



es In Libya!
R is UNFAIR
يز أصوات اللاجئين في ليبيا
وضعية اللاجئين غير منصفة

MEDREPORT DECEMBER 2022

The UNHCR response is always the same: pretend to care, change nothing, neglect, repress.
UNFAIR
The UN Refusal Agency

"UNHCR usually doesn't re on the phone
UN
The UN

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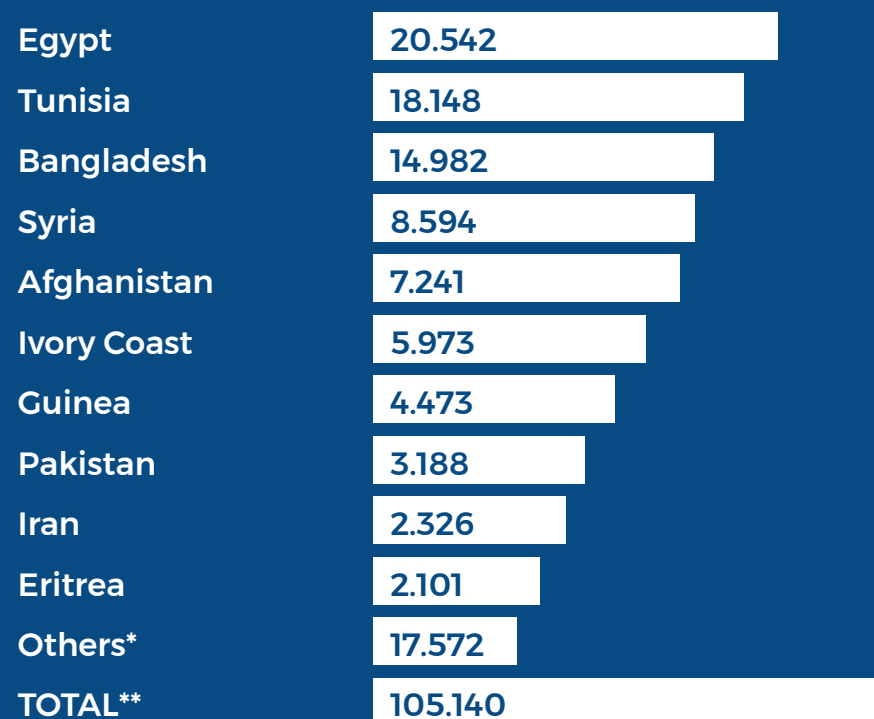
WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

In December, the number of people who found themselves forced to flee, cross the Mediterranean Sea and managed to arrive in Italy was 10,799. Among them were 735 unaccompanied minors.

Over a hundred thousand people arrived in Italy in 2022. December 28, in particular, was the day in December with the most arrivals: 939. By contrast, the month with the most landings was August, with 16,822.

Following the approval of the Italian government's decree imposing a new code of conduct on sea rescue activities by Non-Governmental Organizations, criticism came from the Garante dei detenuti e delle persone privati della libertà, Mauro Palma, who expressed a number of concerns. Reflections having to do with applications for international protection on board, to single rescue, to sanctions issued administratively and without the scrutiny of the judiciary.

NATIONALITIES DECLARED AT THE TIME OF LANDING (UPDATED TO DECEMBER 31, 2022)



* The figure could include immigrants for whom they still are identification activities are in progress.

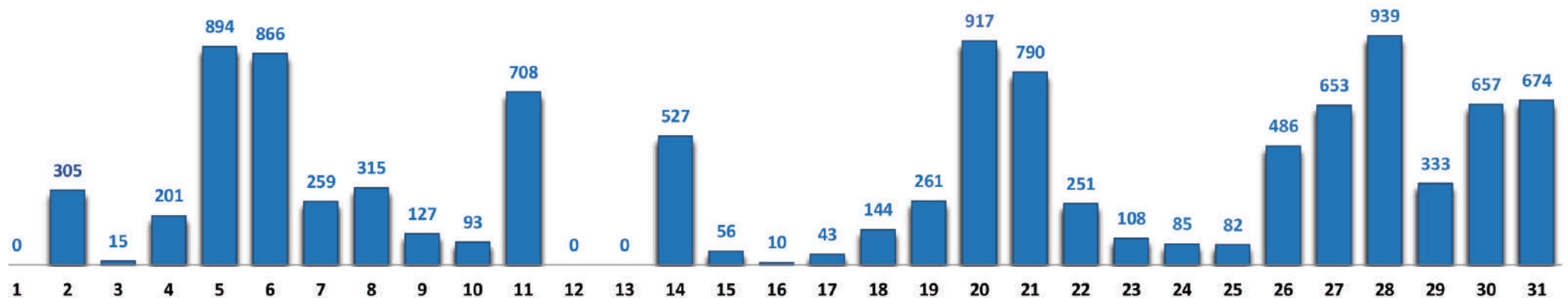
** The data refer to the landing events detected before 8:00 am of the reference day.

