



MEDREPORT
JUNE 2022

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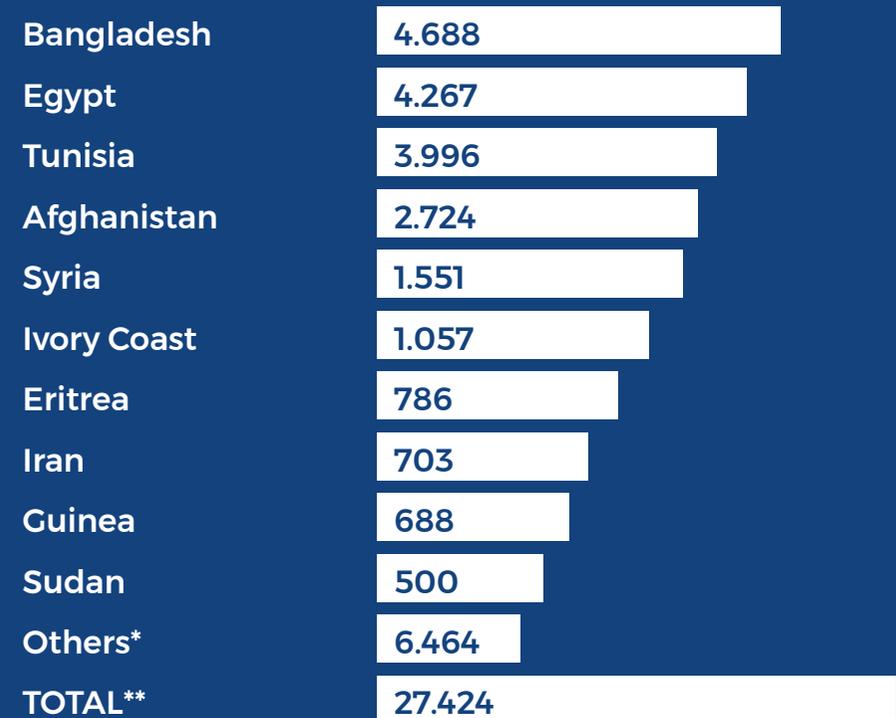
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WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

The number of people who were forced to flee and cross the Mediterranean Sea in June and managed to arrive in Italy was 8,008. Among them 763 unaccompanied minors.

Once again this month, the tireless work of the ships of the civil fleet made it possible to save hundreds of lives. At the same time, however, constant interception by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard has brutally interrupted the attempts of so many people to find a better future.

NATIONALITIES DECLARED AT THE TIME OF LANDING (UPDATED TO JUNE 30, 2022)



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

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

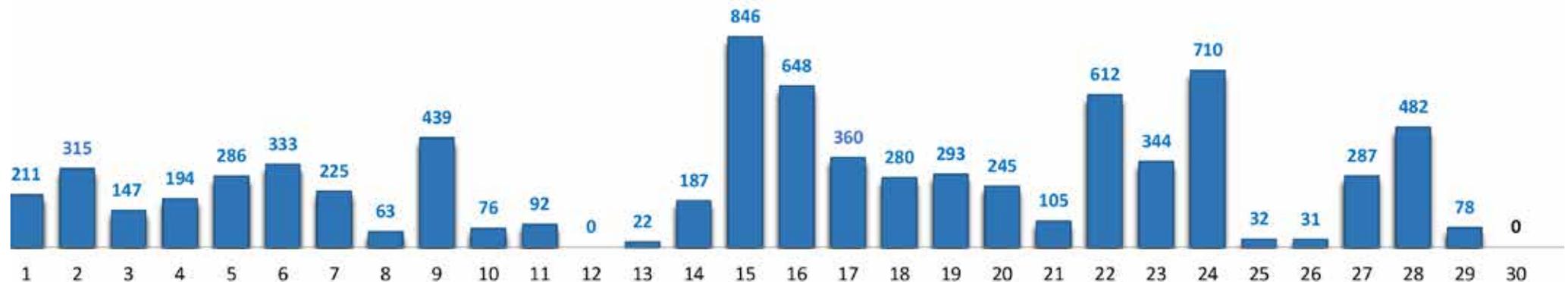
Source: Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic.

