What do the numbers tell us
Forced to flee across the Mediterranean, 2,439 people managed to arrive in Italy in February. The number is lower compared with the arrivals of the previous month: 3,035.
299 unaccompanied minors were among those who arrived in the first month of the year.
In February, there were over 2,300 push-backs by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, including 228 women and 77 minors. Yet another violation of the principle of non-refoulement that continue to happen day after day. Yet another violation that today, however, find even less light in the face of the horror of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the darkest hour in the West.
The spectacle of the violence of weapons in an everyday life where people still die in the waves can only be bleak.

These data are based on information provided by the Ministry of the Interior’s Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration. These data refer to landing events recorded by 8:00 a.m. on February 28, 2022.
Please tell us how did United4Rescue begin?

United4Rescue was founded in 2019 by members of the Protestant Church. Thousands of people supported the appeal “Let’s send a ship!” which called on the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to send a rescue ship to the Mediterranean. The initiative turned into the founding of United4Rescue as an association in November 2019, successfully collecting donations for a first rescue ship and then again collecting for a second rescue ship. In addition to the purchase of our two affiliated ships the aim behind United4Rescue is above all to help where there is a need of money for rescue missions - across organisations and without bureaucracy. For example, for the conversion of rescue ships, for equipment or deployment costs. In addition we create publicity and awareness for this most important of issues, helping to make the broad social support for sea rescue in the Mediterranean visible through our allegiance of already more than 800 organisations. As long as there is no governmental sea rescue we will not just stand by but instead take action and provide help.
United4Rescue as an association is quite young. Is the EKD’s direct involvement in sea rescue a novelty or have there been previous contacts with solidarity movements?

The EKD has been committed to fight the deaths in the Mediterranean for years providing financial support for rescue missions and in particular making possible the purchase of the civilian reconnaissance aircraft “Moonbird”. EKD representatives have for example also visited detained rescue ships and made public the church’s support and solidarity. So the EKD’s commitment has not just begun in 2019!

Which initiatives belong to U4R and what does the daily coordination of a network with more than 800 associations look like? Tell us also about the diversity of the alliance. Are there associations that are not active in sea rescue?

Generally speaking any organisation or group can become an alliance partner with us. Therefore, as an alliance we combine an enormous social diversity: from farms to federal associations. Church congregations and companies are just as much a part of this as a kindergarten or a flower shop. Several cities have also joined. Very few of the alliance partners are actually active in refugee aid. But what they all have in common is that they want to publicly show their solidarity with civilian sea rescue in the United4Rescue alliance. Together we make visible how great the support for sea rescue is in society. As an association we inform our alliance partners about news in sea rescue and support them when they start their own actions: benefit concerts, lectures, actions and events. We offer advice and help with information, posters, flyers and social media material.
How do Germans currently feel about taking in refugees? Has Merkel's decision to accept 800,000 Syrians helped Germany to become more cosmopolitan? Has anything changed in recent years?

What is certain is that there is an immense, basic humanitarian solidarity and willingness to help among the population. The summer of migration in 2015 has not changed this. Countless people in Germany have been committed to refugees and positive coexistence since then and continue to do so today. However, there is no doubt that the openness and willingness to accept refugees in Germany would be greater if the public debate were more sober and fact-based. Instead the discussion is still too often dominated by sweeping prejudices and even open hostility towards people. This also applies to politics where ignorance, fear and racism are often instrumentalised. However, Germany has been a country of immigration for decades. Millions of people in our country have had migration or refugee experiences in their families or they have had them themselves. They live in international partnerships, feel at home in more than one culture or have parents or grandparents who were not born in Germany. Fortunately this diversity is becoming increasingly visible in the population - and hopefully with it tolerance towards new arrivals.

What do you think of the new government in office? Their coalition agreement mentions some promising points on migration.

It is still too early to make an assessment. But in principle the agreements of the new government parties reveal a thoroughly positive commitment to refugee protection and civilian sea rescue. Germany is to support a state-coordinated European rescue at sea. Rescued boat people should be brought quickly to safe places and civilian rescue at sea should no longer be hindered. Illegal pushbacks and the suffering at the external borders are also to be ended. Whether this change of course will actually succeed and whether the promises can be kept, however, will only be seen in their implementation and will be decided not least at the European level. What is missing from the coalition agreement: Safe ports! The strong signal of almost 300 cities and municipalities that would voluntarily take in additional protection seekers unfortunately remains completely unmentioned!
Europe and the EU member states no longer seem to be defending their original fundamental values; it is civil society that has taken over this task. Civilian sea rescue is just one example. Have we come to the point where Europe’s cohesion is being destroyed by the member states and saved by civil society?

