



MED REPORT
JULY 2024

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**NOT ONE
STEP BACK**



TESTIMONIES OF THE “MEDITERRANEA WITH PALESTINE” PROJECT ACTIVISTS FROM THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK

In the heart of the occupied West Bank, **Mediterranea Saving Humans - together with *Operazione Colomba* and the Palestinian movement *Youth of Sumud* - supports the grassroots, non-violent resistance of the Palestinian population living in the Masafer Yatta.**

It was in these lands that our activists witnessed the daily abuses suffered by the Palestinian community. And they reported them to us in an interview.

An extraordinary non-violent resistance

In the heart of the occupied West Bank, the struggle for justice and human rights is faced with brutal violence on a daily basis.

With the start of the operational phase of the ‘Mediterranea with Palestine’ project, **Mediterranea Saving Humans** supports the grassroots, non-violent resistance of Palestinians living in Masafer Yatta, the rural region south of Al-Khalil, in Area C, and facing every day a reality marked by systematic oppression and violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers, with the blessing of the State of Israel. Together with the Palestinian movement *Youth of Sumud* and *Operazione Colomba*, **Mediterranea** is committed to documenting the human rights violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces and to supporting the civilian population through non-violent interposition actions. **Mediterranea** wants to be in Palestine as a tool for the local population to carry on their daily fight against the Israeli occupation.

In this context, our activists have witnessed the daily abuses suffered by Palestinian communities. And they decided to report them to us in an interview.

Thanks to Michele, Stasia and Diego, we will talk about the assault on the village of Khamlet at Daeba and the assault on one of our activists by Israeli settlers in Um Fagarah. We will also tell about Shaeb al Botom, the village where masked settlers armed with sticks terrorised and beat Palestinian residents, and the village of At-Tuwani, where demolitions of Palestinian homes have become a sad routine. The massive use of weapons of all kinds, psychological violence, humiliation, and the progressive expropriation of Palestinian land is the Israeli modus operandi to carry out its supremacist and racist project: the elimination of the identity and presence of the Palestinian people from their land. In other words, a slow but steady ethnic cleansing.

Through their words, we hope to convey not only what happens every day in the Occupied Territories, but also the incredible strength and courage of those who, on a daily basis, carry on the non-violent fight for a free Palestine.

Michele, beaten to a pulp by Israeli settlers

Michele is our first interviewee.

He left Bologna with Mediterranean's third mission on 29 June. He stayed a couple of days in Bethlehem to coordinate with colleagues from Operation Dove, and arrived in At-Tuwani on 2 July. Unfortunately, Michele could only be on the ground until 4 July.

On 2 July, he was on the ground for an accompaniment with shepherds in Humra, a village a few hundred meters from At-Tuwani. There is a very tense atmosphere in Humra: there have recently been a number of arrests of international and Palestinian activists here. Immediately the settler-soldiers arrived and approached the Palestinian shepherds. They are reservists of the Israeli army, but actually they are also the same people who live in the settlements and have been exercising violence in these territories for years. Thanks to the transfer of powers wanted by the Minister of Public Security Ben Gvir, it is now the local administration itself (in fact the settlers) that also acts as a public security force.

After a verbal clash between settlers and policemen, the situation ended without any particular consequences, but these scenes occur way too often.

The next day was much more intense. It started with the accompaniment of the shepherds in the morning, taking place from 5 to 8 a.m. It was at this point that Hafez Hurraini and his son Sami, the spokesman of Youth of Sumud, a non-violent movement born thanks to his grandmother Fatima, showed up. Hafez has a garden on the border with the Ma'on colony, and his political role makes him a constant target of the settlers' actions.

Activists accompany him daily to the garden to help him with farm work and to watch out for possible settler attacks.

Michele's team received a new alert from the village of Um al-Khair, inhabited by Palestinians of Bedouin origin, which has recently become a target for the demolitions by the Israeli army. A group of young settlers was damaging the water system. Arriving on site, the situation was very delicate, there were two vehicles of settler-soldiers and Israeli activists arriving from Jerusalem. The situation, fortunately, was solved quickly: policemen and army left and the Israeli activists slept in the village for the night. In the meantime, however, the water pump was damaged and the village remained without water for a few days until the pump was put back into operation.

On the night of 3 July Mediterranean received another alert. In KHALLET at Daeba, Israeli settlers were setting fire to Palestinian land: the villagers tried to extinguish it, but they were violently pushed back by the Israeli police and army.

Michele at the time of the fire was only a few hundred meters away from the pyres, in the village of Um Fagarah, where about seventy armed settlers with covered faces and canisters of petrol arrived shortly afterwards. They wanted to burn the village. Palestinian and international activists tried to line up in front of the village to protect and document the situation. The settlers started to push them back by throwing stun grenades and shooting in the air. From that moment, a veritable pogrom began. The settlers captured A., a villager, and broke both his legs. He stayed for two days without receiving medical attention. Michael meanwhile tried to escape, but he was chased by the settlers and pushed to the ground. Their faces were covered, they ap-

peared to be between 16 and 20 years old. They started kicking him. There were at least seven people. They smashed his phone and hit him in the face with the handle of a shovel, luckily they 'only' hit his cheekbone. The whole thing lasted about a minute and a half. Michele managed not to lose consciousness, but ended up with a swollen eye and bruises on his back. He hid under an olive tree about 20 metres from the road, then descended to the bottom of the valley and climbed another slope so as not to be seen by nearby Israeli settlements. After walking for about seven kilometres in the dark, he recognised a village of Palestinian shepherds, where he was rescued.

Incidents like this happen on a daily basis. The settlers have no restraint. They arrogate to themselves the right to vent their anger, going unpunished.

However, Michele's testimony is also full of good memories, affection and gratitude from the local population. And of much Palestinian care, of course, such as that shown by Hafez Hurraini for example, who after witnessing the destruction of his own field, asked the volunteers to look out for the tiny, hidden plant that had survived the ferocity of the settlers' attacks.

Stasia and the power of Palestinian women

Stasia only slept a couple of hours, but her energy and humanity transport us directly to Masafer Yatta, during Mediterranea's second mission from 22 June to 3 July.

