

SAVING HUMANS
MEDITERRANEA

MEDREPORT
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SAVING HUMANS
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**BEAUTY WILL SAVE
THE WORLD**

**STORY FROM THE
MEDITERRANEA
FESTIVAL**

From September 12 to 15, Mediterranea Saving Humans brought together activists, volunteers and supporters at the Città dell'Altra Economia in Rome for the third edition of its annual festival. An opportunity to reflect on borders and their violence, but also to create spaces for dialogue and discussion.

There is no room for indifference

“Beauty will save the world,” said Aldo, quoting Dostoevsky, on the last day of A Bordo! The Mediterranea festival. Spoken under a sky finally clear of clouds, these words concluded four intense days of meetings, debates, testimonies and sharing. Not just a call to hope, but a call to action: today, we need that beauty more than ever.

From September 12 to 15, Mediterranea Saving Humans brought together activists, volunteers and supporters at the Città dell'Altra Economia in Rome for the third edition of its annual festival. An opportunity to reflect on borders and their violence, but also to create spaces for dialogue and discussion.

The opening of the festival, entrusted to the president Laura Marmorale and Aldo Ciani, a Roman activist, once again clearly explained the meaning of Mediterranea: there is no room for indifference. Their words kicked off four days in which resistance, solidarity and human rights were at the center of the debate. A Bordo! was not just a meeting between activists, but a platform to give voice to those who fight every day for freedom of movement and respect for human rights. The days were intense and full of emotions, with an unavoidable focus on Palestine, where Mediterranea began the project Mediterranea with Palestine a few months ago. Thanks to the interventions of Francesca Albanese and Luisa Morgantini, together with Operazione Colomba and Mohammad Hurreini, an activist from the Palestinian organization Youth of Sumud, a dramatic picture of the reality in the occupied territories was drawn.

The testimonies of the activists of Mediterranea, who since June, together with Operazione Colomba, have supported the nonviolent resistance of Youth of Sumud in the Masafer Yatta region, in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank, have told of the “sumud” (an Arabic word that can be translated as resilience) of a people who have resisted systematic violations of human rights for over fifty years, in a context of apartheid and slow but constant ethnic cleansing carried out by the State of Israel.

Of course, the Mediterranean was also a protagonist. The common thread of “Mediterranean resistances” gave voice to strong and engaging stories: Naeima Hussein, Ibrahima Lo and David Yambio shared their testimonies of the atrocities suffered in Libyan concentration camps and of the violence against people on the move in Tunisia, but also and above all the political demands of the self-organized movement Refugees in Libya, which calls for respect for the human rights of migrants in Libya and throughout North Africa. Their voices were joined by those of Fabio Gianfrancesco and Sophia Igel, respectively Rescue Coordinator of Mediterranea and activist of Alliance with Refugees in Libya, who launched an appeal to European civil society: amplify the demands of people on the move and monitor and report what happens along the migratory routes.

On Saturday morning, A Bordo! brought together representatives of many organizations of the Civil Fleet, the increasingly large alliance of ships, sailboats and planes that carry out civil rescue at sea. The discussion focused on the ongoing repression of rescue operations in the Mediterranean, which has grown with the rise to power of the far Right in Italy and many other European countries, and the clear, strong and united responses that

this context requires us to give. Always with an unshakable certainty: The central Mediterranean, where we rescue and bear witness to human rights violations against people on the move, is where we need to be.

The last day of the festival addressed a crucial issue for Mediterranea: the criminalization of migrants and solidarity, which is not only taking place along the external borders of Europe, but also within Fortress Europe, starting from our country. In a dialogue between Nicola Cocco of the No CPR Network, Giovanna Cavallo of the Forum to change the order of things, Loredana Leo, lawyers of ASGI, and Laura Marmorale, the growing repression of which people on the move are victims emerged, with the criminalization of the so-called smugglers and within the CPRs, in Italy and Albania. The collective commitment that our civil society must take is to counter the security drift of reception policies, continuing to fight alongside those seeking a better future and for the creation of a culture of solidarity and humanity. A Bordo! has created a living and pulsating space and has left a tangible mark, with a clear message: today more than ever we cannot afford to remain indifferent. The testimonies heard, the faces met and the ideas exchanged made it clear that the fight for human rights is never isolated, but is part of an intersectional network that continues to grow, to resist and to be realized in concrete actions. The beauty that will save the world, the one we all need therefore, is the one of people, of their will to change things, to fight for a more fair Mediterranean and world.

STORIES OF BORDERS
GERMANY CLOSES



Starting Sept. 16, 2024, the German federal government has introduced new controls on all borders in the country; from France to Luxembourg, the Netherlands to Belgium and Denmark. Another measure that, together with last month's deportation of the Afghan citizens and the reduction of social benefits for some refugees, is symptomatic of a gradual closure in a country that, in recent years, had instead seemed to be one of the most open and welcoming to people on the move.

The “tough” approach of German migration policy

Last month, the German federal government introduced new controls on all of the country's borders. Specifically, random border controls were temporarily reinstated at Germany's land borders with France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark starting Sept. 16, 2024 for a period of six months. The government's decision was made after waves of the far right developed in the country following violent attacks by immigrant people to send a message ahead of federal elections next year.

Migration expert at the German Council on Foreign Relations Svenja Niederfranke had mentioned how it is often not the most important members of criminal networks that make it all the way to the borders of the European Union, pointing out that the measure may not lead to substantial changes and instead causes significant problems for commuters and transport companies that will have to deal with queues at the border.

Several countries have now criticized German decisions to introduce border controls; Poland, Greece, and Austria have taken a strong stance, and this could risk weakening the European Union from within.

Today, one month after the measures were introduced, the government published some new results on irregular border crossings from which ongoing trends can be inferred, with the aim of monitoring the measures and evaluating their success. In particular, it became clear that the measures introduced have not been as effective as desired so far.

