



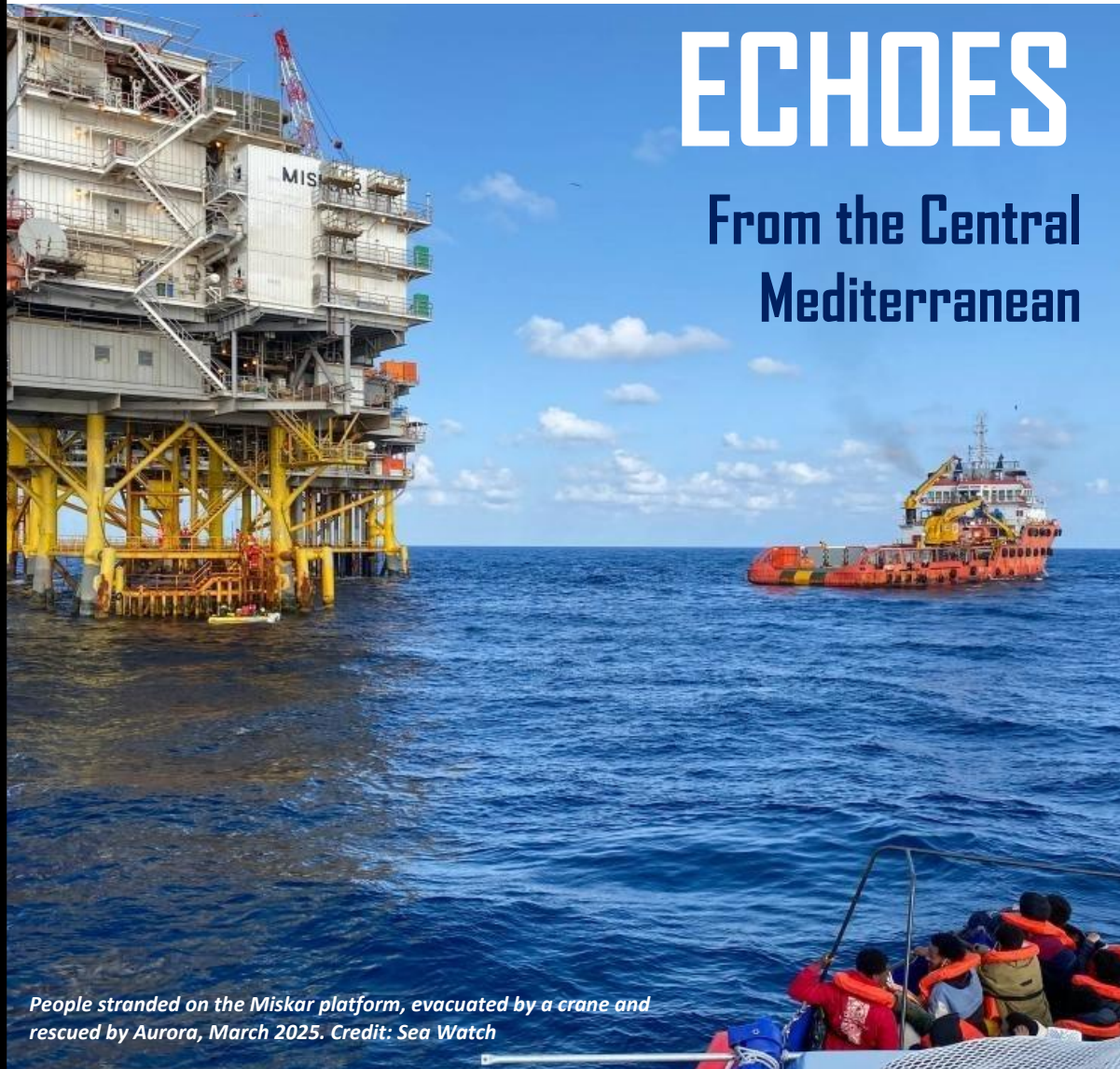
Civil MRCC

Coordination and
documentation
platform for people in
distress in the Central
Mediterranean

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N°17

May
2025



*People stranded on the Miskar platform, evacuated by a crane and
rescued by Aurora, March 2025. Credit: Sea Watch*

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PLATFORM OF HOPE

The so-called “Miskar case”, the extraordinary rescue of 32 people from a gas platform in the overlapping Tunisian and Maltese Search and Rescue (SAR) zones to Lampedusa in March 2025, contains a deeper meaning for us in these terrible times: never give up even in desperate situations. Who could imagine that the tenacity of the people on the move, together with the chain of solidarity structures in the Central Mediterranean, could lead to such an amazing outcome?

Breaking normalization! This slogan was and still is at the center of our narrative to express the need to defy more offensively the unbearable conditions at sea. How to combine daily solidarity with elements of civil disobedience? How to use the coming months and mainly September - with the transnational chain of actions in reference to the 10th anniversary of the summer of migration - to re-politicise maritime space? With Echoes, we will try to accompany the different steps of this struggle...

In 2025:

- **14.683** people **arrived to Italy** and Malta by sea, many of whom arrived autonomously (UNHCR figures up to April 27)
- **3.377** people were **rescued by the Civil fleet** from almost 70 boats in distress (CMRCC figure up to April 28)
- **6.620** people were **pushed back to Libya** after they were intercepted by the EU-supported so-called Libyan Coast Guard (IOM figure up to April 19)
- **294** people have been reported **dead or missing** on the Central Mediterranean Route (IOM figure up to April 19)

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

INSIGHTS FROM LAMPEDUSA

ARRIVALS, FRONTEX AND THE POLITICAL TOOL OF CRIMINALIZATION OF DRIVERS



Lampedusa, as the transit point of many people on the move, is an important place in the fight against borders. We want to give you some insights into what we could see while living on the island and creating links to the other side of the sea. How is the situation in Tunisia and Libya affecting the arrivals in Lampedusa? How are the border dynamics on the island evolving, and what reality are people facing when reaching Lampedusa and Italy?

Arrivals seen from Lampedusa

Between January and Mid-April around 8 750 people arrived in Lampedusa. Arrivals strongly depend on the weather conditions. During brief windows of good weather, increased crossings can be observed, as the journey becomes less threatening. The Mediterranean, however, remains one of the deadliest migration routes worldwide. On the first weekend of April, such a weather window opened and 1 500 people arrived in Lampedusa within only two days. At the same time, the dynamics in the departure countries play a big role.

While the number of people arriving in Lampedusa stayed almost the same compared to last year, an immense shift has been observed regarding the point of departure. Since autumn 2024, **arrivals from Tunisia have decreased with a worrying consistency**, to the point where no boat reached Lampedusa in January. A boat arrived in February and four others in March, among which the shipwreck of 18.03.25, where 7 bodies were recovered and 39 people are still missing.

According to our data, **in 2025, a total of 182 people** who departed from Tunisia reached Lampedusa, compared to 2.224 people in the same period in 2024.

All the arrivals in 2025 departed from Sfax. During these months, we observed the **disappearance of former Tunisian departure points** such as Monastir, Teboulba, Mahdia, Chebba, Kerkennah, and Djerba. These coastal cities have a historical key role in the migration of the central Mediterranean. After the EU and Tunisia signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in July 2023, authorities **have**

expanded their presence across these regions. The intensification of criminalization and imprisonment has thus rendered many kilometers of the Tunisian coast unusable for departures.

These departure points for reaching Italy have, in the past months, turned into **zones of repression and obstruction of departures**. This has resulted in a forced geographical shift further south, making the journey longer, more dangerous, and nearly impossible. The outcome is existential: fewer departure points, with tighter control enforced by both local and European authorities, are leading to an increase in violent interceptions. People are trapped in Tunisia. People from Central and Western Africa additionally face another border in the shape of structural racism and are stuck in a limbo: They are obliged to accept to live in dangerous conditions within the olive camps and constantly risk deportation to the desert or accept the so-called “voluntary return” programs managed by IOM.

While arrivals from Tunisia drastically decrease for the above reasons, people are still managing to arrive in Lampedusa from Libya: 56 boats arrived in January, 32 in February and 26 in March. Most departures originated from Libyan northwestern coastal towns. According to our data, 2/3 of the boats came from Zuwara, 1/4 from Sabratha and only a few from Zawiya. While now all the boats are coming from these places, during the same months last year, boats from Libya were also departing from Tajoura and Ras Ajdir.

