted the Italian #MRCC and @guardiacostiera in rescuing 4 others. There is now a total of 471 people on board our ship, amongst whom 205 children.

3
LouiseMichel
@MVLouiseMichel
The crew of Louise Michel was informed about a boat in distress by @alarm_phone and @PVolontaires
All 19 survivors including 1 child and 1 baby have been embarked on the Louise Michel.
The Louise is now proceeding towards another distress case reported by @alarm_phone

4
EMERGENCY NGO
@emergency_ngo
The disembarkation of 28 people rescued by #LifeSupportSAR concluded this afternoon in #Ravenna, northeastern #Italy, after 4+ days at sea, including 2 in rough seas and adverse weather conditions.
#civilfleet

Picture: SOS Méditerranée

OCTOBER 2023

3 October	<p>Colibri 2 provides critical support to Nadir in 3 operations with 125 people in distress.</p>
4 October	<p>The Alarm Phone receives a distress call from a boat with 53 people. Louise Michel is in the area and finds the overcrowded rubber boat. After performing the rescue, Louise Michel responds to a mayday relay and rescues an additional 30 people, who had been adrift for 3 days without food. All 83 are disembarked the following day in Pozzallo.</p>
5 October	<p>Open Arms is punished with 20-day administrative blockade and faces a fine of up to 10,000 euros by Italian authorities after interrogating Open Arms's captain and SAR coordinator for more than six hours. (5)</p> <p>Alarm Phone learns of a distress case with 45 people in an overcrowded and unseaworthy wooden boat. Nadir responds to stabilize and provide first aid to the boat. Later that night, an iron boat with 48 people is also found. All 93 people are safely transferred to the Italian authorities.</p>
6 October	<p>Colibri 2 spots 3 boats with around 130 people. Two are stabilized by Aurora and the 100 people on board are safely transferred to the Italian authorities.</p> <p>258 people in total are rescued by Geo Barents from 2 unseaworthy wooden boats. They are safely disembarked 3 days later in Salerno.</p>
7 October	<p>Colibri 2 spots 4 separate boats with around 170 people, 2 of which had been alerted by Alarm Phone. Aurora reaches one overcrowded wooden barges at risk of sinking where 110 people are stabilized with life vests until the Italian authorities arrive and complete the rescue. Life Support responds as well and aids a second boat. Of the remaining 2 boats, 1 arrives in Lampedusa autonomously and the fate of the fourth remains unknown. (6)</p>
8 October	<p>Life Support conducts two more rescues of 48 people from the Maltese SAR zone. Alarm Phone provided the initial alert for the first case of 21 people, the location of which was confirmed by Seabird. The second boat with 27 people was found after Life Support began navigating to assigned POS Livorno.</p>
9 October	<p>AlarmPhone receives a distress call from 21 people who had already been at sea for 3 days. Aurora performs the rescue and is assigned the distant port of Trapani.</p>
10 October	<p>In collaboration with Alarm Phone, Seabird notifies Louise Michel of a boat in distress. After rescuing the 19 people onboard, Louise Michel heads to Pozzallo for disembarkation.</p>
11 October	<p>Alarm Phone is contacted about a wooden boat with 48 people which is also spotted by Seabird. Despite authorities knowing their positions for many hours, they ignore their duty to respond. Aita Mari responds and in coordination with Seabird finds a second boat in the vicinity. All 69 survivors are brought onboard.</p>
13 October	<p>Aurora rescues 53 people from an overcrowded boat. The port of Pozzallo is assigned, 17 hours of sailing time away from the rescue operation site.</p> <p>69 people from 2 boats alerted by Alarm Phone are rescued by Aita Mari. The distant port of Genova is assigned, requiring a journey of 900km. Eventually, disembarkation for survivors occurs in Naples. (7)</p>
14 October	<p>Mare Jonio rescues 47 people from an ironclad boat that was sinking. Everyone is safely disembarked in Lampedusa.</p>

15 October	<p>Alarm Phone receives a distress call about a boat in the Maltese SAR zone which is confirmed by Seabird 2. 31 people are rescued through the coordination of the civil fleet, during which neither the Italian nor the Maltese authorities respond.</p> <p>In the middle of the night, Geo Barents responds to a distress case of 63 people from a rubber boat that had deflated. The case had been alerted by AlarmPhone and spotted by Seabird 2. Everyone was brought safely on board, however the Italian authorities assigned the distant port of Genova requiring 1166km of travel.</p>
16 October	<p>Alarm Phone is contacted about a distress case with 31 people. Humanity 1 responds and is able to locate and safely bring aboard the survivors.</p> <p>Humanity 1 completes a third rescue in a row, bringing aboard another 28 people, supported by Seabird 2's aerial reconnaissance. 88 people are disembarked in Bari 3 days later.</p> <p>Seabird spots a boat in distress and Mare Jonio responds, bringing aboard 69 people. Upon disembarkation in Trapani, the ship is placed in administrative detention for 20 days and faces a fine of up to 10,000 euros under the Piantedosi decree.</p>
18 October	<p>In the middle of the night, Sea-Eye 4 successfully completes a rescue operation of 51 people in the Libyan SAR zone, a case that had been alerted by AlarmPhone. Assigned the port of Brindisi, the people are safely disembarked, after which the Sea-Eye 4 has to undergo a grueling 9-hour port state control.</p>
21 October	<p>Alarm Phone is contacted about a ship with around 250 people in deteriorating conditions between the Maltese and Tunisian SAR region. The boat is spotted by Seabird and information is relayed to Nadir, which is in the vicinity. Nadir is able to stabilize the boat until the rescue is completed by the ITCG who disembark the people in Lampedusa. (8)</p>
24 October	<p>Alarm Phone is contacted by a boat in distress with 29 people in the Libyan SAR zone. Seabird sights the ship and Ocean Viking makes its way to the boat. All 3 organizations coordinate the rescue together. Ravenna is assigned as the port of disembarkation, 1613 km and 6 days of navigation away. (9)</p> <p>In the morning, Nadir first finds an overcrowded wooden boat with 60 people. Everyone is safely transferred to the Italian CG. Later in the afternoon, Nadir finds and stabilizes an overcrowded wooden boat with 44 people who had fled Libya. Once again, all survivors are safely transferred to the Italian CG.</p>
25 October	<p>Alarm Phone is alerted to a distress case and with the help of Seabird, Humanity 1 rescues the 8 people from an unseaworthy fiberglass boat.</p>
26 October	<p>Alarm Phone is contacted by a group in dire need of rescue. Humanity 1 is assigned the distant port of Civitavecchia after rescuing the 50 people in rough seas in the middle of the night. The port is 800km away, extending the 3 days those rescued have already spent at sea. Waves of over 3m forces authorities to assign the closer port of Taranto.</p> <p>Ocean Viking evacuates 18 people stranded 3 days in rough seas who had been sighted by Seabird. Sea-Eye 4 was also on site searching for the distress vessel. Ocean Viking finds and rescues the people, then continues on to Ravenna for disembarkation.</p>
27 October	<p>Authorities request Humanity 1 to stabilize 50 people needing rescue from an overcrowded sailing boat. Survivors are then successfully transferred to Italian CG.</p> <p>AlarmPhone receives a distress call from people in an unseaworthy rubber boat. By the time the Sea-Eye 4 arrived, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard was on site attempting a push back. 48 are saved by the NGO vessel and disembarked in Vibo Valentia.</p>
28 October	<p>Nadir finds an overcrowded wooden boat with 48 people in the Maltese SAR zone. After many hours of waiting, authorities finally respond, and survivors are transferred to the Italian Coast Guards.</p> <p>AlarmPhone receives a distress call from 61 people in the Libyan SAR zone. Geo Barents responds and conducts the rescue. The distant port of Civitavecchia is assigned, where survivors are safely disembarked 3 days later.</p>

 **Open Arms ENG** ✓
@openarms_found

● **#BREAKINGNEWS**
New 20-day administrative blockade and fine of up to €10,000 for the #OpenArms.