There is certainly unity among the EU member states in refugee policy. But all too often the unity is based on sealing off and warding off those seeking protection. In doing so the states undermine refugee laws. Principles of international law, the Geneva Convention and European law are undermined and often blatantly violated. There is no longer any question of “policy failure” or “excessive demands”. All the more remarkable is the solidarity of civil society. A new form of civil disobedience seems to have emerged in recent years: it is the commitment of refugee activists. These activists draw attention to injustice and demand the application of the rule of law. Instead of symbolically violating the law in order to attract attention to their cause they strictly adhere to existing laws. In doing so they defend a Europe that protects the rights and dignity of people.

The Pope spoke in the refugee camp on Samos about a “shipwreck of civilisation” of Europe and humanity. The Protestant Church in Germany and the Catholic Church in Italy have acted very courageously. Isn’t it time for a strong and visible collaboration between the two to find common solutions?

Because migration and refugee policy can only be solved in a European way, European collaborations between churches but also trade unions, cities, municipalities and other actors are undoubtedly becoming more and more important. There are already many contacts, partnerships and also ecumenical networks between the churches in Europe such as the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). Time and again there are joint statements and declarations. But a strong, widely audible sign from many churches all over Europe would indeed be new - for example, if church bells were to ring everywhere at the same time against the dying at Europe’s external borders. Such an initiative would have to be initiated from within the churches but with United4Rescue we could of course strengthen such a commitment and help to network actors. Churches from various countries are already alliance partners with us. And again and again we present our work in the church space and tell how easily churches and congregations can also help in a very concrete way.
“This is my third attempt to cross the Mediterranean. Last year was my first. It was a terrible experience - the most traumatizing of my entire life. I lost my best friend. I had known him since I was a child. We grew up together in Darfur.”

While A. K. and I are talking, there are dozens of people on deck with us. From the bow to the stern, near the railings and inside the cabins, seated on the capstan winch and standing on their own. Team Rescue saved over a hundred people, including men, women, and children the previous night. And this morning, a second rescue operation brought another 107 human beings aboard the ship. After a short pause, A.K. continues:

“Our boat caught fire and people started jumping into the water to save themselves. He jumped, too. But, I was much luckier. I was at the prow, far away from the fire. For a while, I saw him trying to stay afloat. But, then, he disappeared. We covered the flames with blankets and managed to put them out. But, for those in the water, it was already too late. We were desperate. And, we needed help, so we called the Libyan coast guard who told us they were coming. They lied. In the end, we were rescued by some fishermen. There were 120 people on board and about 50 drowned. 50, you know? For six months, I could not sleep. I was traumatized and I could not, indeed, I did not want to believe that I had lost a brother that way. The second time was better. I couldn’t get across. But, at least, I didn’t lose anyone dear to me. And, I survived, again.”

A. K. is only 17 years old. He was born in the Republic of Sudan, an Arab-African state surrounded by Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Chad, and Libya. Since last October 25th, Sudan has been under the full control of the army. The Sudanese people are desperate and in revolt. The military suppressed the protests killing more than 50 people and the country’s Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdock, resigned less than a month ago. Without Hamdock, Sudan has lost the last hope of receiving international aid to revive an economy that has long been on its knees.
I ask him, “What happened this time?”

“We left Libya on Wednesday, around midnight,” he replies. “We were at sea the whole day and night before you rescued us. The problem is that as soon as we started sailing, the boat started taking in water. We were alarmed. Some had already begun praying. But, we were pushed out to sea; they didn't care about our lives.”

I know who he is talking about. He is referring to the Libyan human traffickers.

Every year, thousands of Sudanese, Somalis, Nigerians, Eritreans, Gambians, Senegalese, Malians, Tunisians, and Chadians leave their homes and countries for the coasts between Zuwarah and Tripoli. They cross the continent illegally, relying on cocseurs, couriers who facilitate their journey in exchange for money. If they are caught on the way, they end up in inhumane detention centers, where they are tortured and humiliated. Even die. Those who manage to survive all this and finally arrive in Libya, know that their destiny is in the hands of traffickers. They decide when you leave, by what means, how many people go.