Frontex coast guards in the port of Lampedusa



Frontex activities in Lampedusa

Focusing on Lampedusa, we can see the externalisation of borders in the overall presence of Frontex on the island. Since 2006, Frontex has been active here, hosting one of the largest Frontex operations called Themis in 2018 and gradually expanding their area of influence. Over the last years Frontex has deployed more Coastal Patrol Boats for maritime surveillance. As of April 2025, four vessels are operating, with national coast guards from Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, and Romania.

These actors take part in joint training exercises with Italian authorities, such as the Italian Coast Guard and the Guardia di Finanza. All of the patrol boats are involved in Law enforcement procedures at sea and the number of patrolling hours are expected to increase according to Frontex. Speaking of the various coast guards—particularly the Swedish one—it is important to highlight that, during sea rescue operations, they are equipped with firearms, which we believe are out of place in such a context.

Italy has increased its collaboration with Frontex in recent years. More than 40 Frontex officers and staff are currently on Lampedusa, assisting Italian authorities with the identification and registration of the arriving people. Their inland teams, mainly



composed of Frontex officers and cultural mediators, operate both within the Lampedusa hotspot and directly on the pier, where they begin the so-called 'screening operations'. During these operations, they collect detailed information about the journey—how people reached Lampedusa and what tools they used to navigate - all in preparation for the 'debriefing sessions' held in the Frontex office inside the hotspot, aimed at identifying possible drivers and facilitators.

At the same time, Frontex uses two planes and one helicopter, flying two to five times a day. They monitor the Tunisian and Libyan corridor daily, constantly searching for boats. During these flights, they not only spot vessels but also take pictures to collect data on the boats and to identify potential drivers. The aerial surveillance conducted by the EU border agency Frontex enables increased tracking of boats at sea, with coordinates and information often forwarded to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. This cooperation once again puts lives at risk, as people fleeing Libya are intercepted and forcibly returned, violating the principle of non-refoulement.

Frontex and European Agencies in Tunisia

While we do not yet have full clarity on Frontex's aerial involvement with Tunisian authorities operating at sea, there are strong indications of the agency's growing interest in collaborating with Tunisia. Multiple visits have been made by Tunisian officials and delegations from the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs to Frontex headquarters. In addition to that, Frontex has deployed a European Migration Liaison Officer to the EU Delegation in Tunis since 2018. Meanwhile, officers from Tunisia's Anti-Crime Police Brigade of al-Gorjani have also been present in recent years, working alongside Italian police and Frontex officials within the Lampedusa hotspot, to enhance tools and methods for identifying criminalised profiles on both sides of the shore.

These developments are in line with public statements by Italy, Austria, and other EU Member States regarding increased logistical support for Tunisia's maritime forces (Garde Nationale Maritime, supported by ICMPD in the framework of the 'Border Management Programme for the Maghreb Region'), with the explicit goal of blocking departures from the country's coast. What is being promoted is a continuous exchange and growing transfer of knowledge, techniques, and strategies aimed at improving the "effectiveness" of preventing people from leaving Tunisia, a country ruled by an authoritarian police regime. In April 2025, more than

40 opposition figures were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 13 to 66 years on charges of conspiracy against the state and attempting to overthrow President Kais Saied. At the same time, people on the move from West and Central Africa face daily police violence, structural racism, and a high risk of deportation and abuse under the border regime.

The EU regardless, continues to label Tunisia as 'safe', primarily in pursuit of its interests. As the Frontex Executive Director stated: "Together, we embrace the shared responsibility of safeguarding the EU's external borders." His words make it clear: surveillance operations deployed by the agency have never been about ensuring the safety of people on the move, but rather about protecting European territory from their arrival.

The criminalisation of those who facilitate the journey seen from the pier

Another method of border management is the criminalization of those who facilitate the journey. In 2024 the majority of arrests of boat drivers happened in the ports located along Eastern Sicily (Pozzallo, Syracuse) and the Calabrian Ionian coast (Roccella and Crotona). Second most arrests took place in Marsala, Agrigento, Ragusa, Catania and Leuca. The arrests usually occur directly after the disembarkation or on the same day.



On the **9th of April**, just after disembarking a ship of the civil fleet in Salerno port, three Egyptians went into pre-trial detention on the basis of the testimonies of other passengers and possible videos and photos from the journey. We want to take this recent incident, which is a recurring issue, as a reminder of the reality that many people face after reaching Italian/ European shores. For many people, arriving in **Italy doesn't mean safety**, but up to 30 years in prisons and often afterwards going to detention centres for deportation (CPR) for a maximum of 18 months. Most of the criminalization of drivers happens in ports, where also civil fleet ships

are disembarking. People that just arrived after a dangerous journey are being interrogated via direct and indirect questions to find different hints for possible accusations. As civil actors, it is our responsibility to try as best as we can to prevent these arrests from happening **by prioritizing giving proper knowledge to equip them to resist. We urgently call civil fleet actors to keep in mind the reality people are facing after disembarking and for collective reflection on to what extent Italy and Europe can be considered safe.**

Accusations are often directed solely on the ground of nationality. That ends up in a clear tendency to target the minorities of nationalities on the boat. The largest group who was accused of boat driving in 2024 were Egyptian citizens, according to the report "From sea to prison". The second-largest group targeted was from East Africa (Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea), followed by Tunisia. Moreover, people who come from countries that are related to fishing are often targeted because of possible nautical knowledge, such as Gambian, Sudanese, Senegalese, Tunisian, Egyptian and Moroccan people.

The penalty system of Italy and other European states follows a racist narrative. Authorities are applying racial profiling and furthermore, people accused of facilitating freedom of movement do not have the same rights as European citizens. While often sole suspicion seems to be enough for detention, the accusations are based on insufficient proof. It disregards the complex and dangerous reality people are facing in the departure countries.

Often people keep on reporting that they did not have the choice to drive the boat. A young Ethiopian man in April 2025 told us: **"You don't have a choice to drive the boat. The Libyans tell you, with the gun in their hands, that you have to drive the boat. If you don't do it, they will shoot you."** And even when individuals choose to be the drivers, because of their previous experience and nautical knowledge, they share the perilous journey of the crossing. The lives of people are being used as a political tool, not seeing the reality of migration dynamics. Allowing others to not die at sea and reaching the Italian shores. **How can Europe justify criminalizing drivers and solidarity for such an existential part of seeking freedom?**

Maldusa Project

Website: <https://www.maldusa.org>

HIGH ALERT IN TUNISIA

BULLDOZERS, FIRE AND IOM FENCED CAMPS AGAIN

According to the European Commission, the Meloni government and the forthcoming German government, Tunisia is a Safe Country. But this is not the main reason for us to keep an eye on what is happening there: Tunisia is opening a new chapter in the EU's war against Black African migrants. The makeshift Camps are being demolished with bulldozers and fire. 30.000 persons are losing their last resources. Hundreds are gathering in front of the regional IOM offices, and in Tunis, asking for "voluntary return". New gated camps are being set up, by the Tunisian military and by IOM, in the desert and at the Algerian border.

Echoes and migration-control info have repeatedly reported on the developments in Tunisia, after the racist speech of President Saïed and the EU Tunisia Deal in 2023, and the illegal mass deportations and dumping of African migrants in the desert. Black Africans were driven out of cities like Tunis and Sfax, and found refuge in makeshift camps under the olive trees along the main road, running from Sfax to the North. The camps were situated between km 10 and 40, near the smaller towns of El Amra and Jebiniana. In the course of time, some relevant structures of survival were developed in these camps, like bathing tents, clinics, cooking tents, a mosque area, education sites for children, some sports facilities, and even a court for clearing disputes. There were 36 camps counted: 19 in Al-Amra (between kilometres 20 and 30) and 17 in Jebiniana (between kilometers 31 and 40).



Refugees protesting in front of the UNHCR headquarters in Tunis, March 2023

However, the situation in the camps worsened constantly, especially due to the fact that the passage to Lampedusa became more dangerous and complicated. The cruel efficiency of the EU-equipped Tunisian Coast Guard and supported by Frontex drones resulted in People on the Move being stranded in Tunisia in horrendous conditions. The

poverty of the different communities also increased: migrants from West African regions of crisis could no longer be supported by their families, and migrants from the refugee camps in Darfur and Chad came without any money at all. The search for survival caused some problems with the local population, feeding racial prejudices.