After more than 6 hours of interrogation of our Captain and our SAR Coordinator, the Italian authorities seize our boat again.

The crime? Having saved 176 lives in danger in 3 rescue operations in international waters in the central Mediterranean.

The far-right government of Meloni and Salvini continues its strategy of harassing the work of humanitarian ships. Once again it investigates, fines and arrests those who save lives while funding with millions of public money those who imprison, torture and blackmail vulnerable people.

5

 **Pilotes Volontaires**
@PVolontaires

Le 07/10, repérage de 4 embarcations dont 2 qui s'étaient signalées à @alarm_phone avec environ 170 personnes. L'1 d'entre elles a pu être secourue par #LifeSupport @emergency_ong ,1 autre a été sécurisée par l'Aurora avant d'être prise en charge par les garde-côtes italiens. 3/5
[Translate post](#)

6

 **Radio San Sebastián**
@RadioSnSn

● RESCATE #AitaMari |@smhumanitario denuncia que las autoridades italianas les han asignado el puerto de Génova, a 600 millas, para desembarcar @maydayteraneo

7



 **@alarmphone**
@alarm_phone

Thank you #Nadir and #Seabird for being the first to react when we called for assistance! The Maltese authorities failed to react and the #civilfleet had to step in once more. We hope the people will safely reach #Lampedusa!

8

 **SOS MEDITERRANEE France** ✓
@SOSMedFrance

● BREAKING : L'#OceanViking a secouru 29 personnes d'une barque en fibre de verre impropre à la navigation dans les eaux internationales au large de la Libye à la suite d'une alerte d'@alarm_phone, confirmée ensuite par #Seabird.
Après avoir passé huit heures en mer, les personnes rescapées sont épuisées. Elles sont maintenant prises en charge par les équipes de @SOSMedFrance et de l'@ifrc.

9

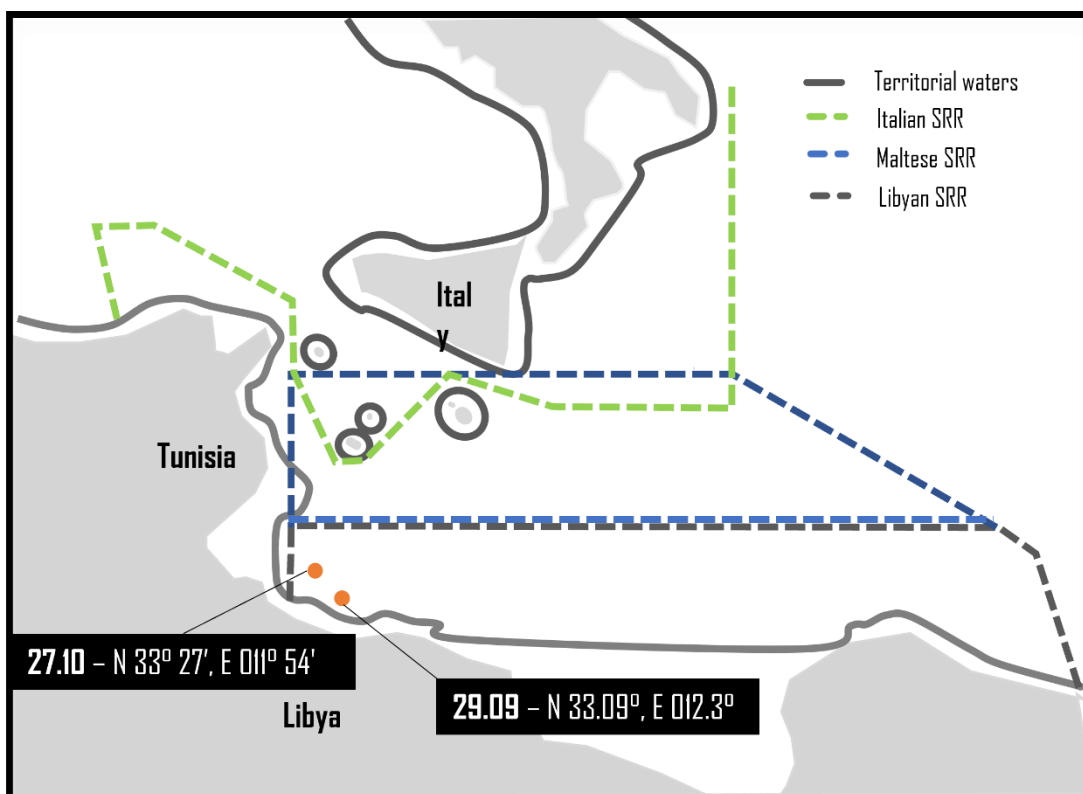
29.09.23 AND 27.10.23 CIVIL FLEET VESSELS WITNESS VIOLENT PULL BACKS BY THE SO-CALLED LIBYAN COAST GUARD

On September 29 both the **Louise Michel** and **Seabird** witnessed a violent pull-back by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard that took place in the Libyan SAR zone. Seabird issued a mayday relay after spotting a RHIB from the so-called Libyan Coast Guard maneuvering dangerously near an overcrowded rubber boat, causing the boat to begin sinking. Video captured by Seabird showed that around 50 people fell into the water. The Louise Michel was nearby, having just responded to a distress case alerted by the **AlarmPhone**, and together with Seabird searched for survivors. In the end, an estimated 50 people were pulled back to Libya. It is unknown if loss of life occurred as a result of the interception by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

In the early morning of October 27, the **AlarmPhone** (AP) received a distress call about a boat that had left Zuwara and was still in the Libyan SAR zone. AP communicated the distress call to relevant authorities, as well as **Sea-Eye 4**, which was patrolling nearby. Before long, Sea-Eye 4 reached the distress vessel only to find that the so-called Libyan Coast Guard was already on-site. Sea-Eye's crew observed that people had fallen overboard from the overcrowded rubber dinghy which then fled from the sCLYCG. Despite the sCLYCG's threats to attack, Sea-Eye 4's crew deployed rescue equipment in response

to more people falling into the water during the dinghy's escape, and managed to save 48 people from the unseaworthy rubber dinghy. Tragically, several of those who had fallen overboard were never found and four bodies were recovered from the dinghy. Medical emergencies were treated onboard the Sea-Eye 4, however, the Italian Marine Rescue Center refused to initiate an evacuation for a pregnant woman in critical condition. After many hours of repeated calls, first to Italian then finally to the Libyan authorities, the Italian authorities finally instructed Sea-Eye 4 to sail for Lampedusa, where the woman could be evacuated a day after the rescue. The remaining survivors were disembarked in Vibo Valentia on the 29th.

These two cases highlight the level of risk undertaken by people on the move. Drownings and disappearances are a regular occurrence, many of which take place out of sight. Those that are witnessed by members of the Civil Fleet amount to nothing more than the failure by various actors to observe international human rights and maritime laws. Were it not for the presence of civil fleet vessels and air reconnaissance aircraft, the events of both September 29 and October 27 might have never been documented, highlighting the need for the watchful presence of civil actors in the Central Mediterranean.



ANALYSIS

SUBVERTING THE NARRATIVES ABOUT SMUGGLING

*By Captain Support & Feminist Autonomous Centre
for Research*

WHY WE NEED THIS DISCUSSION

Across the EU and its member states, migration is constructed as a threat that needs to be defended against. Particular emphasis in this is given to “migrant smuggling,” framed as a global crime that exposes migrants to life-threatening risks. This narrative is tied into the use of humanitarian language by authorities to express concern for “vulnerable migrants” whose life is endangered not through their own policies and actions, but by dangerous actors, namely “smugglers”.