Once in the West Bank, Stasia has been informed that even international activists are targeted by the settlers. In fact, there is a veritable task force within the Israeli police whose job it is to crack down on the international presence in the Occupied Territories.

Stasia spent five days in At-Tuwani; despite the apparent quietness, settlers there are everywhere, both on foot and in pick-up trucks, doing everything they can to increase their presence there. Like many international activists, she went as well to Hafez's garden to carry out the accompanying activity - a practice aimed at preventing the Hurraini family from being disturbed by settlers while on their land. The activity takes place twice per day: from 5 to 8 in the morning and from 5 to 8 in the afternoon. The garden is located in a village squeezed between the settlement of Ma'on and the settlement of Avat Ma'on. The walls are everywhere, almost as if one were in a laboratory experiment. And yet, the sunrise is still sunrise even during the accompaniment. A very emotional moment.

Stasia, being a woman, had access to the world of Palestinian women, and describes it as something of disarming power. She met Qamara, a 19-year-old girl who dreams of building a beauty salon in At-Tuwani, with the intention of bringing lightness back to people and bringing them back to life, not just surviving.

She would like to open it there in At-Tuwani, because it is her home. The course she is taking to open the salon was interrupted on 7 October and the atmosphere has never been so tense, full of fear and uncertainty about the future. Despite this, Hafez keeps encouraging Sami and Qamara to study, as he is convinced that culture is a bridge, a way to remember their own history.

The Palestinian women's fight is intersectional, women play a very important role in At-Tuwani, they do not only look after family and the house. Women also take care of the land, as they are the first to go out to pasture and water the fields, and the first to face the settlers and soldiers. Women are in the front line defending the shepherds, acting as non-violent interposition, rebuilding schools, and accompanying children. They are always on the forefront, cultivating and carrying on the values of Fatima, with whom her son Hafez made a very strong pact, swearing that he would never be forced out of his own land.

Stasia talks about the great lesson she received from working in the field and being at the side of Hafez's family. The meaning of planting and tending such a garden was not the activity itself but an act of resistance, which lies in the smallest and strongest actions. We at Mediterranea want to talk about this, about the incredibly gentle response to everyday violence. Every day in Masafer Yatta, roads and villages are demolished, water is cut off, shepherds are beaten. But right after the plants are ripped up and uprooted, Hafez stands up every day, replanting them and watering them.

Seeing settlers, even very young ones, encouraged to go to Palestinian lands to hunt, beat and destroy, protected by the Israeli courts, leaves an anger that our activists carry with them every day. But it also shows the importance of living such an experience in complete listening. We have nothing to teach them in this fight. And we will not be able to fully understand it. But being at their side in all this was a privilege for us.

Diego and the constant physical and psychological violence

We then talk to Diego, who left on the fifth mission.

He tells us that after the attack on Michele, activities have been temporarily reduced, and they are now planning the activities relying only on Hafez, Sami and those who have been in the field the longest. The accompanying activities are still going on, of course, and work continues.

Diego was called twice for an intervention. Some very young settler shepherds brought their flocks to destroy what the Palestinians just planted. The first time he was only asked to photograph and document what happened. The second time, however, he intervened: he was in Sheab al Botom and accompanied a shepherd with the aim of driving the settlers' sheeps off his land. Fortunately, he succeeded in his intent; the sheeps left. But the atmosphere was tense: soldiers arrived, shaking hands with the settler as a sign of complicity; they did not even approach the shepherd. They were waiting for something. Then from the valley some masked people armed with clubs arrived and attacked the first Palestinian house that came across.

The attempt to face them was futile, and a woman and a man were hit on the head and ended up in the hospital.

Diego, as the previous witnesses, reports these as moments of explicit violence, demolitions, and continuous psychological violence. The level of impunity towards the settlers is disarming. Zakaria, for example, Sami's cousin, was shot in the stomach in At-Tuwani on 13 October 2023. Zakaria, despite his physical problems, was able to go and report the incident to authorities with the help of an Israeli lawyer. However, he only managed to leave the same police station where he wanted to press charges, after paying a bail of 1,000 shekels (about 250 euro), as he was accused of throwing stones at settlers. If he did not pay, they would have arrested him.

The conversation with Diego then turns to the toponymic fight. The colonies in which 700,000 people live (about 10 per cent of Israeli citizens) surrounding Palestinian villages, in fact, appropriate and mispronounce the names of Palestinian villages. Palestinian lands become Israeli lands, Palestinian villages are disconnected and a race against time begins to build new walls, more and more, with the ultimate plan to totally deny access to the main roads and create a system of true apartheid. Disconnecting, dividing and isolating Palestinian towns is a way of dividing communities. The area of At-Tuwani and Masafer Yatta is very strategic, in the south of the West Bank, where the wall has not yet been closed. By taking control of this area, one gains control of the access to the Jordan Valley. In other words, if Israel were to control this area in its entirety, the main Palestinian towns would be at risk of being surrounded and enclosed in a Gaza strip-like situation, but without the sea.

In At-Tuwani, almost every house has a demolition order, including the guest house that hosts the international volunteers. Everything owned by the Palestinians can be disintegrated, with arrogance and contempt. The resulting ethnic cleansing in the rural territories results in people pushed into the increasingly overpopulated cities, where the ghetto effect is created. Diego says he is shocked by the fact that there are poorly controlled entry checkpoints in the cities. It is very easy for Palestinians to get in. The problem, however, is getting out. Israel wants Palestinians to live in the ghetto-cities of Zone A, and they do not allow them to leave.

Diego also wants to leave us by emphasizing his fondest memories, just like Michele. The first memory brings us to the valuable sharing moments during dinners, which made him feel part of the community straight from the beginning. Everyone agrees that the first thing to do when you arrive at the camp is to go to Hafez's house. He chats and offers some watermelon in exchange for cigarettes. A special welcome to those who come to support the non-violent resistance in At-Tuwani.

The second memory refers to the beauty of these places. The villages are located in a rocky, rugged landscape, difficult to cultivate. Yet the walk to Hafez's garden at dawn in the morning is magical, like walking on the moon. Diego tells of incredible gardens, beautiful caves and small hidden villages, places of an incredible beauty.