Source: Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic.

The data are subject to subsequent consolidation

Guarantor Mauro Palma pointed out that “international maritime law does not identify the master of a ship as competent to determine the status of those who temporarily fall under its care as a result of a rescue operation and is therefore under no obligation whatsoever to ask those rescued whether they wish to apply for international protection.”

Data updated to Dec. 11, 2022, provided by the Missing Migrants Project, by the International Organization for Migration, testify that 25,331 migrants have died or disappeared in Mare Nostrum since 2014. To add to the horror of the numbers, is to understand how this is an inaccurate figure in any case, because the number of victims is surely much higher considering those who have been killed or missing along land routes across the Sahara Desert and border areas.



These data are processed on the basis of information provided by the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic. The data refer to the landing events detected by 8.00 on the reference day.



CHRONICLE OF DECEMBER OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN

DAY 3

A shipwreck off Lampedusa: a boat capsized 40 miles from the island. 40 people were rescued from the sea. The European policy of closed borders kills again.

DAY 4

In the afternoon, the civil ship GeoBarents rescued 74 life-threatening people on board an overcrowded and unstable dinghy fleeing Libya. Among them were many women and children, who were entrusted to the care of the MSF team.

In the same hours, despite threats from the so-called Libyan Coast Guard in international waters, the MV Louise Michel rescues 103 people in mortal danger. The castaways safely board the ship Humanity1.

In the evening a small 6-meter boat sank in the waters off Lampedusa. 32 migrants, including 3 women, were rescued by the Coast Guard. There are, however, 4 missing, including 2 children aged six months and six years.

DAY 5

39 people, rescued by the Italian Coast Guard 90 nautical miles from Cape Passero, land in Pozzallo overnight.

In the morning, GeoBarents crew rescues an overcrowded dinghy off the coast of Libya. On board are 90 people including 35 minors.

DAY 6

Overnight, in two separate operations, the team aboard Humanity1 and MV Louise Michel rescued 49 people and more than 100 people, respectively. Both rescues occurred in international waters off the coast of Libya.

In the morning, GeoBarents rescued 90 people aboard an unstable dinghy that had departed the previous evening from the Libyan coast. Among them were two pregnant women and more than 30 children, the youngest of whom was only two years old.

After Alarm Phone operators raised the alert, the Italian Coast Guard and Guardia di Finanza rescued 450 people in distress aboard a boat in the central Mediterranean Sea.

were in danger aboard a small wooden boat. This is the fifth rescue in less than two days.

DAY 9

Italian authorities assign the port of Salerno for the disembarkation of the 248 people aboard GeoBarents. The next day the same authorities will assign the port of Bari for the safe landing of the 261 survivors aboard the Humanity1.

DAY 14

The humanitarian ship LifeSupport with Emergency's team on board has set sail from Genoa for its first mission in central Mediterranean waters.

DAY 15

Yet another shipwreck off Tunisian authorities: over 26 people recovered at sea, 4 killed.

DAY 16

In the evening, a joint rescue operation by RiseAbove and SeeNotRettung rescued 63 people aboard an endangered dinghy fleeing Libya and reported by AlarmPhone. The castaways were then rescued on the humanitarian ship SeaEye4.

DAY 17

Within hours of the previous rescue, the team aboard RiSeAboce rescued 27 people in distress. Among them were 9 women, 2 children, 3 elderly and 1 unaccompanied minor.

DAY 18

The team aboard the humanitarian ship LifeSupport carries out its first rescue in the Libyan-held Sar area: 70 people, including 26 minors and five women.

In the morning, yet another tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa: a boat sank with 43 shipwrecked people on board. The latter were rescued by Italian Coast Guard and Guardia di Finanza units. A five-year-old girl did not make it.

DAY 22

The team aboard the humanitarian ship Life Support completes the safe disembarkation, at the port of Livorno, of the 142 shipwrecked people rescued in the central Mediterranean in previous days.

DAY 27

In the night the civilian ship Ocean Viking rescued 113 people in mortal danger. These were on board an overcrowded inflatable boat. Among them were many women, some pregnant, and children, including 3 infants.