States defend their own border violence by claiming that militarisation and surveillance is necessary not only to protect EU citizens from the constructed threats of migration, but also to protect “vulnerable migrants” from violent criminals. Here, both violence and vulnerability is constructed around racialized and gendered categories and colonial narratives that intersect forms of patriarchal protection/control by the state, as well as with colonial and patronizing fantasies of white saviorism.

NGOs and more humanitarian analyses of border violence that want to challenge border violence are often framed around the protection of people (and particularly women and children) who are again essentialized as “victims,” exploited by violent and profit-seeking smugglers. Initiatives, campaigns and SAR NGOs often address the state by demanding protection for people on the move, and demanding to end their border management agreements with non-European countries which would be the main perpetrators of this violence.

PROBLEMS WITH SMUGGLING NARRATIVES

Whilst these demands acknowledge the lack of rescue, protection and care by EU and national authorities, they also tend to emphasize their responsibility to protect people from “foreign” (often Libyan or Tunisian) actors constructed as violent and outlaws, including coastguards and so-called smuggling networks. This approach “externalizes” the source of violence to non-European actors with a danger of playing the same game that legitimizes EU

narratives for stronger border militarisation, and of downplaying how EU’s policies enact racist violence, apartheid, extortion and exploitation of and against people on the move in first place.

Therefore, both the process of criminalization of migration and solidarity, as well as resistance to it by civil society organizations, keeps labeling some actions as benevolent and humanitarian, whilst others as potentially dangerous and deserving of punishment and repression, with a clear divide between Europe as safe and savior, and anything non-European as dangerous and criminal.

DANGERS OF ROMANTICISATION

The word “smuggling people” is often associated with notions of “violence” and “coercion”. Whilst people might encounter violence along their journeys, it is important to keep the focus on the violence and exploitation generated by global inequality and (im)mobility regimes, without minimizing the violence often experienced by people on the move by those facilitating their movement.

Moreover, criminalizing people’s movement and its facilitation creates the conditions under which violence and abuses of power become not just possible, but more likely. It is not the “migrant” condition itself that makes people vulnerable, but its illegalization: forcing people in a state of invisibility and precarity makes them vulnerable to potential exploiters or abusers. Under these conditions, the individuals or groups that are in a position to enable or restrict movement often are among the perpetrators of border violence: not just smugglers, but border guards, police forces, or militias.

RESISTING OUR IMAGINARIES

How can we oppose these twisted narratives and acknowledge that what is defined as smuggling is often related to mutual aid amongst migrant communities and to services that seek to facilitate freedom of movement? How can we avoid fabricating or perpetuating differentiations between figures such as the community organizer, the migrant activist, the boat driver, the sea rescuer, or the lorry driver? How can we resist our inclination towards creating a fake dichotomy between the good European savior who does not deserve criminalisation by EU states, and the allegedly violent non-European facilitator who deserves repression? How can we enact forms of aid and protection “from below” that do not demand the intervention of the same authorities that generate

this violence in the first place? For doing so it is important to challenge our imaginaries, to acknowledge how they are informed by privilege and Eurocentric values, as well as to understand the intersections and overlaps of practices named as facilitation, smuggling, and solidarity, rather than reinforcing their differences.

Many of us may be familiar with the legacy of Harriet Tubman, the fierce smuggler, conductor, and guerrilla soldier who facilitated enslaved people's journeys to freedom across the Underground Railroad. Drawing direct parallels between migration and enslavement is problematic and feeds into narratives of smuggling, coercion, and victimhood that need to be challenged.

However, there is much to learn from the practices of resistance against enslavement, racial apartheid, colonial violence, and state oppression that people have put in place throughout history. Practices carried on by people on the move themselves, with their autonomy, their networks and their railroads that might need to remain underground, that need to remain unseen, but not necessarily unacknowledged.

Acknowledging their power in challenging the border regime, rather than taking distance from them, can help to expand our imaginaries and to better link our struggles against border violence with those for the decriminalization of migration and of facilitation.



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LEGAL FRAGMENT

THE NEW BORDER ASYLUM PROCEDURES IN ITALY

A NEW WAY OF "MANAGING" ARRIVALS AND THE VIOLATION OF REFUGEE RIGHTS AT THE SOUTHERN EU BORDER

By Lucia Gennari, Civil MRCC legal team

A few days after the Cutro massacre, the Italian government gathered all its ministers in the Calabrian village for an "extraordinary" council of ministers from which came out Decree-Law No. 20/2023 of 10 March, sadly known as the "Cutro Decree", which was later converted into state law (Law No. 50 of 2023).

With this measure, the Italian government and parliament have made important changes to the rules on migration and in particular on asylum procedures, administrative detention, criminalisation of aiding and abetting irregular immigration and different residence permits.

We now turn to an aspect of this new law that seems important to us because it has strong political and symbolic connotations and potentially very important effects for those arriving to Italy by sea and passing through the so-called hotspot system, namely the issue of "border asylum procedures".

As a small preamble, we would like to underline that the countries where centers known as "hotspots" have been more or less formally established are just Italy and Greece in the EU. These two countries have, however, implemented differently what was initially defined by the EU Commission as a "method" for screening incoming migrants and classifying them into "genuine asylum seekers" and "irregular migrants".

Since 2016, in the Italian hotspots, the illegitimate practices of the authorities have mainly concerned informal detention in the hotspots (a practice recently sanctioned with four judgments by the European Court of Human Rights and the de facto exclusion (through police practices) of certain categories of people from access to asylum procedures. Thus, people from countries with which Italy has functioning return agreements, e.g. Tunisia, frequently do not receive information about the possibility to apply for protection or, when they express their willingness to do so, their application

is often not registered. Thus, through informal detention and exclusion from asylum procedures, many people have been returned in violation of Italian and international law.

Today we are witnessing a potential paradigm shift in the management and functioning of hotspots, through a mechanism that would seem to bring the Italian system - at least partially - closer to the Greek one. Following a series of legislative reforms over the last six years, and in particular the one in March of this year, "accelerated procedures" for examining asylum applications have been massively introduced, in actuality neutralizing the right to asylum on the basis of a continuous reduction of guarantees for applicants, who are subjected to quick (and summary) procedures and with reduced access to social, psychological and legal support, services that can often determine or help the successful outcome of the asylum procedure.

The March decree strengthens the use of the "border procedure", increasing the cases in which it can be applied and providing for the possibility of detaining applicants in border areas (i.e. hotspots, pre-removal camps and other "similar" areas). The procedure may apply not only to those coming from a "safe country of origin" who apply for asylum at the border, but also to anyone who applies for asylum at the border after "evading or attempting to evade border controls". In these cases, applicants may be detained for a maximum of four weeks in order to verify their "right to enter the territory": we are therefore in front of a "legal fiction", provided for in very vague terms also by the EU directives, according to which the areas where the border procedure takes place would be "outside" Italian (and EU) territory.

There is therefore a great risk of abuses and violations, similar to those already occurring in the transit zones of ports and airports.

To avoid detention, the new law states that the applicant must either have a passport or provide an economic guarantee which, according to ministerial provisions, should consist of a bank transfer of a sum of 4,938 euro to be paid all at once and from an account in the name of the person concerned. This means, for example, that a relative present in Italy would not be able to pay the sum in order to prevent his or her family member from being detained at the border to carry out the asylum procedure. These two conditions appear to be basically impossible to meet by the majority of those arriving to the Italian coasts in search of protection.

If these rules were applied systematically, we would be facing a major step change in a very restrictive direction of migrants' rights at the borders and the normalization (by law) of practices that we consider unjust and illegal. However, it is important to note two elements.