The data are subject to subsequent consolidation

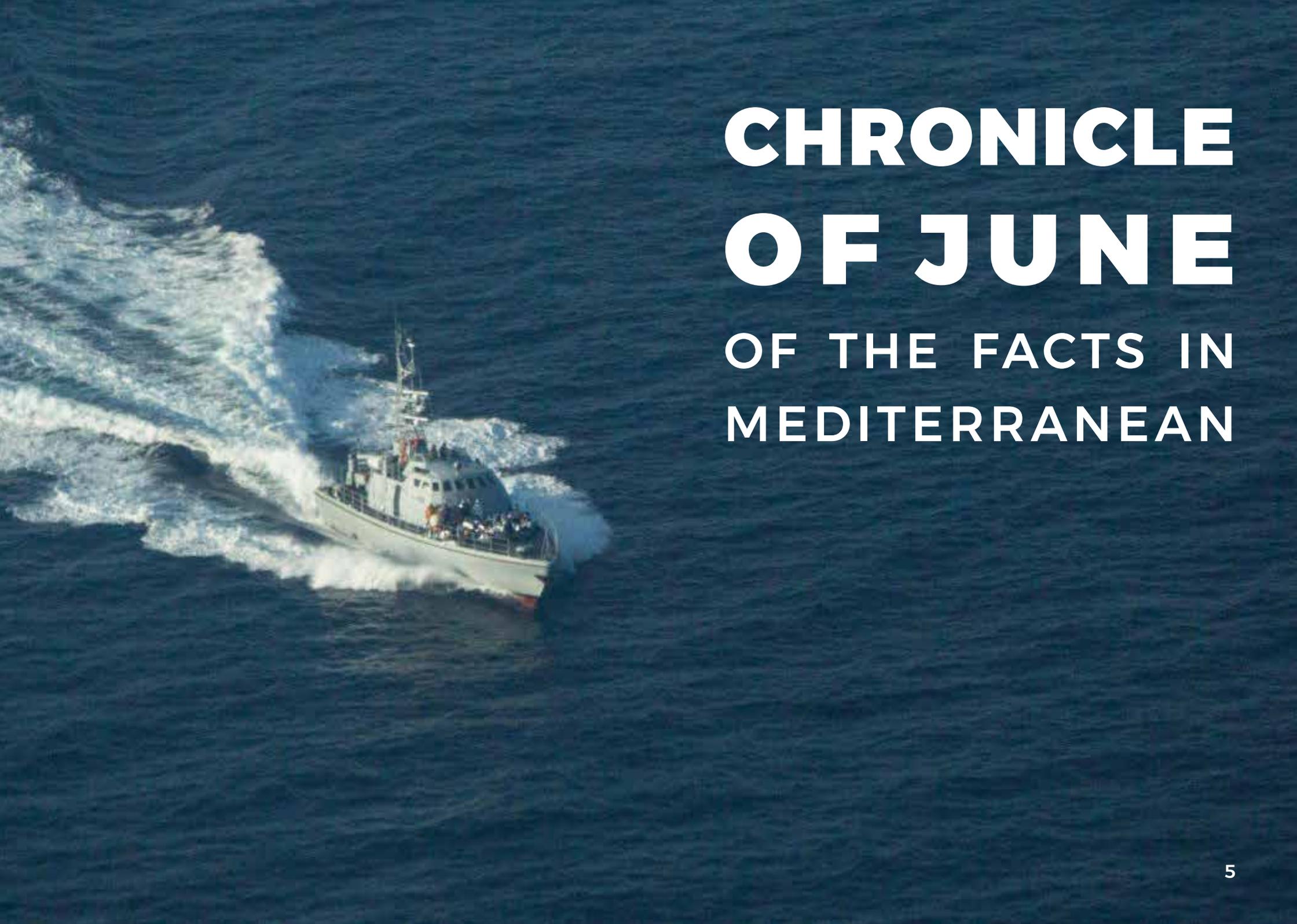
An extensive research by Matteo Villa, on behalf of ISPI, has provided further confirmation of the non-existence of the pull factor value: from June 2021 to date, 86% of arrivals by sea are autonomous. At the same time, we can see that the number of people who were disembarked from the Mediterranean in the same period is around 75,000: half of those fleeing Ukraine and rightly welcomed in Italy.

Can we really go on talking about a 'landings emergency'?

Once again this year, the hotspot on the island of Lampedusa is at breaking point: numbers that are predictable, but we constantly forget this. The blame cannot lie with those who arrive, but with a political management that, through opportunism or disinterest, continues to ignore the realities of migration.



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 JUNE OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN" is overlaid on the right side of the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

CHRONICLE OF JUNE OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN

DAY 1

The Sea Watch crew on board the humanitarian vessel Sea Watch 3 announce that they have reached the search and rescue zone in the central Mediterranean Sea.

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Ras Jadar, intercepted, in two separate operations, 38 people attempting to escape from the Libyan coast on board a boat. Women and children were also on board. The Libyan authorities took the intercepted people to the port of Tripoli. At the same time, Libyan soldiers on board the patrol boat Zawiya intercepted another 128 people attempting to cross the Central Mediterranean. The latter were taken to the port of Zawiya

DAY 2

The crew aboard Sea Watch 3 rescues 49 people in distress aboard a dinghy. A few hours later, in a new rescue operation, 25 people on board a small boat in difficulty are rescued.

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Melita, intercepted 90 people attempting to cross the central Mediterranean Sea. All were taken to the port of Zawiya.

DAY 3

At 1pm, Mediterranea Saving Humans' humanitarian ship Mare Jonio set sail from the Sicilian port of Mazara del Vallo to begin a new search and rescue mission in the central Mediterranean.

After two operations the previous day, the Sea Watch crew on board the Sea Watch 3 ship rescued 99 people, who were in distress on board an inflatable boat, and 49 people, who were in distress on board a wooden boat.

The Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Zawiya, intercepted 84 people attempting to cross the central Mediterranean Sea. All were taken to the port of the city of Zawiya.

DAY 4

While the Mare Jonio enters the Libyan Sar zone, on the pages of La Stampa, don Mattia Ferrari denounces: 'The mafias would like a big wall between Italy and Libya to prevent migrants from passing through. We have opened a breach in this wall'.

DAY 5

Despite the dangerous presence of the Libyan patrol boat on the scene, the crew aboard Mare Jonio rescued 29 people whose lives were at risk aboard a fragile wooden boat.

In the evening, the crew of Sea Watch 3 foiled an attempted illegal push back by a patrol boat of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Their action resulted in the rescue of 85 people, who were in distress on board a wooden boat.

DAY 6

The MSH crew on board Mare Jonio rescues 63 people fleeing Libya, in distress on board a fragile, overcrowded wooden boat.