Indeed, since the controls were instituted, 2,448 unauthorized entries have been detected, including 838 cases at the borders with France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, as stated by the Federal Police; 539 people have been turned away from the western borders. Officials did not specify the outcome of other checks conducted. Between Sept. 16 and Oct. 2, there were 18 irregular entries at the German-Danish border; 14 of these people were turned back in Denmark. The Federal Police have executed 387 arrest warrants in the past two weeks, which was only possible because of the introduction of border controls.

German Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz recently spoke about Germany's migration policy. On the one hand, there were openings, regarding, for example, the increase in jobs for Ukraine refugees that occurred as of September 2023. According to official data, 266,000 Ukrainians were employed in Germany as of July 2024, a number that represents an increase of 71,000 people over 2023. Overall, refugee employment has increased significantly in recent years, with about 64 percent of the refugees who had arrived in 2015 currently having jobs. Germany is focusing heavily on the employment of refugees: Chancellor Scholz and the head of the Federal Employment Agency, Andrea Nahles, have urged employers and employees to offer more language courses to refugees to facilitate their easier integration.

Foreign working people are crucial to the country, which faces a significant labor shortage and which identifies, in immigration, a way to balance otherwise declining demographic trends. Over the past year, foreign working people have increased by 283,000, and in the first half of 2024, more than 80,000 work visas were issued, half of them to skilled workers.

On the other hand, however, Chancellor Scholz is working toward a tougher approach in migration policy, emphasizing, for example, the need for faster and large-scale expulsions against irregular migrants. For example, in August, 28 Afghan citizens who had been convicted in Germany were returned to their country of origin; this is the first deportation since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021. Another measure that, together with the reintroduction of border controls and the reduction of social benefits for some refugees, is symptomatic of a gradual closure in a country that, in recent years, had seemed instead to be one of the most open and welcoming to people on the move.

FROM GERMANY TO AFGHANISTAN: THE FIRST DEPORTATION



The German Far Right and the Damage to European Solidarity

The first deportation from Germany to Afghanistan has taken place. This has not happened since 2021. The German authorities justified the decision as part of a tougher policy against migration. However, this decision represents a threat to the whole of Europe, both in terms of fundamental human rights and in compliance with international law.

First deportation from Germany to Afghanistan since 2021

Negotiating with the Taliban. This is what the German government has come to in the past month. A plane carrying 28 Afghans took off from Leipzig/Halle at the end of August, while a spokesman for the German Foreign Ministry stated that Germany has no intention of normalizing relations with the Taliban, but only of maintaining discussions at a “technical” level. The flight from Leipzig/Halle marks the first case of deportations to Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power in 2021. German authorities have justified the decision as part of a tougher policy against migration, especially for people who have been convicted of crimes or are considered a security threat. This decision, which comes in the midst of an increasingly polarized political context characterized by the victory of the far right in Thuringia, represents a threat to fundamental human rights and respect for international law.

The context that led to these measures reflects a hardening of public opinion and a growing distrust towards migrants, especially following the attacks that have hit the country in recent months. These attacks, while being isolated crimes, have been exploited by far-right parties to fuel a climate of fear and xenophobia, casting a shadow over an entire community of refugees and asylum seekers. In parallel, Germany has introduced temporary border closures, increasing border controls and accentuating the discourse on the migration emergency.

Deportations in an extremely dangerous context

Sending people back to Afghanistan means exposing them to serious risks to their safety. The country, under the Taliban regime, is ravaged by violence and instability. Reports of torture, extrajudicial executions and systematic persecution of political opponents and religious minorities make Afghanistan one of the most dangerous places in the world.

This makes the deportations a clear violation of the principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in the Geneva Convention, which prohibits the forced return of people to countries where they risk persecution or inhuman treatment.

What makes this practice even more disturbing is the fact that most of the deported Afghans have not been convicted of serious crimes, as the German government claims, but are rather individuals in a precarious situation, victims of a bureaucratic system that does not grant them any protection.

The German Far Right and the Damage to European Solidarity

The rise of the far right in Germany, highlighted by the recent victory of anti-immigration parties in regional elections, has had a strong impact on the country's migration policy. The current approach to deportations reflects an attempt to respond to pressure from an increasingly polarized electorate, which sees migrants as scapegoats for the country's economic and social difficulties. This political climate does nothing but weaken the values of solidarity and welcome that the European Union should represent.

The deportations have also raised a heated debate within the European Union. Unlike Germany, many other member states have suspended returns to Afghanistan, citing security concerns. Germany's position risks increasing tensions over the EU's common migration policies, calling into question the respect for shared humanitarian principles.

An urgent request: stop the deportations

The German government must immediately stop deportations to Afghanistan and review its migration policy in light of its international obligations. The safety and protection of the most vulnerable must not be sacrificed to meet domestic political pressure or to appease the far right.

The German authorities must demonstrate responsible leadership, placing human rights and protection at the heart of their political decisions. The lives of those who come to Europe in search of a better future cannot be treated as pawns in a political game.

At a time when European values of solidarity and welcome are being put to the test, it is essential that Germany and other EU Member States remain true to their principles, ensuring a fair and humane asylum system. Deportations to Afghanistan are not only morally unjustifiable, they put at risk the lives of people who have been forced to flee a brutal regime and have sought refuge and hope in Europe.



SUDANESE REFUGEES IN EGYPT

“REFUGEES PLATFORM
IN EGYPT”’S
INVESTIGATION

Sudanese citizens, badly affected by the military conflict in their own country, find themselves forced to seek asylum in neighboring Egypt. An investigation by the “Refugees Platform in Egypt,” however, revealed the existence of massive deportation activities by the army headed by Cairo. Egypt is found guilty of gross human rights violations, thereby contributing to the severe humanitarian tragedy already unfolding in Sudan.

The investigation on Sudanese refugees in Egypt.

Sudanese citizens, greatly affected by the military conflict in their own country, find themselves forced to seek asylum in countries on the border. These include Egypt, which over the years has been increasingly reluctant to accept them and more prone to deportation; with the support of the EU, Egypt is found guilty of gross human rights violations, thus contributing to the severe humanitarian tragedy in Sudan.