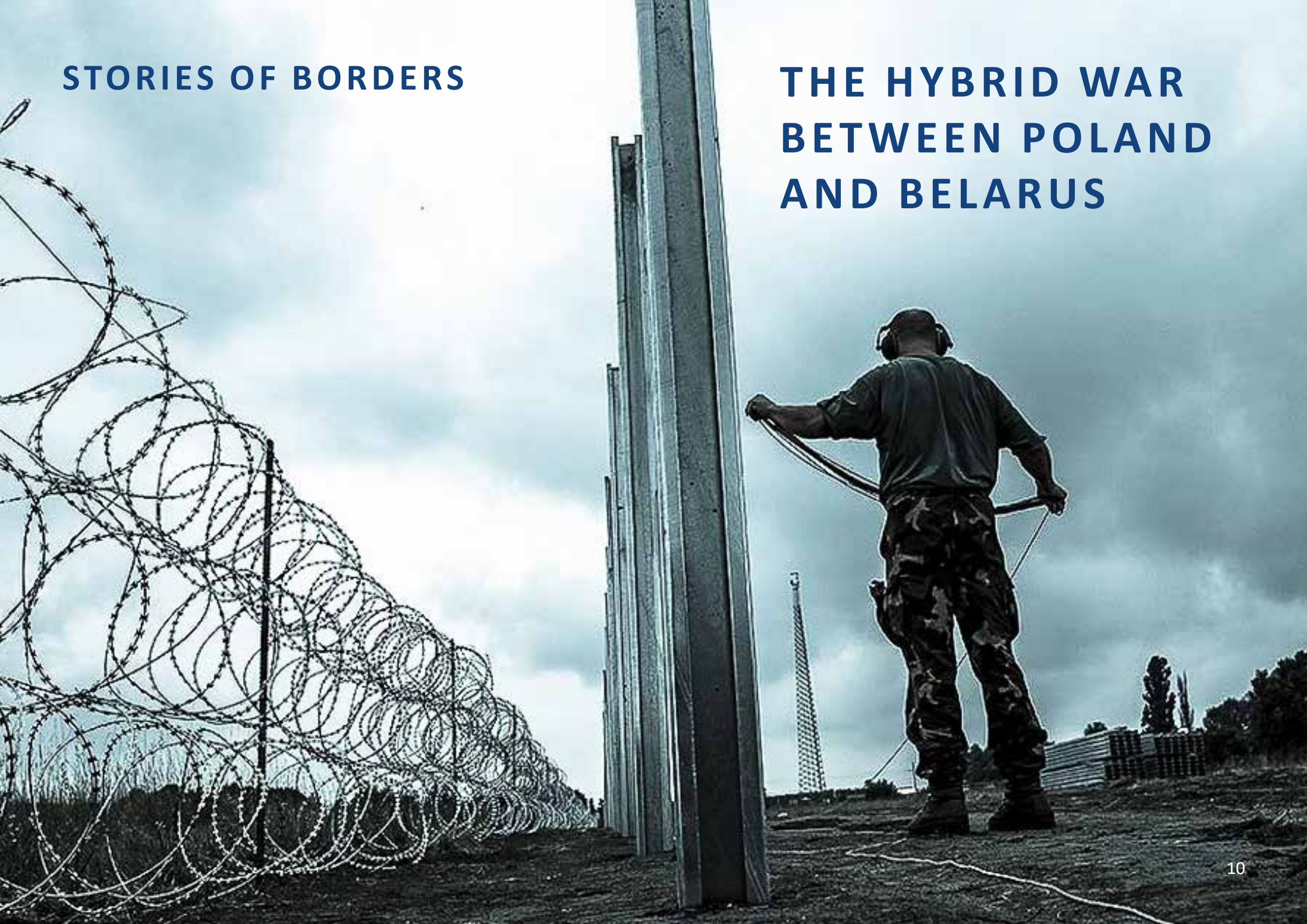
A few thoughts

Mediterranea activists stay in the West Bank for about 10 days, taking advantage of their privilege, while Palestinians stay there all their lives. We want to support them in their fight, which at the same time is also our political fight: we have to act on our public opinion, to be the megaphone of their claims, to expose the consequences of the political choices of our governments. As Mediterranea we go to sea to tell and document the consequences of the actions of Italian and European institutions: the lagers in Libya, the deportations, the tortures, the deaths at sea. Similarly, in Palestine the consequences are violence, occupation, Gaza, with the silence and complicity of the European Union and the West world.

We have a very important task when we come back: to tell what is happening and to bring out the contradictions of a system that is inherently unjust and violent. With Mediterranea we are going to do exactly what Qamara asked our activists: so we want to talk about the Palestinian situation without talking about greatest systems, about overly complicated and distant analyses. We want to make people understand what is happening in the West Bank with very concrete testimonies: with pogroms, with settlers running up and down the street with their trucks, uprooting trees, beating, and shooting.

STORIES OF BORDERS

**THE HYBRID WAR
BETWEEN POLAND
AND BELARUS**



Since 2021, a hybrid war has been underway between Poland and Belarus, played out in the skin of people on the move trying to reach the European Union. In the face of increasing flows in recent months, Poland has decided to close its border with Belarus, reintroducing an exclusion zone for journalists and civil society organizations and decriminalizing violent actions carried out by police forces.

Poland again closes its border to people on the move

A recently released video by Kristin Joachim and Kinga Wołoszyn-Kowanda denounces the worsening situation at the border between Belarus and Poland, a border that has been experiencing an increase in not only irregular crossings but also incidents of violence in recent times.

There has been a climate of tension between Poland and Belarus for years now, more precisely since 2021, when Belarusian President Lukashenko began using migrant people as a tool of “hybrid warfare” against EU countries, thus instrumentalizing the migration phenomenon. At that time, as a response, Poland initiated the construction of a 186-kilometer wall, 5.5 meters high, equipped with motion detectors and thermal cameras, sending thousands of police officers to the border in order to patrol the border area and strengthen its control.