BORDER STORIES

THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

THE DEADLY LINE: MILITARISED BORDERS LEAD TO MORE DEATHS IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, ALARM PHONE REPORT

December 14, 2022: This morning news again broke that people have drowned in the Channel after a rubber dinghy with approximately 47 people onboard appears to have broken apart at sea. Details of the event are still emerging, but the location of the initial search and rescue operation – on the border line separating British and French territorial waters – recalls the situation which led to the deaths of 32 people last year and again raises questions about the coordination of the French and English Coastguards in their duties to save lives at sea.

Unlike the 24th of November 2021, it seems most people on board the dinghy survived and will be able to provide testimonies about what exactly happened early this morning. What we currently know as Alarm Phone is that our partner association working in Northern France, Utopia 56, received a message at 02:53 French time (UTC+1) from a boat in distress. The travellers provided their location: 50° 59.294' N, 1° 21.087' E, approximately 15 nautical miles South East of Dungeness point.

A minute later Utopia 56 received a voice note in English which we have transcribed below: *“Hello brother we are in a boat and we have a problem please help. Uh, we have children and family in a boat. And a boat, water coming ... we don't have anything for rescue for ... safety. Please help me bro please please. We are in the water we have a family.”*

The sound of a running outboard engine can be heard in the background of the voicenote.

Neither Utopia 56 nor Alarm Phone was able to recontact these people to receive updated positions or confirm if they were rescued.

Utopia 56 called the French Coastguard at CROSS Gris-Nez at 02:57 French time and communicated the boat's position, the phone number for the people, as well as the distress situation on board.

A follow up email was sent to the French Coastguard, Alarm Phone, and the Operations Room at Dover MRCC at 03:13, thus notifying all relevant actors of the location of the boat in distress. For now we do not know if and when the travellers made their own calls directly to the French and British Coastguards, nor what they may have communicated to the Coastguards if they did.

This initial position which was shared was in French waters, although it is likely the boat was continuing its journey due to the engine sounds heard in the voice note. Based on opensource AIS and ADS-B data available through VesselFinder and ADS-B Exchange it does not appear that any search and rescue (SAR) operation was launched by the French. However, this cannot be confirmed as the French military boats operating in the Channel have been known to stop transmitting or spoof their AIS positions, mostly when they are patrolling.

Our monitoring has shown that when engaged in SAR operations or standing by a small rubber boat in the Channel they will consistently transmit their positions over AIS to ensure they are visible to other ship traffic.

The first evidence of a SAR operation comes from the British side, around one hour after the initial distress alert.

We do not know what information the Coastguards considered before launching a SAR operation, but at approximately 03:40 UTC+1, Dungeness RNLI Lifeboat 13-02 launches and proceeds at top speed to a position 3.65 nautical miles North West of the initial distress position sent to Utopia 56 and meets with the shipping vessel Arcturus BA862 at approximately 04:20 on the border line.

At approximately 4:20 UTC+1 the Coastguard helicopter launches from Lydd to join the search and rescue operation and fishing vessel Lass O Doume BM 181, Dover RNLI Lifeboat 17-46, and HMS Severn all proceed to the scene.

What exactly transpired at sea is, for now, not known. Had the boat capsized? Were people already in the water, and if so for how long?

The fact that the position of the initial rescue operation (as well as those launched later in the morning, after the critical nature of the situation became clear) was on the border line between French and British waters raises urgent questions on the cooperation of the Coastguards to make sure this boat was rescued.

Through handling many cases together with our partners in France, Alarm Phone has been aware that this year small boats have been consistently, if not systematically, accompanied by French vessels in order to make sure they are in place to intervene swiftly should the boat become in distress. However, the boat which Dungeness Lifeboat was tasked to this morning appears to have been unaccompanied by any French vessel.

We have also noticed a change of operation following last year's mass deaths, and the current investigations which the Coastguards are now facing: the UK Coastguard has been launching Border Force and RNLI rescue boats earlier, in anticipation of people crossing into British waters, rather than waiting for dinghys to already be in these waters before launching a SAR operation.

A fishing vessel, Arcturus BA862, who is reported to have not been alerted to any distress case, happened to be the first on scene. Dungeness Lifeboat was the first SAR asset, and reached the people on the border line. We know Dover MRCC was alerted of the distress case at 03:13 UTC+1 by e-mail. A government spokesman now reports that UK authorities were alerted only at 04:05 UTC+1. Why the discrepancy? If the UK authorities were only aware of the case from 04:05 UTC+1 on what information was the Dungeness lifeboat launched at 03:40 UTC+1?

Other questions remain unanswered. Did either the UK or the French Coastguard make contact with the people in the boat after the alert from Utopia 56? At what point did the situation on board deteriorate?

The search and rescue response later this morning was massive: all Lifeboats along the English coast launched, with many French and English Coastguard helicopters as well as military vessels also participating. Despite all these resources it was not enough to save the 4 people confirmed dead.