An investigation carried out two summers ago by “Refugees Platform in Egypt” (RPE, an independent organization that works for human rights advocacy, focusing on supporting and defending the rights of people on the move), with the support of “The New Humanitarian,” revealed the existence of massive deportation activities of Sudanese refugees from Egypt by the Cairo-based army. The two organizations were the first to thoroughly investigate the modus operandi of the deportation system. The investigation, through some courageous testimonies, reveals the chilling reality of all those Sudanese nationals who leave their conflict-torn country for Egypt with the intention of seeking asylum: however, Sudanese hopes are dashed upon arrival in Egypt, which punctually detains all Sudanese nationals in secret military bases, only to deport them later.

The events must be framed in a specific moment in Sudan’s history: the war between the Sudanese army and a former branch of the latter, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The conflict originated on April 15, 2023 due to a clash of interests in the running of the country between two military leaders who held the country’s reins after the coup in 2021. The departure of

the RFS from the main Sudanese military has created strong instability because of the RFS military force, which was accused of human rights violations as early as 2019. Against this backdrop, more and more Sudanese citizens are fleeing their country where hunger is as real a danger as war, and from a conflict that has already claimed thousands of lives.

Egypt and Sudan are two very historically connected countries, not surprisingly Egypt has long hosted millions of Sudanese migrants. The Egyptian government has sided with the army in the current conflict, and yet refugees have faced increasing hostility from Egyptian politicians and the public. It has been more than a year since Egypt progressively restricted entry into the country at the Sudanese border; at first men between the ages of 16 and 50 were prevented from entering unless they had a visa issued by Egyptian consulates in Sudan. Gradually the ordinance was extended to all Sudanese citizens, most of whom turned to smugglers because of the long processing time for entry visas: those who urgently needed to flee the conflict had no choice but to pass through irregular border crossings.

Europe's dirty complicity

The investigation touches on several hot buttons, first of all Egypt's denial of signed and ratified refugee conventions; secondly, there is evidence of European complicity, as the EU has allocated millions of euros to Egypt to cause the flow of immigration to Europe to decrease dramatically.

The situation could easily be exacerbated by a second €8 billion funding package from the EU, €200 million of which is earmarked to combat immigration. The EU's goal is to lean on third countries and delegate the disposal of migrant flows: the European Union, considered the bastion of democracy, delegates the management of migrant people to countries with records of massive human rights violations. In this regard, the EU foreign affairs spokesman was previously approached by several journalists for comment on the results of the investigation conducted during the conflict: no comment was ever made.

Egypt is responsible for a variety of abuses against Lebanese citizens: deportation processes do not even spare children, the elderly or seriously injured people. Sudanese refugees, after having suffered war atrocities in their own country, are beaten and seriously injured by Egyptian border guards. In this situation, there is a total lack of legal aid: refugees are arrested and accused of crimes they never committed, without having the possibility of contacting a lawyer or an official of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). They are detained in secret military facilities that do not have any type of permit that authorizes them to legally exercise detention. These facilities are located in places where Egyptian activists have disappeared or died. Arbitrary detentions and forced repatriations of migrants, for which no official data can be found, are the order of the day for Egypt, which in the past has reserved the same treatment to citizens of Eritrea and South Sudan.

The tragic prospect for those forced to flee

The conflict has caused irreparable damage: it is the largest displacement crisis in the world according to the International Organization for Migration. Over nine million people are forced to leave their homes; of these, only two million have decided to seek asylum in neighboring countries. About half a million have tried their luck in Egypt, a country that has restricted access to Sudanese citizens as much as possible through precautionary measures. The closure of the borders has produced only one result: the proliferation of smugglers. The use of this alternative means of transport once again endangers the lives of Sudanese, who face the prospect of prison by crossing the border clandestinely, and all this only after having risked their lives for the dangerous journey undertaken. The smugglers take the refugees across the desert, on a long and bumpy journey that passes through mountains, rocky outcrops and military checkpoints. Refugees are herded by smugglers into the back of pickups and forced to cling to ropes and any available handholds throughout the transit to try to stay aboard the vehicle. Additionally, the dust and sand force them to use surgical masks, if available, to try to protect themselves from the suffocating dust.

Between May 2023 and February 2024, more than 160 people were injured and around 20 died in road accidents while traveling to cross the border. Some testimonies report ambushes by border guards, who opened fire on passengers of traffickers' convoys, or alternatively captured and subsequently tortured migrants.

It is very easy to be intercepted by the government, whether you are on the street, in train or bus stations, or in the south of the country (such as Aswan). It can also happen to those who undertake a journey to the north, to Cairo or Alexandria, strategic locations as they are home to UNHCR offices. If intercepted in one of these latter places, the arrested refugees are not immediately expelled, even if they still have to undergo trials without legal assistance and which always end with the migrants being sentenced to deportation.

The files of nearly 200 refugees contain arrest reports, investigations by the police, border guards, the secret police agency Mahith, and decisions made by prosecutors. In the investigative documents, refugees are often accused of being part of smuggling groups or are referred to as "suspected outlaws" who are responsible for "causing serious harm to the dignity and reputation of Egypt." The unreliability of the documents is evident from the repetition of the same sentences and motivations in each individual file, making it less credible that each of these cases is actually being thoroughly investigated.

Testimonies of the deportation process

The atrocities committed are proven by the testimonies of deported refugees, lawyers and officials of the Egyptian government, and local organizations for the defense of rights. In addition to the testimonies collected, videos and satellite images are of vital importance, confirming the existence of several secret military bases used as arbitrary detention centers. The Ministry of Defense and a police unit of the Ministry are in charge of managing the facilities where migrants are forcibly placed and forced to submit to inhumane conditions; one localized facility is located in al-Shallas and another in Abu Simbel. Local lawyers report the illegality, even according to Egyptian law, of these facilities. According to testimonies, people are transferred to these bases shortly before undergoing the deportation process through the crossing very close to the Ashkit border. This is not the only strategic place to keep in mind. There are two other strategic points to be aware of: the Ras Hadaraba crossing, for refugees intercepted in the disputed Hala'ib Triangle, and Ashkit, a busy crossing where deported refugees are sent to the adjacent town of Wadi Halfa.