Increased migration flows in recent months have led to a new tightening of relations between the two states. Poland, specifically, has begun implementing measures to counter immigration into the country, blocking anyone attempting to enter its territory illegally. In particular, acting on the border area with Belarus.

For example, the zone closed to journalists and people part of civil society associations (first created in 2021) was reintroduced, with the aim of making it almost impossible to monitor and report incidents of violence-such as the infamous pushbacks carried out by Polish police forces.

The buffer zone is supposed to be 200 meters from the border, but in some cases, as in the Bialowieza National Park area, it is as wide as 2 km. Initially, areas as large as 5 km were planned, which were reduced following protests from the local community and humanitarian organizations. The restriction was initially planned for a period of time of 90 days, but it is possible that this period will be extended in case of a prolonged emergency. In fact, media and aid workers could theoretically enter the area after obtaining a permit from the Border Guard. However, as is evident, the requirement does not allow them to reach migrants when they are in severe emergency conditions.

Incidentally: in 2022-after a zone of similar purpose had been introduced by the previous government in 2021-the Polish Supreme Court acquitted journalists who had been accused of entering the zone. According to the court, the exclusion zone was too broad and the category of journalists should not have been included.

In addition to the reintroduction of the exclusion zone for media, associations, and civil society organizations, Warsaw recently passed a law decriminalizing soldiers, border guards, and police officers when they use weapons in self-defense or in a preventive manner against migrant persons in the border area. According to Amnesty International, these two measures risk creating a gray area away from public scrutiny, thus undermining the rule of law and contributing to a serious humanitarian crisis: not only is access to measures that protect human rights, such as life-saving aid or medical support, denied, but people who commit unlawful acts are even protected, without the media or civil society being able to monitor and intervene.

According to the NGO Grupa Granica, which has historically been active in the border areas, the government is responsible for more than 4,000 rejections at the border since it has been in power, according to daily data provided by the Polish Border Guard itself on the number of illegal entries prevented from entering the country.

As in 2021, there have been numerous protests by the local community this year, the “civil walk” in the border area within the prohibited areas; while in Warsaw, a protest was organized at a march by Prime Minister Tusk.



ITALY-ALBANIA: THE AGREEMENT LEGALIZES PEOPLE'S DEPORTATIONS

The situation in Albania opens up a crucial issue in the development of Italian and European migration policies. Regardless of how many people will be taken to the centers built under this specific project, the agreement sets a dangerous precedent, perfectly consistent with the general dismantling of the right to international protection.

In Shëngjin and Gjadër, in northern Albania, first reception facilities are being built as a result of the Italy-Albania agreement on asylum seekers. The agreement defines the possibility for the Italian government to use some areas of the Albanian territory to outsource the first reception of migrants coming from the Mediterranean route and establishes the creation of three new facilities: an identification center at the port of Shëngjin, a hub in Gjadër, where the asylum seekers will have to wait for the outcome of their request, and, near the hub, a detention facility on the model of the Italian Centres of Permanence for Repatriation (CPR).

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Once the centres are operational, migrants rescued in the Mediterranean from Italian authorities' boats will be arbitrarily disembarked in Albania, establishing for the first time - here the precedent - the possibility of using the soil of another state, in this case even outside the European Union, to divert people rescued at sea.

The paradoxes already begin at sea

The paradoxes already begin at sea: all rescued people will be deported to Albania, the agreement states, with the exception of pregnant women and the 'vulnerable subjects'. The parameters according to which vulnerability will be evaluated are at the very least a puzzling matter: according to the Ratification and Execution of the Italy-Albania Protocol (p.34), women, elderly and children are to be considered as vulnerable subjects, as well as 'persons suffering from serious illnesses or mental disorders, persons who have suffered torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence'. The screening would have to be carried out directly on board the search and rescue vessels, in a condition therefore particularly complex both for the crew and especially for the rescued people. Leaving aside the fact that, as also widely reported by our medical staff on board, the majority of the rescued people do show signs of physical or psychological violence and would therefore be unfit to be taken to Albania.

The capacity of Albanian facilities

Then there is the equally contradictory question of the capacity of the new Albanian facilities, which will be able to accommodate up to 3,000 people per month, according to Meloni, thus reaching 36,000 presences per year. To guarantee these numbers it would be necessary to process all asylum applications in 28 days; according to Arci, however, the average time the Italian government currently takes to process an application is two and a half years. The migrants deported to Albania therefore risk

being stranded in the country (without being able to leave the areas defined by the agreement) for much longer than expected. Once again, the seriousness of this agreement lies in its existence, regardless of what the actual turnout in the centers will be. However, the discrepancies in the numbers only make the government's dishonesty and misconduct even more obvious.

Times and costs

Time and costs are also increasing in line with what was originally agreed. The agreement signed in February stated that Italy would allocate EUR 650 million over the next five years and that the facilities would be operational by 20 May. After an initial delay, on the occasion of the inauguration of the sorting hub in the port of Shënjin, Meloni had declared that the centers would be ready to start accommodating people from August 1st. However, that date has also been postponed. The center at the port is ready, but work is still going on in the accommodation facilities in Gjadër, which has been further slowed down in recent days by the extreme heat waves that have been hitting the country. Thus, the planned costs, which had already risen to 825 million at the beginning of summer, are at risk of increasing even further with these latest slowdowns.

In the meantime, the search for personnel to work in the facilities has begun, with offers of benefits and incentives, an extra 100 euro a day, with meals and lodging paid by the administration to make the work more attractive.

Shëngjin and gjadër

With regard to the specificities of the Albanian territories designated to the project, Shëngjin and Gjadër are being built in two very different contexts. In Shëngjin, as in many other locations hosting hotspots in the Mediterranean, tourism and migration are close and interconnected. Shëngjin, a popular destination for Kosovar tourism for decades, in recent years has also become increasingly frequented by European visitors. The hub where disembarkation and identification will take place is located at the port, just a few dozen of metres from the last rows of beach umbrellas. Today the area is only separated by a low net with a symbolic rather than threatening barbed wire, but before the hub becomes operational the net will be replaced by a four-meter high wall, making what will happen in the hub invisible, so as not to disturb the peace of the bathers.