After an Alarm Phone alert and a long search, the crew of Sea Watch rescued 49 people in distress in the central Mediterranean Sea.

Mohamed Mahmoud Aziz, a 19-year-old activist from Refugees in Libya, took his own life after months of abuse in the Libyan camp of Ain Zara.

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, in several operations, intercepted 325 people attempting to escape the Libyan horrors. Among them were four women and two children. All were taken to the port of the city of Tripoli.

DAY 7

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers a lifeless body off the coast of Derna, a city in north-eastern Libya.

DAY 8

While waiting for indications of a safe port, the Mare Jonio with 92 rescued people on board entered Italian territorial waters. A few hours later, at 9.39 p.m., the MRCC in Rome announced the assignment of the port of Pozzallo for safe disembarkation.

DAY 9

The Italian authorities indicate the port of Pozzallo for the safe disembarkation of the people rescued by the crew of Sea Watch 3: 344 men, women, children on board.

DAY 12

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepts a boat with 12 people on board who were attempting to find safety by fleeing the Libyan coast.

DAY 14

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Sabratha, intercepted a boat carrying 17 people, including a woman. All were taken to the commercial port of Tripoli.

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers a lifeless body in the city of Tripoli, near the Hotel Corinthia building. On the same day, another lifeless body was recovered in the coastal town of Zawiya.

DAY 15

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Sabratha, intercepted a boat carrying 83 people. All were taken to the commercial port of Tripoli.

DAY 16

The crew on board the humanitarian ship Louise Michel announce that they have started a new search and rescue mission in the central Mediterranean.

The Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boats Ras Jadar and Sabratha, in separate operations, intercepted 212 people, including women and children, who were attempting to flee the Libyan coast. All were taken to the port of the city of Tripoli.

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers two lifeless bodies near the Refinery Point area of the city of Zawiya.

DAY 17

The crew aboard the ship Louise Michel rescued 17 people, who were in difficulty on board a fragile vessel unseaworthy for navigation.

DAY 18

After the first rescue the previous day, the crew of the Louise Michel rescued 96 people in distress fleeing from the Libyan coast. A few hours later, a new rescue brought another 52 people to safety.

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers a lifeless body in the Al-Mutrad area, near the town of Zawiya.

DAY 19

The Sea Bird with the Sea Watch crew on board spotted 95 people in distress in the central Mediterranean Sea. After contacting the merchant ship Aslihan that rescued them, the humanitarian ship Sea Watch 4 also arrived to help.

In separate operations, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted 351 people attempting to flee the Libyan coast. All were taken to the port of the city of Zawiya.

DAY 20

After more than 24 hours of no assistance from the Italian and Maltese authorities, the crew on board Sea Watch 4 took on board the 96 people rescued the previous day from the merchant ship Aslihan. On the same day, the same crew rescued 23 people in distress on board a fragile boat reported by Seabird. Shortly afterwards, the 29 people rescued by the Resqship Nadir also boarded Sea Watch 4.

DAY 23

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Ubari, intercepts 30 people on board a boat near the Qarabolli area.

DAY 24

The crew aboard the Louise Michel rescued 59 people in distress on board an overcrowded dinghy. Some of the castaways were already in the water due to dangerous maneuvers by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, led by a Maltese helicopter.

The Sos Méditerranée crew on board Ocean Viking rescued 16 people, including six unaccompanied minors. These were in difficulty on board a fragile fiberglass boat in international waters off Libya.

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers a lifeless body near the town of Tokra in Cyrenaica.

DAY 25

MSF announces the start of a new search and rescue mission in the central Mediterranean for the crew on board the humanitarian ship Geo Barents.

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard, on board the patrol boat Ubari, intercepted 67 people on board a boat near the Qarabolli area. Among them nine women.

DAY 26

The Sos Méditerranée crew aboard Ocean Viking rescued 75 people in distress aboard an overloaded dinghy in the Libyan search and rescue region. Among them 34 unaccompanied minors, four pregnant women, eight children and a nine-month-old infant.

In separate operations, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted 235 people attempting to flee the Libyan coast. All were taken to the port of the city of Zawiya.

DAY 27

After a report from Alarm Phone, the crew on board Sos Méditerranée, with the support of Louise Michel, rescued 66 people in distress, who had already been at sea for more than two days. The Italian authorities indicate Porto Empedocle for the safe disembarkation of the people rescued by the crew of Sea Watch 4.

DAY 28

The MSF crew on board the Geo Barents rescues 69 people who were in distress aboard a dinghy in the central Mediterranean Sea. All of the castaways are exhausted and many are showing symptoms of sea water ingestion and hypothermia after many hours in the water.

The Italian authorities allow the safe disembarkation of survivors on board the ship Louise Michel at the island of Lampedusa.

DAY 29

The Libyan Red Crescent recovers a lifeless body near the city of Derna in north-eastern Libya.

DAY 30

The Sos Méditerranée crew aboard Ocean Viking rescued 49 people aboard a boat in difficulty in international waters off the Libyan coast.

SAR

MEDITERRANEA



MISSION 12 THE CREW



SHIP'S DOCTOR

I am Vanessa Guidi, I am 29 years old and I am a doctor specializing in Emergency-Urgency Medicine. For 3 years I have been an activist of Mediterranea Saving Humans and for 2 years President of the association.

In summer 2020, I took part in Mission 8 as a ship's doctor on the Mare Jonio during which we rescued 110 people.

