



**MED REPORT**  
OCTOBER 2024

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# MISSION 19: THE REPORT

## 73 MORE PEOPLE RESCUED FROM DEATH

Mission 19 raises the number of people rescued by Mediterranea Saving Humans to 1290 from October 2018 to date, including 609 in the last year alone from October 2023 to October 2024.

### Wednesday, October 9

In October, Mediterranea Saving Humans embarked on Mission 19 aboard the Mare Jonio, initially located at the port of Trapani, in hopes of rescuing several people in the Central Mediterranean. The mission was obstructed from the outset by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, which as early as Sept. 17 had forced the ship to disembark the rescue equipment on board: among them were containers for the reception of shipwrecked people, the infirmary, chemical toilets, showers and the two rhib fast inflatable boats. The Mare Jonio, for failing to collect the necessary certificate of seaworthiness, had to diligently follow the Ministry's illegitimate directives. Despite all these impediments, the ship unexpectedly manages to depart at 3 p.m. from the port of Trapani.

### Thursday, October 10 and Friday, October 11

On the morning of the first day, a report arrives from Alarm Phone and the Seabird plane directing the Mare Jonio to head to Lampedusa to rescue a very precarious wooden barge carrying forty-five people: the undertaking turns out to be more difficult than expected, since the crew searches for the boat for more than three hours. During this endless wait, the people aboard the barge experienced immense stress and imminent danger, since water had already reached the boat's hull. Suddenly, a communication arrived from the IT MRCC in Rome (national center for the coordination of maritime rescue): the boat has been rescued by the Italian Coast Guard, which will see to it that the shipwrecked people are disembarked in Lampedusa.



Despite arriving safely in Lampedusa, the Mare Jonio's day is still long: in the afternoon, a new report arrives from Frontex and Alarm Phone attesting to the presence of a massive group of people (between 75 and 110) aboard an inflatable boat located in the Libyan Search and Rescue (SAR) zone. Despite the adverse weather conditions, the Mare Jonio crew does not back down and decides to sail towards the barge, which fortunately has a working engine. Very few miles from the target, Seabird reports the interception and capture of the boat by the Libyan militia SSA (Stability Support Apparatus). With a deep sense of bitterness, the Mare Jonio decides to head back toward Lampedusa, thus hoping to avoid the predicted heavy storm and rescue other vessels in great danger. The mission ended only after the warning of a successful rescue of a fiberglass boat, with about 40 people on board, by the Coast Guard (Circomare) of Lampedusa.

### **Saturday, October 12 and Sunday, October 13**

The Mare Jonio with its tireless crew departs at 07:45 Saturday morning from Lampedusa to reach the Libyan SAR zone only in the evening: in order to monitor the situation as best as possible, especially those west of Tripoli, the ship is forced to sail between 30 and 40 nautical miles from the Libyan coast. Later in the day, a report arrives from Frontex's Osprey 2 aircraft about the presence of an ironclad boat, containing 40 people, 34 miles southwest of Lampedusa: the report catches the Mare Jonio unprepared, since the boat is about 100 miles away from the target (about 11 hours' sailing). Fortunately, after due pressure to the Italian Authorities, the people are rescued and brought to Lampedusa.



## Monday, October 14

The crew of the Mare Jonio knew that this day would turn out to be a great victory, as they succeeded in rescuing 58 people, who had been at the mercy of the waves for 22 hours with broken engines and no basic necessities. All, in the international waters of the Tunisian SAR zone.

Already on its way to the Libyan SAR zone on Sunday 13, at 02:27 on Monday the ship received a communication from Alarm Phone regarding a distress situation in the Tunisian SAR zone, specifically concerning a vessel with more than fifty people on board. Aware of the distress situation, at 03:32 the Mare Jonio notified several recipients, including the Italian authorities, of their readiness to take action on the previously reported distress situation. It is not until 04:10 that Mare Jonio notifies the various authorities (Italian, Tunisian, and Maltese) of their interception of the vessel, reporting the presence of 60 people and pointing out the vessel's inability to sail, due to the level of overcrowding, the absence of a classified crew, and malfunction of the vessel. The possibility of shipwreck is real, which is precisely why Mare Jonio decides to take action to secure the vessel. At 06:03, while Mare Jonio reports that 58 people have been rescued and asks for a safe conclusion to the rescue operation, no response comes from the authorities previously contacted. At 10:07 a.m. silence still prevails despite repeated requests to assign a port for the shipwrecked people to disembark. Unable to get any indication, the ship decides to set course again for Trapani, but en route at 12 noon another dinghy with 25 people on board is sighted.

The ship is now 25 miles southwest of Lampedusa, in the Maltese SAR zone, and as per protocol the Mare Jonio contacts the Coast Guard (Circomare) in Lampedusa in order to proceed with the rescue: the Coast Guard asks for a delay until the arrival of a patrol boat. The Coast Guard, however, misses a key detail: the boat cannot wait to be rescued, as the situation is highly critical. The Mare Jonio decides to launch its Rescue boat into the sea to try to secure the vessel through the distribution of life jackets, until the arrival of the Coast Guard patrol boat CP281 (which will be responsible for landing the people in Lampedusa). It was not until 1:06 p.m. that the IT MRCC in Rome announced that the disembarkation of the 58 shipwrecked people rescued from the Mare Jonio would take place at the port of Naples, at that time 360 nautical miles away at a maximum speed of 8 knots: a 45-hour sail. Not only do the castaways have a long and physically and emotionally trying journey behind them, but now they are forced to continue the journey that had already put them in danger the previous days. The Mare Jonio did not give up, and began a long correspondence and fight against the Italian Authorities for the allocation of a closer port: the Mare Jonio emerged victorious, and at 10:21 p.m. the IT MRCC in Rome indicated the Empedocle port on the southern Sicilian coast as an alternative landing.



