



**MEDREPORT**  
**OCTOBER 2023**

# INDEX

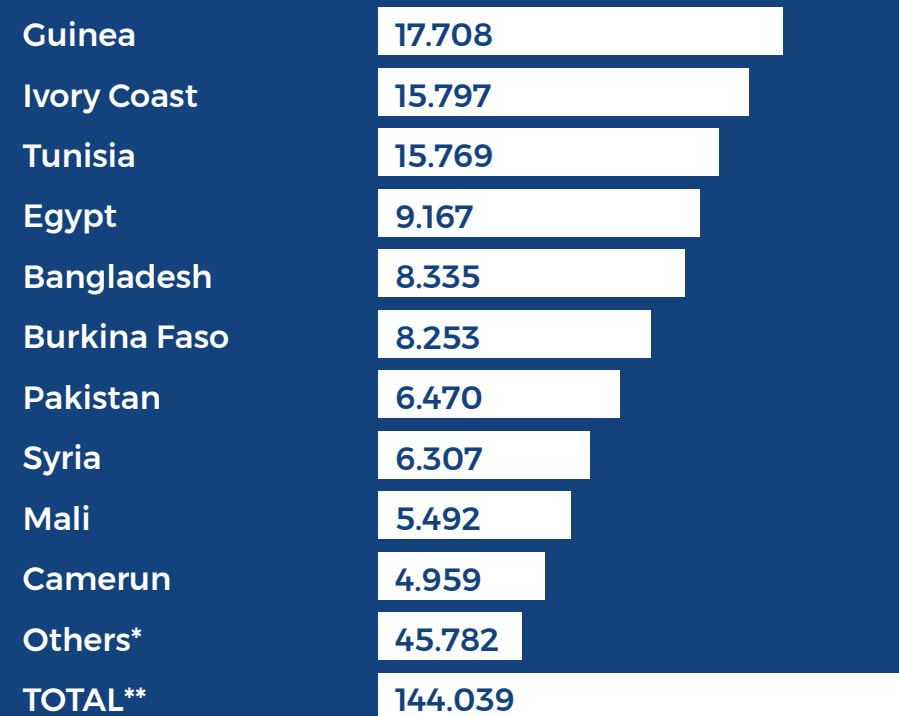
<b>What the numbers tell us</b>	<b>3</b>
Data for the months of October	
<b>Chronicle of the facts of the Mediterranean</b>	<b>5</b>
The most important events of the month of October	
<b>Med Care for Ukraine</b>	<b>7</b>
News from the project	
<b>From Top to Bottom</b>	<b>8</b>
Exploratory Mission in Tunisia	
<b>Border Stories</b>	<b>13</b>
The consequences for people on the move of the suspension of Schengen between Italy and Slovenia	
<b>MSH Monthly report on migrations</b>	<b>15</b>
World and Europe	
<b>Borderline Europe Report</b>	<b>21</b>
News from Central Mediterranean	

# WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

In October, 10,422 people managed to arrive in Italy after being forced to flee across the Mediterranean. Of these arrivals, 2,707 were unaccompanied minors.

The European Union recorded the arrival of 331,600 migrants in the first ten months of 2023, an increase of 18% compared to the same period of the previous year. According to the latest report published by the European Border Agency, Frontex, this peak figure is the highest total number of arrivals since 2015.

## NATIONALITIES DECLARED AT THE TIME OF LANDING (UPDATED TO OCTOBER 31, 2023)



Guinea	17.708
Ivory Coast	15.797
Tunisia	15.769
Egypt	9.167
Bangladesh	8.335
Burkina Faso	8.253
Pakistan	6.470
Syria	6.307
Mali	5.492
Camerun	4.959
Others*	45.782
<b>TOTAL**</b>	<b>144.039</b>

\* 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.

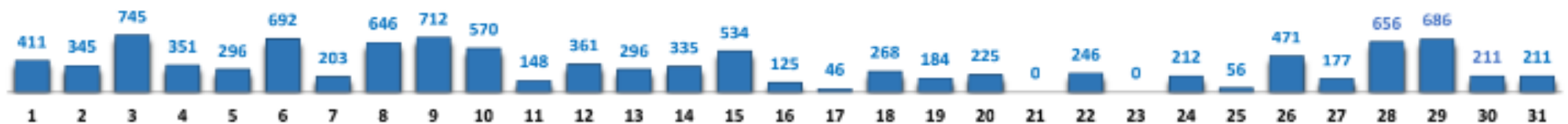
The data are subject to subsequent consolidation

The central Mediterranean was the busiest route to Europe with a reported 143,613 arrivals, a 68% increase compared to the previous year. However, compared to the previous month, there was a 50% decrease in arrivals along this route. With 97,300 arrivals, figures for the Balkan route, the second most active route to Europe, were down 22% compared to 2022. The Agency attributed this decrease in numbers mostly to more stringent visa policies.

The western Mediterranean route recorded a “mere” 12,232 arrivals (-8%), while the West African route to the Canary Islands documented 27,700 irregular crossings, the highest figure since 2009. However, in October, the latter route registered a peak of 13,000 arrivals. Traveling through Greece and Turkey, 45,122 people (+24% compared to 2022) arrived via

the eastern route. A tragic humanitarian crisis lies behind these numbers: so far in 2023, 2,468 people have disappeared in the Mediterranean, most of them off the coast of North Africa.