The deportation activities do not follow any safety regulations, as hundreds of people are grouped in buses to reach the borders. Thanks to testimonies, we know that there guards at the border or humanitarian workers distributed bags with food supplies necessary for survival from the World Food Program and USAID (United States Agency for International Development), and hygienic material.

It is important to highlight the different treatment reserved for refugees detained in southern Egypt: those intercepted near the border areas under Egyptian military jurisdiction are more subject to abuse than those intercepted in the city. The areas adjacent to the border are patrolled by the border guard forces, a key element of the Egyptian military machine. Access to any of the border areas, even for humanitarian groups, requires permission from the military authorities. While deportations used to be carried out after the conclusion of a military trial, for several years now the individual has neither been officially registered nor tried before a court.

The very serious crisis in Sudan requires an international reassessment of economic and social policies, which mark the fate of many Sudanese citizens. Fear and terror dictate the law in the Sudanese military conflict, and Egypt has no intention of giving up the funding allocated by the European Union, much less of welcoming its neighbors in a safe place. It is of primary importance that the modus operandi established by Egypt until now be changed, so that a safe arrival can be guaranteed to Sudanese citizens, in line with respect for the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights.

MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS



WORLD

LIBYA, 2 September

Abdurahman al Milad, known as Bija, a senior officer of the so-called Libyan coast guard and one of the world's most wanted human traffickers, was assassinated by a commando of armed men while in Janzur, some 20 kilometres west of Tripoli.

Tunisia, 7 September

Near Sfax, four people on the move were attacked by a group of Tunisian citizens, who fired several shots, injuring the people who were looking for drinking water.

LIBYA, 9 September

A video shot in the Libyan lager of Ain Zara shows the cold-blooded murder of a detainee by a soldier of the Libyan Agency against Illegal Immigration.

SENEGAL, 10 September

A boat with about 200 people on board capsized off the coast of Mbour, Senegal, on its way to Spain. Some bodies were recovered, 20 people were rescued, but more than a hundred remain missing.

TUNISIA, 19 September

An investigation by the Guardian denounced the violence and rape suffered by people on the move captured and deported to desert areas on the border with Libya and Algeria by the

Tunisian authorities, financed and supported by Italy and the European Union.

SENEGAL, 22 September

30 decomposing bodies were recovered by Senegalese authorities from a boat adrift off the coast of Dakar.

MOROCCO, 22 September

152 people were arrested by Moroccan police on charges of inciting illegal immigration to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta via social media after some 3,000 people gathered near the town of Fnideq to try to cross the border.

WEST SAHARA, 26 September

57 people died in the shipwreck of a boat off El Aaiún while trying to reach the Canary Islands. Only two people survived.

MOROCCO, 29 September

48 people on board a boat adrift off Tan Tan were intercepted by the Moroccan Navy and taken back to Morocco.

AUSTRIA, 1 September

The Austrian government has announced that it will repatriate the Afghan citizens who have committed crimes in Austria. The government's aim is to carry out these deportations to Afghanistan in cooperation with Germany, which has already begun this practice.

FRANCE, 3 September

12 people drowned while trying to reach Great Britain in a makeshift boat in the English Channel. There were about 70 people on board, at least two are missing.

CYPRUS, 4 September

Human Rights Watch denounced that the Cypriot authorities, funded by the European Union to control immigration, deported various Syrian citizens to Lebanon, from where they were in turn repatriated to Syria.

EUROPEAN UNION, 5 September

During a meeting of the European Union's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Frontex Executive Director Leijtens said that it could not be proven that the agency was responsible for illegal refoulements despite the fact that there was countless evidence of human rights violations by Frontex.

GERMANY, 6 September

German Migration Commissioner Stamp said Germany wants to deport to Rwanda some 10,000 asylum seekers who entered the country from the eastern border.

GERMANY, 9 September

The German government informed the European Commission of its willingness to tighten border controls to stop irregular immigration and protect internal security from terrorist threats.

EUROPEAN UNION, 11 September

The Fundamental rights office of Frontex stated that there is a lack of ships dedicated to rescue at sea in the Mediterranean and how the so-called Piantedosi Decree has worsened the situation.

SWEDEN, 12 September

The Swedish government decided to increase economic incentives to encourage voluntary repatriations of people on the move residing in Sweden.

NETHERLANDS, 13 September

The Dutch government stated that it will invoke the opt-out clause (non-participation) from EU migration and asylum rules as soon as possible.

EUROPEAN UNION, 18 September

The European Regional Development Fund will allocate 14 million euros in the Canary Islands to support the local first reception system in a project in cooperation with Spain and Frontex.

EUROPEAN UNION, 26 September

The European Court of Auditors accuses the Commission of not supervising the use of funds for the so-called Libyan coastguard, which is accused of violating the human rights of migrants.

SPAIN, 28 September

A boat carrying 84 people sank off the coast of El Hierro, in the Canary Islands. 9 people died, 27 were rescued and 57 are still missing.

CIVIL FLEET, 2 September

Nadir (ResQShip) rescued 49 people and assisted 80 until the arrival of the Italian Coast Guard thanks to a report from the Sea-bird (Sea-Watch) aircraft.

LAMPEDUSA, 3 September

93 people aboard four boats were rescued off Lampedusa by the Italian Coast Guard.

SIMI, 4 September

12 people who arrived independently on the island of Simi were rescued by the Greek authorities.

LIMNOS, 4 September

30 people who arrived independently on the island of Limnos were rescued by the Greek authorities and transferred to Lesbos.