Gjadër, on the other hand, is a very small town, isolated at the base of a mountain, with apparently no running water yet. The centers in Gjadër will be located within the perimeter of a former military base, built in the 1970s, reused by the CIA in the 1990s and abandoned ever since: basically a collection of dilapidated buildings around a gigantic and deserted former landing strip. Here, far from everything and without being able to leave the delimited areas, the asylum seekers will have to wait for the outcome of their applications. All unsuccessful applicants will be transferred to the detention facility, pending repatriation, whi-

ch apparently will include a further transit to Italy. The costs of transport, both for the ships to Albania and afterwards for the transfer to Italy, are excluded from the funds allocated in the agreement.

Exchanges of favors and economic convenience

The Italy-Albania protocol fits perfectly into the logic of border externalization carried out in a compact and homogeneous manner by Italy and the European Union over the last decade. A strategy made up of agreements and funding that seems to be based more on a mutual exchange of favors and on the economic convenience of the signatory states than on the actual will to manage a phenomenon, that of migratory flows, which is currently narratively oversized and exploited by politics.

MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS



WORLD

SAHARA, 5th July A report by UNHCR, IOM and the Mixed Migration Centre estimates that at least 16,000 people on the move have died while trying to cross the Sahara Desert in the past 3 years, at least double the number of people who drowned in the Mediterranean during the same period.

MAURITANIA, 5th July A boat that set sail from Senegal with 167 people on board has wrecked off the coast of Mauritania. Local authorities say more than 50 people are missing.

LIBYA-TUNISIA, 10th July The United Nations say they discovered a mass grave along the Libyan-Tunisian border with at least 65 bodies inside.

LIBYA, 12th July Libyan Interior Minister Trabelsi, who is wanted by the United Nations for crimes against humanity, said that cooperation with the European Union to strengthen Libya's borders will continue and that Libya will not accept the resettlement of people moving into the country.

LIBYA, 17th July Italian Prime Minister Meloni attended the Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum in Tripoli, where she met with several North African leaders responsible for violence and human rights violations against people on the move.

LIBYA, 21st July Refugees in Libya released videos showing violence against people on the move at the Tunisia-Libya border and the Tunisia-Algeria border. Mediterranea Saving Humans sent these testimonies to Italian President Mattarella.

MAURITANIA, 22nd July A boat that set sail from The Gambia with about 300 people aboard was shipwrecked off Nouakchott, Mauritania. The bodies of 15 people were recovered aboard the vessel, 28 others at sea, while Mauritanian authorities rescued 120 shipwrecked.

NIGER, 22nd July Alarm Phone Sahara reports that 463 Nigerian citizens were deported from Libya to Dirkou, a location in Niger near the border, and left in the middle of the desert without food and any kind of assistance.

FRANCE-UK, 12th July Four people died while trying to reach the United Kingdom by crossing the English Channel. French authorities rescued another 63 shipwrecked.

POLAND, 12th July The Polish parliament has approved new measures authorizing the army to fire on migrant people trying to enter the country from Belarus.

FRANCE-UK, 18th July Another shipwreck in the English Channel has claimed one victim. 71 people trying to reach the United Kingdom were rescued by French authorities.

UK, 23rd July Bibby Stockholm, the British floating prison used to lock up the asylum seekers while waiting for their applications to be processed, will close its doors in January 2025.

SEA

FRANCE-UK, 24th July In one week, 3 shipwrecks claimed 6 lives in the English Channel. All of the drowned people were traveling in unstable and overcrowded boats.

EU, 30th July The European Rights Agency said that while there are many reports of violations of the rights of people on the move at European borders, there are few open national investigations into such mistreatment.

GREECE-TURKEY, 30th July 23 people are stranded near Orestiada, along the Evros River, which marks the border between Greece and Turkey. The group reports that it has been pushed back several times by Greek authorities, who have violently assaulted the people on the move.

GREECE-TURKEY, 31st July For more than 15 days, 17 people were stranded along the Evros River on the Greek-Turkish border. The group was subjected to violence by Greek police until the people were pushed back into Turkey. Here some were arrested, others managed to escape from Turkish authorities.

CIVIL FLEET, 1st July Louise Michel rescued 36 people aboard a boat in distress and disembarked them in Lampedusa.

GARABULLI, 1st July About 80 people aboard an endangered boat were intercepted off Garabulli by the so-called Libyan coast guard and deported to Libya.

CIVIL FLEET, 5th July Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity) rescued 291 people aboard 3 boats in distress thanks to the Seabird (Sea-Watch) aircraft report and disembarked them in the port of Bari, assigned by Italian authorities despite the 1100 km distance from the rescue site.

CIVIL FLEET, 8th July Thanks to Alarm Phone alerts, Sea-Eye 4 rescued 174 people in distress aboard 5 boats. Two of these operations were made possible by the presence of Nadir (ResQShip), which stabilized the boats before Sea-eye 4 arrived and directly rescued 57 shipwrecked. Sea-Eye 4's assigned port is Genoa, a 3-day sailing distance away.

INOUSSES, 9th July Twenty-seven people were intercepted off the island of Inousses by the Greek Coast Guard and turned back to Turkey. 21 of them were found on the Turkish island of Kara Ada, but eight died at sea.

CIVIL FLEET, 9-10th July Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) rescued 261 people in 4 operations and stabilized two other boats later rescued by the Italian Coast Guard. The assigned port of disembarkation is Marina di Carrara, more than 1,800 km away.

ALBORÀN, 10th July 12 people who landed independently on the island of Alborán were rescued by Spanish authorities after a 6-day wait and were transferred to Almeria.

CIVIL FLEET, 10-11th July Life Support (Emergency) rescued 174 people aboard 3 boats in distress and disembarked them in the port of Civitavecchia.

POZZALLO, 10th July 378 people were rescued off Portopalo by Italian authorities and were disembarked in the port of Pozzallo.

CIVIL FLEET, 10th July Despite the threatening presence of a Libyan SSA patrol boat, which prompted many people to jump into the water, Geo Barents rescued 87 people in distress. In a second operation, 12 more people were rescued. The assigned port of disembarkation is Salerno.