According to Italy’s Ministry of the Interior, 147,239 migrants arrived in the country from January to November 2023, marking a sharp increase compared to previous years. The countries most frequently declared as arrivals’ country of origin were: Guinea, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Bangladesh, and Egypt. Thanks to favorable sea and weather conditions, over 1,200 people landed on Lampedusa in twenty separate landings in a 24 hour period. The number of landings on the island could exceed 160,000 by the end of the year. However, this figure is still below 2016’s record of 181,436 arrivals.



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.

A white patrol boat is shown from an aerial perspective, moving through dark blue water. The boat is leaving a white wake behind it. The boat has a red hull and a white superstructure. There are people visible on the deck. The text "CHRONICLE OF OCTOBER OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN" is overlaid on the right side of the image in white, bold, uppercase letters.

# **CHRONICLE OF OCTOBER OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN**



## DAY 4

M.V. Louise Michel's crew rescues 83 people fleeing Libya in two separate operations. In the second instance, a so-called Libyan Coast Guard patrol boat interferes with the rescue. Fortunately, there are no negative consequences.

## DAY 5

Italian authorities issue an administrative detention to the civil ship, Open Arms, for the violation of rescuing 176 people in 3 separate operations in the central Mediterranean.

## DAY 6

Geo Barents' crew rescues 258 people, including women and children, fleeing Libya on two boats. Italian authorities assign the port of Salerno to the civil ship for disembarkation.

## DAY 7

The crew of Emergency's civil ship, LifeSupport, rescues 21 people, including 4 women and 5 minors.

## DAY 8

In coordination with the MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Center), the crew of Emergency's civil ship, LifeSupport, rescues 69 people in two separate missions. The port of Livorno is assigned by Italian authorities for disembarkation.

## DAY 10

Aurora's crew rescues a boat in distress south of Lampedusa. The passengers had been at sea for three days.

## DAY 13

The crew aboard SeaWatch's Aurora rescues 53 people aboard a boat in distress. Italian authorities designate Pozzallo as a port of safety.

## DAY 14

Despite all attempts to impede its undertaking, our ship, Mare Jonio, sails from Trapani's port for Mission 14 in the central Mediterranean. Just hours before this departure, Mare Jonio's crew rescued 47 people in mortal danger, including seven women, a young girl, and 16 unaccompanied minors, aboard a sinking iron boat located 40 miles southwest of Lampedusa.

## DAY 16

Mediterranea Saving Humans' crew aboard Mare Jonio rescues 69 people adrift at sea aboard an overcrowded dinghy in danger of sinking after having fled Libya.

## DAY 24

The crew aboard the civil ship, Ocean Viking, rescues 29 people in distress who fled Libya on a fiberglass boat.

## DAY 26

Ocean Viking rescues 18 people in distress in the central Mediterranean.

# MED CARE FOR UKRAINE

## MEDITERRANEA COMPLETES ITS 50TH MISSION IN THE COUNTRY AT WAR

In October 2023, the Med Care for Ukraine Project completed its 50th mission in the country in the midst of war. This milestone establishes Mediterraneo Saving Humans as one of the most active Italian organizations assisting war refugees in Ukraine. Immediately after the war began following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, over 400 people escaping occupied cities were brought to safety by Mediterraneo Saving Humans' three "Safe Passage" missions. Later in August 2022, the Med Care for Ukraine Project was established to provide basic medical and humanitarian aid to 2,000 war refugees sheltered in Lviv. Thus far, Med Care has completed 36 healthcare missions and 11 humanitarian aid missions. This endeavor has been made possible thanks to: Mediterraneo Saving Humans activists and its ground crews, the dozens of volunteer doctors and nurses who have participated in the project, and the many partners who guarantee the operation of the project and the collection of humanitarian aid.

At the end of October, Med Care's 12th resupply mission will leave Naples. It will stop in 10 locations which Mediterraneo Saving Humans now oversees, including institutional and informal refugee camps, private homes, and the area of Striskj Park where Mediterraneo Saving Humans has been providing assistance to the homeless in recent months. In addition to the resupply mission, Med Care also began operating in a new reception site in October. Located in the western part of Lviv, the new site accommodates approximately 100 people from the eastern part of the country in a student residence hall.

In the last month, life in the city of Lviv has been relatively quiet. Of late, other regions have mostly been the targets of Russian attacks and this has given the province of Lviv some time to breathe.



# FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

The Rebbio Network's  
Exploratory Mission in Tunisia  
Tunis - Zarzis  
October 9-18, 2023





“From top to bottom” is the direction power flows; it is the lens through which we westerners view the world. We are unaware that we are cloaked in privilege. It is not until we meet Samir, or someone like him who has not been endowed at birth with privilege, that we realize how it shields us.

In October 2023, the Baobab Experience, Mediterranea Saving Humans, and the On Borders organization went to Tunisia as part of an exploratory mission. The purpose of the mission was to explore the possibility of providing information to people on the move about humanitarian aid structures operating in Italy and of providing information to asylum seekers regarding their rights and duties.