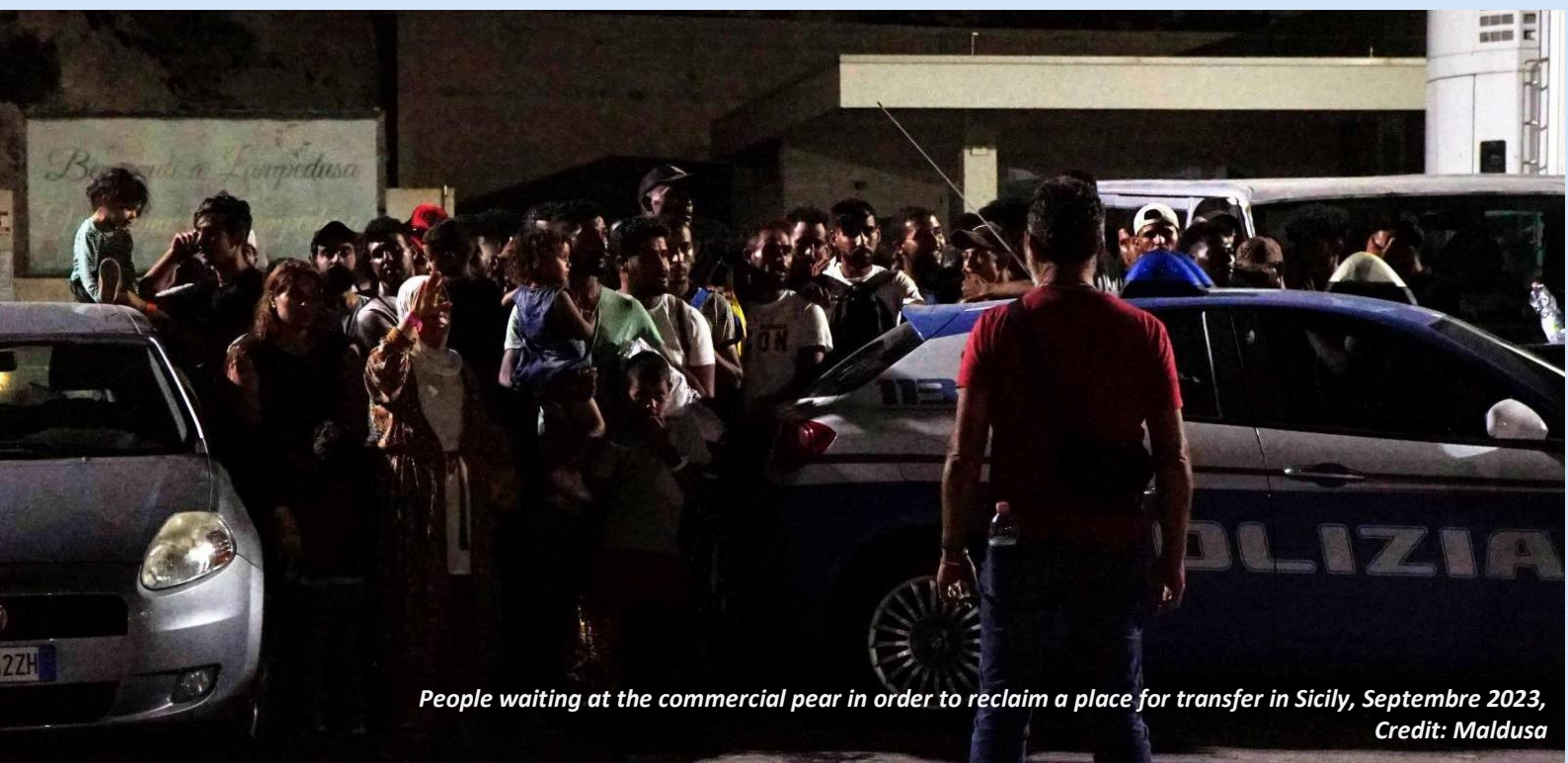
The first is the censure of the application of these rules by the Italian courts. The only known attempt to apply this procedure so far is the one concerning the new "hotspot" in Modica, Sicily, where several dozen Tunisian citizens, who had previously disembarked (autonomously or as a result of rescues) in Lampedusa, were detained. The Court of Catania, competent to assess the legitimacy of their detention, issued as several decisions that did not validate the measure. The reasons were different: it was considered illegitimate to apply the border procedure itself to people disembarked so many days before in a different place from the one where the detention was taking place; it was recognised that for those who disembarked following SAR operations, one cannot speak of "irregular" entry into Italy; it was recognised that there was a contrast between the rules on the financial guarantee to be provided to avoid detention at the border and the EU regulations on the matter.

These decisions of the Catania judges triggered a very strong reaction from the government, whose representatives publicly contested not only the content of the rulings but also personally attacked the judges who had issued them. For weeks, newspapers published information on the judges, including those of other courts, who were "guilty" of having issued rulings in favor of people on the move, contesting the conformity of certain government regulations and ministerial practices with "higher"

standards and principles. This unhinged and threatening reaction, besides constituting a blatant breach of the "rule of law", seems to us to be a sign of the political and symbolic value of what is happening at the border and of the potentiality of conflict that unfolds in these areas and on these issues.

A second element to be considered is the possibility in practice of subjecting large numbers of foreign nationals to border procedures. To achieve this, the Italian authorities would have to set up many closed and guarded facilities, rapid mechanisms of information, identification and communication with the competent courts for the "validation" of border detention, which in turn should be equipped to respond quickly to the needs of the border police. Detention, in fact, is initially ordered by the police and must then be validated by a judge within 72 hours of its commencement. As things stand, we do not feel that the conditions exist for these procedures to be implemented systematically and yet we cannot ignore the fact that many centers are being built in the regions of southern Italy and that it would be nothing new for Italian authorities to deprive people on the move of their liberty in an informal way.

It is therefore important to bear in mind that these changes, even if just potential, are very powerful on a political and symbolic level. In addition, it always should be taken in great consideration how "numbers" sometimes count, when thinking for example of what happened in September in Lampedusa, when the arrival of thousands of people caused a crisis in the more informal and "handmade" hotspot system in the island.



People waiting at the commercial pier in order to reclaim a place for transfer in Sicily, Settembre 2023, Credit: Maldusa

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH ROMDHANE BEN AMOR FROM FTDES (FORUM TUNISIEN DES DROITS ECONOMIQUES ET SOCIAUX)

Could you tell us about the FTDES and its role in migration-related struggles?

The FTDES's philosophy has always been based on confronting unfair policies and standing by the most vulnerable groups. For this reason, migration justice was one of the most important topics that we worked on from the beginning. In addition to the social movements or dynamics related to immigration, we focused on the political dimension of migration issues and tried to confront every deviation that affects the rights and dignity of people on the move and all political ramifications that justify this violation.

We monitor the political context and especially relations between Tunisia and its European partners. We also pay attention to the national laws, which no longer respond to Tunisia's international commitments and/or are not up to the level of values and the principles raised by the Tunisian revolution, such as freedom, democracy, justice, and equality. We can say that the political aspect held an important space in the FTDES's work in presenting a narrative

different from the government's narrative, which presents a vision that is fundamentally biased toward the displaced people.

Since 2020, there has been a sharp increase in the number of people leaving Tunisia by sea. How can this trend be explained?

What happened is that Tunisia, in its faltering phase of transition experienced after the year 2011, neglected an economic and social transition. This neglect deepened the role of corrupted families in the Tunisian economy. The post-revolutionary transition also deepened the existing disparities among the people, which was further aggravated by the political crisis that began in 2020, led by the Presidency of the Republic and Parliament. The conflict between the Presidency of the Republic on the one hand and Parliament and the prime ministers of the government on the other, gave Tunisians the impression that the political future had become very uncertain.