TOBRUK, 4 September

A boat that set sail from Bab-al Zaitoun with 32 people on board sank off the coast of Libya. One person died, 22 were reported missing and nine were taken to hospital in Tobruk.

SIMI, 4 September

4 people in critical medical condition who arrived independently on the island of Simi were rescued by the Greek authorities.

LIMNOS, 5 September

32 people who arrived independently on the island of Limnos were rescued by the Greek authorities.

TILOS, 5 September

Around 100 people who arrived independently on the island of Tilos were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard.

GAVDOS, 5 September

Some 41 people on board a boat in distress were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard off Crete and disembarked on the island of Gavdos.

SIMI, 6 September

5 people who arrived independently on the island of Simi were rescued by the Greek police.

LAMPEDUSA, 6 September

Around 20 people drowned in the shipwreck of a boat in distress reported to the authorities by Sea-Watch 4 days before the incident. No European authorities intervened by launching a rescue operation.

ALGERIA, 9 September

After 7 days at sea, an endangered boat that had set sail from Algiers with 13 people on board was intercepted by the Algerian authorities and the people were deported to Algeria.

SICILY, 10 September

Some 53 people on board a boat in distress were rescued between Sicily and Malta by the Italian Coast Guard and landed on Italian shores.

CRETE, 12 September

34 people on board a boat adrift between Libya and Crete were rescued by a merchant ship until the Greek Coast Guard arrived and disembarked them on the Greek island.

MATRUH, 18 September

A boat that set sail from eastern Libya with about 45 people on board was intercepted by Egyptian authorities, who deported the people to Matruh, Egypt.

CRETE, 19 September

Some 22 people aboard a boat in distress were rescued off Crete by the Greek Coast Guard, which disembarked them on the island.

SIMI, 19 September

Some 29 people who arrived independently in Simi in two landings were rescued by the Greek authorities.

CIVIL FLEET, 19 September

Geo Barents (MSF) rescued 206 people on board 2 boats in distress, thanks to the air support of Seabird and despite the presence on the scene of the so-called Libyan coast guard, and landed them in Genoa.

CRETE, 20 September

51 people aboard a boat in distress were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard off Crete and disembarked on the island.

CIVIL FLEET, 20-23 September

Astral (Open Arms) rescued 351 people on board eight boats in distress.

LIBYA, 21 September

The merchant ship CL Fogou rescued a boat with 63 people in distress off Crete, but after both Cyprus and Greece refused to grant a port of disembarkation, the people were deported to Libya, the country from which they were fleeing.

CIVIL FLEET, 21 September

Thanks to a report from Alarm Phone, Nadir rescued 37 people on board a boat in distress and disembarked them in Lampedusa.

PASAS, 22 September

29 people were rescued off the island of Pasas by the Greek Coast Guard, which disembarked them in Chios.

KERKENNAH, 22 September

A boat carrying 47 people was forced to land on an island in the Kerkennah archipelago while trying to reach Italy due to an engine failure. Here the people were captured and deported to the border with Algeria by the Tunisian authorities.

SAMOS, 23 September

Four people lost their lives in a shipwreck a few hundred metres from the island of Samos. There were an estimated 33 people on board the boat, five of whom were rescued.

SAMOS, 23 September

25 people who arrived independently on the island of Samos were rescued by the Greek authorities.

CIVIL FLEET, 23 September

Sarah rescued 32 people on board a boat in distress thanks to Alarm Phone reports and disembarked them in the port of Pozzallo.

SALAKTA-CHEBBA, 24-25 September

The bodies of 13 victims of a shipwreck were found between Salakta and Chebba, on the east coast of Tunisia. There is no news of the boat on which they were travelling.

LAMPEDUSA, 25 September

A tourist boat rescued 55 people aboard a boat in distress off the coast of Lampedusa.

LAMPEDUSA, 25 September

50 people on board a boat in distress off Lampedusa were rescued by Italian authorities and disembarked on the island.

CIVIL FLEET, 25-27 September

Nadir rescued 188 people in 6 operations in cooperation with Alarm Phone and landed them on Lampedusa.

LAMPEDUSA, 26 September

62 people aboard a boat in distress were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard off Lampedusa, while a boat carrying seven people reached the island independently.

LAMPEDUSA, 26-27 September

2 boats with 16 people on board autonomously reached the island of Lampedusa.

LAMPEDUSA, 28 September

388 people aboard 8 boats set sail from Libya were rescued by the Italian authorities and disembarked in Lampedusa.

SIMI, 29 September

The Greek Coast Guard rescued 18 people who had arrived independently on the island of Simi.

CIVIL FLEET, 29 September

Thanks to a report from Alarm Phone, Trotamar III (Compass Collective) rescued a boat with 35 people on board, who were then disembarked in Lampedusa.

ROME, 2 September

20 refugees landed at Fiumicino on a humanitarian flight from Tripoli thanks to the collaboration between ARCI and the Community of Sant'Egidio.

TRAPANI, 3 September

After rescuing 182 people in three operations, Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) was banned from continuing search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean due to the lack of suitability certifications from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport.

CIVITAVECCHIA, 4 September

After rescuing 289 people and forcing them to disembark in the port of Civitavecchia, more than 1,000 kilometres from the place of operations, Sea-Watch 5 was fined 20 days' administrative detention and a fine of up to 10,000 euro for violating the so-called Piantedosi Decree by failing to coordinate with the self-styled Libyan authorities.

SALERNO, 11 September

The Court of Salerno suspended the administrative detention imposed on the ship Geo Barents (MSF) for violating the so-called Piantedosi Decree.

PALERMO, 14 September

The prosecution of the Court of Palermo asked for six years' imprisonment for Matteo Salvini, then Minister of the Interior, for kidnapping and refusal to perform official acts in relation to the failure to assign a safe port for the disembarkation of the 147 people rescued by the Open Arms ship in August 2019.