While we ought to recognise the efforts of all search and rescue actors in these case and over the past months in the Channel the final question remains: why were these 43 people and thousands of others forced to make such a dangerous journey?

Lives will continue to be lost if states persist in reinforcing militarised borders rather than allowing all people to access existing routes to cross the Channel by ferry and train.

Yesterday's announcement from the British Prime Minister confirms the UK government's intention to continue to illegalise the movement of some. Freedom of movement for all is the only way to prevent loss of life like today's



MED CARE FOR UKRAINE NEWS FROM THE PROJECT

MEDITERRANEA RETURNS TO KIEV IN THE DARK AND WITHOUT WATER

The fifth humanitarian aid mission under Mediterranean Saving Humans' "Med Care for Ukraine " project was held from Dec. 18-23.

The caravan departed from Veneto, for the monthly mission that Mediterranean regularly guarantees to support the civilian population affected by Russian attacks and the inhabitants of refugee camps.

In December this year we reached the thirteenth rotation of medical teams, consisting of doctors, nurses and psychologists, who together with our translators ensure basic medical care for 1400 people between the refugee camps of Sykhiv, Naukova and Striskji Park and dozens of informal reception places in the city of Lviv.

The December humanitarian aid mission delivered relief supplies to multiple places in the conflict, reaching as far as Kiev. The first stop in the city of Lviv saw the distribution of humanitarian aid to refugee camps where the situation is getting worse and worse.

As our last missions were able to record throughout Ukraine there is a general worsening of living conditions, both in civilian housing and in the refugee camps.

There are 9 million Ukrainians who do not have electricity; in Lviv the time slot in which electricity is guaranteed has gone from 8 hours in November to 4 hours in December.

Add to this the winter temperatures that reached 18 degrees below zero in December during our mission.

A total of 4 power generators were delivered during our last mission in order to be able to guarantee power continuity during power outages.

The Lviv Municipality is building a new citadel for refugees next to the current refugee camp in the Sykhiv district. These are containers that, unlike those currently installed in the camps, have indoor bathrooms. This will allow, when completed, to give camp residents the opportunity to be able to wash themselves without having to leave the containers and cross the camp in the snow to reach the shower modules.

Our medical teams have shown an exponential increase in cold-related illnesses such as flu, colds, bronchitis and pneumonia between November and December.

The second stop of Mediterranea Saving Humans' mission was in Kiev where our activists returned after our missions first reached the Ukrainian capital last May.

Living conditions in Kiev are extremely precarious and harsh, even more so than in the western part of the country. There is a lack of electricity for much of the day; generators in public places cannot guarantee a continuous supply of power because they would risk melting from too many hours of operation.

There is a lack of running water for many hours a day, and when it returns it is brown in color, undrinkable. It is a water drama that has been sweeping the country in recent months, after Russian bombing also affected the water supply.

For the first time since the beginning of the conflict, there are heavy disruptions to the Internet network, which is working intermittently.

All of which clearly describe how the deteriorating living conditions of Ukrainians are getting much worse and how Russian attacks are hitting the civilian population in a violent and barbaric manner. In Kiev, our activists brought humanitarian aid to our partners at NGO Insight at their Kiev office. The headquarters of the LGBTQIA+ community rights organization is located next to a building that was destroyed by Russian bombing.

Our delegation also held a meeting at the Italian Embassy in Kiev with Deputy Chief of Mission Francesco Pesce. Finally, on December 22 Mediterranea participated as an official invitee in the ceremony for the appointment of the new bishop of Donetsk Fr. Maksim Ryabukha, of the Salesians who through the Don Bosco Center in Lviv are partners in the Med Care for Ukraine project. Don Maksim was presented with one of Mediterranea Saving Humans' cribs depicting the nativity on board the ship "Mare Jonio," made for Mediterranea by users of the "Lavori in Corso" mental health center in Naples as part of the "Ubuntu" project. Throughout the mission, our delegation had to deal with continuous air-raid alerts that can last up to several hours as Russian attacks intensify. A dramatic situation that represents the everyday life of the Ukrainian civilian population.



UNFAIR - THE UN REFUSAL AGENCY

REPORT OF THE TWO DAYS OF PROTESTS IN GENEVA

On the occasion of the 75th International Day of Human Rights of the United Nations, the solidarity alliance formed by ‘Refugees in Libya’ and ‘Solidarity with Refugees in Libya’ reunited in Geneva to demand justice and fair treatment.

The demonstrations took place in front of the UNHCR building, where every day officials of the so-called Refugee Agency make decisions on the lives of millions of vulnerable people around the world.

The first article of the UN Declaration of Human Rights speaks clearly: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and must act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”.