## Tuesday, October 15, 9:00 a.m.: the disembarkation

To ensure comprehensive and targeted care for shipwrecked people during reception, at 08:01 a.m. on Oct. 15, Mare Jonio sends the authorities a detailed medical report on the health status of rescued people. Not only is the report very detailed, but Mare Jonio precisely and pointedly examines several individual alarming situations, citing injuries and infections. Fortunately, despite everything, 58 people were saved from death and arrived safely in Europe. At 7:00 p.m., the Mare Jonio's captain and owner are summoned to the offices of the Capitaneria di Porto Empedocle, where they are notified of a 4,000 euro fine and a measure of administrative detention of the ship for another twenty days: the absurdity of the affair lies in sanctioning those who offer rescue for people whose lives are in great danger. It is still not clear to the authorities and the Italian government that rescuing those in need is first and foremost a moral obligation, which no human being should shirk. The punitive process is strongly endorsed by the strategy of rejecting refugees and asylum seekers in Italy and Europe is based on the systematic failure to rescue (and the Cutro shipwreck is an example of this). Mediterranea takes responsibility for saving all those lives that for the Italian government may as well die.



**STORIES OF BORDERS**

**THE EUROPEAN  
'REPATRIATION HUB'  
PROJECT**



The European Commission has considered the creation of offshore centres, veritable ‘repatriation hubs’, to carry out the repatriation operations of rejected asylum seekers. A model that could take hold due to strong pressure from right-wing parties that are creating an increasingly inhospitable environment for people on the move arriving in the EU.

### European ‘innovative solutions’ for managing migration flows

In recent weeks, there has been growing pressure within the EU for the creation of a model that guarantees offshore treatment of migrants who are deported from the bloc. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has confirmed her intention to ‘develop repatriation hubs outside the EU’ for migrants who do not have the right to stay there. Von der Leyen, however, has not yet cleared up some doubts concerning the European project, such as the length of stay and the actual location where the centres would be set up. Von der Leyen recalled the importance of protection for migrants, but also added that this does not necessarily have to take place within the EU, but can also take place in third countries. Finally, she pointed to the recent agreement between Italy and Albania as a model that the EU could follow and reproduce.

In addition, the European Commission promised member states new legal proposals to allow increased deportations of people whose asylum applications have been rejected and who have received deportation orders to their countries of origin. The Greek Prime Minister, Kyriákos Mitsotákis, called deportations ‘the missing link in migration policy’, expressing his satisfaction with the willingness to tackle the problem and solve it. However, in an interview with the Financial Times, he also emphasised the importance of increasing legal migration, stating, in relation to the acute need for skilled and unskilled labour, ‘who will pick our olives?’



Not all EU state leaders supported the idea of offshore centres and some questioned their effectiveness, pointing out that in the past they had proven to be very expensive and ineffective solutions.

However, on the whole, member states are said to be looking for 'innovative solutions' to manage migration flows, as emerged from a recent meeting of 11 national leaders organised by Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands that showed the unity of many EU countries and the common goal of tightening European migration policies, both at EU and national level. After the UK's much-discussed agreement with Rwanda, the Netherlands, led by a government dominated by the party of right-wing leader Wilders, also recently stated that its government is considering a plan with which to send asylum seekers from African countries whose asylum applications are rejected to Uganda.

At the same time, the eastern EU countries are facing increased migratory pressure at their borders - the Frontex agency spoke of a 192% increase in arrivals this year. Poland, for example, is facing a 'hybrid war' from Russia and Belarus, which are using migrants as weapons and as a countermeasure. The subsequent decision to suspend asylum in the country, expressed by Polish Prime Minister Tusk, was supported by EU leaders who recognised that appropriate measures are required in exceptional situations. Effectively setting aside the right to asylum, a universal human right and a principle at the heart of Article 18 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.



FROM LIBYA TO ALBANIA  
THE STRUGGLE BECOMES  
TRANSNATIONAL

To fight against the phenomenon of criminalization- which people seeking a safe place to live suffer every day on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea - we need to amplify the voices of people on the move and unite in intersectional and transnational networks. For this reason, Mediterranea Saving Humans helped create the “Alliance with Refugees in Libya” and “Network Against Migrants Detention” networks.

### Civil society mobilizes for freedom of movement

“In order to keep hoping that one day we will get out of this hell, it is important that our voices are heard by the international community.” This is the testimony of Iskander, a Refugees in Libya activist, written on a panel of the exhibition “Evacuate Human Rights Defenders From Libya,” on display at the Berlin headquarters of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

“There is no reason that can justify the degradation, suffering and abandonment of people who are in state custody.” These, however, were the words of Nicola Cocco, an infectious disease physician and migration medicine expert, with whom he spoke during the first national assembly in Bologna, the very assembly that gave birth to the Network Against Migrants Detention.

Libya’s detention centers and Italy’s CPRs are just two of the examples of the criminalization that people simply seeking a safe place to live suffer every day on both sides of the Mediterranean. To fight against the phenomenon of criminalization, it is necessary to amplify the voices and political claims of people on the move and unite in intersectional and transnational networks in order to dismantle, brick by brick, from within and without, Fortress Europe. For this reason, Mediterranea Saving Humans helped create the networks “Alliance with Refugees in Libya” and “Network Against Migrants Detention.”



## **“From Tripoli to Berlin”: alliance reaches Germany.**

Launched in early 2024 by Refugees in Libya (RiL) and Alliance with Refugees in Libya (ARiL) to evacuate people moving from Libya to Europe, the “Evacuate Human Rights Defenders from Libya” campaign has finally arrived in Germany. After Geneva, Brussels, Bologna, Rome, Lampedusa and Tortosa, the “From Tripoli to” series of events took place in Berlin on October 18 and 19, hosted by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) and the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation.

The event lasted two days: on Friday, with The Public Debate “Evacuation, not externalization! The Right to Move Against an EU for the Few,” and Saturday, entirely devoted to three different workshops.

The “Evacuation, not externalization” debate was attended by David Yambio and Naeima Yaqoub (RiL), along with Dorina Ache-laritei (ARiL), who had the opportunity to dialogue with ECCHR senior legal advisor Allison West, Mirka Schäfer, from SOS Humanity - representing civil sea rescue organizations - and Julian Pahlke, a German parliamentarian.