The mission was conceived and developed within the “Connect The Dots” project which attempts to create safe corridors between all entities in Italy that offer support and protection to the children, women, and men who land on our shores or cross our borders and who often do not remain in the country, but continue their journey beyond Italy.

However, we were confronted with a humanitarian emergency in Tunisia that was more serious than anything we could have imagined. Paradoxically, we witnessed the most shocking scenes exactly in the places where people on the move should have received assistance- just a few steps away from both the UNHCR headquarters in Tunis and Zarzis.

“I arrived here two months ago. When the war reached us, some friends and I decided to leave. I lost many of them during the trip. I haven’t heard from my family in months.”

Samir belongs to the largest of Darfur's 36 regional ethnic groups, the Fur tribe. In fact, Darfur literally means "land of the Fur." After the conflict spread from the capital Khartoum to the western part of Sudan, Samir was forced to leave his village and his family.

Now instead, he lives in a squat just a few hundred meters from the UNHCR headquarters in Tunis. This six storey abandoned building is without walls and it is missing a roof and yet, 600 to 700 people live here. The floors are full of gaps wide enough to make every step a dangerous risk, especially at night: "Another young man fell through the floor four days ago. He broke his leg and is now in hospital."

They show us their beds which are made from pieces of cardboard they collected from garbage containers. They point out the plastic bottles lying against corners of the stairs which they use for urinating.

So far in 2023, 144,000 people have arrived in Italy by sea. This figure surpasses the total number of arrivals by sea for all of 2022 by 40,000 arrivals. One of the reasons for this increase can be found in Sudan's hidden war. When arrivals land in Italy and declare their country of origin, Sudan is among the top ten nationalities recorded.

Samir could have been one of these arrivals, instead he is stuck in Tunisia, the country of origin with the second highest number of arrivals to Italian shores.

Criminalization of migrant people and of migrant support networks has become increasingly brutal and visible following President Kais Saied's fateful remarks on February 21, 2023





when he accused the sub-Saharan community of conspiring against Arab culture by planning to transform the ethnic composition of the country.

According to Mitchell, a young man from Liberia who arrived almost two years ago, the blame lies with Europe and the recent agreement with Tunisia:

“Right now, life here is not easy. Before, the situation was calmer. I earn 27 Tunisian dinars (8€) a day for eight hours of work. It’s not much. But before, I made even less money. I am undocumented. No one forced me to come here.”

We encountered an even more appalling situation in Zarzis. On the outskirts of the city, less than ten meters from UNHCR headquarters, there is the entrance to an abandoned olive grove where approximately 400 people are living, most of whom are, again, from Sudan. People sleep in groups of 4 or 5 under bare trees, without tents and without any form of shelter in case of rain.

Going towards the sea, it takes 40 minutes by foot to collect drinking water from the nearest fresh water source. The rare times the people here receive packaged food from Tunisian passersby, they use salt water to cook. They will have nothing else until they receive their temporary documents, at which time they will receive only 140 Tunisian Dinars (40€) in financial assistance from the UNHCR.

The banality of evil in this case is exposed by the fact that they cannot venture too far from the olive tree grove. Anyone caught searching for food elsewhere by Tunisian police risks being deported to the desert on the border with Libya and Algeria.

The people here are forced to live in this open cage while waiting for the UNHCR to operate according to its bureaucratic timetable and political pace:

“The application process to receive refugee status is long and the waiting period for reception is even longer. Why does the UNHCR even register us if it can’t help us?”

The mood among the young men varies according to when they arrived and what they have experienced. Many people who have crossed Libya actually tell us how proud they are to have survived the hell of the concentration camps thanks to the struggle shared with Refugees in Libya outside the UNHCR headquarters in Tripoli and inside the Ain Zara prison.

However, others have been stuck in this olive tree grove for seven months. You can feel their frustration of having lost hope for the future.

“I was hoping I could be safe when I arrived in Tunisia. But, if this is not possible, I prefer to go back. Here, we are not treated as human beings. At least in Sudan, they want to kill us because we are human beings who belong to another tribe.”

As the mission comes to an end, we carry with us the frustration of the people we met throughout our stay; we bear a feeling of helplessness that cannot be comforted by our privilege. On the top floor of the squat in Tunis, the words “You deserve To WIN” scrawled on a wall mocks us, spitting all of life’s cynicism in our faces.

We say goodbye to these young people and tell them that we will keep our promise to fulfill their request, “Please tell others what you have seen.”



# BORDER STORIES

## THE SILENT BORDER BETWEEN ITALY AND FRANCE

Established in 1985, the Schengen Area subsequently grew to become the largest free travel area in existence. At present, it is made up of 27 different countries with a combined population of 400 million people.

Originally created to allow citizens of member states to freely travel within its territory, several EU member countries are now strongly calling into question aspects of the Schengen Agreement which may have serious consequences on people's ability to move within the Schengen area. Using the Covid-19 pandemic as a pretext, border controls were reinstated in 2020. Even though the reintroduction of border controls is to be used as a measure of extrema ratio, several countries had already chosen to suspend Schengen in 2015 in response to terrorist attacks and to the increase in the flow of people moving to the EU.