2020 is also the year of Covid and in Tunisia, like other countries of the South, the most vulnerable groups were affected. During this year, Tunisian citizens felt abandoned by the state but also felt abandoned by the rich countries. There were two factors in the year 2020 to particularly take into consideration, namely, political and economic factors, which allowed the crises to deepen.

Metal boats also appeared at the end of 2020. What are the characteristics of these boats, and why are they gradually replacing wooden boats?

The Tunisian state's strategy to combat so-called irregular migration has targeted organized / self-organized migration networks. In Tunisia, we find mainly wooden boats, and the authorities have taken strict measures against the factories or workshops licensed by the state involved in the manufacture of these boats. These anti-immigration measures also harmed fishermen, leaving them to face significant bureaucratic procedures, even in boat maintenance and renovation procedures. The state has also restricted raw materials. In this situation it is natural that the smuggling networks will resort to alternative methods to ensure access to the northern coast of the Mediterranean and as a consequence, they resorted to iron boats.

In that period, iron boats were easy to manufacture and only needed basic materials that were easy to get but also the manufacturing process did not require large equipment, providing the people making them with a greater financial income, but they have proved to be dangerous. These boats are intended mainly for "sub-Saharan migrants", and this shows the difference between sub-Saharan migrants and Tunisian migrants who use wooden and rubber boats.

The FTDES reports that a new route has developed, with migrants arriving in Tunisia via the Algerian land border before going on to Sfax and attempting the crossing. Can you elaborate on this new route?

This migration route is a result of the EU migration policies when it closed the route through the East (so called Balkan route) and made agreements with Libyan militias, but also with Morocco, as all this prompted the waves of movement to search for a new migration route from the Algerian desert to Tunisia and then Sfax. We shall not also forget that there is tolerance from the Algerian authorities that allows migrants to cross into Tunisia.

People who are in Tunisia have already had a previous harsh immigration experience, and may consider that

the route to/from Tunisia as less dangerous and less abusive, despite the tragedies that were witnessed, but also the geographical proximity is an important element. As Tunisia has a tradition of immigration, people moving to Tunisia think that it is easier to cross from its coast.

The majority of people here have fled wars, conflicts, and climate change. Most of them are young men, but there are many women and children.

A few months ago, several civil society organizations, including the FTDES, denounced the violent interception practices of the national maritime guard, which had caused several shipwrecks. Are these practices continuing today? How can the increase in these violent practices be explained?

In general and in the past years, the dominant narrative was that the Tunisian Coast Guards were not violent with migrants compared to Libyan ones. But it should be noted that the Tunisian Coast Guards have committed crimes previously like in 2011, when navy vessel "houriya 301", in order to intercept migrants, hit the boat directly with the military vessel. Same thing happened again in 2017 in Kerkennah.

A few years ago, the testimonies that we collected and received from non-Tunisian migrants stated that Tunisian Coast Guards had a more humanitarian approach in rescues. Back in those days, there were not a lot of people departing from Tunisia towards Europe. Then, more and more people were intercepted to Tunisia and more, more non-Tunisian citizens started departing from the Tunisian coasts and the EU started giving more attention to the Tunisia Route, where they have started training, funding, equipping, coordinating with the Tunisian Coast Guard and authorities.

Since then, after 2020, we started hearing about violent behavior from the Tunisian Coast Guard. The Tunisian Coast Guard started to develop a new narrative which was more present and dominant in the media, stating that they get attacked by migrants when they try to rescue them. Through testimonies collected from people on the move, certain NGOs and activists broke the silence around this violence, providing evidence of such attacks. However, it is still very hard to collect evidence since the Tunisian Coast Guards officers steal all phones that have recorded any video or taken any picture. They also threaten people on the move with deportation and detention if they speak up about this violence to journalists or NGOs.

During the first six months of the year 2023, the Tunisian Coast Guard made a strategy of befriending certain TV channels, radios and journalists, as if they had a clear and previously prepared media strategy to counter what people on the move have been reporting on different social media platforms. Today, since it's clear that they are responsible for the tragedies that are ongoing on the Tunisian coasts, they have changed their media strategy by legitimizing their practices as part of a "legitimate violence from the state".

We consider their communication strategy as a clear recognition from the Ministry of Interior of the violence that has been perpetuated by the TNCG on people on the move at sea. Today, unfortunately, it is still ongoing but it is getting harder and harder to get in touch with people on the move and to document the violations since their strategy is to deport almost every person that gets intercepted at sea to the Algerian or Libyan borders and take their phones.

Tunisian fishermen are often the only witnesses to shipwrecks and violations of the law at sea. How do they react?

After the 2011 revolution, Tunisian fishermen were always a major witness at sea, and they often engage in rescue operations, following what is imposed on them by the law and their moral duty. This was particularly evident during the Libyan war, during

which many migrants departed from there. Fishermen have contributed in rescuing many lives.

However, in recent years, fishermen have been subjected to a form of punishment for their involvement in rescuing migrants. There were policies adopted to remove them from the geographical area close to the Libyan coast and turn it into a space that is a quasi-closed military zone. We saw what happened with the Libyan militias: fishermen were shot and their boats seized.

From the Tunisian side, there are also attempts to prevent the fishermen from standing in solidarity with people on the move. For example, the fisherman who undertakes a rescue operation must obtain permission from the Tunisian authorities. The delay of the Tunisian authorities in responding to the Mayday call, forces the fisherman to abandon his fish harvest and to call other surrounding boats. The political message that is conveyed by the Tunisian authorities to the fishermen that rescuing migrants in distress is not their concern and that they shall stay away from this issue. For this reason, when a fisherman goes to sea, he is torn between his human and moral duty and the indirect punishment that he may be exposed to for his contribution in saving lives.



Demonstration against the visit of Meloni in Tunisia, 6th of June 2023, Credit: FTDES

What happens to migrants (whether Tunisian or from other countries) after they are intercepted by the national coastguard?

Previously, although the crossing was criminalized by the 2004 law, migrants were released and those who were suspected of organizing the passage were detained. This changed in 2020 after the increasing cooperation between the European Union and Tunisia. Both Tunisians and non-Tunisian nationals faced more and more violence in the process of interceptions of boats, confiscating phones and everything that migrants own. For Tunisians, they are criminalized for crossings, and for non-Tunisians, there is collective punishment for all participants, and this is done by deporting them to the Algerian or Libyan borders, often the desert, in very difficult climatic conditions in winter and summer.

For the moment, Tunisia does not have a SAR (Search and Rescue) zone officially recognised by the IMO. However, it seems that Tunisia is under considerable pressure from the European Union to speed up the creation of such a zone. Where does Tunisia stand on this issue? And what would be the consequences of defining a Tunisian SAR zone?

There is a draft law that was recently adopted. The authorities portray it to the public as a part of Tunisia's obligations under the international agreement to which Tunisia is a signatory. But we expect that the process of declaring a SAR zone is following the European Union's agenda, alongside the issue of readmission of migrants from the EU back to Tunisia and the adoption of a Tunisian asylum law. These three points were the European Union's priorities in its relationship with Tunisia.

A Tunisian SAR zone is essentially a European demand and comes from a package of measures that must be taken to deal with the European Union, as it already happened with Libya. We have the impression that today we want to copy the Libyan example in Tunisia, and considering the multiple visits of European officials, we expected, as civil society organizations, that there would be other things that will be implemented on the legal side, such as the issue of the national asylum law and the issue of the SAR zone.