PALERMO, 14 September

Police in Palermo identified and closed more than 700 social pages promoting sea travel for people moving from Libya and Egypt.

TRAPANI, 17 September

After an "occasional" inspection that lasted 10 and a half hours, the Trapani harbour master's office, on the orders of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport headed by Minister Salvini, ordered the Mare Jonio to disembark all rescue equipment from the ship.

CROTONE, 18 September

The Crotona Court denied house arrest for Maysoon Majidi, a Kurdish-Iranian activist accused of aiding and abetting illegal immigration, who will therefore remain in jail in Reggio Calabria.

ROME, 19 September

Mediterranea's legal department has filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court against Interior Minister Piantedosi for Italy's collaboration in the arrests and collective rejections operated by the self-styled Libyan authorities, for which the minister took credit in a tweet.

PALERMO, 20 September

Musa, one of the shipwrecked and rescued by Open Arms who was denied a port of disembarkation by the then Interior Minister Salvini, demanded compensation of 50,000 euro for aggravating the physical and psychological suffering of the boy, aged 15 at the time, who was previously detained in a Libyan lager.

GENOA, 24 September

Geo Barents was subjected to a 60-day administrative detention in the port of Genoa for violating the Piantedosi Decree due to its failure to cooperate with Libyan authorities and following a Coast Guard inspection.

PORT EMPEDOCLE, 27 September

Two Tunisian citizens were repatriated with an accelerated border procedure from the centre in Porto Empedocle. However, since the centre was opened in mid-August, as many as 64 out of 74 border detention orders issued by the Police Headquarters were not validated as they were considered illegitimate.

TRIESTE, 28 September

180 asylum seekers are abandoned on the streets without any kind of reception by the Municipality of Trieste, which has not found any housing solution to deal with the situation.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

According to [borderline-europe](#) data, 7,595 people reached Italy by sea in September 2024. Most of the refugees (77%) arrived in Sicily - mainly on Lampedusa.

However, there were also some arrivals in Calabria via the Ionian route (11%), mostly from Turkey. In addition, some boats reached Sardinia (2%) via the Algerian route. It is striking that there are again more departures from Libya (around 53%), compared to 15% from Tunisia this month.

According to our counts, the Italian authorities rescued just under 36% of those who arrived, while rescues by NGO ships accounted for just under 13%. According to [borderline-europe](#) data, Frontex was involved in around 1% of rescues in September. 8% of refugees reached Italian coastal waters autonomously (12 nautical miles off the coast) without first being intercepted or rescued.

In 42% of arrivals, no rescue information was available. According to official figures from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 7,685 people arrived in Italy in September.

ROUTES TO EUROPE

It can be observed time and again that the European authorities do not fulfil their responsibility to rescue people at sea or that rescue operations are carried out far too late. Attempts are also often made to shift responsibility for the rescue to other countries. Meanwhile, the people have usually been at sea for several days, have no food or water and are drifting on the open sea without fuel.

SAR zones (Search and Rescue Zones) have been set up to better coordinate sea rescue operations. SAR zones regulate which state must take over the coordination and management of sea rescue and that people must be brought to a safe harbour. What implies a faster response and cooperation is unfortunately very different in reality. SAR zones are often used by states as an excuse for not having to intervene. This is what happened recently when the Alarm Phone reported around 50 people in distress at sea. Instead of initiating a rescue, Italy commented that the responsibility lay with Malta. However, Malta did not respond to the Alarm Phone's calls. A final update from the Alarm Phone came on 26 September: children on the boat had already fainted, there was no more fuel, nor water or food, and water had entered the boat. What happened to these people remains unclear, but it is certain that they were not rescued.

In an article on X, journalist Angela Caponnetto commented critically on how a recent shipwreck off Lampedusa was reported. This clearly occurred in Italian waters and not, as written here, '10 miles south-west of Lampedusa in Libyan waters'. Territorial waters are defined as a distance of up to 12 nautical miles, but from 12 nautical miles it may be neighbouring and above all international waters. However, as the shipwreck occurred 10 nautical miles south-west of Lampedusa, the area of responsibility is clear, in this case Italy. But here, too, the Italian authorities reacted far too late (see chapter on deaths and missing persons).

Crotone court: The so-called Libyan coastguard does not save lives

Andreina De Leo, who works at the Chair of European Law at the Faculty of Law at Maastricht University, has written a very interesting article. In her project 'The EU's Shifting Borders - Examining the Externalisation of Migration Management and the International Responsibility to Protect', she clarifies the impact that the ruling by the court of Crotone (Calabria) on the arrest of the sea rescue NGO ship Humanity 1 could have on the funding of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

More than 500 million euros have been granted to Libya as aid in the years 2015 - 2027, which will be transferred there by means of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Italy and Libya. The court in Crotona has now ruled that Libya is not a safe harbour for refugees. Furthermore, the so-called Libyan coastguard is not authorised to carry out sea rescue missions as its actions do not meet the standards required by the sea rescue conventions.

Accordingly, Humanity 1 did not have to listen to the orders of the so-called Libyan coastguard, as they are not sea rescuers, but armed units that even fire shots during the 'rescue'. However, the Humanity 1 was accused of not following the instructions, which is why the ship was detained by the Italian authorities in accordance with the rules of the so-called Piantadosi Decree after the refugees had been rescued and disembarked. However, the agreement between Libya and Italy (MoU) does not outweigh the international conventions on the law of the sea. According to De Leo, it is not the first court judgement of its kind, but one of the clearest. Since the so-called Hirsi judgement of 2012, which banned push-backs from EU states to an unsafe port such as Libya, the EU has been trying to find methods to avoid having to get its own hands dirty. This was done 'by applying a form of externalisation', which was defined as 'contactless control'.

This means completely outsourcing border control functions to a third country in order to ensure that violations of fundamental rights take place geographically far away from their own jurisdiction. The activities of the EU member states should be limited to the provision of financial and technical support (Violeta Moreno-Lax 2020).