In October 2023, several EU countries, such as Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia, and others, reintroduced controls at their borders. Citing the urgency posed by the rising threat of terrorism due to the recent conflict in the Middle East, Italy also reintroduced border controls along its border with Slovenia on October 21st for an initial period of 10 days which the government can extend.

However, the Council Presidency's statement also mentions the "constant migratory pressure" the country is subjected to, not only by sea but also by land, as a reason for the reinstatement of border controls.

Commenting on the matter, Italy's Minister of the Interior Piante-dosi stated that in 2023 over 16,000 migrants who arrived in Italy from its eastern border were "not all of them eligible" for refugee status. Consequently, 300 agents have been assigned to patrol the 47 Friuli-Venezia Giulia crossings.

The consequences of reinstating border controls for many will simply mean longer times will be needed to cross the border and that control of the border will be more rigorous.

However, for dozens of people reinstating border controls means they will be rejected at the border. As has been reported, within the first 48 hours of the reinstatement, 28 of the 66 foreigners who went through check points were rejected by Italy. Moreover, a man was arrested on charges of aiding and abetting illegal immigration.

It seems, therefore, possible that Italy has restarted sending migrants back to Slovenia. This also seems possible based on the fact that there is an informal agreement between the two countries which allows Italy to carry out these "readmissions" which, however, are a violation of fundamental human rights.

In fact, Italy has already been condemned several times for the deportation of migrants.

The last condemnation is as recent as May 2023 when the Court of Rome ruled that the Ministry of the Interior compensate an asylum seeker who was pushed back to Slovenia despite having applied for asylum, therefore after having requested international protection.

After arriving at the Italian border through the Balkan route, a young man from Pakistan was expelled from Italy before his application for asylum could be reviewed, thus violating the Dublin Regulation. After being rejected by Italy, the young man was rejected by Croatia and, later, by Bosnia and Herzegovina. This practice is called "chain readmission."

Bringing together individuals and more than 30 organizations to work together to defend human rights along the Balkan route, the RiVolti ai Balcani network denounces the potential deterioration of the situation as it is feared that the temporary suspension of the Schengen Agreement could provide a way to hide new rejections and readmissions.

Gianfranco Schiavone, President of ICS (Italian Solidarity Consortium of Trieste), manages a reception center for asylum seekers which operates at the Ferneti Pass, right on the border with Slovenia. A smaller flow of migrants has been reported since border controls were reinstated. According to Schiavone, Italy has, in fact, exploited the crisis in the Middle East and the consequent terrorism warning to achieve another crucial objective for the current government which is reducing the number of migrants entering Italian territory through the "instrumental use of the international crisis" when "the only purpose of this measure is to hinder the passage of migrants at the border."



# **MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS**



# WORLD

**LIBYA, October 1st:** A report published by a team of UN inspectors sheds light on the affairs of Bija, the head of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. The report reveals involvement in human trafficking, oil smuggling, and human rights violations committed by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and within Libya's detention centers.

**TUNISIA, October 12th:** President Kais Saied announces the return of 60 million euro Tunisia received from the European Union because, "Tunisia is able to overcome all difficulties with its own resources." However, differing views on how to curb migration flows and the Tunisian regime's human rights record are more likely to be motivation for the refund.

**GREECE, October 4th:** The Ministry of Migration announces journalist access to the country's refugee camps has been suspended indefinitely. Many investigations into Greek refugee camps had revealed human rights standards were not being met.

**EUROPEAN UNION, October 5th:** The European Union's 27 countries reach an agreement on managing the migration crisis. In the event of a large migratory flow to the EU, a relocation mechanism within the bloc will be triggered. Any member country refusing to accept its allotted number of refugees will be fined. The European Parliament will vote on the agreement next year.

**EUROPEAN UNION, October 18th:** Nine European Union countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden) temporarily suspend the Schengen Treaty's free cross-border movement agreement within the area alleging an increased terrorist threat following the crisis in the Middle East.

**GREAT BRITAIN, October 19th:** A bus carrying asylum seekers headed to the Port of Portland's Bibby Stockholm floating prison is blocked by a group of Just Stop Oil activists. The British Government is accused by many human rights organizations and activists of failing to respect the rights of the asylum seekers who will be detained in the floating prison.

# SEA

**CIVIL FLEET, October 3th:** Nadir (ResQShip) assists 173 people in 4 separate rescue operations. Italian authorities later take all the survivors to the island of Lampedusa to disembark.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 4th:** Louise Michel, in two separate operations, rescues 83 people and takes them to the port of Pozzallo.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 5th:** Nadir assists 93 people aboard two boats in distress while awaiting the arrival of Italian authorities to later take them to Lampedusa to disembark.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 6th:** Geo Barents (Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders) rescues 258 people aboard two boats in distress and takes them to the port of Salerno to disembark.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 6th:** Aurora (Sea-Watch) and the aircraft, Colibri, (Pilotes Volontaires) witness the so-called Libyan Coast Guard forcing back 70 people aboard a boat in distress.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 7th:** Life Support (Emergency) assists 69 people in distress in two separate operations. They disembark at the port of Livorno.