In a context increasingly dominated by xenophobic and racist propaganda, migration policies reflect European societies’ desire for closure, entrenching themselves within the physical, legal and cultural walls surrounding Fortress Europe. Agreements to externalize borders with authoritarian regimes in North Africa make the European Union and its member states responsible for gross human rights violations and violence against people on the move.

Finding new legal and safe channels of evacuation becomes, therefore, increasingly complex, but this issue was discussed during the debate thanks to the common will of all involved to create an alliance to guarantee a “safe passage” from Tripoli to Germany to all defenders of human rights.

The first workshop on Saturday 19, organized by ARiL’s activists, focused on the hotline, a vital tool for responding to emergency requests from Libya, Tunisia, and even Niger. The daily testimonies of people on the move - who tell of killings, torture, sexual violence, abduction, and forced labor - prompted ARiL to equip itself with this tool to provide concrete support to migrant people across the Mediterranean.

Next, ECCHR held a workshop on the legal concept of “accountability” in order to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of a legal approach related to RiL’s struggle.

Many examples of legal proceedings taken against Libyan and European authorities to expose crimes against humanity against people on the move were illustrated. In the second part of the discussion, however, a general brainstorming session was useful to try to imagine and build new strategies for holding human rights violators accountable to justice.

The last workshop of the day featured several representatives of Mediterranean Saving Humans and Alarm Phone recounting the first steps of the campaign to evacuate the defenders of human rights from Libya, starting with the relationships initiated with various local administrations in Italy (Bologna and Rome) to secure humanitarian corridors from Libya and create, thus, a model of safe and welcoming cities.



Within an increasingly bleak European and global situation, a self-organized, grassroots movement like RiL is a beacon of hope in the struggle against borders, and in the struggle for freedom of movement and the building of an extended, transnational alliance to amplify the voices and claims of people on the move.

### **“Network Against Migrants Detention”: a transnational struggle against administrative detention**

The ominous Decree Law 20/2023 ensured the implementation of repatriation centers (CPRs) throughout the country. Since the introduction of the legal provision, there has been no delay in the government’s announcement about the opening of a CPR in Emilia Romagna, in Ferrara.

The response of civil society was strong and immediate and saw the start of a network that included many realities, diverse and plural but with the same idea of struggle: that of opposing the CPRs, places of violation of rights, today aimed at subjects without an authorization to stay in the territory or asylum seekers, in certain circumstances.

Over the summer, realities spread throughout the country came together with the intent of organizing a national network, determined to act out dissent in a broader and more cohesive manner. In the need to act and react to the oppressive policies of the current government, however consequential to those promoted by previous governments—from the Turco Napolitano of ‘98 onward—the network shared the importance of gathering and extending the initiative at the national level, both to strengthen the actions of struggle and to allow a confrontation between re-

alities stationed on territories with different peculiarities. These intentions led to the organization of the national assembly on October 13, at Làbas in Bologna, at dawn from the first deportations to Albania.

The assembly included two moments: during the morning there was an informational phase, a presentation and brief discussion among those present, while in the afternoon issues such as the outsourcing of borders, health in the CPRs, the legal status of those who can be detained and monitoring action with respect to the conditions of the facilities and the enforceability of rights were addressed. Each aspect was developed in a working table, with the aim of sharing experiences of struggle and bringing forth proposals for mobilization.

It was clear and shared by all the urgency of a constant, widespread and coordinated activation in support of the people targeted by the externalization policies, aimed at shedding light on the various aspects of the CPR system and administrative detention through different modes of mobilization. A further proposal, born out of the need to activate in the face of the absurdity of deportations in Albania, was the construction of a mobilization, later set for December 1 and 2, reaching under the Italian embassy in Tirana, all the way to the detention facilities in Lezhe, in alliance with Albanian comrades, some of whom were present in the assembly, others in connection.

Just the next day, the Italian military ship *Libra* departed, deporting sixteen migrants on board, bound for Albania. After being rescued off the coast of Lampedusa, some 20 people from countries deemed safe were reportedly selected to be forcibly transferred to the Shenjin center under the expedited border proce-

dure. This procedure provides for the detention of the asylum seekers pending a decision on the asylum application and in order, in case of a positive outcome, to “ascertain the right to enter the territory of the state.” This provision introduces the paradoxical concept of the fiction of non-entry whereby a subject who is in an Italian border zone or in Albania is not considered to be de facto present on EU territory, despite still being subject to Italian jurisdiction. The creation of legally extraterritorial zones and the selection criteria that determine who is transferred to Albania are some of the abominations put in place by Italy at the urging of European policies.

Some of the criteria in the screening procedure carried out on the *Libra* ship, such as vulnerability for example, are not new concepts, and even before they determined access to more dignified reception projects, such as the SAIs, also defining the procedure to be applied to asylum seekers, from a meritocratic perspective, based on the valorization of weakness and powerlessness. Such instruments, in differentiating subjectivities on the basis of legal status, have the clear effect of debasing people’s dignity and compressing fundamental rights, reducing them to tatters and making them effectively unenforceable.

In the face of mounting reports about the legality of detention orders in Albania, the Network Against Migration Detention (NAMD), has seen an ever-increasing enlargement. As the anniversary of the signing of the Italy-Albania protocol approached, the assembly decided to hold a press conference in Tirana on November 6, one year after the signing of the pact.

The occasion also saw the announcement of the launch of a path of mobilizations against the CPR system and administrative detention, and in particular the December 1 and 2 initiative was officially launched.

The network’s presence in Tirana on November 6 was important and symbolic. It made explicit that dissent is there and that an activation is developing in a cohesive and determined manner. The path is long and the assumptions complex, but in spite of this, despite the fact that European and national legal provisions are putting - and will put - those who challenge them to the test, it will be crucial to continue to do so in a firm and resounding manner.

Bringing a meaningful presence to Albania is meant to be a first step in recognizing the seriousness of this national approach, the neocoloniality of the choices that led to the construction of these places-not-places on Albanian soil, and, most importantly, to support those who suffer this system firsthand.