However, as the Italian judgements issued before the Crotona Court ruling show, the conditions in Libya, which have remained unchanged since 2012, are so bad that cooperation with the Libyan Coast Guard is illegal if a direct link can be established with the Libyan authorities (e.g. by handing people over to the Libyan Coast Guard).

However, the highly favourable ruling from Crotona will not directly lead to an end to EU funding for Libya. 'The Crotona judgement explicitly contradicts the rhetoric used by both the Commission and the Italian authorities to justify their continued support for Libya.'

While it could help strengthen the case against supporting Libya and lead to legal victories in individual court cases, it may not be enough to bring about a change in policy. The fact that it is virtually impossible for individuals to challenge the use of EU funds in this sector poses a problem for the right to an effective remedy when the misuse of funds enables serious and systematic violations of fundamental rights.

It also raises the more general question of whether there are currently sufficient mechanisms in the EU to ensure effective monitoring and control of public spending.'

PUSHBACKS

According to our counts, 3,410 people were intercepted and towed back in the Mediterranean this month. 3,066 people were intercepted in Libya - 344 people were forcibly returned to Tunisia. These figures are not guaranteed, as the number of unreported cases is probably much higher. We only learn about interceptions when they are directly observed by NGO ships or monitoring aeroplanes, for example, or when they are made public by the Alarm Phone or other independent sources. The figures published this month by the Italian Ministry of the Interior give cause for concern: between January and September this year, 16,220 interceptions are said to have been carried out by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, and 61,515 by the so-called Tunisian Coast Guard. In comparison, we recorded 21,189 interceptions to Libya and 12,796 interceptions to Tunisia. This means that the Ministry of Interior counted around five times as many pullbacks to Tunisia. This discrepancy in the count makes the accessibility of the actual data appear more than dubious. For the interceptions to Libya, we counted significantly more than the Ministry of Interior. As always, our counts are without guarantee, as double counting cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the question can also be asked here as to how transparent the figures are for the public.

Mediterranea Saving Humans is an organisation that has long campaigned for the rights of people who were brought to Libya illegally. In response to the publication of the interceptions to Libya, which are presented as a success in the post by Interior Minister Piantedosi, the organisation reacted clearly: Mediterranea Saving Humans forwarded a post by Piantedosi to the prosecutor of the European Court of Justice, Karim Ahmad Khan, who is already investigating the pullbacks by the so-called Libyan coastguard. International arrest warrants are said to already exist, one of which would have been directed against the militia leader and commander of one of the so-called Libyan coastguards, Bija, who was killed a few weeks ago and is said to have acted as a key figure in the arrest of people.

Time and again, we see the Italian government celebrating its figures. Be it when it speaks of a general decline in arrivals (see CMI August) or, as this month, when Piantedosi describes pullbacks to Libya as rescues and praises the cooperation between Italy and the various countries of origin. By presenting itself in this way, the Italian government is trying to disguise its responsibility and involvement in human rights violations at the EU's external borders and sell it as a positive effect of its migration policy. Unfortunately, the EU is also following suit and has not yet refrained from signing agreements with Libya and Tunisia, even though the human rights situation in both countries is sufficiently recognised as problematic.

So-called Libyan coast guard threatens NGO ships

In September, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard threatened NGO ships during various operations. This happened on 19 September 2024, when the Geo Barents (MSF) was in the process of completing a rescue that had been coordinated with the MRCC, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Rome, and was threatened to be shot on. On 23 September 2024, the SeaBird, Sea-Watch's reconnaissance aircraft, documented how the so-called Libyan coast guard fired on a boat with refugees coming from Libya. According to Sea-Watch reports, Frontex was also on the scene. Spanish journalist José Antonio Bautista García was on board the SeaBird and followed the events. He suspects that it was Frontex that informed the so-called Libyan coastguard of the boat's location. Another Alarm Phone case from 22 September 2024 can also be assumed to be a pushback due to information from European authorities: The Alarm Phone alerted both the Maltese and Italian coastguards about a boat in distress with around 35 people on board. Although a rescue ship was in the vicinity, it was the so-called Libyan Coast Guard that intercepted the boat and towed it back. The localisation of the boat would otherwise have been impossible for the so-called Libyan coastguard without the help of the European authorities. The Libyan authorities' ships are financed by Europe/Italy and carry out violent pullbacks, towing people back to unsafe harbours.

The ASSO 29 case

On 2 July 2018, there was a collective pushback of 260 migrants by various Italian ships. After the boat Zuwara was capsized by the so-called Libyan coastguard, the people were transferred to the Italian ship Asso 29 and brought back to Libya on the orders of the Italian military ship Caprera. The Caprera is moored in the harbour of Tripoli to support the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Such repatriations are illegal, so the case went to court in 2023. Last July, five people who had made it to Italy despite the pushback attempt received compensation of 15,000 euros each. One of them, a Sudanese man who had remained in Libya and was detained after the pushback, was able to take the case to court in Rome with the help of two lawyers, Cristina Cecchini and Loredana Leo. The court came to the conclusion that the Asso 29 should have taken all the people to a safe harbour in Italy. They were on board the Asso 29 on Italian territory, which meant that Italy had a responsibility to protect the shipwrecked people from human rights violations. The court in Rome therefore granted the Sudanese an entry visa. Although this is an important ruling, lawyers Lucia Gennari (Asgi - Association of Legal Studies in the Field of Migration) and Ginevra Maccarone (defence team) rightly commented that the argument of a breach of state obligations 'must apply to all cases in which Italy offers assistance to the Libyan authorities in carrying out interceptions'.

DEAD AND MISSING

According to [borderline-europe](#) counts, 161 people died in the Mediterranean in September and 118 migrants are still missing. These missing persons cases mainly include boats that made contact with Alarm Phone but could not be found. Although this does not confirm their fate, it is almost certain that these people were either secretly intercepted and thus exposed to the violence of the so-called Libyan coastguard, or they died at sea. In our counts this month alone, we recorded 371 people who left but whose arrival could not be confirmed.