**LAMPEDUSA, October 8th:** 27 people on board a boat in distress off the coast of Lampedusa are rescued by a couple on vacation sailing in the area.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 10th:** Louise Michel rescues 19 people. They disembark at the port of Pozzallo.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 13th:** Aurora rescues 53 people aboard a boat in distress. They disembark at the port of Pozzallo.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 13th:** Aita Mari (Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario) rescues 69 people. Italian authorities assign the port of Naples for disembarkation even though it is over 900 km from the rescue site.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 14th:** Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) rescues 47 people aboard a boat in distress. They disembark at Lampedusa.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 15th-16th:** Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity) rescues 90 people in three separate operations. Italian authorities assign the port of Bari for disembarkation even though it is over one thousand kilometers from the rescue site.

**SYMI, October 16th:** The Greek Coast Guard rescues 8 people after a boat sank near Symi. Three passengers died in the accident and another two are missing.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 15th:** Geo Barents rescues 63 people aboard a boat in distress. Italian authorities assign the port of Genoa for disembarkation even though it is over three days' travel from the central Mediterranean.

# SEA

**CIVIL FLEET, October 16:** Mare Jonio rescues 69 people aboard a boat in distress. They disembark at the port of Trapani.

**SAMOS, October 17th:** The Greek Coast Guard rescues 17 people near Samos. They disembark on the island.

**KALYMNOS, October 17th:** The Greek Coast Guard rescues 28 people off the coast of Kalymnos. They disembark on the island.

**LESBOS, October 17:** The Greek Coast Guard rescues 40 people near Lesbos. They disembark on the island.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 19th:** Sea-Eye 4 (Sea-Eye) rescues 51 people in distress. Authorities assign the port of Brindisi for disembarkation even though it is over 500 miles from the rescue site.

**SYMI, October 19:** The Greek Coast Guard rescues 24 people off Symi. They disembark on the island.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 21st:** Thanks to support from Seabird (Sea-Watch), Nadir assists a boat carrying 300 people and escorts it to Lampedusa.

**LIBYA, October 23rd:** Despite being found within Malta's SAR area, 30 people are forcibly returned to Libya by the Libyan ship, Tareq Bin Zayed.

**TURKEY, October 23rd:** 11 people aboard a boat in distress near Inousses are illegally pushed back to Turkey.

**TURKEY, October 23rd:** 25 people off the coast of the Turkish island of Kos are intercepted by the Greek Coast Guard and pushed back.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 24th:** Nadir assists 104 people in two separate operations while waiting for the Italian Coast Guard. The authorities will later take them aboard and bring them to Lampedusa.

**CHIOS, October 25th:** 15 people off Chios are rescued by the Greek Coast Guard who later take them to the island.

**LIBYA, October 25th:** 60 people aboard a boat located within Malta's SAR area are intercepted and forcibly taken to Libya.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 25th-27th:** Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) rescues 47 people aboard two boats. They disembark at the port of Ravenna.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 26th:** Humanity 1 rescues 50 people in distress. Italian authorities assign the port of Civitavecchia, 800 kilometers away from the central Mediterranean, for disembarkation.

**LAMPEDUSA, October 26th:** The Italian Coast Guard rescues 347 people aboard a fishing boat and brings them to Lampedusa.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 29th:** Nadir aids 52 people aboard a boat in distress while waiting for Italian authorities to arrive. Once rescued, the survivors disembark at Lampedusa.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 29th:** Despite harassment by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, Sea-Eye 4 rescues 49 people and discovers four bodies aboard the recovered boat. The survivors later disembark at Lampedusa.

**CIVIL FLEET, October 29th:** Aita Mari rescues 112 people in distress. They disembark at the port of Reggio Calabria.

**TUNISIA, October 30th:** The Tunisian Coast Guard intercepts 68 people aboard a boat fleeing Libya and forcibly takes the passengers to Tunisia.

**TUNISIA, October 30th:** The Tunisian Coast Guard intercepts a boat carrying 50 people sheltering at a Miskar oil platform and illegally takes the passengers to Tunisia.

**LIBYA, October 31st:** The so-called Libya Coast Guard intercepts 30 people aboard a boat in distress and forcibly takes them to Libya.

**LAMPEDUSA, October 3rd:** Lampedusa marks the 10 year anniversary of the tragedy at sea that claimed 368 victims. No representatives from the Italian government attend the official commemorative ceremony.

**POZZALLO, October 8th-11th:** The Court of Catania rules against the detention of 10 migrants in Pozzallo's Administrative Detention Center, calling the government's decree requiring precautionary detention of asylum seekers until the finalization of the application process unlawful.

**MARINA DI CARRARA, October 10th:** After rescuing 176 people in three separate operations, the civil ship, Open Arms, receives a 20 day administrative detention and a 10,000 euro fine for violating the Piantadosi Decree.

**SALERNO, October 10th:** In the middle of the night, Salerno's Processing Center expels 60 people who had been rescued by Geo Barents. The center concluded none of the survivors were entitled to apply for asylum thus, leaving them without protection and without shelter.

**REGGIO CALABRIA, October 11th:** Reggio Calabria's Court of Appeals drops most of the charges against Riace's former mayor, Mimmo Lucano. However, a suspended 18 month sentence still stands



**TRAPANI, October 18th:** Mediterranea's civil ship, Mare Jonio, receives a 20 day administrative detention and a 10,000 euro fine for not coordinating the rescue of 69 people aboard a boat in distress within Libya's SAR area with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and, instead, choosing to carry out the rescue mission on its own.