## Oppose the “migranticide”

Given the increasing level of systemic racism and the consequent production of more and more border violence, the reaction of supportive civil society can only be equally systemic and cohesive.

This is why the emergence of networks and alliances such as ARiL and NAMD marks a key step in organizing a broad, heterogeneous and effective front of struggle in order to counter the phenomenon defined by jurist Luigi Ferrajoli as “migranticide” to describe “a veritable series of crimes against humanity,” whose perpetrators - states and international institutions - go unpunished.

In addition to the legal dimension, migranticide also has a profound social connotation, rooted in a concept as simple as it is inhuman. As Cocco explains, “Western countries, and European countries in particular, feel the desire, I would say postcolonial, to no longer see migrants. Whether they are violated in their dignity, in their rights, before leaving, whether they die along the way, whether they are hidden or rejected by administrative detention practices or externalization of borders once they have arrived”.

For this reason, as European citizens, we have the responsibility and the ethical duty to act and react, amplifying, first of all, the voice of people on the move who claim their struggle against the capitalist, colonial and xenophobic border regime embodied in Fortress Europe.





**THE LIGHTHOUSE  
REPORTS INVESTIGATION  
DETENTIONS AND  
PUSHBACK AT THE  
TURKISH BORDER**



After the 2016 agreement between the European Union and Turkey to contain migration flows, Turkey strengthened its border surveillance also thanks to EU funds. However, several international investigations - including one conducted by Lighthouse Reports - have revealed how this economic support is often used for violent rejections and arbitrary detentions.

### **Human rights violations on the Turkish-Bulgarian border, once again funded by the European Union**

The Turkish border is one of the main migratory routes to Europe and at the same time one of the most critical points in the management of flows of people on the move. After the 2016 agreement between the European Union and Turkey, which provides for economic support to curb migration flows, Turkey has strengthened its border surveillance, partly thanks to EU funds. However, several international investigations - including the recent Lighthouse Reports investigation - have revealed how this economic support is often used for violent rejections and arbitrary detentions.

On the border with Bulgaria, the situation is very tense; both countries patrol the border, conduct operations that include push-backs and send migrants illegally back to Turkey, often with the use of physical violence. Migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries in crisis find themselves trapped in a limbo in which any attempt to advance towards Europe is blocked by a 'deportation machine' silently supported by European funds, formally intended for humanitarian support, and in practice used for coercive practices of containment and repatriation.

The Lighthouse Reports investigation documents how EU funds have supported a system where migrants and refugees mainly from Syria and Afghanistan are often detained, violently deported and repatriated.

The investigation documents some EUR 213 million of EU funding for the construction and maintenance of some 30 deportation centers in Turkey, with a total of almost EUR 1 billion to help ‘manage’ the flow of people moving across Turkish borders. Some of these funds have been used to expand fingerprinting systems, now used to track and pick up migrants on the street, and to equip the deportation centers with barbed wire and higher walls.

### **Inhuman detentions, and systematic pushback**

According to the testimonies of migrants detained in Turkey, conditions in detention centers are extremely harsh, with reports of overcrowding, lack of access to adequate health services, and frequent incidents of violence by security forces. The investigation by Politico and Der Spiegel showed that these centers are often located in remote locations and that detainees, including women and children, suffer beatings and psychological intimidation.

Turkish security forces, in unofficial collaboration with Greek security forces, intercept migrants attempting to cross the Aegean Sea or the land border. Once caught, migrants are often brought back to Turkey and detained without the possibility of applying for asylum, thus violating the Geneva Convention.

A growing number of testimonies and video footage document how security forces use physical violence and coercive means to force migrants back. In some interviews, migrants claimed to have been tied up and even abandoned at sea by Greek security forces or forcibly sent back to Turkey.

### **Border violence in numbers**

According to data collected by the Border Violence Monitoring Network research project, there are more than 12,000 documented pushback cases at the Greek-Turkish borders between 2020 and 2023. Approximately 35 per cent of those pushed back suffered physical injuries, including bruises, fractures and signs of beatings. The use of tools such as batons and pepper spray is common, and in some cases, migrants reported being left unclothed in harsh weather conditions.

In a 2023 Human Rights Watch report, numerous migrants recounted being detained in unofficial facilities, where the abuse and conditions of confinement caused psychological trauma. The average detention lasts between 24 and 72 hours, during which there is no access to food or medical care.

Worsening the scenario is the increasing criminalisation of solidarity at the border between Turkey and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, the authorities have taken increasingly harsh measures against activists and volunteers who provide humanitarian support to migrants in transit. Local and international activists groups have been denounced or detained on charges of facilitating irregular migration by obstructing their humanitarian assistance activities, such as distributing food, water and clothes to migrants who manage to cross the border.

Organizations such as No Name Kitchen and Collettivo Rotte Balcaniche reported incidents of intimidation and repression. The activists, after answering emergency calls from migrants in distress in the forest on the Bulgarian Turkish border, were stopped by Bulgarian authorities and detained for over 20 hours

without the possibility of contacting a lawyer or the embassy. They spent the night in a cell with confiscated telephones and no health care, with the only fault being that they were caring for two women and three children, some of them with health problems due to the journey without food or water.

Various human rights organizations have taken several cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), accusing the Turkish authorities of inhuman and degrading treatment and violation of the right to asylum. In several cases, the ECHR demanded explanations from the authorities, who continue to deny the systematic nature of the violence.

The European Union, on the other hand, continues to fund Turkey as a key partner in the management of migration flows. However, the lack of transparency and control over the actual use of these funds is causing an increase in border violence and abuse, which affects the most vulnerable groups of people trying to cross the border into Europe.

# MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS





**Djibouti, 2 October** 45 people died, 144 were rescued and 111 are still missing off the coast of Obock, Djibouti. According to witnesses, people travelling on 2 boats were forced by traffickers to dive into the sea.

**LIBYA, 4 October** The International Criminal Court issued 6 arrest warrants against Libyan militia members for crimes against humanity.

**LIBYA, 14 October** Italy opened a training centre for Libyan border guards in Sabratha despite the fact that these militias are accused of crimes against humanity.