As Le Monde wrote: „*Reaching the Italian island of Lampedusa from the beaches of Chebba or Salakta has become almost impossible. Since January 1, only 432 migrants have managed to reach it, aboard makeshift vessels, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They were over 18,000 during the same period two years ago.*“

On April 3, the spokesman of the Tunisian National Guard, Houssein El Din Jebabli announced that the camps would be dismantled. In the so-called olive grove area, the operations to clear the tent cities have been going on for weeks now. The National Guard threatened that any person who would not ask IOM for repatriation would be dumped in the desert.

Several reports on the situation have been published by Nawaat, and France24 (06.04.25). Detailed accounts were given by by Mirco Keilberth in ND 09.04.25, and ND 14.04.25, as well as in Le Monde, 19.04.25.

Many of the refugees have relocated elsewhere, and some are trying to hide even deeper in the olive plantations. While hundreds are gathering in front of the IOM offices, the organization says that repatriations might take months to organize. There are however rumours about a new IOM camp to be set up West of Beja. This camp would be strategically located in a valley with steep mountain slopes at the Border to Algeria, so that the Tunisian guards would only have to guard one side of that valley. It has also been said that the Tunisian military would open a militarized detention camp in the desert of Remada, which is a restricted military zone, where African migrants would be concentrated.

The Meloni government has just recently transferred 20 million Euros to deal with the migrants, and it seems that this money is not used for lifts home, but for detention facilities. Remember Choucha? IOM is big in this game, again.

Migration-Control.info

Website: migration-control.info

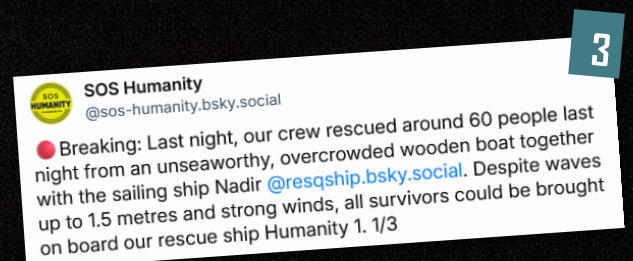
IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

A DIARY OF RESCUE COORDINATION BY CIVIL ACTORS IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The following section provides an overview of the level and impact of rescue coordination by civil actors in the Central Mediterranean Sea, using brief reports and social media extracts.

MARCH 2025

March 1	The aircraft Seabird and Alarm Phone warns from the danger of an illegal pullback to Tunisia: 32 people in distress prior seen by Frontex are stuck on Miskar oil platform in international waters. Actors of the civil fleet and several Tunisian organisations stress for days that the European states should act and rescue the persons. Nevertheless, the 32 people are left for days on the gas platform in the Mediterranean without any help from European states until the Aurora takes them on board on the 4th of March (see report on page 7).
March 8	Under challenging conditions, the Sea-Watch and Sea-Eye crew rescued 42 people from an overcrowded boat in the night. The people are taken safely on board the SEA-EYE 4 . Italian authorities assign the port of Crotone, approximately 740 kilometers away.
March 9	The crew of Sea-Watch and Sea-Eye comes to the aid of another 80 people in distress in three rescue operations.
March 10	The team on the Ocean Viking rescues 25 people from distress following an alert from Alarm Phone . Among the rescued persons are women, unaccompanied minors and babies (1).
March 13	Only hours after arriving in the operational area, the Nadir finds an overcrowded rubber boat with 40 people on board at night. The crew accompanies them and requests an immediate evacuation for 1 unconscious person. The Italian coast guard evacuates everyone.
March 15	In the early morning, the Aurora rescues 17 people from a boat in distress.
March 18	The Nadir finds a rubber boat in distress near an oil platform off Libya. Approximately 67 people are in distress. Around 25 people are in the water. The crew recovers people from the water and the shipwreck to the ship. Yet, at least 1 person reportedly remains missing. Survivors are disembarked in Lampedusa. Sea-Watch and the Nadir jointly rescue 28 people from another boat in distress.
March 24	With support from the aircraft Seabird and Alarm Phone the rescue ship Aurora attends a boat in strong winds and high waves. Aurora's crew hands out life vests and secures the 85 people before the Italian coastguard finally arrives to take the people on board (2). During the night, Humanity1 rescues around 60 people from an unseaworthy, overcrowded wooden boat together with the sailing ship Nadir . Despite waves up to 1.5 metres and strong winds, all survivors can be brought on board the rescue ship Humanity (3).



MISKAR CASE: PEOPLE ON THE MOVE AND THE CIVIL FLEET FIGHTING SIDE BY SIDE FOR 4 DAYS

*For 4 days, a group of 32 people who had set sail from Zuwara fought for their right to freedom of movement. After landing on a gas platform (in international waters and overlapping Maltese and Tunisian SAR zones) under Tunisian jurisdiction, they faced non-assistance and indifference from the states. On both sides of the Mediterranean, civil society mobilized to amplify the voices of the stranded people: several organizations joined forces to alert the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, while Tunisian civil society launched an appeal for the people to be immediately rescued and taken to a safe place. After four days of struggle, the people were rescued by Aurora, Sea Watch's rescue boat. They agreed to be evacuated by crane from the platform only after receiving guarantees that they would not be returned to Libya or Tunisia. We celebrate their victory with them. **Solidarity won!***

1st of March

01:45 – Alarm Phone alerts the authorities about a boat in distress at sea in position N34 13 740 E011 56 708 (international waters, in the Tunisian and Libyan overlapping SAR zones). The boat carries 32 people. The people on the boat report that they have departed from Zuwara and that they are now adrift.

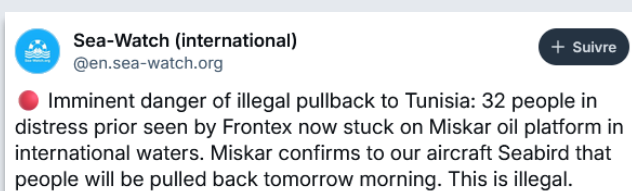
07:21 - The Italian authorities send an "Inmarsat" message to all ships informing them "on behalf of the Libyan Navy" about a boat adrift at sea.

09:00 – Alarm Phone receives the information from the Libyan coast guards that they have currently no vessel available to search for the boat in distress.

12:52 – Alarm Phone calls the Tunisian coast guards. They report that the boat in distress is under the Miskar oil platform but say they cannot launch a rescue operation at the time being as the weather is too bad.

14:53 – The civilian monitoring plane Seabird1 from Sea watch takes off from Lampedusa to check the situation of the survivors on the Miskar platform. On scene, they report the presence of a Frontex aircraft and the supply vessel MARIDIVE 518 in the vicinity. Seabird1 calls the platform, which says that 32 people are on the structure and that the Tunisian navy was planning to launch a rescue operation the day after.

18:28 – Sea Watch tweets to report about Seabird flight:



Despite many attempts during the day, Alarm Phone does not manage to reach the people on the platform.

2nd of March

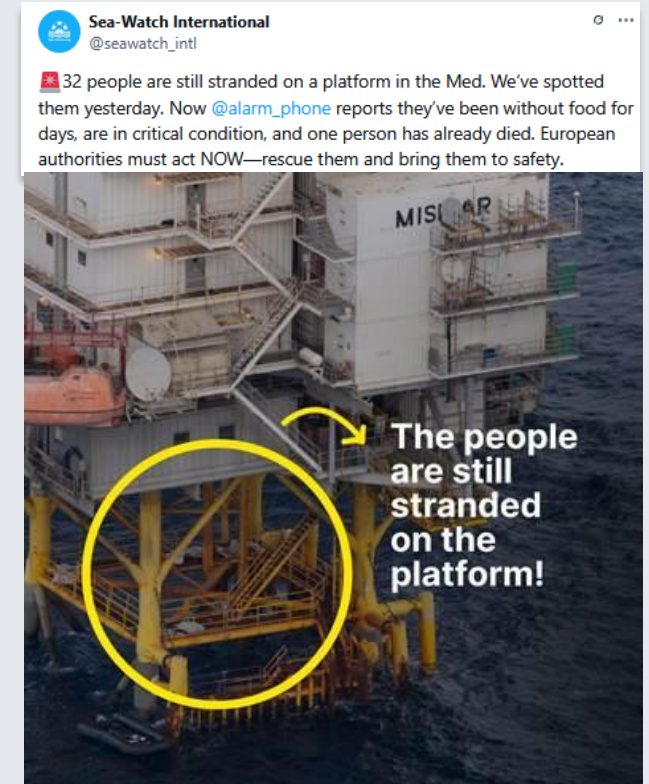
09:11 – Alarm Phone tweets about the situation of the stranded people:



11:20 – Alarm Phone is called by different survivors who report from the platform that they have not eaten for days and that one of the people died. The hotline is also called by different relatives, worried about the fate of their loved ones.