**POZZALLO, October 28th:** A protest condemning the Meloni government's immigration policies, especially the decree requiring asylum seekers to be detained in Administrative Detention Centers during the application process, takes place in front of Pozzallo's detention center.

**TARANTO, October 31st:** Even though the so-called Libyan Coast Guard threatened a civilian vessel and caused the deaths of 4 passengers, Italian authorities claim Sea-Eye 4's rescue of the people aboard the vessel was in violation of the Piantedosi Decree. Consequently, Italian authorities impose a 20 day administrative detention and a 10,000 euro fine on the ship.

**FRENCH-ITALIAN BORDER, October 14th:** Rescuers find a man's lifeless body a short distance from the border with Italy near Cerveyrette.

**TURIN, October 25th:** Following an investigation into the suicide of Moussa Balde while detained at Corso Brunelleschi's Administrative Detention Center, Turin's Prosecutor's Office recommends charging the center's director, its physician, and a facility inspector. Charges against an executive officer and another agent are dismissed.

**TURIN, October 27th:** The fascist organization, "La Barriera" (The Barrier), covers Via Traces' reception center with posters protesting the City of Turin's decision to introduce a "Right to Education" (ius scholae) clause to its statute as a path to citizenship for foreigners.

**FRENCH-ITALIAN BORDER, October 29th:** A man attempting to reach Briançon is found dead near Durance after crossing the French border.



# REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM  
CENTRAL  
MEDITERRANEAN



# ARRIVALS

In October, [borderline-europe](#) reported 10,846 arrivals in Italy. Approximately 8,500 fewer people arrived this month than in September. Compared to August, which had the most arrivals per month so far this year, there were about 12,000 less arrivals. There was also a decrease in arrivals when compared to last year's figure of 12,899 October arrivals. According to the Italian Interior Ministry, arrivals this October totaled 10,264. While post summer months are usually marked by a high number of arrivals, there was an unprecedented decrease in landings this year. Of note, relatively few people arrived in Italy during the last two weeks of the month presumably due to rather difficult weather conditions.

Most arrivals continue to reach the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa. However, [borderline-europe](#) has also documented isolated arrivals in Sardinia and Calabria.

About 7% of arrivals reached Italy autonomously meaning they reached Italian territorial waters or landed on Italian soil independently. However, 53% arrived with the aid of Italian authorities and 12% arrived with the help of the civil fleet.

According to the Italian Interior Ministry, approximately 12% of this year's arrivals fled Guinea and about 11% came from the Ivory Coast or Tunisia. Furthermore, a significant number of people seeking protection in Italy were from Egypt (6%), Bangladesh (6%), Burkina Faso (6%), and Pakistan (5%).

# DEAD AND MISSING

[borderline-europe](#) reported 50 dead and missing in October. Since the beginning of the year, over 2,140 people have died or have been declared missing in the central Mediterranean. The IOM Missing Migrants Project reported 41 people died or were considered missing in October. This figure accounts for only documented cases. The number of unreported cases is probably much higher.

Yet again, attempts to reach Italy from Tunisia sank. Fortunately, 44 of the 46 survivors of the incidents were rescued by the Tunisian authorities. However, two died.

On October 28th, an old, dilapidated fishing boat from Tunisia capsized around midnight just a few meters from the coast of Marinella di Selinunte, in western Sicily. The capsized boat dragged many people with it through the sea until it became grounded in a sandbank about 50 meters from the shore. It is believed that the boat carried approximately 60 passengers of whom 35 survived the accident. So far, only six bodies have been recovered. The remaining 19 were declared missing. It is unclear why Italian authorities did not rescue the people aboard the boat in time to save them.

# WAYS TO EUROPE

In October, *borderline-europe* noticed the departure points for arrivals had changed. More people were again attempting to cross the Mediterranean through Libya while the number of departures from Tunisia, which was the main point of departure for months, decreased. In October, approximately 36% of boats departed from Libya and another 10% departed from Tunisia. Compared to August, departures from Libya increased by 27.1% while those from Tunisia decreased by 27.6%. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish the departure point for half of those who arrived. But, it is possible to have a rough idea of how the situation has evolved through the data we do have. Our findings, together with those of the MALDUSA Project, have been recently published in an article which also analyzes the possible reasons for these changes.

Moreover, as in previous months, there has been a consistent decline in the number of departures from Turkey. In October, there were 712 arrivals in Calabria from Turkey through the Ionian Sea route.

The stringent criminalization of so-called “smugglers” is one of the principle measures implemented in Italian, but also German, policy in the fight against illegal immigration in Europe. According to the Italian Interior Minister Piantedosi, 100 people are suspected of aiding and abetting illegal entry into the country since the so-called Piantedosi Decree was issued in March 2023 and later passed into law in May. *borderline-euro-*

*pe* has been involved in the “From Sea to Prison” project which has demonstrated just how arbitrarily one can be accused and charged with this “crime.”