Today we often hear that the Tunisian coast is witnessing humanitarian tragedies one after the other. As an answer to this situation, the Tunisian authorities always use the excuse of the lack of logistical and technical capacities to carry out proper search and rescue operations. Expanding the SAR

area to great distances will contribute in establishing the European approach on the ground: the Tunisian Coast Guard will become a main actor in interception operations over very long distances and therefore transporting migrants back to Tunisia, which we consider to be an unsafe country. It will also limit the operational space for SAR NGOS. We believe that it will turn Tunisia into a disembarkation platform for migrants, and this will perhaps be followed by other measures on the pretext of transforming/deeming Tunisia into a so-called "safe port". Tunisia will be fully involved in border externalization policies and it will clearly turn into a European border point and make Tunisia a guard of the European borders.

In July 2023, the European Union signed a new cooperation agreement with Tunisia, providing for a budget of 105 million euros to strengthen migration control. We recently learned that President Kais Saïd had refused the first installment of funding, deeming the sums announced derisory and refusing to accept for his country what he saw as "charity". How do you explain this reaction? And what do you see as the future of this agreement?

The basis of this agreement is a political and moral failure. It came in difficult political circumstances, especially on the Tunisian side, in which all the elements of freedom and democracy were not present. Migrants were subjected to repression on land and at sea. It also came in a context in which civil society organizations and activists supporting people on the move were exposed to a campaign of slander, hatred, and being accused of betrayal. Still today, all opposition voices in Tunisia are being harassed, whether by imprisonment or smear campaigns. Therefore, in these circumstances, there was no societal discussion in democratic institutions on the content of the agreement, and the agreement was discussed in non-transparent conditions.

This agreement gives the European citizen a higher status than the Tunisian citizen. This means that the European citizen is at an advanced level and enjoys all rights, unlike the Tunisian citizen who does not enjoy those. The memorandum classifies Tunisian citizens into specific categories and classes, categories of people that meet the conditions of visa and migration and categories of people that will be forced to migrate without having access to safe and legal pathways. It is based on 5 points, but the core of the text is the so-called irregular migration and the issue of so-called readmission.

The agreement was made between two parties between whom there is not much trust, and this is

clear after the agreement. As we expected, this agreement was born dead, and we already see signs of a lack of trust between the two parties after the statements of the Tunisian side regarding the funds that were rejected. But these are funds related to previous pledges related to the Covid pandemic and have nothing to do with the recent agreement. In any case, we believe that this agreement will not be applied despite the efforts made by Georgia Meloni to try to market this agreement as the one and only solution.

The European Union's externalization policies in Tunisia continue to strengthen and harden. How can civil society, in the south and north of the Mediterranean, oppose them?

In the countries of the South, the context is very difficult. Civil society's role is retreating, in a unilateral

context, that does not recognize the role of civil society, and this reduces the margin of action at the level of direct influence on policies. Perhaps in the northern countries, despite the restrictions to which activists are exposed, the civil society could have greater scope for action.

But this does not mean that we must remain silent about what is happening in Europe or in the countries of the global South. There must be more networking, organizing, and more openness to civil, social, and union movements. The Mediterranean region has turned into a cemetery, and although the scope for action has become more difficult in the countries of the global South, hope is always present and there must be no silence regarding all racist and violent accomplices against people on the move.

Thanks Romdhane, for this interview!



Gathering following the murder of Falikou Koulibaly, December 2018, Credit: FTDES

Website: <https://ftdes.net/>

AMPLIFYING VOICES

ALLIANCE WITH REFUGEES IN LIBYA

A new translocal network called “Alliance with Refugees in Libya” (ARiL) was built already in August 2023 - following mobilization at the end of June in Brussels (see Echoes No. 7, page 18) in a meeting in Bologna. Bologna was not chosen by accident. Refugees in Libya (RiL) had decided before to create a registered association and an office in this city. “Translocal” means that, on one hand a group of local activists and supporters was formed, while on the other hand transnational relationships remain essential for the network: with activists in other European cities, but first of all with active refugees and migrants still living in Libya.

With the aim to consolidate and to strengthen the movement of RiL in Libya and in Europe, several concrete projects and working groups have been established:

- for the opening of the mentioned office in Bologna;
- for setting up an archive;
- for the creation of a collective hotline for requests from Libya;
- for the start of a Human Rights Defender-Campaign.

These projects are interconnected and carried out by grassroot-activists from sea rescue organizations and from struggles for freedom of movement to expand concrete support for people seeking protection in Libya and to consolidate collective work in the fight for freedom of movement in Europe.

On the hotline

Since 2021 more than 8.000 requests have reached out to the already existing hotline of Refugees in

Libya. Since, RiL is in contact with the people behind the requests, trying to provide what is within their reach, collecting information, amplifying the different voices and pursuing legal processes. It is not only a hotline, but a network, an exchange point of a shared struggle. From December 2023 on, the Alliance with Refugees in Libya plans to extend this network with infrastructure and peoplepower. This collective hotline should run seven days a week, trying to answer requests, to collect valuable information and to amplify the voices of Refugees in Libya.

On the Campaign

The Human Rights Defender Campaign, starting from the beginning of 2024, aims to achieve the evacuation of human rights activists and people seeking protection from Libya to safe countries. The idea was presented already in an online event on 1 October 2023, the 2nd anniversary of the historical self organized sit-in protest in Tripoli.

The campaign will firstly refer to the 220 RiL activists, who have been imprisoned in Ain-Zara Camp for more than 18 months. After their hard-won release in July 2023 the coherent demand for evacuation came up again. The narrative of the campaign should emphasize on the collective activity of human rights defenders in Libya.

Think global, act local. With the office in Bologna a local implementation of the realities of Refugees in Libya should start on European ground. Together with the translocal network several events, training and regular meetings will be organized for the hotline and the campaign in near future. Support is needed on various levels!

Website: <https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/>

Contact: Refugeesinlibya@gmail.com



Picture : Refugees in Libya

CRIMINALISATION

IUVENTA: NOTES FROM TRAPRANI

By iuventa crew

As we approach the end of the preliminary trial, we want to take a look back...

After its start in May 2022, the preliminary phase of the trial against the four defendants of the iuventa-crew is entering its final phase. It is expected that at the beginning of 2024, the judge of the Trapani court will decide whether the case has to continue in a main trial or to dismiss the charges. Given the systematic rejection so far of all requests of our lawyers, we are not very optimistic.

Despite this, we would like to use this turning point to emphasize once again that this trial should never have taken place, and to demand the charges to be dropped. But above all, we would like to remind once again that the only response of European states to the thousands of deaths at their borders every year is to raid and imprison people on the move and to obstruct in every possible way the operations of the civilian fleet.

The case against iuventa is one of the many spaces of resistance and denunciation of a network that confirms that the struggle for justice at the borders is active and powerful. In the face of the will of states to criminalize migration and mutual support, they will not succeed in silencing us or in making us give up.

#DROPTHECHARGES

The last phase of the preliminary trial, during which mainly procedural issues have been discussed, will take place in the coming months. In this final phase, the closing arguments of the various parties involved will be presented. The first step was the oral, or written, presentation of the defendants' statements. In mid-December it will be the turn of the prosecution's closing arguments and those of the defense lawyers.

On October 13, and for the first time since the investigations began seven years ago, the iuventa defendants were given the opportunity to defend themselves against the prosecution's accusations. Two of the statements were read out in court and we have made them public in their entirety ([https://www.iuventa-](https://www.iuventa-crew.org/en/2023/10/14/inside-courtroom-incl-video/)

[crew.org/en/2023/10/14/inside-courtroom-incl-video/](https://www.iuventa-crew.org/en/2023/10/14/inside-courtroom-incl-video/)). Few minutes after the first defendant began to read his statement, two of the prosecutors, including the chief prosecutor, left the courtroom. We wondered what it is they don't want to hear.

"It is completely incomprehensible to me that the statements by the three authorities that were present on the spot (two military units in the air and one military unit in immediate proximity to the IUVENTA during the period in question) have not been used to verify the testimonies of the IMI Security employees. In fact, these statements are not even part of the investigation files. After seven years!"