Yet the UNHCR Libya, for over 100 days, ignored the requests of the group made up of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers who asked to be acknowledged as human beings and be evacuated to safe countries. Furthermore, the UN agency had closed its offices two days before the arrival of Al Khoja, the director of all Libyan detention centers who ordered his militias to set fire to the demonstrators’ tents.

A little over a year after the protests began, the few refugees and asylum seekers who managed to set foot in Europe mobilized and took the protest from Tripoli to Geneva. This time they could not remain unheard.

The mobilizations began on 9 December with a press conference held under a snowy sky and the tent covered with posters and banners denouncing all the injustices committed by the UNHCR.

The first voice on the microphone is that of David Yambio, spokesman for Refugees in Libya:

“Today I am here to represent the thousands of people still locked up in concentration camps in Libya. We are talking about people regularly registered as refugees with the UNHCR who have been prevented from having fair access to the asylum process.

The Agency has never been transparent even with respect to its mandate. The proceedings last 10, 20 years. There are children born in Libya who have become adults while waiting. Over the past 10 years in Libya, at least 45,000 people have registered as refugees. Yet in Tripoli there is only one UNHCR office. How do they think they can help us? And today I still have to listen to the astonished voices of those who ask us why we started the UNFAIR campaign?”.

Immediately afterwards, the word passes to his fellow activist Lam Magok, trapped in Libya for 5 years: “I have been there for 5 years. In Libya, migrants always live in fear. They live in fear of being kidnapped, killed, tortured. We are human beings like everyone else. We are like Ukrainians. There are no first class and second class migrants“.



Azeb Ambessa, of United4Eritrea and Solidarity with Refugees in Libya, adds: “This transnational movement was born shortly after the start of the protest in Tripoli to amplify the voice and requests of Refugees in Libya even within that European Union, accomplice and sponsor of the torture, killings and rapes that take place every day in detention centers, which are an integral part of the Union’s border regime”.

Finally Muhammad al-Kashef, activist of Alarm Phone and co-founder of Refugees’ Solidarity Movement who recalled how “more than 70 years after the signing of the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, the UNHCR has failed in its mission. Not only in Libya, but also in Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey and even in the Greek islands, the UNHCR does nothing”.

The voice from the speaker boxes came through loud and clear this time. In the afternoon, in fact, Alex Tayler – Senior Liaison Officer for the Middle East and North Africa of the UN – invited in a delegation from the presidium made up of David Yambio and Muhammad al-Kashef, who brought all the requests of the UNFAIR campaign to the official’s table – available here: <https://unfairagency.org/unhcr/>.

Tayler has shown himself sensitive to our requests and both parties have expressed their willingness to embark on a path of dialogue. We, however, cannot stand still waiting for real signs of discontinuity from the UNHCR. While we are safe here in Europe, thousands of migrants are risking their own skin because of the UN agency’s betrayal of its mandate. Our protests will not subside until our demands on the UNHCR are acted upon.

Despite the freezing temperatures, on the return of the delegation, the gathering continued until late in the evening with spontaneous interventions by representatives of the Afghan, Eritrean and Sudanese communities including Gandhi B., tortured for 8 months in Libyan prisons: “Before disembarking in Italy I was a political opponent of the Al-Bashir dictatorship, a human rights activist in Libya and a witness of numerous crimes committed by Libyan militias. From the moment I set foot in Europe I became just a refugee. We have so many stories to tell you about Libya and the UNHCR, but are you Europeans willing to put up with these truths?”

The evening ended with the screening of video material shot during the 100 days of struggle in Tripoli and with the short film “ABBAS” by the Sudanese director and activist Mustafa Zeyo.

The next day, December 10 (International Day for Human Rights), we met in the Place des Nations, in front of the UN headquarters. The demonstration started here and crossed the city to the rhythm of music and slogans such as “We are here and we will fight – Seeking asylum is everybody’s right!” and “UN Agencies – Stop ghosting refugees”.

The march was accompanied by spontaneous interventions including that of Snit Tesfamaryam of the Eritreischer Medienbund Schweiz of Zurich: “Every person in the Eritrean diaspora has at least one relative or acquaintance affected by the Libyan militias. UNHCR, stop this violence! Our people are already suffering enough from dictator Isaias Afewerki! “Yiak!(enough!)” and “Down, down, Isaias”.

The march ended at Place de la Navigation, in the middle of the Paquis district, to an 80% inhabited by foreigners. Here the demonstration ended with various artistic and musical performances, leaving us with the promise to meet again soon.

In fact, our struggle does not end here. We will continue to report violations by UNHCR, the European Union and individual member states. We will continue to denounce the racist and criminal border system which has caused thousands of deaths at Europe’s internal and external borders.