**TURKEY, 17 October** A report by Lighthouse Reports denounced serious violations in centres for migrants and asylum seekers in Turkey, including coercion to sign 'voluntary' repatriation requests.

**SENEGAL, 17 October** The European Union allocated 30 million euros to Senegal to support the African country in its fight against illegal migration.

**LIBYA, 21 October** The Libyan Coast Guard announced that it will renovate its Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre by the end of October.


**TUNISIA, 22-26 October** Mohannad Saad Adam, Sudanese activist of Refugees in Libya, was murdered near Sfax by an unknown person. A few days later, police raided the informal camp where Mohannad and hundreds of other activists were living, destroying all the tents.

**LIBYA, 30 October** During her meeting in Tripoli with Libyan Prime Minister Ddeibeh, Italian Prime Minister Meloni said she wanted to strengthen cooperation with Libya on various issues, including the fight against illegal migration.

**MAURITANIA, 31 October** A pirogue travelling along the Atlantic Route arrived in Nouakchott, Mauritania, with 2 dead bodies and 122 survivors on board. Several other people are reported missing.

**EUROPEAN UNION, 7 October** Front-Lex and Refugees in Libya filed a lawsuit against Frontex at the European Court of Justice, complaining that the agency provides the location of endangered boats in the central Mediterranean to the so-called Libyan coastguard.

**FRANCE-UNITED KINGDOM, 7 October** A shipwreck of a boat bound for the UK resulted in the death of several people, while shortly afterwards 3 suffocated bodies were found at the bottom of a second boat.



**CYPRUS, 8 October** The European Court of Human Rights condemned Cyprus for deporting 2 Syrian asylum seekers to Lebanon in September 2020.

**GERMANY, 9 October** German Interior Minister Faeser announced that she will continue the policy of deportation to Afghanistan for Afghans who have committed crimes in Germany.

**EUROPEAN UNION, 14 October** European Commission President Von Der Leyen said member states should set up new identification and repatriation centres in non-EU states outside the EU, modelled on the Italian centres in Albania.

**BULGARIA, 14-20 October** 7 international activists were arrested by Bulgarian police while providing legal and humanitarian assistance to people on the Turkish-Bulgarian border.

**EUROPEAN UNION, 15 October** European Commission Home Affairs spokeswoman Hipper explained that if EU law does not regulate forced return to a third country other than a person's country of origin, the model of the Italy-Albania agreement cannot be replicated.

**FRANCE-UNITED KINGDOM, 17 October** A child died and 65 people were rescued in a shipwreck in the English Channel off Wissant.

**GREECE, 21 October** Greek police prevented eight people who had arrived independently on the island of Symi from applying for asylum at the island's police station.

**EUROPEAN UNION, 23 October** European Ombudswoman O'Reilly accused the European Commission of hiding a report on human rights violations in Tunisia before signing the Memorandum with the Saïed regime.

**SWITZERLAND, 23 October** Switzerland decided to close 9 of the 36 centres for asylum seekers on its territory as many places remained unused.

**FRANCE-UNITED KINGDOM, 23 October** A shipwreck in the English Channel of a boat bound for the UK left three people dead, while 45 people were rescued by the French authorities.

**EUROPEAN UNION, 23 October** EU Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders Lawlor stated that the so-called Flows Decree hinders search and rescue activities in the central Mediterranean.

**SPAIN, 27 October** After six days of travel clinging to the helm of a merchant ship from the Ivory Coast, six people were rescued by the Spanish authorities off the Canary Islands.

**FRANCE-UNITED KINGDOM, 31 October**

One man died in the shipwreck of a boat in the English Channel, 61 survivors were rescued. The bodies of three other people, also victims of a shipwreck, were found on the coast of northern France.

**LIBYA, 1 October** 26 people aboard an endangered boat were captured in the Maltese SAR zone and deported to Libya by the so-called Libyan coast guard, as witnessed by the Seabird (Sea-Watch) aircraft.

**CIVIL FLEET, 2 October** Nadir (ResQShip) rescued 78 people in 2 operations with support from Seabird and Trotamar III (Compass Collective) and landed them in Lampedusa despite threats from the so-called Libyan coastguard.

**GAVDOS, 5 October** A boat with 36 people on board was rescued by a merchant ship, which disembarked the people on the island of Gavdos.

**LAMPEDUSA, 8 October** A body was found on board a boat rescued off Lampedusa. The 43 people who survived were disembarked on the island.

**SYMI, 8 October** 16 people who arrived independently on the island of Symi aboard 2 boats were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard.

**LAMPEDUSA, 8 October** 85 people on board a boat in distress were rescued by the Italian authorities and disembarked in Lampedusa.

**CIVIL FLEET, 9-10 October** Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) carried out two operations, rescued 47 people and disembarked them in the distant port of Ravenna.

## **TILOS, 10 October**

110 people who arrived independently on the island of Tilos were rescued by the Greek authorities.

**CIVIL FLEET, 10 October** Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity) rescued 36 people on board a boat in distress and disembarked them in the port of Crotona.

**LIBYA, 10 October** Some 136 people on board an endangered boat were intercepted and deported to Libya by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

**CRETIA, 11 October** 34 people on board a boat in distress were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard, while a second boat with 75 people on board was rescued by a merchant ship. All the survivors were disembarked in Crete.

**KASTELLORIZO, 11 October** Some 57 people who arrived independently on the island of Kastellorizo were rescued by the Greek authorities.

**LEBANON, 12 October** 95 people on board 2 boats were captured and deported to Lebanon despite the Greek authorities being informed of the boats' location.

**CROTONE, 12 October** 42 people on board a boat in distress were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard off Isola Capo Rizzuto and disembarked in Crotona.

**LAMPEDUSA, 14 October** In just over a day, over 1,000 people arrived on the island of Lampedusa.

**CIVIL FLEET, 14 October** Thanks to a report from Alarm Phone, Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) rescued 58 people in distress and disembarked them in Porto Empedocle, after refusing the distant port of Naples, assigned by the Italian authorities.