SICILY, 14th July 19 people aboard a boat with a broken-down engine were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard southeast of the Sicilian coast.

CIVIL FLEET, 16th July Thanks to Alarm Phone's report, Nadir rescued 21 people who had fallen into the water from a capsized boat. It later stabilized a second boat with 60 people on board, which was then rescued by the Italian Coast Guard. The people disembarked in Lampedusa.

CIVIL FLEET, 16-17th July Sea-Eye 4 rescued 31 people in 3 operations and disembarked them in Ortona. During the second rescue, the shipwrecked and the Sea-Eye crew were threatened by the so-called Libyan coast guard.

EGEO, 17th July About 25 people were intercepted, beaten and turned away in Izmir, Turkey by the Greek Coast Guard.

CIVIL FLEET, 17th July Thanks to Alarm Phone's report, Ocean Viking rescued 55 people in distress in 2 operations and disembarked them in the distant port of Naples.

CIVIL FLEET, 19th July Thanks to reports from Alarm Phone and Seabird, Geo Barents rescued 179 people in 2 operations and disembarked them in Livorno, a port about 1100 km away from the rescue site.

AUGUSTA, 22nd July 40 people were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard southeast of Sicily and disembarked in the port of Augusta.

LIBIA, 22nd July Sixty-two people were intercepted in the Maltese SAR zone and deported to Libya by the so-called Libyan coast guard without intervention from Italian and Maltese authorities.

CIVIL FLEET, 25th July Thanks to Seabird's report, Sea-Watch 5 rescued 156 people in distress aboard 2 boats and disembarked them in La Spezia, more than 1,000 km away from the rescue site.



ITALY

LIBIA, 26th July 103 people aboard an endangered vessel were intercepted and deported to Libya by the so-called Libyan coast guard.

CIVIL FLEET, 27th July Louise Michel rescued 40 people aboard a boat in distress and disembarked them in the port of Pozzallo.

CIVIL FLEET, 29th July Life Support rescued a boat carrying 41 people and disembarked them in the port of Naples.

CIVIL FLEET, 30th July Ocean Viking rescued 196 people aboard 2 boats in distress and disembarked them in Ancona, a port nearly 1,500 km away from the rescue site.

CIVIL FLEET, 31st July Nadir stabilized a boat carrying 110 people, 80 of whom were rescued by its crew and the other 30 by the Italian Coast Guard. Later Nadir discovered the remains of a shipwreck involving 50 people.

LATINA, 1st July Antonello Lovato, employer of Satnam Singh, was arrested by Latina Carabinieri for letting the Indian laborer die after he suffered a workplace injury.

LAMPEDUSA, 2nd July After rescuing 37 people, Louise Michel was sanctioned with a 20-day administrative detention under the so-called Piantedosi Decree. The charge by Italian authorities is that they disembarked the rescued people in Lampedusa and not in Pozzallo, her assigned port of disembarkation, which was made unreachable due to bad weather.

ROME, 4th July The Council of State has rejected the petition filed by several Italian civil society organizations against the government's decision to donate 3 Italian patrol boats to the Tunisian National Guard, which is guilty of illegal rejections and violations of the rights of people on the move.

ROME, 17th July Following the gunshot attack suffered by Mare Jonio last April 4, Mediterranea Saving Humans filed a complaint with the Prosecutor's Office in Rome, accusing the so-called Libyan coast guard of international piracy, attempted kidnapping, torture and private violence.

VENTIMIGLIA, 17th July

A video shot near Ventimiglia, on the French-Italian border, documents that a truck driver, after discovering moving people sneaking around in his vehicle, hit them numerous times with a whip to get them off.

CROTONE, 23rd July

The Crotona Public Prosecutor's Office has remanded for trial 4 officers of the Guardia di Finanza and 2 of the Coast Guard for forgery, omission of official acts, and massacre following the events of the February 26, 2023, Cutro shipwreck.

CROTONE, 24th July

The Crotona court has decided not to grant house arrest to Maysoon Majidi, a Kurdish-Iranian activist who was accused of being a boatman and jailed on Dec. 31.

ROME, 30th July

119 refugees landed at Fiumicino airport thanks to a humanitarian flight organized to evacuate them from Libya.

PANTELLERIA, 31st July

ASGI denounces the inhumane conditions at the Pantelleria hotspot, where nearly 5,000 people disembark each year, including overcrowding and a lack of ability to communicate with the outside world.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

Our records and the official ones from the Ministry by the fact that fewer and fewer cases According to borderline-europe data, 6,441 people arrived in Italy in July. Most of the refugees (66%) arrived in Sicily, mainly in Lampedusa. However, there were also some arrivals in Calabria via the Ionian route (5%) with Turkey as a point of departure. In addition, some boats reached Sardinia via the Algerian route.

According to our records, the Italian authorities rescued less than 45% of the people who arrived, while the rescues by NGO vessels accounted for another 30%. According to data from borderline-europe, Frontex took part in about 9% of the rescues in July 2024. Six per cent of the refugees reached Italian coastal waters (12 nautical miles from the coast) independently without being intercepted or rescued. For the remaining 10% of arrivals, no rescue information was available.

According to the official data from the Ministry of Internal affairs, 7,088 people arrived in Italy in July. We can only explain the discrepancy between are being reported. Journalists are also noticing this change. Sometimes the publication of inside information only depends on the efforts of individual journalists like Sergio Scandura. But as the newspaper Avvenire concludes: 'Silence at sea seems to have become the rule'.

DEAD AND MISSING

According to [borderline-europe's](#) count, 62 people died in the Mediterranean in July and 24 are still missing. We believe that the number of unreported cases is much higher, as deaths are only counted if a body is found and missing persons only appear in the statistics if they are reported missing by relatives or fellow escapees.

IOM half-yearly statistics

Data published by IOM show that the Mediterranean is one of the most dangerous borders in the world. According to IOM, 399 people died crossing the Mediterranean in the first half of 2024 and another 487 are considered missing. These figures, as well as data collected by [borderline-europe](#), clearly show that people undertake the journey despite all Europe's attempts to isolate them and that safe escape routes need to be created to avoid these deaths.