Life is not a lottery: none of us will ever have the power to decide if, when and where to be born.

Freedom of movement is a universal right!

MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS



WORLD



LIBYA

Dec. 4 - Evidence continues to come in that testifies to serious human rights violations in Libyan detention centers. This time the victim captured on video is a young man from Niger who is being tortured by two Libyan militiamen.

Dec.10 - Libyan Prime Minister Dbeibah calls on the UN Security Council to lift sanctions against Abdurahman al-Milad, better known as Bija. He is one of the main human traffickers active in Libya.

SWITZERLAND

Dec. 9-10 - Hundreds of protesters from across Europe gather in front of UNHCR's European headquarters and on the streets of Geneva to demonstrate against the UN agency's inaction and complicity in the violation of refugee rights in Libya and North Africa.

FRANCE-UK BORDER

Dec.14 - A boat capsizes in the English Channel while trying to reach British shores. Four people died and 43 are still missing.

GREECE

Dec.22 - Greek authorities report that the first hearing in the trial of Sarah Mardini, Sean Binder and the other Emergency Response Center International activists, charged with various offenses only for rescuing many people in distress in the stretch of Aegean Sea opposite Lesbos, will be held on Jan. 10.

SEA

ITALY

Dec. 3-5 - Two shipwrecks occur off the coast of Lampedusa: in the first, 40 people are rescued by the Coast Guard and 3 are still missing, while in the second, 32 people are rescued and 4 are missing.

MOROCCO

Dec. 8 - A shipwreck in front of the Tan-tan cliffs costs the lives of at least 53 people. Only three people survive the capsizing of the boat.

CIVIL FLEET

Dec. 13 - The first SAR mission of Emergency's Life Support ship departs from the port of Genoa.

TUNISIA

Dec.14 - In a shipwreck off Sfax, four people lose their lives while attempting to reach Europe. The other 26 people on the boat are rescued by the Tunisian Coast Guard.

FRONTEX

Dec.15 - A study by Human Rights Watch and Border Forensics shows complicity between Frontex's Heron drone and Libya's so-called coast guard in carrying out illegal refoulements made in waters off Misrata since May 2021.

ITALY

Dec.18 - In a shipwreck off Lampedusa, a 5-year-old girl dies. The other 43 people are rescued by the Italian Guardia di Finanza and Coast Guard.

MOROCCO

Dec.22 - In a shipwreck in the Atlantic opposite Asfi, one person dies, four are rescued and 41 are counted missing.

TUNISIA

Dec.25 - The bodies of four victims of a shipwreck near Kerkennah Island are found.

CIVIL FLEET

Geo Barents rescued 361 people, Louise Michel 33 plus 261 in a joint operation with Humanity 1, Rise Above 85, Sea Eye 4 45 plus 63 in joint operations between the latter two, Life Support 142 and Astral 160.

ITALY

Italian authorities have rescued more than 1,100 people in distress in the central Mediterranean.

PUSHBACKS

645 people were illegally returned to Libya and 18 to Turkey.

ITALY

ROME

Dec.1 - A conference entitled “The Boundaries of Solidarity,” organized by Legal Clinic UniRoma 3, Mediterranea and ASGI on the topic of the criminalization of solidarity in the context of migration, is being held at the Law Department of the University of Rome 3.

TRAPANI

Dec.10 - The Trapani Public Prosecutor’s Office requires the Port Authority to take charge of the restoration and maintenance of the Iuventa ship, which was seized in August 2017 as part of the investigation for aiding and abetting illegal immigration against Iuventa Crew activists.

Dec.19 - The Ministry of the Interior and the Prime Minister’s Office have asked to be a civil party in the trial against Iuventa, saying they have suffered “economic and moral damage” and intend to seek compensation from the accused activists.

MODENA

Dec. 15 - Modena prosecutor’s office files suit over threats received by Don Mattia Ferrari, Mediterranea’s shipboard chaplain, from a Libyan mob spokesman on social media.

RAVENNA

Dec.31 - Mediterranea, along with many others, is organizing a city presidium to welcome the 113 people rescued by Ocean Viking and disembarked in the Romagna port assigned as a Place of Safety (POS) by the Ministry of the Interior.

TURIN

Dec.6 - The Academic Senate of the Polytechnic University of Turin votes by a large majority in favor of continuing agreements with Frontex, signed in July 2021, to provide mapping equipment to the European agency, which is guilty of numerous human rights violations along the EU’s external borders.