During the afternoon, Alarm Phone continues to receive calls from the people stuck on the platform. They report to be extremely tired. They are afraid to be returned to Tunisia or left to die on the platform. Coast guards remain irresponsible over the phone despite many calls.

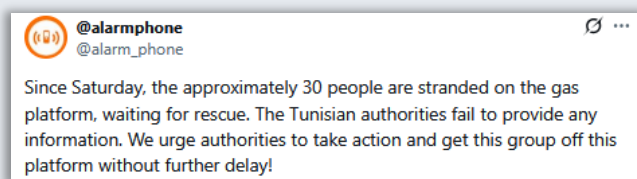
19:25 – Tweet from Sea Watch



19:59 – Alarm Phone calls the Miskar platform. The person replies that the survivors are safe and were given food but that they are in bad condition. The workers on the platform do not have information about a potential rescue operation.

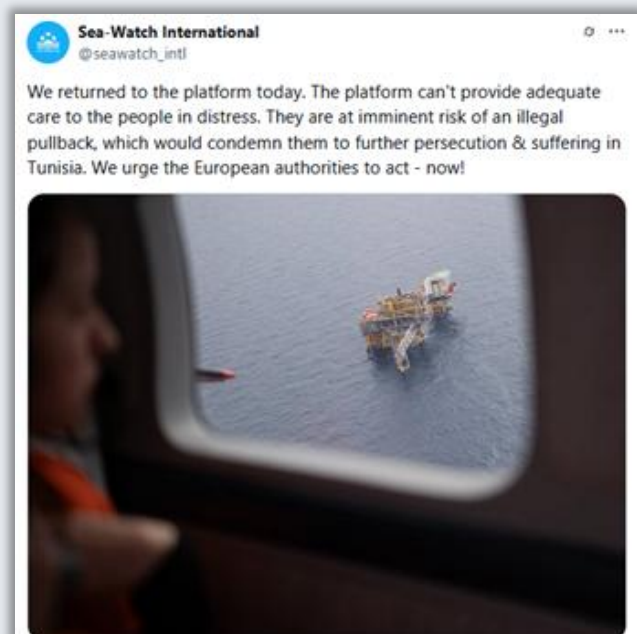
3rd of March

09:49 – Alarm Phone shared another tweet about the case:



13:08 – Sea Watch alerts authorities again about the situation of the people stranded on the platform after a monitoring flight of their aircraft, Seabird1. After calling the platform, the crew confirms that 32 people are still left without assistance.

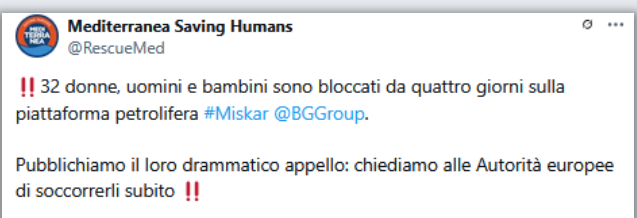
18:08 – New tweet from Sea Watch



During the day, Alarmphone continues to receive calls from the people stranded on the platform desperately asking for help. The Tunisian authorities remain irresponsible. Videos taken from the platform by survivors start to be circulated on social media.

4th of March

10:39 – Mediterranea Saving Humans shares a tweet calling the European authorities to act



11:43 – Alarm phone sends another email to authorities to urge them to provide assistance.

11:47 – Sea Watch informs by email all relevant authorities about deployment of their rescue asset Aurora en route to the Miskar platform.

12:00 – Initiated by the Tunisian civil society, a statement is published to urge authorities to rescue the people



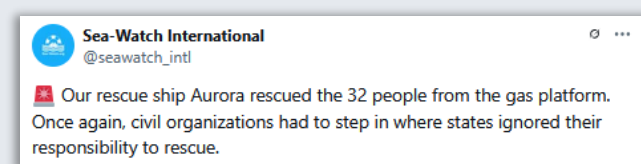
12:55 - The rescue ship Aurora approaches the area near the Miskar platform. The crew reports on scene a Tunisian Navy asset and the merchant vessel Maridive 703.

13:18 - Miskar establishes communication with Aurora while engaging in Arabic with the Tunisian Navy asset. It is communicated that the Tunisian authorities have undertaken coordination and are requesting the transshipment of the survivors from Maridive 703.

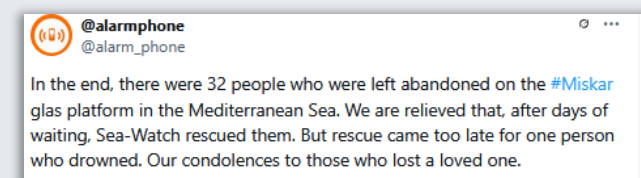
13:58 - The craning operation of rescued survivors from the Miskar platform to the Maridive 703 begins.

14:35 - Aurora confirms that they will proceed with the transshipment of the survivors from Maridive 703.

16:07 - All people are embarked on board Aurora



19:57 - Tweet from Alarm Phone



Earlier in the day, following an urgent request by UpRights, StraLi, and SOS Humanity, the United Nations Human Rights Committee has, for the first time, ordered Malta to take immediate action to fulfill its obligations under international law. The Committee instructed Malta to urgently coordinate a search and rescue operation for the survivors stranded on the Miskar gas platform (cf. *Legal fragment on p. 15*).

APRIL 2025

April 3

During the night, the crew of **Humanity1** rescues about 90 people (1). The crew is on the way to another distress case when they discover an unseaworthy wooden boat with around 50 people. Everyone can be brought on board the Humanity 1. The originally targeted boat is an unseaworthy iron boat, which in the meantime is sheltered by a tanker. The approximately 40 people on board can also be rescued. **Alarm Phone** was in touch with one of the boats.

April 5

The **Aita Mari** rescues 108 people in the central Mediterranean. They were located on two boats in serious danger, including 13 women and 13 children (2).

April 13

Alarm Phone informs about around 67 people in distress off Tunisia. After alerting all authorities to the severe distress at 8:30 am, hours of non-assistance pass. Despite being only 40 miles off Tunisia and 50 miles off Lampedusa, it is thanks only to the Civil Fleet and **Aurora** that the people are brought to safety.

April 20

Extreme swell, pitch black night, dehydrated people: On Easter Sunday, the **SEA EYES** receives a distress call via **Alarm Phone**: 76 people in a double-decker wooden boat. After more than 3 hours of hard work, the crew brings all the survivors on board after midnight (3).

April 22

The **Nadir** rescues 92 people from two boats in distress. One of them was reported missing for 4 days. After **Alarm Phone** reported about a boat in distress, in the night the crew finds the 50 people on a wooden boat and evacuates everyone onto Nadir. On their way to Lampedusa, they find another boat in distress. It turns out to be an iron boat Nadir was searching for before the storm hit. The iron boat with 42 people on board was missing since the weekend.