Body recovered near the Aeolian Islands

At the beginning of July, a body was found near the Aeolian Islands. And in the last four months, four bodies have been discovered also in this area. In one case, a tattoo allowed the body to be identified by its brother. The victim was related to a shipwreck near Sardinia in February this year. 17 Tunisians had set off from Bizerte, Tunisia, and all were considered missing.

Also on the same boat was Anas, a six-year-old boy whose body was identified at the end of July. His body had already been brought ashore in Calabria in April and was identified using DNA evidence, thanks to the cooperation of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the NGO Memoria Mediterranea.

Death due to a delayed rescue by Maltese and Italian authorities

In a sea rescue case on 30 June, the NGO SOS Humanity was subsequently heavily criticised and asked for clarification. The people were in distress at sea in the Maltese SAR zone at 5pm. However, the Maltese authorities did not coordinate the rescue and even responded to the call from Humanity I (SOS Humanity), which had proactively asked to take the lead in the coordination of the rescue. The Italian authorities then took over the rescue coordination. The Humanity I, which was in the vicinity, was asked to wait a few kilometers away, while two patrol boats of the Italian Coast Guard and an Italian military vessel went to the emergency site. It was only 12 hours later, at 05:30am, that the Italian authorities recovered the survivors and subsequently transferred them to the Humanity I. During this time, one person died from severe pain (around 1:00am) while the Italian authorities were on site. So far, there is no information on the cause of the delay. But this person could have been saved if the authorities, both from Malta and Italy, had acted promptly, competently and according to their duty. It is very surprising that there is no known investigation into this lack of assistance and that there has been no public re-evaluation.

ROUTES TO EUROPE

Migrant arrivals in Italy since the beginning of this year have decreased by 60% compared to the same period last year. The Italian government led by Giorgia Meloni is also celebrated for this in the media - but do these figures really show that this radical policy is having an effect? They prove one thing above all: the frivolousness with which the discussion around refugees and migrants is conducted. Now more than ever, the people are endangered by the Italian authorities' failure to assist them and by Italy's support for the so-called Libyan and Tunisian coastguards. What Italy calls externalisation measures or bilateral agreements are nothing more than a legitimised monetary support of violent crimes through push-backs (discussed below) to Tunisia and Libya, where refugees are knowingly detained in camps and prisons and thus exposed to violence, torture, rape and death.

The Italian authorities repeatedly delay rescuing refugees. On 13 July, Alarm Phone sent a call to the Italian authorities for a boat in distress at sea. Although at that moment there was a merchant ship nearby, it was not instructed to take care of the rescue. It took another eleven hours before the boat in distress was finally rescued by Italian units. In doing so, they exposed the people who had already been on the boat for four days to a disproportionate and unnecessary danger.

Another case shows that even merchant ships often fail in their duty to rescue people in distress at sea, perhaps also because

of the Italian government's intimidation measures. On 22 July, Sea-Watch monitors spotted a boat in distress at sea with around 70 people on board. They sent several distress calls to a merchant ship, which was only 10 kilometers away from the boat and therefore obliged to bring assistance. However, all distress calls were ignored. Shortly afterwards, the boat was intercepted by the so-called Libyan coast guard and forced to return to Libya. The paradox of these cases is that rights and duties are practically reversed. While private and commercial vessels should officially fulfill their duty to rescue, they now run the risk of being fined for aiding illegal immigration. This practically prevents the enforcement of international law.

A report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows that these are no exceptions. For example, investigations into violations of the fundamental rights of persons seeking protection at borders are often not carried out or are closed prematurely. FRA also notes that investigations of rights violations at borders do not meet the standards of independence, thoroughness, transparency, speed and victim participation developed by the European Court of Human Rights. According to FRA, this has a dangerous impact on the observance of the rule of law in Europe.

The following two cases illustrate how difficult it can be to bring violations of the law by border authorities in the Mediterranean to court. On 11 October 2013, just one week after

the incident off Lampedusa on 3 October, a boat sank causing the death of 238 refugees, including 60 minors. The head of the coast guard on duty at the time and the commander of the naval team were later tried for manslaughter and insubordination. As expected, the Court of Appeal in Rome has now confirmed that the crimes are statute-barred. The legal representatives of the survivors lobbied for this trial for many years, but it was repeatedly postponed. Now the perpetrators will go unpunished only because of the statute of limitations and officially there will be no justice for these victims of Italy's isolationist policy.

There are also new developments in the Cutro case, a shipwreck in which at least 94 people, including 35 children, lost their lives last February. Investigations into the rescue operations have been completed and show that the disaster could have been avoided. Although the Guardia di Finanza and the Coast Guard's sea rescue control center had already been informed about the boat in distress, they only acted after it had already sunk. Six people were charged with culpable shipwreck and multiple culpable homicide. However, it remains to be seen to what extent the six defendants can actually be convicted. The government seems to be sympathetic to the defendants, as evidenced by statements by Piantedosi, Giorgetti, Salvini and Gasparri.

In a comment on the Cutro shipwreck, former Coast Guard admiral Vittorio Alessandro also reveals that since June 2022 there have been internal decisions on rescue procedures that require the police to carry out secret surveillance of the approaching 'target' and then intervene directly 12 miles off the Italian coast. It is not clear why this has to be done covertly and why intervention only has to take place 12 miles from the coast.

Italy must guarantee the protection of people throughout its SAR zone. Moreover, in the Cutro case, no unit of the Italian authorities intervened in the rescue even within these 12 miles, the Guardia di Finanza simply backed off because of bad weather and did not request the assistance of the better equipped Coast Guard.

PUSHBACKS

According to [borderline-europe](#) records, 2,577 people were intercepted during their journey to Europe in July. Of these, 2,461 were repatriated to Libya and 116 to Tunisia. As always, these figures give no guarantees, as the number of unreported cases is likely to be significantly higher.

The so-called Libyan coast guard interrupts rescues by NGOs and returns people to Libya.

In July 2024, the so-called Libyan coast guard intervened in at least four rescues of people at sea.