Extract from the court statement of Sascha Girke, iuventa-crew defendant

As already confirmed in 2018 by the "Forensic Oceanography and Forensic Architecture" research agency at Goldsmiths (University of London) (<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-seizure-of-the-iuventa>), the defendants' statements demonstrate once more that each of the prosecution's accusations are unfounded. Our statements are in line with the findings of the Goldsmiths analysis, showing that the iuventa crew did not return empty boats to smugglers, as they were accused of having done. Nor did they collaborate with anyone connected to the smuggling networks to arrange so-called "handovers", as the Italian authorities claimed.

In our statement we described in detail the operations under suspicion, those of 10 September 2016 and 18 June 2017. We wondered why the prosecution relied solely on the testimony of IMI Security employees – Ballestra, Montanino and Gallo – who were deployed on the VOS HESTIA, and whose background and motivations are highly questionable as evidenced by their known connections to radical right-wing organizations.

We wondered why the prosecution never wanted to take the testimonies of two aerial military units and one naval military unit, all of which were involved jointly with iuventa in the rescues, and which could corroborate our version of events. "This leads me to question the intentions of the public prosecutor's

office and to what extent political motives guided this investigation”, said Sascha in closing his speech.

We recalled with pain how in May 2017, in order to bug the iuventa, the IMRCC forced us to leave the SAR area even though there were several cases of boats in distress. While we were on our way to Lampedusa, five boats disappeared at sea, thousands of people drowned in the area we had just forcibly left. “I wish the prosecution had had to listen to the cries of the thousand people from the five boats that disappeared. They drowned so that we could be investigated,” lamented Dariush in his speech. Although the main prosecution would not, once again, listen. It seems clear what they did not want to hear.

#NOTTRANSLATIONNOJUSTICE

“I don’t think a judge should give you the feeling that he has already decided against you, just because he has read the indictment. In fact, I expect a judge to be interested in information that can give him a better overview. The presumption of innocence also applies to us. Doesn’t it? This brings me to the question of fundamental rights. Again, I have been surprised at how often they have been denied to us in this courtroom.”

Extract from the court statement of Dariush Beigui, iuventa-crew defendant

During the intervention in court we also reviewed the violations of the fundamental elements of a fair trial during this preliminary phase. As we denounced in the #NoTranslationNoJustice campaign, less than 3 percent of the entire file has been translated. Despite this, the judge keeps considering that “essential information” is available to the defendants. Regrettably, what is to be considered “essential” is largely left to the member states and ultimately to the discretion of national prosecutors and judges. But what is essential for an effective defense?

According to Nicola Canestrini, “this should be determined by putting the rights of the defendant in front and center of every determination.” Since European law does not clearly define what can be considered “essential information”, we have repeatedly asked to bring this issue before the European Court of Justice. Each and every time our request has been rejected by the judge. According to EULITA, the European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association, this is even a European-wide problem, as “ridiculous remuneration keeps qualified interpreters far away from courtrooms with the

consequence that hearings have to be suspended, time is wasted and costs ramp up.”

Furthermore, the impossibility of conducting an adequate interrogation due to the lack of proper interpretation, on up to three occasions, is further evidence that fundamental rights are being violated in the iuventa trial. The experts summoned by the judge to assess the quality of the interpretation during the interrogations were categorical. They concluded that the interpreters provided by the authorities were not adequate, as essential parts could not be understood by the accused. Contrary to the experts’ assessment, the judge ruled that the overall meaning of the translated parts was sufficient for general fairness of the procedure and considered that the interrogation had been carried out.

#DECriminalizeFacilitation

“It’s time to rethink the whole discipline. As of today, this criminal case against individuals has taken on broader legal scope, extending beyond this singular case. This is a significant development for us as it fully reflects the nature of the charges, which were never only about the individual defendants but rather an attack on all who have engaged in similar conduct, are currently doing so, or may do so in the future.”

Francesca Cancellaro, iuventa lawyer

Despite the judge’s systematic refusal of each and every element raised by the defense lawyers, we had few but very important successes in the last year. After years of preparatory work, our lawyer Francesca Cancellaro filed a complaint asking the Court of Trapani to refer the case to the European Court of Justice for an assessment of the “facilitation of unauthorized migration” laws. Lawyer Cancellaro argues that both the so-called Facilitator’s Package and Article 12 of the Italian Immigration Act violate fundamental rights of individuals laid down in both international and Italian law. Key information about the complaint is available on our platform (<https://daten.solidarity-at-sea.org/s/nHqAwwf6GPzPp43>).

What experts in international law and human rights defined as a “sublime work” was dismissed by the judge in Trapani as “unfounded.” However, his decision did not address the arguments submitted, but left them largely unconsidered.

“It is time the focus shifts on the rights of those arrested as suspected “smugglers” who are usually sentenced to long prison terms without consideration

of any circumstances. The EU legal framework provides the perceived legitimization and the juridical opportunity for EU member states to abuse criminal law against people on the move and those in solidarity. European courts at this stage are still contributing to the ever increasing death toll in the Mediterranean. The racist and violent implementation of neo-colonial interests needs to stop once and for all."

Kathrin Schmidt, iuventa-crew defendant

Thankfully, a few weeks later, in the context of the Kinshasa case, in which a woman of Congolese origin faces charges of facilitating unauthorized entry into Italy under Article 12, lawyer Cancellaro re-filed the complaint. On this occasion, the judge of the Bologna court accepted the request in its entirety. The European Court of Justice will now have to make an assessment on the basis of the legal arguments presented by Cancellaro. This success goes beyond the case against iuventa, and represents hope for the movement against the criminalisation of migration and mutual support at the European borders. As far as we know, it is the first time that migration facilitation laws have been challenged.

Using one of the largest lawsuits against SAR organizations to attack the core of the criminalisation of people on the move and mutual support is an act of poetic justice.

THOSE WHO DETAIN AND DESTROY SHIPS LEAVE PEOPLE TO DIE!

"Negligence in custody is a crime under Italian law. We expect a thorough investigation which will assess if and who violated their duty to maintain the perfect functionality of the seized sea rescue vessel, which was completely abandoned."

Nicola Canestrini, iuventa lawyer

Finally, iuventa's strategy also includes demanding accountability for those responsible for the abandonment and destruction of the rescue ship, confiscated in 2017. The report which followed the technical inspection carried out in October 2022, commissioned by the owners of the vessel and authorized by the G.I.P of Trapani, indicates that "once on board it was evident that the ship has been in a state of total abandonment from the date of seizure" because "no ordinary or extraordinary maintenance has been carried out". The iuventa-crew filed a criminal complaint to the Trapani Prosecutor's Office on 12th of February 2023, requesting an investigation into the abandonment and destruction

of the rescue ship. On the 21st of November, 12 NGOs joined the iuventa complaint.

Since the beginning of 2023 alone, in 12 cases NGO ships have been detained in Italy, while in the same period more than 2,300 people lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean. Measures such as seizure and detention are part of a systematic practice in Italy to obstruct civilian search and rescue operations. This has progressed since the seizure of the iuventa and has been escalated by the Piantadosi decree. Any attack on a rescue ship has an impact on the entire civilian fleet and ultimately on the lives and safety of people on the move. The joint effort of the NGOs underlines the importance of holding state actors accountable for their actions in seizing and destroying life saving assets.

With all this...

We approach this final phase of the preliminary trial with mixed feelings. On the one hand the proceedings have further confirmed what we have been repeating since we first learned that an investigation had been opened against us: this trial is political. The total lack of evidence and the violation of fundamental rights during the trial, the decision of the ministry of interior and the prime minister's office to present itself as a private prosecution, reminds us that justice is subject to the power game. It is the same justice that abandons and even imprisons all those who seek to protect their lives in dignified conditions.