We move close to the capstan winch, the device used to tow ships away from the wind. But now that we’re here, the young man doesn’t want to talk anymore. Who could blame him? He has already experienced hunger, injustice, fear, and suffering during his young life. He has experienced loss, deprivation, and despair. He has seen horror, hatred, violence, and human cruelty. He has felt disillusionment, melancholy, impotence, anger, unhappiness, pain. Speaking to me now, at this precise moment, may not be good for him.

While I am thinking this, he says one last thing.

“Few of us know how to swim. I am afraid of the sea, especially after it took away my best friend. But, what can I do? As soon as we get to Libya, we must escape. We need safety. We need to survive. We need to be free.”

And, I can't do anything other than listen— in silence.

A.K. is a young man from Sudan who chose to remain anonymous. His testimony was recorded by a member of Mare Jonio’s crew during its last mission at sea which rescued 208 human beings. Among them was A.K. The young man’s words were reported in their entirety. To learn more about Mediterranea Saving Humans’ Mission #10, read our January Report.
The Long Afghan Winter
Elena Nicolussi Giacomaz

An unprecedented humanitarian crisis has hit Afghanistan. According to the World Food Program, winter threatens turning the country’s geopolitical situation into a real catastrophe with 22.8 million people suffering from food insecurity, 9.7 million children without healthcare, 18.4 million civilians in need of humanitarian aid, and 3.5 million internally displaced persons. This situation is even worse than the humanitarian crises that have hit Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syrian, and Yemen.

Elena Nicolussi Giacomaz analyzes, data in hand, the consequences of this frigid - and almost forgotten - Afghan winter and its consequences on a population already exhausted by 40 years of conflict.

FROM THE SUSPENSION OF FUNDS TO THE “OPIUM ECONOMY
Famine
Winter
Healthcare System on the Verge of Collapse
Internally Displaced Persons
The Game

Read it now! —> https://mediterranearescue.org/en/news-en/the-long-afghan-winter/
Mission #11 Mare Jonio

After the last 70 people rescued during Mission #10 disembark in Pozzallo, Mare Jonio is repaired after some maintenance is completed in Mazara del Vallo.

Mission #11, whose Head of Mission will be Luca Casarini, is currently scheduled for departure at the end of March 2022. Departure depends on at least 3 important factors: the schedule for change in crew and the scheduling for specific training needed for the new crew; future weather conditions, such as any announcements of rough weather developing in the Central Mediterranean; and, whether or not any other civilian fleet vessels are conducting missions which is a basic condition needed in order to allow for the joint execution of complex rescue operations.

The last mission saw additional increases in operating costs at sea, including increasing fuel prices, which has almost doubled, and increasing costs associated with landing operations (the disposal of survivors’ clothing which is treated as a special type of waste, anti-Covid sanitizing of the ship, etc.).

Now, more than ever, it is important to donate to support future missions!! Donate now —> https://donate.mediterranearescue.it/torniamoinmare/~my-donation
FEBRUARY 2022
**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7**

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers a lifeless body off of Joudaim, north of Zawiya.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10**

Six Egyptians from Lampedusa's hotspot are taken into custody by Agrigento's State Police and are charged with aiding and abetting illegal immigration and homicide. The smugglers are alleged to have forced some migrants to stay in the engine area of an approximately 10 meter boat carrying over 70 people which arrived in Lampedusa on January 20th. The smugglers are accused of causing the death of a man of Bengali descent who they threatened and beat in order to force him to remain below deck.

Is the UN Maritime Organization aiding and abetting crimes at sea? “According to a 1979 United Nations Convention, nations can create their own search and rescue areas at sea, but certain conditions must be met. In order to create or expand search and rescue areas, a country must first 'establish relief coordination centers' that function '24 hours a day and are continuously staffed with personnel who have a practical knowledge of the English language.' People rescued in the SAR areas must be brought to a port of safety, in accordance with the rules of the Convention. When the IMO recognized Libya's search and rescue zone in 2018, these obligations were not met.”

Entire Mediterranea Saving Humans article at this [link](#).
**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11**

During the night, the Libyan Stability Support Apparatus intercepts a boat off the Sorman coast carrying 91 people, including 12 women and 1 child. During the day, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard’s patrol boat, Ubari, intercepts two boats carrying a total of 94 people, including 25 women and 3 children, in two separate operations.

A total of 128 people reach Lampedusa in three separate landings within a few hours of each other. First, 39 migrants, including 16 women and 3 children, 17 miles off the coast of Lampedusa, then another 75 migrants aboard a 10 meter wooden boat 11 miles from the coast, and lastly 14 more migrants of various nationalities about 12 miles from the coast are all intercepted and rescued by Coast Guard patrol boats. Everyone rescued is taken to the hotspot of Contrada Imbriacola which already hosts 164 people.