The first incident occurred on 10 July during a rescue by *Geo Barents* ('MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières'), when two masked men of the so-called Libyan coast guard suddenly appeared, triggering panic among the refugees. The serious threat forced people to throw themselves into the water. In the end, all the people were rescued, but this incident underlines the enormous threat posed by the so-called Libyan coast guard and the enormous stress to which refugee people and rescuers are exposed. The refugee people would rather drown than be taken back to Libya, reported the crew of the *Geo Barents*.

The threat posed by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard also became clear after the rescue by *SEA-EYE 4* on 16 July 2024. After the rescue by *SEA-EYE 4*, they set fire to the empty boat, circled the NGO ship and chased it for a long time.

These are just a few out of many examples where the so-called Libyan coast guard and other Libyan actors disrupted rescue operations. European and Italian cooperation with the so-called Libyan coast guard must also be strongly criticized. Instead of contacting the NGO ships, the Italian authorities inform the so-called Libyan coast guard, which intercepts the boats and brings the people back to Libya. One such case occurred on 13 July 2024, when *Sea-Watch* documented how 50 people were brought back to Libya because the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre contacted the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. On 22 July 2024, there was a withdrawal because a merchant ship ignored *Sea-Watch's* distress calls. Eventually, 70 people were brought back by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. On the same day, they managed to carry out another irregular push-back with 62 people. The refugees were in Malta's SAR zone and therefore should also have been rescued by the Maltese authorities. The Italian authorities were also aware of the situation, but neither Malta nor Italy reacted. This collective and deliberate turning a blind eye must stop!

CIVIL RESISTANCE

In July, the civil fleet organisations carried out 49 missions. They were able to rescue a total of 1,944 people. In addition, 355 people were helped by maritime rescuers, e.g. by distributing life jackets. The Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) rescued 512 people in seven rescues this month. It also assisted 132 people until the coast guard arrived. In a multiple rescue by Humanity I (SOS Humanity), a total of 291 people were rescued by three boats. Sea-Watch 5 (Sea-Watch) rescued a total of 156 people in two consecutive rescues. In a joint rescue of the Aurora (Sea-Watch) and the Trotamar III (CompassCollective), 70 people were embarked on the Aurora and 50 on the Trotamar III. In addition, the Trotamar III assisted 100 people in another operation before they were taken on board by the Coast Guard. Aita Mari (Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario) rescued 34 people in one operation and Louise Michel (Louise Michel/Banksy) rescued 76 people in two operations. 219 people were rescued by Life Support (Emergency) in five missions this month. The ship SEA-EYE 4 (Sea-Eye) also rescued a total of 262 people in eight missions. The sailing ship Nadir (RESQSHIP) was deployed a total of eight times and was able to rescue 230 people and assist 123. It is also important to mention the excellent cooperation between the Civil Fleet and AP.

This month, the Italian government's strategy of trying to keep NGO ships out of the Mediterranean emerged once again: In 11

out of 17 cases, NGO ships were assigned distant ports. They had to unnecessarily travel long distances to reach La Spezia, Ortona and Genoa. This political game by the government should not only be viewed critically in terms of the welfare of the people on board, who should be brought to a safe port as quickly as possible. It also means that rescue ships are unable to operate in the Mediterranean for several days and are therefore unable to prevent shipwrecks.

The Louise Michel/Banksy left for its first rescue mission in the Mediterranean this year on 30 June after a long and necessary maintenance period. After only one day at sea, she rescued 36 people. The crew was assigned to bring the people ashore in Pozzallo (Sicily). However, the Louise Michel headed for Lampedusa, as the journey to Pozzallo would have been too risky due to the weather conditions. After finally receiving permission to disembark in Lampedusa, the Louise Michel was detained for 20 days because the crew had not followed the instructions of the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. Louise Michel commented: 'The political game that is being played with people seeking safety must end immediately. [...] The EU is deliberately restricting civil rescue at sea while people seeking protection drown in the Mediterranean Sea.' On 26 July, the Louise Michel was allowed to leave again and was able, after only one day, to rescue 40 people.

Surprisingly, the number of cases of multiple rescues by NGO ships officially coordinated by Rome has increased since this month. In total, there have been seven multiple rescues in which NGO ships have carried out up to five rescues in succession before reaching a port. Multiple rescues were officially banned by an Italian government decree in January 2023. According to this decree, NGO ships can only carry out one rescue and then must take the rescued people to an assigned port, often far away, before they can rescue other people in distress at sea. Has the official sea rescue control centre in Rome also realised that the support of NGO ships is essential when it comes to saving lives? This remains a question, since the allocation of distant ports hinders those very rescues.

In this context, the update of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's (FRA) report 'Search and Rescue Operations and Fundamental Rights', published in June 2024, is also interesting. The document discusses the various lawsuits brought by the Italian government against NGO vessels: 'This update aims to contribute to the discussion on the need for sufficient and effective SAR capabilities at sea, providing an overview of the difficulties faced by civil society in its efforts to prevent fatal accidents at sea'.

The new civil fleet vessels SARAH and SEA-EYE 5 have arrived!

The German maritime rescue organisation 'SARAH' (Search and Rescue for All Humans) has officially started its work in the Mediterranean Sea with a new rescue ship.

SARAH is a former luxury yacht that has been refitted for use as a rescue ship. It is one of the fastest rescue ships in the civil sea rescue fleet. Its first rescue took place just one day after operations began: the SARAH managed to rescue 19 people in the Maltese SAR zone on 21 July.

The SEA-EYE 5 is the fourth ship of the United4Rescue alliance to start its rescue mission in the Mediterranean Sea. United4Rescue board member Sandra Bils comments: "These are stormy times, also for civil rescue at sea. The ships of our alliance face strong political winds and constant harassment by the authorities. SEA-EYE 5 is our answer to all this. No one can seriously question the suitability of a German rescue ship'. The Sea-Eye 5 was christened on 22 July in the port of the Italian city of Ancona. Soon it will set sail for the central Mediterranean to save lives.

For further reading, [borderline-europe](#) recommends the 'Central Med Analysis' by Alarm Phone (of which [borderline-europe](#) is a co-founder) and the 13th issue of ECHOES by the civil MRCC! (both publications are in English).