I have found my safe haven in Mediterranea,. Thanks to its daily practice, at sea as well as on land, I feel fully represented. I left for this new mission back on board because I strongly believe in the importance of witnessing and denouncing human rights violations at the borders of this Europe that does not allow itself to be penetrated, allowing and supporting the most inhuman violence and injustice at its own doorstep.

I chose Emergency Medicine because the Emergency Room is that place that never closes its doors to anyone, that welcomes anyone who needs care or sometimes just a safe place to stay, at any time of day or night.

Likewise, we make no distinctions at sea and we are ready to welcome aboard the Mare Jonio anyone who asks for help.



RESCUE

RHIB DRIVER

I am Denny Castiglione, I am 30 years old and I come from Mogliano Veneto, where I work as a systems engineer in a telecommunications company. I have a degree in development and international cooperation and have always been active in social movements and political forces of the Veneto left hand. Over the last five years, with the Officina 31021 [TAG] project, I have found the 'home' where I can express my commitment and passion: a youth organization that manages social spaces, organizes events for the territory, and builds cooperation and hospitality projects. It is precisely the latter that have given me the opportunity, together with other comrades, to carry out a number of international missions in Iraq, Kurdistan, North Africa and along the Balkan route (Greece and Bosnia).

I have been actively supporting Mediterranea since 2018, and am part of the Venice crew [tag]. Recently, I took part in the 3 #SafePassage caravans to Ukraine with the role, in the last 2, of mission leader.

I deeply believe that on earth no one is a stranger, and as a son of migrants from the south, I think everyone should be guaranteed freedom of movement to achieve the sacrosanct human right to happiness.

Borders are nothing more than an invention of us humans to wield power over others, while the human propensity to seek a better future for oneself and the people one loves is entirely natural.

No one of us can choose where to be born in the world, or what passport we have when we come into the world, so each of us legitimately aspires to improve our lives. There are those who can do it where they are and those who need to move somewhere else to do it.

I boarded MEDITERRANEA because the price to pay cannot and must not be death. Being able to rescue those who risk their lives at sea to exercise their right to movement not only saves their lives but also gives meaning to ours.

MEDITERRANEA



RESCUE COORDINATOR

My name is Fabio Gianfrancesco, roman, activist and university researcher in Philosophy. Having grown up at sea since childhood, thanks to my father and grandfather who taught me to respect it and recognise its strength in the voice of the wind and the shape of sails, I owe to the comrades I have met along the way what I have built on land. Together with them, in the university assemblies and within the walls of the ESC Self-Managed Atelier, in the student movement of the Wave and in the battles for a different idea of citizenship in the Metropolises I have passed through, I have learnt not to lower my head in the face of the cynicism of neoliberal morality and to experiment with different forms of solidarity action.

When in 2018 an unprecedented criminalisation strategy hit those who made solidarity a weapon, to fight together with those who are forced to migrate and set out, I decided together with ESC and many others to take part in that process of collective imagination that led to the foundation of Mediterranea Saving Humans.

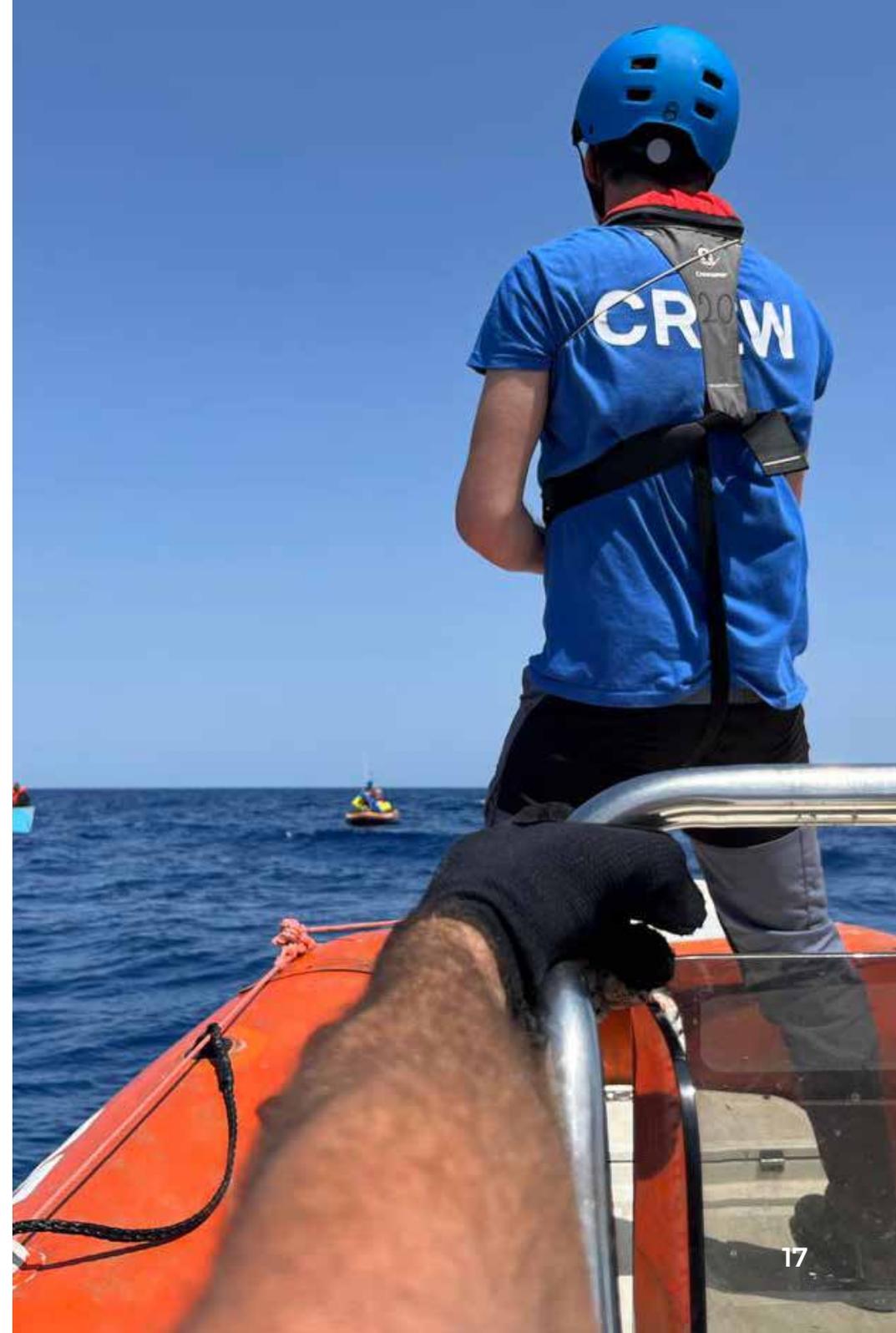
Since 2018 a member of the Rescue Team and active in several missions, I coordinate the crew of Rome. On board when I am not teaching and now, in mission #12, I am coordinator of the Rescue operations of the Mare Jonio. Not to stop resisting the bleak demographic metrics of the European institutions, for which some lives count less than others. For those we meet at sea, convinced that they have already begun to fight and that they do not need our compassion. To them goes our promise to continue this common struggle, knowing that our lives are at stake along with theirs.