**MARSALA, 14 October** 53 people who arrived independently in Marsala were rescued by the Italian authorities.

**CIVIL FLEET, 14 October** Solidaire rescued 41 people on board a boat in distress and disembarked them in Salerno.

**CIVIL FLEET 15-17 October** Nadir rescued 97 people aboard 2 boats in distress and landed them in Lampedusa.

**KOS, 16 October** 4 people drowned in a shipwreck off Kos. The other 27 on board the boat were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard.

**CRETAS, 17 October** A boat sank off Crete, causing one death and 2 missing. 97 people were rescued by the Greek authorities.

**PASAS, 20 October** 42 people who arrived independently on the island of Pasas were rescued by the Greek authorities and transferred to Chios.

**SAMOS, 22 October** 18 people who arrived independently on the island of Samos were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard.

**BENGHAZI, 29 October** About 50 people in distress were intercepted and deported to Benghazi by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

**TUNISIA, 28 October** 12 bodies were recovered on the east coast of Tunisia. They were victims of shipwrecks in the Sicilian Channel.

**TOBRUK, 29 October** 12 people drowned in a shipwreck off Tobruk in eastern Libya. Only one person on board the boat survived.

**KALYMNOS, 30 October** 17 people who arrived independently on the island of Kalymnos were turned back to Turkey by the Greek Coast Guard.

**KASTELLORIZO, 30 October** 88 people, including 27 who arrived independently on the island of Kastellorizo, were turned back to Turkey by the Greek Coast Guard.

**CIVIL FLEET, 30 October** Thanks to a report from Alarm Phone, Ocean Viking rescued 25 people and disembarked them in the assigned port of Civitavecchia, four days' sailing away from the operation site.

**CIVIL FLEET, 31 October** The new Sea-Eye 5 rescued 65 people on board a boat in distress and disembarked them in the port of Pozzallo.

**CIVIL FLEET, 31 October** Life Support (Emergency) rescued 38 people in distress and disembarked them in the port of Livorno.



**ROME, 2 October** The Italian government has passed the new Flussi Decree introducing a number of regulations against so-called illegal immigration, including those aimed at criminalising civilian rescue at sea, while increasing the number of work permits for non-European citizens.

**PALERMO, 6 October** A Tunisian citizen was crushed by a lorry while trying to evade border controls at the port of Palermo after arriving from Tunis aboard a cruise ship.

**ROME, 9 October** 37 Syrian refugees arrived at Fiumicino airport on a humanitarian flight organised by the Community of Sant'Egidio.

**BRINDISI, 10 October** The Civil Court of Brindisi raised a question of constitutional legitimacy before the Constitutional Court with regard to the so-called 'Piantedosi Decree' when assessing SOS Méditerranée's appeal against the administrative arrest of the Ocean Viking.

**PALERMO, 10 October** The Court of Palermo rejected the request to validate the detention of 8 Tunisian citizens subjected to accelerated border procedures.

**BOLOGNA, 13 October** The first assembly of the Network Against Migrants Detention was held in Bologna, attended by Italian and Albanian realities and organisations.

**LAMPEDUSA, 14-16 October** 16 people rescued by the Italian authorities were deported to the Gjader centre, but 2 of them turned out to be minors and 2 others vulnerable. The other 12 people were returned to Italy after the Court of Rome declared Egypt and Bangladesh, where they came from, as unsafe countries.

**ROME, 15 October** 60 refugees on board a humanitarian flight organised by the Community of Sant'Egidio and departing from Beirut disembarked at Fiumicino airport.

**PORTO EMPEDOCLE, 15 October** Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) was subjected to 20 days' administrative detention and a 4,000 fine for violating the so-called Piantedosi Decree on charges of carrying out rescue activities without authorisation from the flag state.

**VERONA, 20 October** A Railway Police officer shot and killed Moussa Diarra, a 26-year-old Malian armed with a knife, in front of the Porta Nuova station in Verona.

**VENTIMIGLIA, 20 October** In Ventimiglia, along the border between Italy and France, the work of art 'Reato di umanità' was installed, denouncing Italian and European border policies.

**LICATA, 22 October** The new Sea-Eye 5 ship was launched in the port of Licata and set off on its first search and rescue mission in the central Mediterranean.

**ROME, 21 October** The Italian government adopted a decree-law establishing a list of safe countries to try to override court rulings that have declared deportations to Albania illegal.

**ROCCELLA IONICA, 22 October** The television programme Report revealed that the Italian authorities kept a shipwreck off the coast of Rocella Ionica, where 60 people have been missing since 17 January, from public view.

**CROTONE, 22 October** The Court of Crotone ordered the release of Maysoon Majidi, a Kurdish-Iranian activist accused of aiding and abetting illegal immigration, pending final sentencing.

**BOLOGNA, 31 October** The Court of Bologna challenged the Italian government's decree-law establishing a list of safe countries at the European Court of Justice.

**RAGUSA, 31 October** The Court of Ragusa suspended the fine imposed on Sea-Watch in March 2024 for violating the so-called Piantedosi Decree.

# REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

## NEWS FROM CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN



## ARRIVALS

According to [borderline-europe](#) data, 6,006 people reached Italy by sea in October 2024. Most of the refugees (89%) arrived in Sicily - mainly on Lampedusa. However, there were also some arrivals in Calabria via the Ionian route (5%), with the point of departure mostly being Turkey. In addition, one boat reached Sardinia (15 people) via the Algerian route. It is striking that, with around 51% of arrivals, there is again an increase in departures from Libya, compared to 23% of departures from Tunisia this month. According to our counts, the Italian authorities rescued just under 44% of those arriving, while rescues by NGO ships accounted for just under 9%. According to [borderline-europe](#) data, Frontex was involved in around 8% of rescues in September. 5% of refugees reached Italian coastal waters autonomously (12 nautical miles off the coast) without first being intercepted or rescued. For 3% of arrivals, no rescue information was available. According to official figures from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 5,722 people arrived in Italy in October. The discrepancy between this figure and our count shows once again how difficult it is to process this data.