April 26

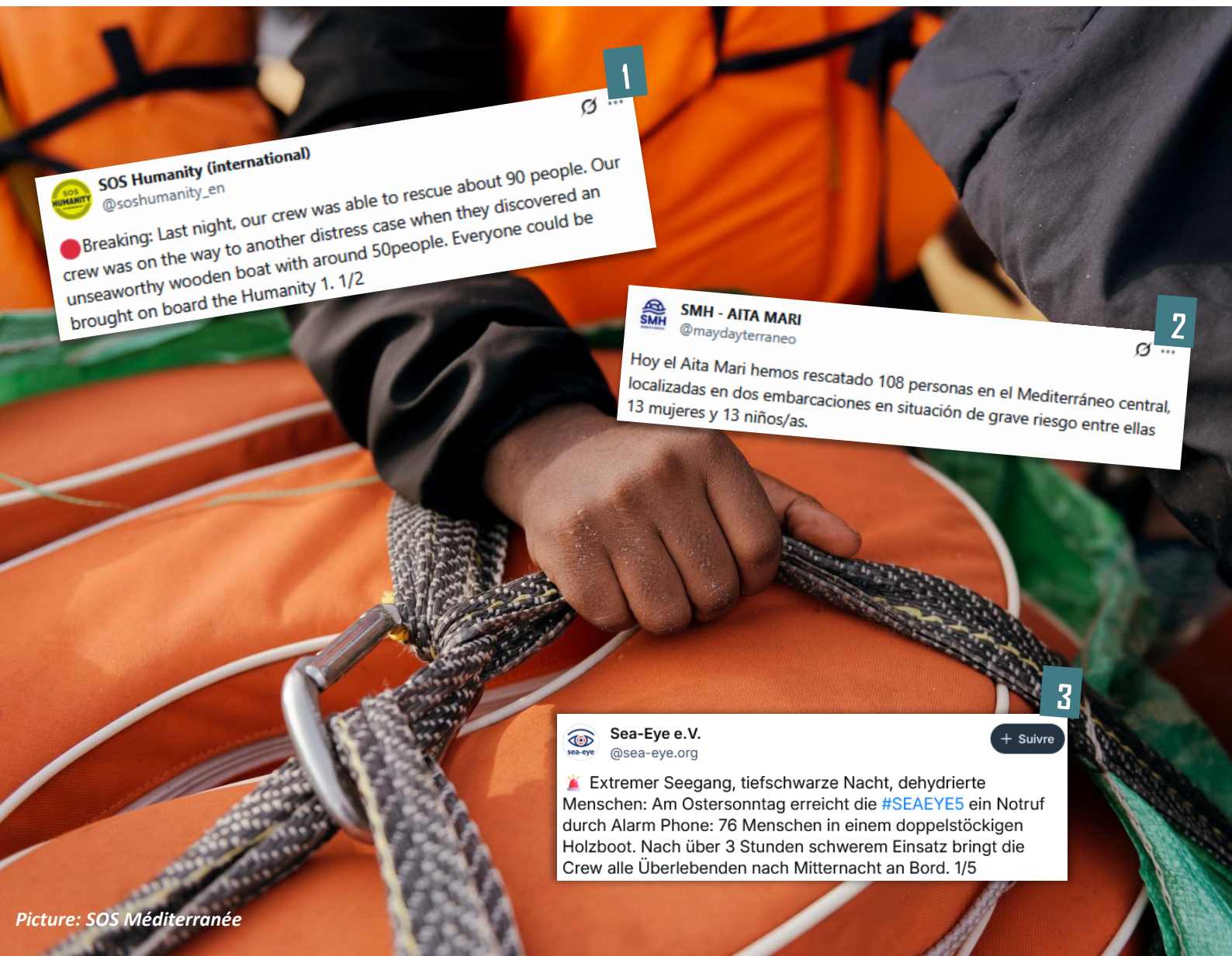
Early morning, **Ocean Viking** spots a white overcrowded fiberglass boat. 59 survivors are taken on board.

April 27

Ocean Viking rescues 67 people on a boat in distress at imminent risk of capsizing.

April 28

Following an **Alarm Phone** alert, **Aurora** supports two boats in distress. The crew provides life jackets & food until the Italian coastguard takes everyone on board. One medical case is evacuated by the Aurora crew to Lampedusa.



SOS Humanity (international)
@soshumanity_en

● Breaking: Last night, our crew was able to rescue about 90 people. Our crew was on the way to another distress case when they discovered an unseaworthy wooden boat with around 50 people. Everyone could be brought on board the Humanity 1. 1/2

SMH - AITA MARI
@maydayteraneo

Hoy el Aita Mari hemos rescatado 108 personas en el Mediterráneo central, localizadas en dos embarcaciones en situación de grave riesgo entre ellas 13 mujeres y 13 niños/as.



Sea-Eye e.V.
@sea-eye.org

+ Suivre

🔥 Extremer Seegang, tiefschwarze Nacht, dehydrierte Menschen: Am Ostersonntag erreicht die #SEA EYES ein Notruf durch Alarm Phone: 76 Menschen in einem doppelstöckigen Holzboot. Nach über 3 Stunden schwerem Einsatz bringt die Crew alle Überlebenden nach Mitternacht an Bord. 1/5

ANALYSIS

THE WHITE GAZE: COLONIAL REPRESENTATIONS WITHIN SOLIDARITY STRUCTURES

In our struggles against borders, we are often confronted with difficult questions around media representations of the violence we witness. We are witnesses of atrocious violence experienced by people on the move. We witness people's deaths, people's desperation, people's calls for help. And we, as SAR structures and no-border groups, are often the only critical gaze on this violence.

The violence we witness is often made invisible by authorities, who try to deceive their role in orchestrating it. It is therefore our responsibility to make it visible, as to denounce not only the border regimes, but also the dynamics under which these abuses are taking place. It is our responsibility to make visible that violence and death at the border are not accidental but systemic, that violence is endemic to borders rather than their unintended consequence. It is our responsibility to point fingers not towards allegedly dangerous traffickers who put people in danger, but towards authorities that create, design and implement borders and their militarisation. It is also our responsibility to demonstrate that if there were no borders there would be no death and violence. In grappling with this responsibility, we are always trying to develop our collective analysis and practices through self-critique and self-reflection. It is trial and error, and a collective process we are constantly engaged in.

With this responsibility, indeed, several questions and dilemma emerge:

- How to represent violence experienced by people: what are the consequences of these representations? And how they might contribute to people's essentialisation merely as 'vulnerable' or 'suffering' subjects, and somehow to their dehumanisation?
- How to avoid the paternalistic over-victimisation of the people we encounter in our struggle against borders, but also how to avoid over-romanticisation of their 'agency'?
- How do we mobilise 'outrage' about border violence, while avoiding the spectacularization of people's suffering, the exposure of their bodies and again a narration that reduces them to the single experience of being 'objects' of violence?
- How to politicise this outrage, whilst at the same time avoiding turning it into an exercise of 'training' white eyes to violence? How to avoid placing mostly white, mostly European voices, emotions, and our life-saving heroic actions at the centre of the narration of this struggle?
- How do we denounce externalisation deals, but also overcome the civilising language that portrays non-EU actors or (to a lesser extent) Southern and Eastern European actors, civil societies and institutions as primitive, corrupt, criminal human right violators, etc, while Europe, and Central and Northern Europe in particular, is described as 'safe', 'lawful' and human-rights oriented?
- How do we take care of each other and of the people we encounter, without centering ourselves and our feelings or avoiding paternalistic approaches?

These questions are not new to any of us, nor are they new historically. People in the struggle for Black liberation have been interrogating themselves on similar questions in their fight against the oppression of Black people in the USA, as well as in the struggle for the abolition of slavery. Whilst, as we know, slavery and migration should not be conflated, as to avoid reducing the migration experience and subjectivity to one of enslaved subjects without agency, we have much to learn from these struggles for liberation and abolition. They teach us how to centre struggles and resistance of those enslaved, imprisoned and oppressed. Many of us are indeed inspired by the underground railroads in our organising structures for the abolition of borders.

Black feminist Sadiya Hartman, in her book 'Scenes of subjection' (1997), powerfully interrogates the role of images, language and narratives, and brings to the front many of the questions raised above. How great would it be to see this text included in the standard 'SAR training programs' followed by activists and volunteers on board of rescue ships, or for anyone organising media work for our structures, as well as legal and advocacy work.

The colonial gaze

Sadiya Hartman, in her account of slavery, refuses to engage with imaginaries of violence and torture as

they reinforce 'the spectacular character of Black suffering'. What is the boundary, she asks, between becoming a witness of horror and becoming a 'voyeur' and spectator? According to her, these images are not useful in inciting indignation. On the contrary, 'they immune us to pain by virtue of their familiarity'. How can we communicate the violence without letting the reader stop to a merely compassionate movement? How can we politicise these sentiments and create a more complex analysis of the context from which the violence is coming from?

Black Feminist Christina Sharpe, in her book 'In The Wake' resonates with Hartman's arguments, how the reproduction of violence inflicted on black bodies is not a weapon against white supremacy - as on the contrary it keeps reproducing imaginaries of Black and brown bodies as subject of violence, victimisation and dehumanisation.