SEA RESCUER

My name is Tommaso Basilici, I grew up in Recanati, lived everywhere, settled in Genoa for quite a while now, I have always been involved in the big world of movements, from the occupations of the social centers, to the struggles for housing, the 2001 G8, hack meetings, legal support and so on.

Borders are another capitalist superstructure invented and aggressively imposed on those who seek a better life for themselves and their loved ones, borders are an aggressive instrument of control whose main victims are the weakest, exploitable and blackmailable, borders kill.

I am taking part in mission 12 on the Mare Jonio because by training, skills and aptitude I feel like a rescuer. I have been a lifeguard, a crew member on the St. John Ambulance, a rescuer on the 118 ambulance, a technician and a search coordinator for the mountain rescue service. Years of rescue experience have taught me that being rescued quickly and well is a fundamental right of everyone, starting with the most fragile and exposed.



MISSION 12

LOGBOOK

**92 PEOPLE
WERE SAFELY
DISEMBARKED IN
POZZALLO ON 11
JUNE.**

MISSION TIMELINE

A few hours after entering the Libyan SAR zone (south of the 34°20 parallel) on Saturday 4 June afternoon, the MARE JONIO intervened in support of the vessel Sea-Watch-3, of the German organization of the same name, which had received a distress signal.

Despite the heavy presence of patrol boats of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and a Maltese military helicopter, the cooperation of the rescue teams of the two NGOs led to the rescue of 85 people - all of whom were brought to safety on the Sea Watch 4, which was able to resume its course northwards with 307 people on board.

Favorable weather conditions saw several departures from the Libyan coast on Sunday morning, 5 June, with numerous boats in difficulty at sea and an aggressive presence of patrol boats of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. At 10.30am, thanks to a binocular sighting of a boat in distress, the Mare Jonio was able to rescue 29 people, even confronting a unit of the so-called Libyan GC that had arrived on the scene. Not far from the scene, a smoking carcass of a small plastic boat, a sign of another illegal pushback.

During the night of 5-6 June, the Ionian Sea was reached by a report from the sailing boat Imara of the NGO R42SailAndRescue, seeking support in rescuing 63 people in distress in the Maltese SAR, who could not all be accommodated on the NGO's small boat. The operations were completed in the morning.

The Mare Jonio then continued sailing northwards, continuing to receive reports of boats in difficulty and observing the intense activity of FRONTEX aircraft and a drone from Malta. In the evening, the Mediterranea ship was then able to support an Italian Guardia di Finanza patrol vessel, bringing ashore on the island of Lampedusa the passengers of two boats in distress, thanks to a report from Alarm Phone.

As there were no more open distress cases, on the morning of Tuesday 7 June the Mare Jonio sent the first request to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Rome (IT MRCC Rome) for the assignment of a safe port of disembarkation (Place of Safety) for the total 92 people rescued and assisted on board our ship.

At 9.39pm on Wednesday evening, EN MRCC in Rome notified the Mare Jonio (and at the same time the Sea Watch 3) of the assignment by the Italian Ministry of the Interior of Pozzallo as 'destination port' for the disembarkation of the people rescued on board.

The two ships entered port on the morning of Thursday 9 June.

While waiting for disembarkation, Sea Watch 3 had to carry out no less than twelve medical evacuations, while on board the Mare Jonio there were 33 minors who are the subject of enhanced protection, and all the shipwrecked people were particularly tried by months of abuse, violence and torture suffered in Libya and by a sea crossing that lasted over three days with very little water and food.

Forty-eight hours after arrival, Saturday morning, 10 June, disembarkation operations were completed.

And on Monday 12, with the arrival in Mazara del Vallo after the waste disposal, ship sanitisation and refueling operations carried out in Pozzallo, our #Mission12 came to an end.