We also assume that the number of unreported cases is much higher, as deaths are only counted if a body has been found and missing persons only appear in the statistics if they are reported missing by relatives or fellow refugees. Evidence that there must be many more dead and missing people, or at least people forced back to Libya or Tunisia, is also provided by the empty boats that are frequently found in the Mediterranean and documented by NGO aeroplanes, for example.

One particularly striking case occurred off the Italian island of Lampedusa. A wooden boat with 28 people on board was in distress at sea due to bad weather conditions. Seven people were rescued by the Italian coastguard, but 21 people lost their lives, including three minors. The boat had set sail from the Libyan

coastal town of Sabrata on 1 September and finally capsized on 4 September 2024. Two days earlier, the Sea-Bird 2 had already reported the emergency to the relevant authorities, including the Italian and Maltese coastguards. The sea rescue organisation Sea-Watch is now accusing the responsible authorities of failing to provide assistance. This accusation is based on the fact that there was a time difference between the sighting by the Sea-Bird and the capsizing of the boat: a whole two days had passed! These assumptions are also consistent with the statements of the seven survivors, who are all of Syrian origin. According to various sources, people from the civil war countries of Syria and Sudan are among the dead.

Because of cases like these, a special place was set up in the central cemetery on the island of Lampedusa for the many people who died in the Mediterranean in search of a decent life.

CIVIL RESISTANCE

In September, 961 people were rescued by NGOs and 547 people were assisted by them, for example by stabilising the boats or distributing life jackets until the coastguard arrived. There were 3 multiple rescues by the Astral, the Geo Barents and the Sea Watch 5, in which the last two NGO ships were assigned to the distant harbours of Genoa and Civitavecchia.

In September, the Nadir (RESQSHIP) rescued 111 people and assisted in various rescues totalling 397 people. In one of these cases, the Dakini was already on the scene and helped the 70 people by distributing life jackets. The Astral was involved in the rescue of a total of 377 people on nine missions or rescued them itself. The Geo Barents (MSF) carried out multiple rescues involving a total of 209 people, while the Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) rescued 64 people on 9 September and brought them to Pozzallo, Sicily. The SARA (SARA) rescued 32 people this month and the Trotamar III (Compass Collective) rescued 33 people. The Sea-Watch rescued a total of 288 people in four different missions.

The Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) was detained on 17 September following an inspection by the state port authority in the western Sicilian city of Trapani. It was also ordered that all rescue equipment, including inflatable boats, had to be brought ashore. The crux of the matter in this case, however, lies in an apparent difference in legal opinion between the various authorities. While the Italian shipping register confirms

the Mare Jonio's suitability for sea rescue, the coastguard casts doubt on this. This incident occurred following the rescue of 64 shipwrecked people who were brought ashore at the port of Pozzallo on 9 September.

NGOs between arrests and releases

In September, there were repeated cases of state intervention in the work of search and rescue operations by various NGOs. For example, the Sea-Watch 5 of the NGO of the same name was detained in the port of Civitavecchia near Rome on 3 September 2024. The Italian authorities used the flimsy argument that the crew had been conducting the rescue without prior authorisation from the Libyan authorities. The authorities in Italy, Malta and Germany were also informed about the rescue. The ship was released after 20 days, but Sea-Watch took legal action against the detention as it is considered illegitimate.

The ship Geo Barents from the international aid organisation Doctors Without Borders (MSF) was detained in Genoa on 5 September 2024 for 60 days and fined 3,330 euros. The authorities accused the crew of disregarding the Cutro Decree, which stipulates that rescue ships must cooperate closely with the Italian authorities. The rescue of 191 people from Libya, who were subsequently brought to the port of Salerno, is said to have violated precisely this requirement. However, the detention was

ended on 11 September 2024 on the basis of a court order from Salerno. On 23 September, however, the ship was again detained in the port of Genoa. This order was based on two different instructions. The first was based on a total of eight alleged technical deficiencies identified by the harbour safety authority. The other related to the alleged disregard of instructions from the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which suddenly appeared on the scene towards the end of the rescue of around 100 people on 23 September 2024.

Draft decree for NGO aircraft

According to a new draft decree by the Meloni government, pilots of search-and-rescue aircraft searching for shipwrecked refugees in the Mediterranean will be fined up to €10,000 in future. This decree has already been approved by the Italian parliament. The current initiative is in line with Meloni's previous policy, according to which she is committed to blocking migration. As part of this, her government is also planning to cooperate with various African governments and to open the already notorious centre for accelerated migration procedures in Albania. Furthermore, the Meloni government is also making it more difficult for NGOs to operate their boats by limiting the number of rescues that can be carried out. In addition, the boats are either detained in Italian harbours on flimsy accusations or forced to head for distant harbours to bring rescued people ashore. Similar measures are now also being taken against the NGOs' aeroplanes. They must now report each case directly to the authorities and then comply with their instructions.

If they fail to do so, aircraft can be detained for up to 20 days or confiscated if they repeatedly disobey instructions. There was already a similar attempt to influence the activities of NGO aircraft in May of this year. Here, the Italian aviation authority attempted to prohibit the relevant aircraft from using airports close to shipping routes. However, this attempt was overturned by the courts.

Salvini trial and threats against public prosecutors

In the trial taking place in Palermo against the current Italian Minister for Sustainable Infrastructure and Mobility and former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini for preventing the landing of the Open Arms in 2019, the public prosecutor's office demanded six years in prison on 14 September. Since then, the public prosecutors Marzia Sabella, Gery Ferrara and Giorgia Righi have faced massive hostility and threats. The Public Prosecutor General of Palermo, Lia Sava, then alerted the authorities responsible for public safety. Meanwhile, Salvini announced that he would not consider resigning even if he were convicted. These events have jeopardised the independence of the judiciary and thus the separation of powers in Italy. This fact also represents an impairment of democracy in the third largest state in the EU.



SAVING HUMANS
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