Rescued people, indeed, often become *sacred* victims, completely de-historicised. Through a narrative centered on the rescue, NGOs risk sanctifying the existence of the people whose past is oblivion. More interestingly, the people's future is also very uncertain. To an EU-white gaze, people start existing in the moment of distress and rescue. They start existing in the moment 'we' (very often the - white - narrating voice) 'see' them, and 'save' them'. Being in danger and needing help is constitutive of our construction of the migrant experience. Our narratives bring migrants into life in the moment they need to be 'saved', but there is no historicization of their journey, of their trajectories, of their existence before and after rescue. Violence and violation of one's body and existence are the first moment people appear and start to exist in European world-views, imaginaries and narratives. From this point of view, their existence not only depends on the 'rescuer' but 'originates from the rescue'.

In this perspective, the reasons why they have to be rescued are forgotten, the responsibilities for such endangerment disappear. Neo-colonial relations between Europe and the countries of the Global South are veiled, and rescue becomes the apex moment of a routinised, dehumanised encounter. What happens "before" is in many cases idealised and essentialised, through images of supposedly undefined "hells".

If, however, there are not so many qualms, on the part of many NGOs, in denouncing in a generalist manner 'the Libyan horrors' or 'Tunisian racism', there does not seem to be an equally careful analysis of the racist, discriminatory and exclusionary regime

of the Italian and European reception system, for example, or more generally of the progressive steps towards the hollowing out from within of the right to asylum in Europe. Thus, communications from various NGOs read: 'We have torn them away from the Libyan horrors. Welcome finally to Italy, where you will be safe, and your rights will be respected'.

Libya and Tunisia, without distinction between governmental actors, militias and civil society, become a metaphor for abhorrent and inhuman evil, apparently lose any connection with those supposedly very human, European actors who have sanctioned neocolonial agreements with those states to externalise borders. If attempts to control migration and stop departures pass through profitable agreements with the elites of third countries and attempt to reduce them to watchdogs on Europe's borders, the protests of civil societies are strong and documented. However, very often this is not taken into account or visibilized, strengthening colonial narratives of 'savage', 'uncivilised' or 'primitive' countries where illegality and corruption reigns, as opposed to a 'safe' and 'civilised' and humanitarian Europe.

In Hartman's analyses, the circulation of these imaginaries makes it impossible to imagine the relationships between Black and white outside of these channels and paradigms. Whilst often these imaginaries are circulated in the name of the fight against racism, they can constitute one of the pillars on which racist narratives and worldviews are built. This way even border abolitionists can become complicit in reinforcing conceptions of abject 'otherness' while trying to challenge it.

In Europe, with a few exceptions of collaborations between self-organised migrant groups (i.e. Refugees in Libya, Boza Fil, Alarm Phone network), migrants' experiences and voices are often only heard when gathered and reproduced by NGOs or by international organisations. This way, their words are systematically reduced to 'testimonies of violence' rather than political claims and analyses. A key question, therefore, is how to center migrants, activists and solidarity voices, analysis and slogans from the Global South, without reducing them to cries for help? How can we amplify the voices of anger and grief and call for justice of those crossing borders without replacing them?

Indignation, self-celebration and commodification

As SAR actors, we experience first hand how borders harm the people who try to defy them. We might see

people being killed, injured, arrested, separated from their loved ones, maintained in illegality for years. And we are definitely affected. But even if some of us might feel empathy, indignation, anger, or even burn out, the lives of those of us with passport-privilege return to their 'normality' as soon as they decide to take distance or disengage.

A militant practice of caring for one another within our structures needs to bring to the table what it means to expose oneself to the violence experienced in witnessing it. At the same time, we must be careful not to make the mistake of centring this topic at the *public* level. In fact, this risks placing the focus mostly on the traumatised rescuer-hero, allowing to forget once more the structural dynamics in which the violence takes place and on those who have experienced the violence themselves.

In many cases, the latter - unlike the rescuers - have to expose themselves to the risk of the violence and do not have access to the support structures and networks to which rescuers have access instead (although, let's face it, it is often too limited as well). In this process, eventually, the pain of those harmed is amplified and spectacularized, but never attended to. Little is said or done to repair or transform the harm experienced, or to subvert the constellations of violent regimes that have made people disproportionately vulnerable to state-sponsored exploitation, abuse, or premature death in the first place.

In the poem 'The White Man's Burden' (1899) Rudyard Kipling argues that the task of the white man is to give "green light for colonialism and at the same time put the other non-white only in the weak rank that needs protection and needs to be led to light.". We self-celebrate ourselves for 'saving' people from the black hole of the Mediterranean Sea, of African brutal regimes and from immense suffering. We celebrate our life-saving missions for bringing them to enlightened Europe, bringing them to life again or restoring their lost humanity.

Indignation and self-celebration allow people to take distance from an understanding of the roots of the problem of border violence, of the colonial and neocolonial structures reinforcing racism and borders, and of the responsibility we have in reproducing them even though we try to dismantle them.

Pain and suffering is often displayed to mobilise indignation to raise funds for our organisations, rather than a tool to incite mobilisation. Whilst we do need money to mobilise against borders, if this

money is the value extracted from the spectacularization of suffering we risk turning people's bodies and pain into merchandise. Indignant spectators take action by donating money, they feel they have done something to resolve their discomfort, and delegate to us the fight against borders. We, in turn, support our morally upright way of life, create jobs for ourselves, undertake NGO or academic careers specialising on this topic, finance meetings, travel costs, hotels and media campaigns that centre our voices and experiences. Besides, our friends and relatives praise us for our life-saving work.

In other words, we profit, both materially and symbolically from border violence, even when we argue that we are here to end it. This is a well known critique of humanitarianism and of the humanitarian business when white European organisations intervene in the Global South. However, it is not often reflected upon in the context of struggles against the EU border regime. The question is, how do we want to keep participating in this, and *how can our struggle against borders contribute to dismantling our own SAR structures?* How do we go beyond legitimising our work as necessary, and instead organise to make our work useless? If we take this question seriously, any act of legitimisation of our means should be weighed and considered as a legitimisation of the structures that make this work necessary.

A politics of refusal and fugitivity

After drafting the words above, we run into a very important article by Annika Lindberg, which resonates with much of what we argued above. Annika's article reminds us that European interlocking structures of violence and dehumanisation are colonially rooted and racist, and as such "should not be considered an aberration but systemic and foundational to the European border regime" and it is inflicted at a physical, existential, as well as epistemological level (the latter referring to how we know and how we make sense of the world through narratives, categories and imaginaries). She focuses on the practices of academic research into border violence, questioning to what extent visibilisation of border harm reproduces rather than erases this violence.

In Annika Lindberg's analysis, one of the key legitimization for making border violence visible is the need to counter-act EU authorities' attempts to invisibilise harm, obscure their responsibility, or portray it as exceptional, as well as the need to make authorities accountable for the violence they exercise. This, following also Kotef's work on

Palestine, overlooks how the spectacle of violence is actually welcome and necessary, in most contexts, to justify border controls. Whilst at times useful, rather than indignation it produces consent by the largest sections of society, and keeps reproducing the understanding that they might be exceptional or unintended consequences of border regimes rather than intended, deliberate and central tools for their operation.

The reconstruction of the June 2022 Melilla massacre produced by El Pais and Lighthouse report can be a relevant example here. When watching it in Lampedusa, during a CommemorAction event, we could not avoid questioning to what extent these imaginaries of border deaths are reinforcing borders rather than challenging them, spectacularising and somehow participating in visiblising the somehow lethal powers of border authorities, objectifying and dehumanising those who are subjected to this absolute violence, as well as serving governments' interests in producing fear amongst potential border crossers.

Drawing on Tuck and Yang work, Annika concludes the article by inviting researchers and activists to engage in a politics of refusal to produce knowledge that reproduces oppression, and to make way for prefigurative imaginaries that subvert imposed categories of dehumanisation and oppression.

We cannot, after all, use the masters' tools to dismantle the master's house, as bell hooks has taught us. Rather than engaging in politics of reaction, reproduction and representation, we should then engage in politics of refusal and fugitivity. A refusal to speak a language that represses and kills, a refusal to portray and narrate our brothers and sisters as oppressed victims, a refusal to play the politics of categorisation and dehumanisation. A refusal that will then open space for new escape routes to build a different world, imaginaries and social relationships that prefigure love, care for one another and liberation from borders, states, prisons and all the violence they are rooted on.