We are happy to have snatched 92 more lives from the risk of shipwreck, and certain death, and the fate of abuse in detention camps in Libya. This was possible thanks to the solidarity at sea of the Civil Fleet, realized in this case in the cooperation between Sea Watch, Imara and Alarm Phone with MEDITERRANEA.

DENNY CASTIGLIONE

RHIB DRIVER

What is the most intense and significant moment you experienced in this mission? (it can also be the most frightening, distressing or ordinary)

There were actually two most intense moments I experienced on this mission. The first was certainly when we finally left the port of Mazara del Vallo, what I felt cannot be described in words. an indescribable mix of emotions that I wish everyone to experience at least once in their life. The second was certainly the intense embrace we exchanged with our rescue team mates after the first rescue. The immense joy of being able to save people even if this happiness did not erase the deep anger and bitterness of having seen with our own eyes a rejection. The fact of being powerless in front of this inhuman thing shook me a lot.

What message would you like to send to the European institutions after having participated in this mission and having witnessed the atrocities that are carried out every day in the central Mediterranean?

There are not many messages to send to the European institutions, I would make an invitation to attend our missions and see with their own eyes what they are up to with dastardly decisions. Maybe it would not help, but you cannot remain indifferent when you see such atrocities before your eyes. We must make possible entry routes into Europe that do not involve death.

Why did you decide to go on a rescue mission?

I decided to leave because first of all I can't stand indifference and then simply because I had the opportunity to do so. I believe that when you have the opportunity to 'do' you cannot back out. As Gino taught us, 'if one of us, any one of us human beings, is at this moment suffering, is sick or hungry, it is something that concerns us all. It must concern us all, because ignoring the suffering of a human being is always an act of violence, and one of the most cowardly.

VANESSA GUIDI

SHIP'S DOCTOR

Why did you decide to go on a rescue mission?

I have decided to go on this mission, even if in a new role compared to the one I held in previous rescues, namely as mission leader and shipboard doctor, because it is still essential to be at sea to denounce violations of human rights and conventions, and even more so because unfortunately we are often the only chance of salvation for people who put to sea. We need to be there because otherwise the alternative for thousands of people is shipwreck or deportation to Libya. And this is not an option we accept for anyone in the world. I decided to leave to help make freedom of movement possible and concrete for people who have been deprived of any freedom.

What is the most intense and significant moment you experienced in this mission? (it can also be the most frightening, distressing or ordinary)

One of my favorite moments during this mission was the day before disembarkation. We rescued 92 people who had been on board for six days. For three we had been at the dock without the possibility of disembarking. The people on board were tired, very tired. They were tired from Libya, from the journey, from the rescue and from waiting. We were literally 1 meter from land but they would not allow us to disembark these people who had every right. There was starting to be some nervousness, we had nipped a couple of fights in the bud and by now it was getting harder and harder to look these guys in the eye and promise them that they would come ashore the next day, because I was afraid that it wasn't true again.

I heard an Egyptian boy clapping his hands and, to cheer them up a bit, I asked if they knew any songs. At first these four Egyptian boys started singing. Then I asked a South Sudanese boy to play us some of his songs. And within five minutes we were all dancing and singing along. We had a lot of fun and for a good half hour we forgot about tiredness and stress. It was a moment that united us even more, crew and guests.

What message would you like to send to the European institutions after having participated in this mission and having witnessed the atrocities that are carried out every day in the central Mediterranean?

In the Mediterranean, the situation has been dramatic for years. Even during this mission we witnessed the capture and deportation of women, men and children in Libya. The so-called Libyan coast guard threatened us and put one of our rescues at risk. The European institutions perhaps do not realize how much their decisions affect the lives and deaths of thousands of people forever. There are things that are worth much more than economic and political agreements and it is disgusting to see how the interests of governments crush human rights. I wish that whoever is responsible for these inhuman agreements would be in the situation to experience for themselves what it means to have to flee at sea, risking death, to have a chance at life.

FREE THE EL HIBLU 3



Malta, its policy of suffering and death. Abdalla, Amara and Kader, their hope of living in a Europe of solidarity.

Abdalla, Amara and Kader (The El Hiblu 3) arrived in Europe in March 2019 on board the merchant ship El Hiblu 1. The tanker rescued them from a sinking dinghy two days earlier, following instructions from a European patrol aircraft. During the rescue operation, six people decided to stay on the deflating dinghy, disappeared and are presumed dead.

Despite telling the shipwrecked people that they would be taken to Europe, the tanker headed south towards Libya, the hell they were fleeing from. At dawn, when the survivors realized where they were heading, they began to protest. Some even threatened to throw themselves into the sea in desperation. Many of them expressed themselves in Bambara, Malinke, fule and the West African dialect. Few in French. Only a couple in English, the only language even the captain spoke. One tried to translate, the other to mediate between the crew and the passengers, both of whom were frightened.

The ship made eventually its way to Malta, where it was stormed by the military. Three youths, then aged 15, 16 and 19, were immediately arrested. These young men, two of whom were still children, were thrown in jail and charged of terrorism, hijacking the ship, and intentional destruction of property.

They were the same three young men who acted as translators and mediators, who tried to calm the people on board, to talk to the crew so they would not be forced to return to the hell of the Libyan detention camps.

Abdalla, Amara and Kader. Immediately placed in a high security wing of the Malta prison, they were transferred to regular juvenile and adult facilities only two weeks later. Almost eight months after their arrival, the three young men were finally released on bail.

That was in November 2019.