On February 26th, a wooden boat, “Summer Love,” capsized a few hundred meters from the shore of Steccato di Cutro causing the death of 94 people on board. Four people were charged with “human trafficking” following the tragedy. Their trial, scheduled to begin on October 4th, has been postponed to November 15th.

We are also attentively following parallel proceedings into the Cutro shipwreck itself and the Italian authorities’ failure to provide assistance. Crotona’s Prosecutor’s Office has charged six suspects with abuse of authority and manslaughter during the investigation.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed Maltese authorities’ continued failure to assist vessels in distress for some time. On October 1st, the sea rescue organization Sea-Watch’s reconnaissance aircraft, Sea-Bird, spotted two boats in distress. Even though merchant ships were in the area, Maltese authorities requested that they not accept instructions from Sea-Bird. The next day, Sea-Bird located one of the boats. However, by this time, people on the boat were wearing life jackets. Sea-Watch stated, “We believe that the nearby Maltese patrol boat also supplied these people with fuel rather than rescuing them. This is a serious violation of the duty to rescue.”

A similar incident occurred earlier this year on June 22nd. Maltese authorities confirmed the presence of a dinghy carrying 14 people in Malta's SAR area. Even though the dinghy had run out of fuel and the passengers aboard the dinghy were attempting to row using empty gas canisters, Maltese authorities determined rescue was unnecessary because the dinghy was not in distress. Eventually, one of the canisters fell into the sea. A passenger drowned amongst the waves trying to retrieve it. A few hours later, a merchant ship reached the dinghy. However, rather than rescue the people aboard, the ship merely provided food and water. An Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) patrol boat subsequently arrived. Again, the people aboard the dinghy were not rescued. They were given more fuel and were left alone at sea once more. It wasn't until the following day that the people aboard the dinghy were finally rescued by Doctors Without Borders' ship, Geo Barents.

## PUSH-BACKS

In October, *borderline-europe* reported 1,792 people were forcibly taken to Libya and yet another 891 were forcibly taken to Tunisia. The Tunisian Navy is responsible for push-backs to Tunisia. However, several Libyan militias are involved in carrying out push-backs to Libya. A recent report published by the UN provides an overview of the structure, operating methods, and connections of the Zawiyha network, an active Libyan militia.

The situation in Tunisia is extremely confusing and difficult to analyze. Seemingly contradictory political trends have been noted. For example, Tunisian authorities have increased pressure on migrants to leave the country through the Mediterranean Sea, while also increasing the number of forcible returns back to the country. Although the number of pushbacks cited by various sources in some cases differ greatly, this month's figures for Tunisia (9,580 in 30 days) must be viewed critically.

Obviously, human rights violations have not prevented Italy from cooperating closely with either Tunisia or Libya. In addition to the Memorandum between the EU and Tunisia adopted in July (see [here](#) and [here](#)), Italy again provided Tunisia with the equipment necessary to enforce its policies against so-called irregular migration in October. Furthermore, following the support it provided Libya under the 2017 EU Migration Agreement, in August Italy delivered three more sea crafts to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard with the intention of making intercepting boats traveling from Libya to Italy more effective.

# CIVIL RESISTANCE

In October, borderline-europe reported sea rescue ships saved 1,320 people. A total of 11 individual ships traveled to the central Mediterranean during this period and Pilotes Volontaires and Sea-Watch aircraft provided them with a wide range of support.

On October 21st, 245 people were rescued. An overcrowded fishing boat traveling from Zuwara, Libya was spotted in distress within Malta's SAR area around noon that day. After Alarm Phone managed to make contact with the boat, the NGO ship Nadir arrived and initiated rescue operations. Due to difficult weather conditions, additional assistance was necessary as Nadir could accommodate only some of the survivors due to its capacity limits. The Italian Customs Corps arrived to aid in the rescue, but waited until it was dark to participate. In the end, the fishing boat reached Lampedusa around 11 p.m escorted by Nadir, three Italian Custom Corps vessels, and a Frontex unit.

A dramatic rescue involving Sea-Eye 4 took place at the end of the month. On October 27th, Alarm Phone reported it had spotted a dinghy in distress. The so-called Libyan Coast Guard was already at the location harassing the people on board by destabilizing the dinghy and causing some to fall into the sea. The refugees resisted attempts by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard to take them aboard its vessel. They even managed to detach the dinghy from the Libyan patrol boat. Libyan militias

also threatened they would respond with violence to any intervention by the NGO ship, Sea-Eye 4. Fortunately, this did not occur. The militias' constant threat caused some people to panic and fall into the sea. Sea-Eye 4 was able to bring most of the dinghy's passengers on board, nonetheless. Three people, including a pregnant woman, almost died. Their conditions were later stabilized. The pregnant woman lost her unborn child. Disregarding the circumstances of the rescue, Italy denied a medical evacuation request and ordered the NGO ship to undertake an eight-hour journey to Lampedusa. Sea-Eye 4's crew had already discovered four bodies aboard the dinghy when it received the order to go to port. Others were still unaccounted for and it is unclear whether these people had died or were forcibly returned by the Libyan Coast Guard.