ITALY-FRANCE BORDER

Dec.7 - All 19 suspects in the occupation of the Oulx Canton House and Clavière Parish are cleared of all charges. They had occupied these places to provide relief and assistance to people heading to France.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM
CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

In December, [borderline-europe](#) recorded 9,504 arrivals of refugees crossing the Mediterranean to Italy, despite the winter and the resulting difficult conditions for crossing the Mediterranean. For December, weather conditions were unusually good, especially at the end of the month, which ensured that there was hardly a day without landings. The Italian Ministry of Interior registered 10,799 people during the same period. While the IOM speaks of 10,797 refugees, the UNHCR counted 10,141 arrivals in the month of December.

Approximately 1,024 people were rescued by NGO vessels in the Mediterranean this month. Even though the Italian government continues to make it difficult for rescue NGOs to save people, this month mainly by assigning unrealistically distant ports, [Humanity 1](#), [Sea-Watch 4](#), [Rise Above](#), [Louise Michel](#), [Ocean Viking](#), [Geo Barents](#) and the new ship of the organization [Emergency](#), [Life Support](#), have once again done the job of the European government and nevertheless saved as many lives as possible.

Some happy news at the December arrivals concerns the birth of three babies, each born during a rescue mission and doing well.

On 7 December, little Ali* (pseudonym) saw the light of day on board the [Geo Barents](#). His mother fled Libya with him and her three other children shortly before. After delays on the part of the Italian and Maltese governments, the mother and her four children were not evacuated to Lampedusa until the evening. Malta refused to take in the mother with all her children and demanded that the three other sons, all under the age of eleven, be evacuated to Lampedusa, while only the mother and newborn would have been allowed into Malta. MSF commented that such action was not only immoral but also violated basic and universal human rights.

Just a few weeks later, on 19 December, Fatima was born during a rescue operation by the Italian Coast Guard on their ship. Her mother was travelling to Italy with about 40 other people who were rescued by the Coast Guard and brought to Lampedusa. During the mooring manoeuvre, the baby was ultimately born and was later taken with her mother to a hospital in Agrigento. Due to the absence of maternity hospitals, Fatima was the first baby born in Lampedusa in over 50 years.

To close this year, another baby girl was also born at sea on New Year's Eve, crossing the Ionian Sea route with about 90 other people and arriving in [Roccella Ionica](#).

DEAD AND MISSING

In December again many people lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. borderline-europe counted a total of eleven people who died on the route and 19 people who are still considered missing for this month. As always, however, a much higher number of unreported cases must be assumed.

Especially cases in which children and babies lose their lives attract media attention because of their tragedy. In recent months, there have been repeated shipwrecks in which several children died or did not survive the crossing due to illness and poor health. In the last two months alone (end of October to end of December), the Mediterranean Sea claimed eleven children's lives through nine different shipwrecks. The cemetery on Lampedusa has been so overcrowded for a long time that the coffins of deceased migrants repeatedly have to be transferred to other communities to be buried. The most recent case is that of the two-year-old girl, Rokia, who also died in hospital after a shipwreck only ten miles off the Italian coast.

WAYS TO EUROPE

As already mentioned in previous issues, more and more Egyptian citizens decide to dare to flee to Europe. Both a critical economic situation and the resulting threat of poverty, as well as oppression by the state, have led to more than 20,000 Egyptians arriving in Italy this year alone via the Egypt-Libya and then Libya-Italy route, according to the Italian Ministry of the Interior.

PULLBACKS

This month, 3,274 people fled Libya but were forcibly intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard in the Mediterranean Sea and taken back to Libya. The Tunisian coast guard also prevented 26 people from crossing to Italy.

In the last week of November and the first week of December (27 November to 3 December) alone, more than 600 people were intercepted on their way to Italy and taken into Libyan captivity. On the penultimate day of the month, 30 December, there was another huge operation by Libyan authorities in which more than 650 people were intercepted as they tried to leave the country on a merchant ship.

One factor driving the renewed increase in pullbacks to Libya is the renewal of the agreement between Italy and Libya in November. In 2022, the total number already exceeds 21,000 people who have not managed to escape Libya.

The fact that the Italian government continues to support this action of the so-called Libyan coast guard is unacceptable, according to Riccardo Magi, a member of the Italian Parliament. He signed with 30 other deputies the draft law “Manifesto di intenti” (Manifesto of intent) of the organization “A buon diritto”, which should investigate more closely the cooperation of Italy with the so-called Libyan coast guard.

Attention was drawn to a report by HRW on the cooperation of the European border agency Frontex with the so-called Libyan coast guard. The report confirms the widespread observation that Frontex’s aerial surveillance makes it easier for Libyan authorities to intercept more refugee boats, making it an accomplice in the cruel mistreatment of migrants, some of which leads to death.