Although they were released more than two and a half years ago, Abdalla, Amara and Kader are still awaiting a trial that could sentence them to life imprisonment. They are allowed to work and pay taxes, but cannot swim on Malta's beaches because their bail conditions require them to stay fifty meters away from the coast. If they fail to report to the police for one day, they risk being returned to prison. In 2020, most of their hearings have been postponed, after waiting for hours at the Valletta Court of Justice.

The prosecution only started inviting the survivors of El Hiblu 1 as witnesses in March 2021.

March 2021. Two years after their arrival in Malta. Too late for many of them to be founded.

Many NGOs (including Mediterranea) and civil society associations are asking the relevant Maltese authorities to drop the charges against the three from El Hiblu and to close the investigation before going to trial.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM
CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

While [borderline-europe](#) registered a total of 7,935 arrivals in Italy on the central Mediterranean route in June, the Italian Ministry of the Interior speaks of 7,943 people in the same period. The UNCHR, on the other hand, presents a much lower figure (7,429). IOM even indicates the number of refugees arrived at only 7,171.

The arrival figures in June, especially in the middle of the month favoured by the prevailing weather conditions in the central Mediterranean, was characterised by a high number of arrivals of Tunisian refugees on Lampedusa. A considerable number of the arriving boats reached the island on their own, without any intervention from the Italian authorities. As a result, as was also the case in May, up to 1,600 people had to endure untenable conditions in the hotspot “Contrada Imbriacola”, which according to official sources is only able to host 350 people.

As in June, we also noticed in the past months that the figures collected by governmental or government-related institutions on arrivals of people seeking protection in Italy differ significantly from one another. In May, for example, it became clear that the Italian Ministry of the Interior included approximately 1,000 more people in its statistics than the UNHCR did – within the same period.

The Ministry of the Interior also counted about 600 more people than [borderline-europe](#) did as part of its monitoring and documentation activities. Why the figures between the individual institutions show such a significant discrepancy, however, also remains unclear to us. As already described in detail in the March issue of our Central Med Info, numbers, particularly in the context of migration and flight, are always synonymous with a political message. The fact that it is precisely the Italian Ministry of the Interior that registers such a massive increase in asylum-seeking people, while the figures from IOM, UNHCR and the counts from [borderline-europe](#) are far below the figure given by the Italian ministry, raises many questions.

PULLBACKS

According to the information available to us, 2,805 people were intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard in June as they fled Libya and were forcibly brought back to the civil war country. Again, the number of people registered by UNHCR (1,979) as well as IOM (2,347) lies significantly below our counts. The Tunisian Coast Guard, on the other hand, was responsible for the illegal repatriation of 223 people in the same period.

In June, various incidents in which the so-called Libyan Coast Guard was involved could be observed. On the evening of 2 June, two Italian fishing boats were allegedly fishing for tuna and swordfish in Libyan fishing waters when they were attacked with firearms by a patrol boat of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Fortunately, no one was injured. However, it eventually required the intervention of the Italian navy to clarify the situation once and for all. The so-called Libyan Coast Guard has not shied away from similar actions in the past. Refugees and sea rescue organisations that were demonstrably in international waters were not only threatened, but also attacked by the Libyan unit.

A few weeks later, on 24 June, a Maltese helicopter delegated the so-called Libyan Coast Guard to a dinghy in distress, although the civilian rescue ship Louise Michel was already on the scene. Dangerous manoeuvres by the Libyans resulted in some of the refugees falling into the water. Fortunately, the crew of Louise Michel anticipated the situation very quickly and was able to take all 59 people on board. After countless

requests for a safe harbour over the course of three days, the rescued people were finally able to go ashore on Lampedusa.

Recent events have again shown that the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which is mainly financed, trained and equipped by the EU and numerous European countries, including Italy, is endangering human lives rather than protecting them. The so-called Libyan Coast Guard is neither in a position to rescue, nor are those rescued allowed to be returned to Libya, where they are still facing inhumane living conditions, torture, slavery and exploitation on a day-to-day basis (see also our definitions of the terms “pushback” and “pullback”).

DEAD AND MISSING

A boat with 29 people on board reported to the Alarm Phone on 7 June that their boat had caught fire off Tunisia. Despite several attempts to call on authorities for a rescue, the people’s requests for help kept being ignored. Eventually, no contact could be re-established with the people on board. Accordingly, we fear another deadly tragedy, largely caused by the ignorance of the European and Tunisian authorities.

In the past month, we again must assume the death of 51 and the disappearance of another 72 people in the central Mediterranean. Of the four shipwrecks we know of, three occurred off the coast of Tunisia. In addition, at the end of the month there was a tragedy of a boat from Libya carrying more than 100 people on board (see the details below). In this case, too, the figures from UNHCR (85) and IOM (74), which do not count dead and missing persons separately, differ significantly from the data collected by us.

PATHS TO EUROPE

Also in June, we were pleased to observe that merchant vessels were again increasingly involved in rescuing refugees in the Mediterranean.

In the past, political pressure and the associated danger of a lengthy and costly blockade at sea exerted by the state on shipping companies and captains repeatedly led to merchant vessels not fulfilling their obligation to rescue people in distress at sea.

On 18 June, the merchant vessel Aslihan took 96 people on board. The ship was on its way to Italy, as were the people seeking protection. However, the Italian authorities refused to allow the Aslihan to enter a port. In order to relieve the shipping company and the ship, but also to be able to provide the rescued people with better medical care, the survivors were taken over by the Sea-Watch 4 after about 24 hours. After European authorities, as many times before, repeatedly failed to fulfil their responsibility to provide a safe port for the people seeking protection, coordination between civilian sea rescue ships and merchant vessels was once again necessary.