Deanna Dadusc & Jasmine Iozzelli



Alarm Phone - Commemoration organized by Alarm Phone and Boza Fii in Dakar, Senegal. October 11, 2024

LEGAL FRAGMENT

LEGAL VICTORY FOR ANOTHER REFUGEE PUSHED-BACK TO LIBYA!

In 2021, during an attempt to cross the Mediterranean to reach Italy, Adam and 170 other migrants were pushed back to Libya. This pushback was carried out by the cargo ship Vos Triton (flying the Gibraltar flag) and by Libyan militiamen, with covert coordination and substantial support by the Italian authorities.



After years of legal battles, a judge has finally recognized Italy's responsibility for the pushback, finding that the Italian authorities provided the so called Libyan coastguard with satellite coordinates for Adam's boat, and failed to prevent the pushback.

The judge acknowledged the stark reality of life in Libya for migrants: a country in which they have no rights and are at constant risk of deportation or arbitrary detention, in centres where migrants face systematic torture and abuse. The judge stated that the Italian government must have been perfectly aware of the risks faced by migrants in Libya at the time of the pushback. The court order required the Italian government to issue Adam with an entry visa, allowing him to escape the dangers of Libya and reach Italy, for his claim for asylum to be considered in a safe country.

The day Adam arrived in Rome, his life changed forever. His story is one of many that reveal the dark side of European migration policies. His case has a happy ending; so many more do not. Adam, 29, is a Sudanese refugee who had fled the conflict in his country. After arriving in Libya in 2018, he tried several times to escape by sea, but each time he was caught and taken back. Adam found new hope in May 2023, when our volunteers were investigating a pushback case from June 2021 and managed to trace some of the victims, among them Adam.

A legal and investigative team, made up of lawyers, journalists and activists, began working to bring the truth to light. The evidence, collected thanks to Sea Watch's aerial surveillance and Alarm Phone records, allowed Adam's lawyers to demonstrate the involvement of Italy in this refoulement of 170 people, a gross human rights violation. The judge found Italy responsible for the rights violation and ordered the Italian government to issue Adam a visa to allow him to enter Italy safely to allow him to seek asylum.

In the early afternoon of Sunday, March 23, 2025, Adam landed in Italy, carrying nothing but the clothes he was wearing and a copy of the court order in his case. After a lengthy police check, he walked out of the arrivals exit, to be greeted by a warm welcome from us! Thanks to Baobab he has a place to stay – they are hosting him and have included him in a reception project.

The decision of the Rome court represents an important step towards justice, paving the way for future legal actions that can help to stop the system of illegal pushbacks and uphold the right to asylum as an inviolable value.



On the JL Project website, there are hundreds of similar cases of illegal pushback involving Frontex and the Italian government. Most of them are waiting for someone to investigate them and to reach out to the victims to help them seek justice.

The JL Project

Website - jlproject.org

Blog - [Saritalibre.it](https://saritalibre.it)

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN DISTRESS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA: THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE REQUESTS MALTA TO URGENTLY ACT

On 4 March 2025, in an unprecedented decision, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee (or the Committee) requested Malta to urgently take all necessary measures to coordinate a search and rescue (SAR) operation to rescue 32 people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea and to bring them to a place of safety. For the first time, the UN Human Rights Committee has granted interim measures in a case of distress at sea. And for the first time, the Committee has applied the functional approach to jurisdiction to do so. The decision is historical: it offers a legal path to respond in real time to States negligence vis-à-vis their international obligations and a legal tool to prevent imminent risk(s) of irreparable damage(s) to the human rights of people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea.

Facts of the case: Malta failed to respond to the distress calls in its SAR zone

The decision followed the submission of an interim measures request filed by StraLi, UpRights and SOS Humanity on 3 March 2025, on behalf of 32 individuals (the co-authors of the submission) who, at

the time of filing, had been in distress at sea for more than three days.

The individuals, including 4 women, several minors, and 2 younger children, left the port of Zuwara in Libya, in an attempt to cross the Central Mediterranean - widely known as the 'deadliest migration route in the world' - to reach the shores of Europe. Shortly after departure, on 1 March 2025, the boat experienced technical failures and was, thus, unable to continue its journey. High waves and strong winds caused the boat to strand on the Miskar gas platform, in an area of the Mediterranean Sea where the Maltese and Tunisian search and rescue (SAR) zones overlap. The people in distress immediately approached the emergency hotline Alarm Phone (AP), which relayed the information regarding the distress case to the competent authorities of Malta and Italy. The individuals in distress informed AP that they did not have any supplies, including food, water and life vests, and that one person had died at sea while others were in poor health. AP conveyed this information to the relevant domestic authorities, including the Maltese authorities. They, however,



People stranded on the Miskar platform, Picture taken from Seabird (Sea Watch)

failed to respond to any communication from AP on the case at stake. The co-authors repeated the requests for urgent assistance on 2 and 3 March 2025. None of the domestic authorities acted upon these requests, nor responded at all.

The circumstances of this case are, as we know and unfortunately, common. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that conduct SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea have repeatedly reported that Maltese authorities fail to respond to distress calls by migrants in its SAR zone, leaving individuals at risk of dying at sea or of being intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) and being brought back to Libya. The UN Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) has confirmed Malta's *modus operandi* of disregarding distress calls in its SAR zone. Sea-Watch and OHCHR documented that even when Malta does respond to distress calls, it regularly coordinates interceptions by the so-called LCG in order to redirect migrants and refugees to Libya. This is in clear violation of the fundamental principles of international law: as the Council of Europe and national courts confirmed, Libya cannot be considered as a place of safety for disembarkation.

Trying something new: filing of an interim measure request at the UN Committee

In an effort to change the course of action, StraLi, UpRights and SOS Humanity (the three organisations) filed an interim measures request to the UN Human Rights Committee. An interim measure is an urgent and temporary measure that the UN Human Rights Committee can issue in circumstances in which there is an imminent risk of irreparable damage to one of the human rights safeguarded and enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

In the current case, the three organisations argued that there was an imminent risk of irreparable damage to the right of life and prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment of those individuals who have been stranded for three days on the Miskar gas platform. The people in distress were already facing the imminent risk of losing their lives at sea. One individual had already died. They were also already in circumstances that may amount to inhuman and degrading treatment, having been left without food, water and proper shelter on the high sea for days. They were also at risk of being intercepted by the so-called LCG and brought back to Libya – to re-enter the documented vicious circle of human rights violations and abuses that migrants and refugees face in the country and that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The aim of the request was to prevent such an imminent risk of irreparable damage, impacting on the 32 individuals' right to life and on their physical and psychological integrity, by demanding that Malta immediately fulfil its international obligations to coordinate or conduct search and rescue operations in its SAR zone.

The interim measure decision: application of the functional approach to jurisdiction

For the first time under the interim measures system of the ICCPR and its Optional Protocol, the Committee recognised Malta's jurisdiction by applying the functional approach. This represents a recent further development of the Committee from the so-called extraterritorial jurisdiction, which traditionally requires States to comply with their international obligations even in situations occurring outside their own territorial soil. The Committee has developed the functional approach in General Comment 36 (2019) and applied it for the first time in the cases A.S. and others v. Italy and v. Malta (2020).

According to this approach, Member States have jurisdiction over 'persons located outside any territory effectively controlled by the State whose right to life is nonetheless affected by its military or other activities in a direct and reasonably foreseeable manner'. In the case against Malta, the Committee recognised the existence of a special dependency between the individuals in distress at sea and Malta, because the boat in distress was located in the Maltese SAR region and Malta had failed to respond to the emergency calls received or take any steps to coordinate or provide a SAR operation to rescue the people at sea. It therefore concluded that 'Malta exercised effective control over the rescue operation, potentially resulting in a direct and reasonably foreseeable causal relationship between the States parties' acts and omissions and the outcome of the operation'. By granting the interim measures in similar factual circumstances, the Committee appears to have followed the same reasoning as in A.S. and others v. Malta. From a plain reading of the interim measures decision, it is clear that the Committee was convinced of the existence of Malta's jurisdiction and thus - responsibility to act - in the case at stake.

The decision on interim measures, communicated in a timely manner to the relevant Maltese authorities, demanded that Malta 'take all measures necessary to coordinate a SAR operation to rescue the 35 authors in distress, to ensure that they are not disembarked in a place where they will be at risk of torture and other forms of ill-treatment or risk to their life, and to inform the Committee about the measures taken,

while their communication is under consideration by the Committee.’ The individuals were eventually rescued by Aurora, the rescue vessel of Sea-Watch, later the same day, on the 4 March. According to the information available to StraLi, UpRights and SOS Humanity, Malta did not respond to the Committee on the matter. Despite the interim measure decision, which is authoritative and mandatory, Malta remained silent, failing once again to comply with its international obligations. Malta is in breach of the interim measures decision, and this violation may lead to legal consequences.