CIVIL RESISTANCE

In December, several NGO ships were once again on the move to save lives in the Mediterranean. Especially due to the worsening weather conditions and the winter, crossings on the Mediterranean Sea are becoming more and more dangerous, making rescue operations even more important.

The ships Geo Barents, Humanity 1 and Louise Michel, but also the Ocean Viking, Rise Above, Sea-Watch 4 and the new ship of the organization Emergency, “Life Support”, were again actively deployed and were able to rescue many people from distress at sea. However, their work was again made difficult by the Italian government in December. Although the Humanity 1 and the Ocean Viking were allowed to dock at the beginning of the month at the ‘usual’ ports in Salerno and Bari, even these are already comparatively far away.

However, this is only due to the bad weather conditions that required landing at a safe port. This strategy also changed immediately with better weather towards the end of the month. Thus, some ships were assigned ports located very far north of the country.

This strategy, on the one hand, wants to demonstratively illustrate the power and the position of the Italian government and, at the same time, ensures that valuable time and resources of the rescue organizations are consumed, which, among other things, prevents them from returning to the mission immediately after landing and saving more lives.

While the ships Life Support and Sea-Watch 4 were assigned Livorno in Tuscany as a safe port, Ocean Viking had to go to Ravenna in Emilia-Romagna to disembark the rescued people.

Italy’s right-wing government continues to make things difficult for civilian rescue ships. For some time now, there has been talk of a new decree with a code of conduct for NGOs active in the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, this plan was made a fact and the decree was approved in the Council of Ministers on 28 December.

It stipulates that rescue NGOs must provide detailed information to Italian authorities immediately after each individual rescue, as the country’s right-wing government continues to talk about the problems arising from non-compliance with the rules on the part of NGOs. There is no question that all civilian sea rescue vessels comply with the rules laid down in conventions and inform the authorities immediately. The statements prove to be particularly absurd when one considers that lack of exchange of information and willingness to cooperate on the part of Italian authorities has repeatedly led to fatal incidents in the past.

In addition, this new decree requires civilian vessels to request and proceed to a safe harbour immediately after the first rescue in the Search and Rescue Zone to avoid multiple rescues in the same operation.

This wastes both resources and the valuable time of NGO vessels to save more lives in distress. As mentioned above, the government led by Prime Minister Meloni already began allocating very distant ports in recent weeks to make further rescues more difficult.

The decree stipulates that civil organizations could face penalties of tens of thousands of euros if they fail to comply with the established rules. A precise definition of the rules that are to be followed has not yet been made, and it is also questionable to what extent they are legitimate at all.

The original proposal also envisaged that responsibility for the refugees on board a rescue ship—as so often demanded by right-wing Italian politicians—should fall to the ships' flag states. This would have meant that the wish for an asylum application would already have to be expressed on board and this would then have to be made in the flag state. In this way, Italy wanted to circumvent the Dublin Agreement, which states that asylum applications must be made in the first country of arrival in the EU. However, in the decree that was finally signed, the proposal is no longer preserved in this form. More detailed information and assessments of the draft can be found [here](#).

Malta also continues to do everything in its power to prevent anything approaching safe passage for refugees and their rescue. Not only were all requests for safe harbors ignored in December, as usual, but also calls for help. Now Malta caused another stir by explicitly asking two merchant ships to ignore a maritime emergency.

Maltese authorities instructed the merchant ships to maintain their course and made it clear that rescuing the shipwrecked people would be “considered interception at sea.”

While the trial of the rescue NGO *Iuventa* has been repeatedly postponed due to procedural errors, disregard for certain standards, and other mistakes on the part of the prosecution, international observers were now admitted to the trial in December. Unfortunately, this was not the only attention-grabbing event surrounding this particular trial this month. The Italian state, led by Meloni's government, now wants to become a joint plaintiff in the trial.

To draw attention to the tragic events in the Mediterranean Sea, the sea rescue NGO *Sea Watch* launched a new social media campaign around the “erTrinkwasser”, which seems like a lifestyle product. It is a play on words: drinking water (*Trinkwasser*) mixed with the prefix “er” is reminiscent of “drowning in water” in German. A clip that at first seems like a normal advertisement, but then addresses the daily deaths in the Mediterranean. Since no reasonable state system for sea rescue has been developed so far, *Seawatch* draws attention to the importance of the work done by NGOs, and thus volunteers and collects donations for them.

Good news reaches us from the Mediterranean Sea: there is more support available, since the ship “*Life Support*” of the organization *Emergency* left the port of Genova in mid-December and is now on mission to save lives. Already in the first month they were able to help several people in distress at sea and ensure that they come ashore safely.



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MEDREPORT
DECEMBER 2022

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