Meanwhile, on the night of 24 June, around 90 nautical miles off Porto Palo off the south-eastern coast of Sicily, a fishing boat in distress was sighted, carrying over 500 people. Under the coordination of the Italian Coast Guard, the people were rescued and distributed among several boats. The Italian Coast Guard eventually brought 184 people to Pozzallo and

72 people to Reggio Calabria. The merchant vessels Serenada and Syn Turais eventually disembarked 97 people to Marina di Ragusa and 150 people in Catania. The seemingly smooth coordination by the Italian Coast Guard was mainly due to the fact that the maritime emergency was located within the Italian SAR (Search and Rescue)-zone.

In June, both the Alarm Phone and *borderline-europe* again documented numerous cases in which the Italian Coast Guard vehemently refused to rescue people in distress at sea, even when their boats were only one nautical mile outside their assigned SAR-zone.

This is particularly problematic off Lampedusa, as the Maltese SAR-zone here almost reaches Italian territorial waters and the maritime rescue coordination centre in Malta continues to ignore distress calls. This frequently leads to life-threatening situations that often occur only a few nautical miles off the coast of Lampedusa. Situations that could be avoided by a quick intervention of national authorities and would not endanger human lives unnecessarily.

CIVIL RESISTANCE

According to our counts, 1,624 people were rescued by NGO ships in June. 1,443 of the people seeking protection have already been able to go ashore, albeit with long delays. After the trend of prolonged standoffs had already become apparent in May, the days until the allocation of a safe port were further exhausted by the Italian authorities in the past weeks. At times, about 900 people were waiting for a safe port. Among them severely traumatised and exhausted people as well as numerous medical emergencies. In June alone, 27 people had to be evacuated from various civilian ships by the responsible coast guards or by helicopters at enormous expense and brought to hospitals in partly life-threatening health conditions.

After the sailing ship Astral (Open Arms) already carried out a rescue last month (we reported here), the sailing ship Nadir (RESQSHIP), which is also used mainly for monitoring purposes, was to take refugees on board twice this month. Although the sailing ships are not actually designed to take and care for people on board for several days, in both cases the Italian and Maltese governments refused to assign the castaways a safe port. In the first case, Sea-Watch 4 was able to take the 29 people from Astral on board after two days to provide them with adequate care. In the second case, the Nadir was allowed to dock in the port of Lampedusa after 90 long hours, yet only when the drinking water on board was running low.

Unfortunately, the practice of assigning a safe port only when the situation on board is getting worse or has already escalated is anything but new. In May, the Ocean Viking was only assigned a safe port after 11 days and immediately after a suicide attempt by a rescued person. The Sea-Watch 4 was also only allowed to enter Porto Empedocle after its last mission, after some people desperately jumped off the ship during the last of three medical evacuations in order to reach the Italian Coast Guard ship in the hope of finally being brought ashore.

The Mare Jonio, the civilian rescue ship of the platform Mediterranea, on the other hand, refused to being kept waiting unnecessarily by the government and sent an ultimatum to the Italian Ministry of the Interior after the SAR operations had been completed. After several requests for a safe harbour had remained unanswered, the crew announced that they would enter Italian waters within a few hours' time. The Italian Ministry of the Interior would be given ten hours to organise the landing. If the Mare Jonio had not been assigned a port by the end of this period, it would head for the nearest local port. This possibility is given to the Mare Jonio, as it sails under the Italian flag and Italy is therefore responsible for the ship. Shortly before reaching territorial waters, the ship was assigned Pozzallo as a port of destination. Despite the fact that only 92 people were on board the Mare Jonio, the disembarkation process took an incredible three days.

The cooperation and cohesion among civilian rescue ships was once again demonstrated very successfully in June. The Sea-Watch 4 not only took in the people from the merchant vessel Aslihan and the sailing ship Nadir, but also 165 people who were previously rescued by the Louise Michel could be brought on board the Sea-Watch 4 for supply reasons. Shortly thereafter, the Louise Michel, as a civilian speedboat, was able to carry out the rescue of the 59 other people mentioned above.

Meanwhile, dramatic scenes unfolded in the SAR-zone. The Geo Barents (MSF), which had previously been alerted by Alarm Phone, reached an inflatable boat only after it had already partially sunk. Three people, including a four-month-old baby, had to be resuscitated during the rescue. For a pregnant woman, help came too late. While at least 30 people are missing, many of the 71 survivors had to witness their children and family members drown. When Taranto was finally assigned to the Geo Barents as a safe harbour after four days, it was still about 24 hours away from the Geo Barents at the time of the announcement. Making these people, who are not only severely traumatised but also in very weak physical conditions, wait yet another day for their disembarkation verges on pure harassment and has nothing to do with the protection of human rights.

After the rescue speedboat Aurora SAR (Sea-Watch) successfully completed its first mission in May and brought 86 people safely ashore, it has now been suspended by its flag state, Great Britain. The British government's reasoning was that the boat and its certification were neither suitable for the Mediterranean, nor for a rescue in non-British waters. However, the boat was also previously used by the British Navy for sea rescue purposes. It remains to be seen whether this practice constitutes yet another idea of authorities to prevent civilian rescue ships from doing their work with arbitrary methods. Sea-Watch is currently trying to take legal action against the suspension.



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