Overall, we are seeing fewer arrivals this month, which can be attributed to other reasons in addition to poor weather conditions, such as a rigid approach by the Tunisian authorities.

# DEAD AND MISSING

The 34th edition of the Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, produced by the Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS in collaboration with the Centro Studi Confronti and the Istituto di Studi Politici “S. Pio V”, shows over 30,294 recorded deaths and missing persons for the period from 2014 to August 2024. The study also points out that more than 1,000 landings were classified as police operations rather than rescue operations - in Cutro in 2023, in Roccella Ionica in 2024 and in many other cases, we have seen the fatal consequences.

But we must not accept these deaths in silence. On April 14, 2024, part of the body of a child was found on the Calabrian coast in Sant’Eufemia by a fisherman. Other bodies had been found scattered far and wide: two had turned up off the Aeolian Islands in March, one near Messina and one near Capo Tindari. It was only through the work of the public prosecutor’s office in Lamezia Terme in Calabria, which investigated after the child was found, that a shipwreck could be discovered in which all the passengers of the boat, which set sail from Bizerte (Tunisia) on 6 February 2024 and sank off the coast of Sicily, died.

## The silence surrounding Roccella Jonica

On the night of June 16-17, 2024, 65 people died off Roccella Jonica, including many children. The boat had set sail from Bodrum in Turkey with 76 people. Their deaths could have been avoided if lessons had been learned from previous tragedies such as the Cutro accident in February 2023. Instead, an investigative report by the political TV program Report reveals how the failure of the rescue services and hesitant action once again cost lives.

Alarm Phone had been informed by a Kurdish journalist who had been looking for help for two days and immediately passed this information on to the Italian coastguard, but nothing happened. French tourists involuntarily witnessed the deaths and arrived while people were still alive. While politicians from the Democratic Party demand full transparency from the Minister of the Interior, the authorities continue to find excuses: there were no Frontex flights at the time, they allegedly did not receive a call for help from Italian waters and, in their opinion, the reports were different cases. Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi deliberately misled parliament and the public by claiming that the boat had sunk outside the Italian SAR zone. However, maps and witness statements clearly prove the opposite: the boat was under Italian responsibility and yet no rescue was initiated. This negligent inaction in the face of a boat in distress shows the inhumane harshness of Italian refugee policy, which knowingly puts the lives of desperate people at risk.

## More deaths

The deaths in the Mediterranean continue. On October 29, 2024, twelve Egyptian migrants lost their lives off the Libyan coast when their boat capsized. Only one survivor was rescued and brought to Libya. “Reports from Reuters and Egyptian security sources confirm that the migrants had set out from the Egyptian governorates of Sharqia and Gharbia. Their goal was (...) to reach Italy,” according to the daily Libya Review.

Around October 27, the Tunisian coast guard recovered the bodies of 16 migrants off the town of Chebba. They could neither be identified nor attributed to a shipwreck. According to a Tunisian NGO, more than 1,300 people died off the Tunisian coast in 2023 alone. IOM (International Organization of Migration) speaks of 1,251 deaths in the Central Mediterranean so far this year. The number of unreported cases is likely to be significantly higher here too.

# ROUTES TO EUROPE

## Italy - Albania deal

Over the course of this month, the Meloni government has completed its supposedly prestigious project: the outsourcing of fast-track asylum procedures to Albania. By transferring this bureaucratic process to a country that is not on EU territory, Rome is boasting that it is effectively preventing refugees from arriving on European soil. This inhumane approach fits in seamlessly with current developments on the rest of the continent to portray refugees as a threat to internal peace and thus present itself as the defender of the Europeans. However, respect for human rights is increasingly falling by the wayside, which poses a greater threat to European democracies than the presence of refugees.

The first case involved 16 people from Bangladesh and Egypt on October 13, 2024. They were taken to the Italian warship *Libra* during two separate rescues by the Italian Coast Guard in international waters and transferred to the camps in Shëngjin and Gjadër on the Albanian Adriatic coast. The basis for this is an agreement between Italy and Albania negotiated by the current governments of the two countries under the leadership of Giorgia Meloni and Edi Rama. According to this agreement, only non-vulnerable adult men from so-called safe countries of origin can undergo their accelerated asylum procedure in these camps. The decisive factor here is the principle that, according to the Italian government, the chances of success for these



asylum applications are close to zero. However, the process casts doubt on its feasibility. As a result, four of the 16 people had to be returned to Italy after just one day. Two were minors, while the other two were found to be particularly vulnerable. However, the detention of the remaining 12 people did not stand up to scrutiny by a court in Rome. The court rejected the detention, as neither Bangladesh nor Egypt can be considered safe countries of origin. The court thus followed an ECJ ruling from October 4, 2024, in which the court found that countries can only be considered safe if all people everywhere in that country are safe. However, due to various human rights violations, this is not the case in either Bangladesh or Egypt. The Italian government immediately criticized this decision as “politically motivated”. However, the Foreign Ministry under Antonio Tajani has come to a similar conclusion as the court, which has led to massive disagreements, particularly between the former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and Foreign Minister Tajani. Further information on the deal and this first case can be found in our Scirocco No. 15 . Despite the rulings, Italy is sticking to the deal.

### **Violent action in the Mediterranean**

On October 13, 2024, the Sea-Eye 4 (Sea-Eye) documented a violent operation in the Mediterranean in which 22 people were forced to jump into the water by masked men in international waters. Although the Sea-Eye 4 was able to save all the people, what happened here is just one of many examples of crimes against humanity. The actors who operate in the Mediterranean and put people in danger are becoming increasingly opaque, making it more difficult to investigate these perpetrators.

Gorden Isler, Chairman of Sea-Eye e.V., also draws attention to this problem: “The EU member states must not allow international waters to become a lawless area. Those responsible must be investigated and held accountable.”

## PUSHBACKS

According to our counts, 1,498 people were “intercepted” in the Mediterranean in October 2024, i.e. they were victims of pushbacks or pullbacks. 1,448 people were towed back to Libya and 50 people to Tunisia. These figures are not guaranteed, as the number of unreported cases is probably much higher.