Open Arms (Proactiva Open Arms) saved a total of 176 people in three separate rescue operations in international waters on September 30th. According to the NGO's founder, Oscar Camps, "The first two boats, carrying 33 and 36 people respectively, were sailing in dangerous conditions and had no rescue equipment on board." Once the first two missions were concluded and "after Italian authorities communicated port details to us, we received an alert from Seabird, the non-governmental or-

ganization Sea-Watch's aircraft, that an overcrowded dinghy was in distress" and no rescue ships were in the vicinity. We subsequently "informed the appropriate authorities and headed to the location which was about 20 miles (two hours of navigation) from our position." Upon arriving at the location of the incident, the crew found "an overcrowded rubber dinghy (...) carrying 109 people, including 94 unaccompanied minors." However, following the final rescue operation and upon arrival at Marina di Carrara, Open Arms was immediately detained. According to the so-called "NGO Rescue Decree," a ship can only carry out one rescue per mission and it must immediately head for the assigned port once the mission is completed. Accordingly, Open Arms should not have executed the last rescue. The decree forces NGO vessels to violate international maritime law which establishes a captain's obligation to provide assistance to people at sea who are in distress.

In October, two ships were detained at port for 20 days each following the Italian government's efforts to limit civil rescue at sea to the fullest extent possible through decrees and legislation, such as the NGO Rescue Decree and Piantadosi's migration law. On October 4th, Open Arms was detained for having fulfilled its legal duty of rescuing people in distress at sea in the aforementioned cases. Moreover, Open Arms received a further penalty of a 10,000 euros fine.

In addition to Open Arms, Mare Jonio was issued an administrative detention as well and a fine of 10,000 euros was also imposed. In the case of Mare Jonio, the Rome Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC) justified issuing the detention on

the grounds that Mare Jonio did not follow its instructions. The MRCC specifically requested that Libyan authorities be contacted so the people who had been rescued by Mare Jonio could be forcibly taken to Libya. However, the MRCC's directive was a clear violation of the law. According to the 2012 European Court of Human Rights' Hirsi judgment, repatriation from a European ship to unsafe ports, such as Libya, is prohibited.

Besides imposing administrative detentions, the Italian government also impedes civil rescue operations at sea by extending inspections to last days on end (see Sea-Eye) and by issuing sudden orders to leave port (see Aita Mari). This last tactic of forcing departure is an immense impediment to carrying out humanitarian aid at sea because it prevents necessary maintenance from being completed.

Furthermore, Italy still manages to sabotage civilian rescue ship activity by assigning distant ports for disembarkation. According to the Italian Institute for International Political Studies' Matteo Villa, in the past year, at least 50% of NGO ships were not allowed to dock at Lampedusa, but had to instead travel at least 778 kilometers in order to reach their designated port.

We are able to confirm this finding. In October, nearly all active NGO ships were assigned distant ports after having carried out rescue missions. On October 13th, Aita Mari had to sail to Genoa which was 900 km from the site of rescue. On October 15th, Geo Barents was also assigned to Genoa which was a distant 1,160 km and Humanity 1 was assigned to go to Bari, a journey of over 1,000 km, even though weather conditions



were terrible. On October 19th, Sea-Eye 4 had to sail 942 km to Brindisi. On October 25th, Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) was forced to go to Ravenna which was 1,613 km away. International law prohibits this practice. Conventions clearly state that the closest port of safety must be designated. Instead, Italian authorities have intensified implementing this practice in recent months, consequently causing avoidable delays in arrival to a port of safety, inflicting further suffering onto migrants, and limiting the amount of time search and rescue ships can dedicate to intervention.

The dramatic decrease in the number of people each NGO has rescued since Meloni took office has also been noted.

In comparison, NGO ships saved at least 280 refugees in 50% of their missions under the Draghi administration (02/2021-10/2022). Under the new regulations, this figure has dropped to approximately 70 people.

Legal action has been taken by an NGO against these administrative detentions. On October 10th, Sea-Eye filed a lawsuit against the Italian government over the 3,333 euro fine it received and over Sea-Eye 4's illegal 20 day detention. Notably, three rescue missions were carried out in this case, rather than just one as required under Italian law. However, the third rescue involved people who were unconscious. It would have been a violation of international law not to rescue them and leave these people to die.

In the same period, the European Court of Justice (CJEU) heard the “Naass and Sea-Watch against Frontex” case on October 11th. The civil sea rescue organization filed the lawsuit against Frontex earlier this year on April 28th. The case focuses on an interception of migrant boats that took place in violation of international law on July 30, 2021. On that day, Frontex provided information and drone footage to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard so it could intercept and forcibly return the passengers on two migrant boats, one of which was in Malta's SAR area. Sea-Watch's reconnaissance aircraft, Seabird, and the rescue ship Sea-Watch 3, both witnessed the incident as it happened, but neither received an alert from Frontex.

There is also an update regarding the IUVENTA case. Hearings were held at the beginning of the month as part of ongoing preliminary deliberations that began in 2022. Whether or not IUVENTA's crew will be charged with “aiding and abetting unauthorized entry” of refugees into Italy is yet to be decided. Preliminary deliberations are expected to conclude by the end of this year.

Finally, there is some good news! CompassCollective's TROTA-MAR III is a new civilian rescue vessel that has been operating in the Mediterranean since the end of September.