One of the survivors who currently “lives” in Malta’s infamous Safi detention camp speaks during the Esi Blu 3 hearing. He explains that he was asleep, trying to recover from the hardships he endured in Libya, most of the time he was onboard Elhi Blu 1. The witness states he does not remember what happened on Elhi Blu 1 and repeatedly reassured the court of his respect. “I respect you, but what I said is what I saw on the boat.” The court declared him a ‘hostile witness’ and threatened to remand him.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12**

93 people, including 16 unaccompanied minors, aboard a wooden boat are rescued by Sos Méditerranée’s crew on board Ocean Viking in the afternoon.

The humanitarian ship, Sea-Watch 4, sails from the port of Burriana for the central Mediterranean on a new search and rescue mission to save lives.
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13
Ocean Viking’s crew rescues 88 people, including 27 unaccompanied minors and 1 infant, aboard a wooden boat in distress a few hours following the first rescue. At dawn, 22 people, including 6 minors, come aboard during a third rescue.

Pilotes Volontaires’ crew aboard the plane, Colibrì, spots a fiberglass boat in distress in Malta’s SAR area. After sounding the alarm, Sos Méditerranée’s crew aboard Ocean Viking rescues the 25 people who were in danger.

Two days after the previous interception, the Libyan Stability Support Apparatus intercepts a boat carrying 111 people, including 29 women and 6 children. Later the same day, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard’s patrol boats, Fezzan and Zuwarra, carry out interceptions. Fezzan intercepts a boat carrying 33 people, including 2 children. Shortly afterwards, Zuwarra intercepts another boat carrying 69 people, including 9 children.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14
Ocean Viking’s crew rescues 19 people in distress aboard a fiberglass boat in international waters. There are 2 women and 3 unaccompanied minors among the survivors.

The Libyan Stability Support Apparatus intercepts a fragile boat located off the Libyan city of Sabratha, carrying 89 people, including 7 women and 4 children.
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16
The Libyan Red Crescent spots a lifeless body near the area of Al-Mutrad, near the Libyan city of Zawiya.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17
The Libyan Red Crescent spots a lifeless body off the town of Sorman.
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Italian authorities designate the port of Pozzallo for the safe disembarkation of the 247 survivors rescued by Sos Méditerranée’s crew aboard Ocean Viking.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19

During the night, Sea Watch’s crew on board Sea-Watch 4 rescues 121 people in distress aboard an overcrowded dinghy. A few hours later, 8 people aboard a small, fragile boat are rescued in a second operation.

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard’s patrol boat, Sabratha, intercepts a boat. There are 60 people on board, including 1 woman and 4 children. On the same day, the patrol boat, Zawiya, in two separate operations, intercepts 193 people, including 26 women and 3 children. A few hours earlier, the Libyan Stability Support Apparatus executed two more interceptions. In the first interception, a fragile wooden boat was stopped. There were 94 people on board, including 4 women and 7 children. Immediately after, the same Libyan patrol boat intercepted another fragile boat carrying 87 people, including 6 women and 2 children.
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

The crew on board the ship, Diciotti, and three class 300 Coast Guard patrol boats from Syracuse, Crotone, and Reggio Calabria rescue 573 people aboard boats in distress located in international waters. According to the Coast Guard, “The migrants in distress were aboard two overcrowded vessels and were at the mercy of the waves during unfavorable weather which was expected to grow significantly worse in the next hours. Rescue operations were carried out 70 miles off of Capo Spartivento, in Italian SAR waters, in a stretch of sea a great distance from the coast that is the direct responsibility of Italy. (175 nautical miles).”

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24

The Libyan Red Crescent locates a lifeless body in the area west of the city of Al-Khums.
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25
Italian authorities assigns the port of Porto Empedocle for the safe disembarkation of Sea- Watch 4 which has rescued 129 lives.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26
MSF’s crew aboard GeoBarents spots a boat carrying no passengers off the Libyan coast. The so-called Libyan Coast Guard’s patrol boat, Fezzan, intercepts two boats in two separate operations. There are a total of 128 people on board, including 12 women and 7 children.
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Yet another pushback is carried out by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. The aircraft, Sea Bird 2, carrying Sea-Watch’s crew, spots an empty dinghy and dozens of people aboard the Libyan military’s boat a short distance away.