Pushbacks and pullbacks are illegal and incompatible with human rights. In addition to the violent pushing back and dragging back of refugees in the Mediterranean, people often experience violence, torture, rape and even death after being pushed back. When people are sent to prison, they often have to pay large sums of money to be able to leave. The Tunisian activist Jihed Brimi published a tweet on October 10, 2024, in which he reported a case in which 22 people were taken back by the so-called Libyan coast guard. He reports that they were stripped of their cell phones and clothes, and that it costs \$2,000 to buy their way out of prison in Zawiya, Libya.

The situation in Tunisia also continues to deteriorate under President Kais Saied, who was re-elected at the beginning of October. Jihed Brimi posted an article on October 10, 2024, in which he drew attention to the fact that 2,500 people had been arrested by the Tunisian National Guard and 1,900 people from sub-Saharan Africa had been prevented from crossing the country’s borders in the preceding weeks. These actions underline once again why EU cooperation with Tunisia is contrary to human rights.

## CIVIL RESISTANCE

A total of 574 people were rescued by NGOs in October 2024. There were two multiple rescues by the Nadir and the Ocean Viking, which was assigned the distant port of Ravenna.

The ship Humanity I (SOS Humanity) rescued 37 people in two rescues in October 2024, the second of which involved only one person. The Mare Jonio (Mediterranea Saving Humans) rescued 58 people in one case. The ship Nadir (RESQSHIP) rescued a total of 227 people in four rescues, all of whom were taken to Lampedusa. The Ocean Viking from SOS Méditerranée rescued a total of 72 people in two rescue missions. The two ships of the NGO Sea-Eye, the Sea-Eye 4 and the Sea-Eye 5, rescued 22 and 65 people respectively in one case each. The new ship of the Open Arms organization, the Solidaire, rescued 41 people in its first case and brought them to the port of Salerno. In addition, the Trotamar III (CompassCollective) also rescued 41 people.

The Mare Jonio of the NGO Mediterranea Saving Humans was blocked in the Sicilian port of Porto Empedocle on October 15 because, following the above-mentioned rescue of 58 people, it had refused to be assigned to the distant port of Naples by the Italian authorities and instead sailed to Sicily.

## **The Brindisi and Crotona rulings on the release of ships**

Civilian sea rescue organizations regularly take legal action against the detention of their ships. One important case is the decision of the Crotona court for the *Humanity 1*, which had rescued 77 people in international waters on March 2, 2024, and was assigned Crotona as its port. The ship was detained there because it had allegedly violated the so-called Piantadosi Decree. In this case: they had not cooperated with the so-called Libyan coastguard. However, the latter had been particularly brutal during the rescue, as documented by the civilian reconnaissance aircraft *Sea Bird* (Sea-Watch). Important and new in the decision to release the ship by the court in Crotona: the behavior of the so-called Libyan coast guard cannot be compared to rescue operations. Not only a safe harbor is needed, but the conduct of the rescue unit is also relevant. Sociologist Chiara Denaro provides a more detailed insight into the ruling in her article from October 29, 2024 on the blog *Border Criminologies*.

In the case of the *Ocean Viking* (SOS Méditerranée), the ship was also detained after rescuing 261 people on arrival. The Piantadosi Decree had been violated, in this case by illegal multiple rescues and also because of non-compliance with the instructions of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Following a complaint by SOS Méditerranée, the judge in Brindisi now ruled that the constitutionality of the Piantadosi Decree should be examined and referred the case to the Constitutional Court. The question is whether it is actually legal for false accusations by the so-called Libyan coastguard to lead to the Italian authorities intervening and arresting ships. Ships that fulfill their duty to rescue when they encounter people on boats that are not seaworthy.

## **Mediterranea takes legal action**

After the Italian government forced the civilian rescue ship *Mare Jonio* to dismantle its rescue equipment on board (see CMI September 2024), two lawsuits were filed on November 1. “In the lawsuit filed by lawyers Lucia Gennari, Cristina Laura Cecchini and Giulia Crescini with the Civil Court of Agrigento against the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the annulment of the protocol of October 15 is requested. This imposed a 20-day prison sentence on the ship after the *Mare Jonio* rescued 58 people from mortal danger in international waters of the Tunisian SAR zone, who were then brought safely ashore in Porto Empedocle,” the *Mediterranea* statement reads. The second lawsuit was filed before the administrative court of the Lazio region. Here it was also demanded that the refusal of the shipping authority to certify the *Mare Jonio* as a rescue ship be withdrawn. In addition, the unlawful order to unload the rescue equipment should also be withdrawn.

## **The Open Arms trial against Matteo Salvini**

2019 - The Open Arms rescued 163 people and was prevented from entering an Italian port for weeks by the then Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini. The trial against Salvini is now coming to an end; the verdict is expected on December 20, 2024. On October 18, Giulia Bongiorno, herself a member of Salvini's Lega party and his defense lawyer, gave a three-hour monologue as her closing statement. At times, it was more reminiscent of a political speech than a personal defense, as the party-political context was brought to the fore. As Minister of the Interior, Salvini would have acted purely as an executor of the interests of the Italian state. Frequent repetition of words and figurative language were striking. The main issue was Italy's sovereignty and the necessity of "border protection". What this case is about can be read in Scirocco No. 15.

## **FDP wants to stop payments for private sea rescuers**

Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Chairwoman of the FDP (a liberal political party in Germany) delegation in the EU Parliament, initiated the discussion on the funding of private sea rescuers by the Federal Foreign Office, which led to tensions between the FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. However, the justification that expenditure is too high and that arrivals have declined cannot be used as an argument, especially because the decline in numbers must also be linked to EU externalization measures. These include, for example, agreements with countries such as Tunisia and Libya, which are using EU funds to upgrade their so-called coastguards and are not providing rescue and assistance, but instead carrying out violent pullbacks and committing massive human rights violations on land and at sea. Annalena Baerbock (Germany's minister for foreign affairs) commented that the funding of civilian sea rescuers with two million euros a year until 2026 was decided two years ago in the Bundestag and that people are being rescued with this money.





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