At the same time, the constant expressions of solidarity, the extraordinary work and support from our lawyers, and the fact that we feel part of a much larger movement that fights tirelessly to transform this murderous power keep us strong. We are certain that when people come together and walk together they are capable of achieving anything.

As we approach the end of the preliminary trial, we want to take a look back...

To keep moving forward...

WEBSITE - <https://iuventa-crew.org>



MOBILISATIONS

REPORT FROM THE MALDUSA CAMP IN LAMPEDUSA

7-12 October 2023

Maldusa invited about 60 activists from various solidarity projects in the Mediterranean Sea and beyond. On the one hand, the network internal meeting intended to further consolidate the cooperation and practices between actors at sea and on land that had been developing in recent years.

On the other hand, several public events and a commemorative action were planned to address the local population and as well as the many workers and tourists on the island, and to strengthen the impressive practices that took place on the island a few weeks ago: solidarity with the "People on the Move" who disembark in Lampedusa.

INTERNAL MEETING

The first internal workshop on „Solidarity at sea“ focused on the contested spaces in the Mediterranean Sea, in Europe and North Africa: we discussed the new waves of racism and escalating border violence, as well as how, in 2023, migrant communities and networks have been asserting themselves in face of obstacles and hostility. A key question, related to our daily struggle, was also how to intensify the operational collaborations at sea amongst the civil fleet around Lampedusa.

In the following session on “Solidarity on land,” various infrastructures for freedom of movement presented their struggles, and exchanged on how we can learn from each other’s tools and strategies, on how to improve our communication, and on how to better involve migrant communities and people on the move.

Maldusa camp in Lampedusa, October 2023, Credit: Maldusa



An analysis of the growing camp/hotspot and detention system in southern Italy has been the main topic of another round of exchange, followed by a workshop where the need of continuous monitoring in Sicily was discussed - mainly in order to amplify the protests of people detained.

What are adequate tools for organizing CommemorActions? How to give more visibility - without creating spectacles - to the victims of the border regime? What are the challenges of the transnational network of families and survivors? Along these questions two parallel workshops took place, one dedicated to the preparation of the 11.10.2013 commemorAction in Lampedusa.

Several participants of the camp are involved in research of missing people and in projects for the identification of bodies, with the aim to develop a more dignified and accessible approach towards families and communities of the missing. In a rich exchange on practices and demands in various contexts, an appointment was made for a common mapping to foster future collaborations.

On the final day, in a workshop on criminalization participants reported about their experiences of imprisonment for boat-driving, and about solidarity campaigns against the criminalization of facilitation in various countries. Over the past years the network has grown on a transnational level, with practices of mutual support and mutual learning, and the impact of both political changes and of our strategies of resistance - both at the practical and discursive level - was evaluated.

Strategic litigation was the topic of a last workshop, in which examples of successful legal struggles were shared, combined with a discussion on what kind of interventions would help to block border violence and what would bring at least a bit of justice for victims, survivors and relatives.

PUBLIC EVENTS

During the first public event, in front of the association "Archivio Storico di Lampedusa", we all sat on and around the impressive patchwork carpet of Yusuf. Local actors presented the initiative they founded in 2020, after the death of a 5 year old boy during a terrible shipwreck of a boat that had departed from Libya, and developed in close cooperation with his mother, who survived the shipwreck and buried the child in the Lampedusa cemetery.

Members of the local Forum Solidale di Lampedusa in solidarity with refugees and migrants explained their approach when meeting people arriving at the pier: *"We were the ones with nothing on our faces. Without masks, without uniforms, nothing on our faces, just our smile... People meeting people. We wanted to do something to keep dignity and humanity. Because the dehumanization of migrant people is the first thing that happens when they disembark at the dock."*

In the second public event, guests from Alarm Phone Sahara and from Refugees in Libya presented their self-organized struggles on the background of the brutal consequences of EU border externalization in



Maldusa camp in Lampedusa, October 2023, Credit: Maldusa

North and West Africa. In Niger, the project was established in 2017 with a hotline and whistleblowers along the desert routes to support people who try to cross to the North, or who have been deported back to South. In Libya, a cycle of powerful protests in front of the UNHCR office in Tripoli started in October 2021, and it currently continues in Europe with the key demand of evacuations.

In 2023, Tunisia has been a central place for departures to Europe and to Lampedusa and, for this reason, most of the information that circulates about Tunisia are in relation to borders and border control. With activists from Tunisia we tried to have a deeper picture of the country's latest political development, the structural economic problems linked to imperialist powers and the rise of racist violence. We had the opportunity to speak about the important mobilizations of Zaris 18/18 that is still asking for truth and justice and a photo exposition of these protests was available in Piazza Castello. An

important space has been dedicated to the racist speech that the Tunisian president made at the end of February and its devastating consequences in terms of segregation, precarization and violence. We stand with the latest words that closed the event: "We lived under the era of Ben Ali and we know, now, how important is freedom."

In the evening of 11.10. 2023, more than 130 people - locals, tourists, transnational activists - followed our invitation and participated in the Commemoration for the victims of the horrible shipwreck that took place off Lampedusa exactly ten years ago. It was an impressive and intense CommemorAction, where we shared tears and anger as well as hope for a world where death at the border belongs to the past.

Find the extra report with pictures here: _

<https://www.maldusa.org/l/lampedusa-commemoration-11-october-2013-2023/>

Maldusa camp in Lampedusa, Commemoration, October 2023, Credit: Maldusa



FOR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT: INDEPENDENT INFORMATION FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS COMING TO EUROPE

RELAUNCH OF THE WEBGUIDE FROM THE NETWORK WELCOME TO EUROPE (W2EU)

On 20 September 2023 the quadrilingual webguide of the network Welcome to Europe was relaunched: “w2eu.info provides information to refugees and migrants that might be useful on their journey to and through Europe. We want to give access to counseling and useful contacts in different European countries. (...) We welcome all travelers on their difficult trip and wish all of them a good journey - because freedom of movement is everybody’s right!”

These sentences, which were drafted years ago, are still valid to describe the basic idea of the project, founded already in 2010, and still online and now with updated information, a renewed design and new mapping tools.

BRIEF HISTORY OF W2EU

The project of w2eu started already in 2010, born in the common struggles during the noborder camp 2009 in Lesvos: „...to build daily structures and to provide useful multilingual information to empower

and to support refugees and migrants in transit for their right to move to their desired destination“. In 2019 a 10-year brochure was published, in which the history of the network was presented: _

<http://infomobile.w2eu.net/files/2019/07/w2eu-10years-booklet-EN-201906-screen.pdf>

In the same year, in summer 2019, Welcome to Europe initiated the first Transborder Summer Camp as a meeting point to discuss solidarity on the routes with the approach to build and extend infrastructures for freedom of movement: _

<https://trans-border.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/TSC-brosch%C3%BCre-202004-screen.pdf>

In 2020 the w2eu-network became less active and tired, also affected by the consequences of Covid. But in a workshop during the second Transborder Summer Camp in July 2022 new people joined and the reorganization of the project started. As of September 2023, the contact lists of most country- and border sections have been updated again.

*Lampedusa commercial pier from the inside of fishing vessel, November 2023,
Credit: Maldusa*



For the Central Med region the information and contacts are available not only for Italy and Malta but also for Tunisia and Libya. We are open for comments and corrections, we welcome all additions and further updates.

And we ask all solidarity networks between land and sea in and around Europe to spread our video-clip with the onliest demand, which will lead to an end of death and violence at the borders: for freedom of movement!

Website: <https://w2eu.info/>



Big fishing vessel departed from Zuwara arrived in Lampedusa, November 2023, Credit: Maldusa



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