New opportunities: preventing the commission of human rights violations in distress cases in the Mediterranean

Obtaining a decision from the UN Human Rights Committee takes years and it implies that a human right violation was actually committed. The entire purpose of the interim measure system is to prevent imminent risk(s) of irreparable damage(s), especially in cases where the right to life and the prohibition of torture and inhumane treatment are at stake. The decision is significant because it offers a new legal path for civil society organisations to ensure that the

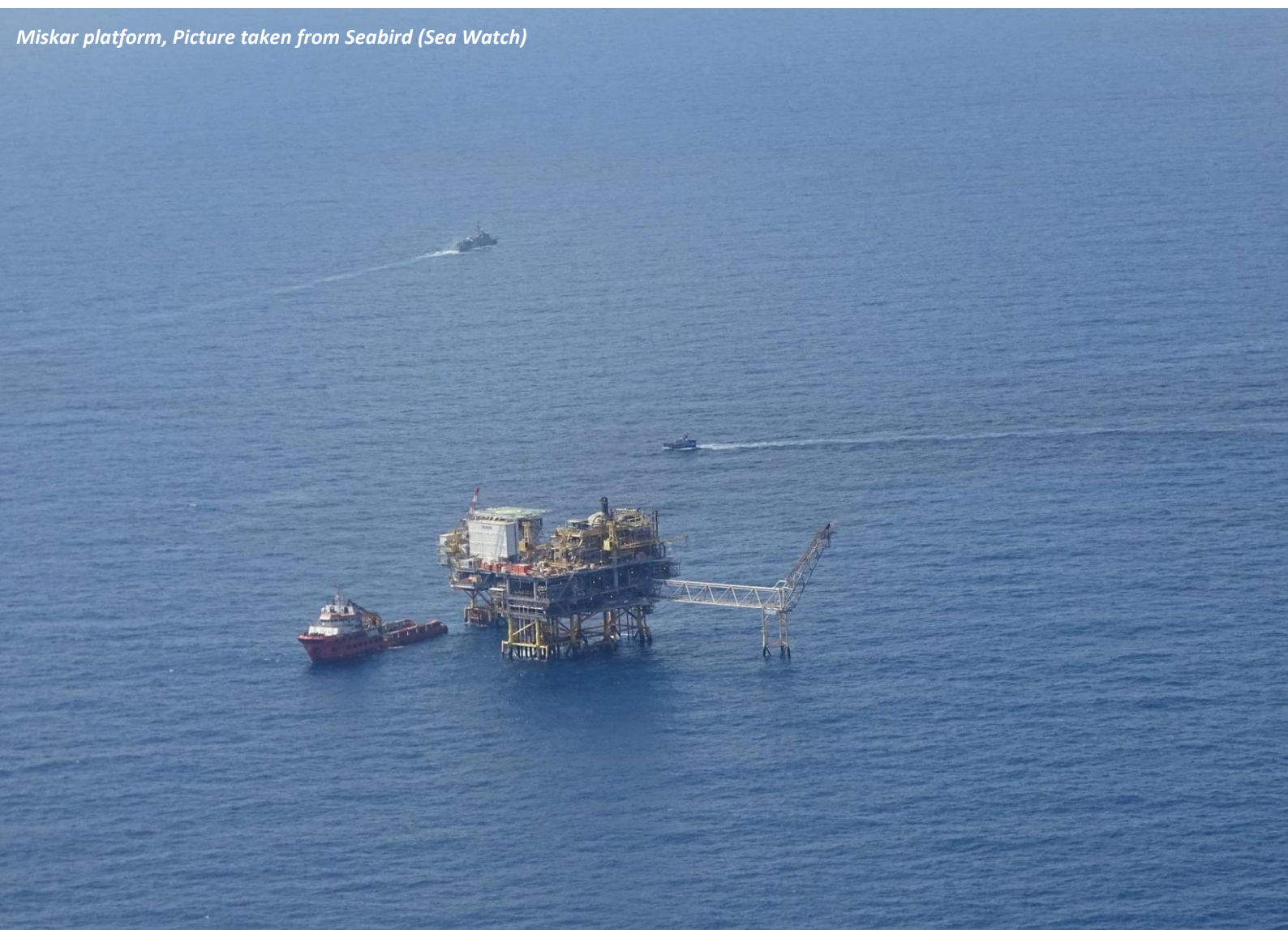
gravity of the human rights violations that migrants and refugees face in cases of distress at sea is not only acknowledged by the United Nations but, most importantly, prevented. The UN Human Rights Committee’s decision represents an historical precedent to ensure that Malta, and all the other EU Member States that turn their backs on fundamental rights and values, are immediately held accountable for their actions (or rather: inactions) towards people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea. It provides a way to increase pressure on States to ensure that they respond promptly to distress calls and make sure that people in distress at sea are disembarked in place of safety.

With this new legal tool, we hope to change the *status quo* and to ensure that distress calls are always picked up and immediately acted upon in order to reduce the number of human rights violations that are being committed by EU Member States in the Mediterranean Sea.

Serena Zanirato (StraLi and Lawyers for Justice in Libya)

Valerie Gabard (UpRights)

Miskar platform, Picture taken from Seabird (Sea Watch)



FORCED TO DISAPPEAR

RUST, MEMORY, AND RESISTANCE: THE AFTERLIFE OF A SHIPWRECK

There is a boat rusting away, abandoned in a parking lot in the port of Augusta. She is a boat strangely out of the water, carefully placed on metal trestles. Several interventions by marine engineers were required to set her there, as well as to insert the wooden blocks that keep her upright. Despite the care taken in positioning her, the boat is now hidden from view, stored in a parking lot owned by the Italian Navy, inaccessible without special authorization. She is barely visible from the peripheral road that runs alongside the port. What's more, she has been placed in a deliberately offensive manner — to the boat herself, her history, and to those who fought to have her preserved: her stern faces inland, turning her back to the sea. The hull is flayed by the traces of her violent past: there is the hole caused by a collision that sank her ten years ago; two more gashes from the recovery operations that pulled her up from the seabed; and finally, deep incisions made to extract the bodies of the migrants who were trapped inside.

She is not the only boat left to rust in that port. The port of Augusta — one of Italy's largest and deepest — with its so-called “boat cemetery,” hides several Italian political skeletons: the carcasses of discarded vessels, petrochemical pollution, and a NATO base. Around this port, and especially around this boat, Augusta's civil society gathers year after year — to call for disarmament, to protest against aquifer contamination, or to demand open borders and freedom of movement.

In this article, we would like to tell you about this shipwreck, the one of April 18, 2015 in which more than 1,200 people lost their lives — the deadliest migrant massacre known to have occurred in the Mediterranean — and the commemoration organized for the tenth anniversary of this tragedy.

The massacre

Little is currently known about the vessel before her sinking. The large blue boat is 22.5 meters long, 7.1 meters wide, and 7.5 meters high and had no name, only an inscription in Arabic, barely visible today: **بارك الله** (blessed by Allah). Probably built in Tunisia, she was then purchased by Libyan people smugglers. A boat of this size usually carries a crew of 15 members, but as the sun set on 17 of April 2015 and the boat departed from a port near Garabulli, East of Tripoli, Libya, it is estimated that there was an average of five

people per square meter, for a total of around 1,100 people, the vast majority of them crammed into the hold and engine room. The passengers on board came from a variety of routes and countries, including Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Sudan, constituting a “mixed boat” typical of the mixed migration movements that characterized that period.

The passengers were 77 miles from the Libyan coast, 112 from Malta, and 131 from Lampedusa, Italy, when the vessel began to sink. In response to a distress call, a large commercial vessel, the *King Jacob*, was advised to carry out a rescue operation, but collided with the boat and contributed to the disaster. As has been well noted, it was the failure of an action rather than inaction that resulted in the mass death, making the people die by rescue. Only 28 people survived.



Vessel King Jacob

The recovery

The day after the tragedy, when news of the massacre dominated news media and social networks, the Italian prime minister put out a press release where he committed to recovering the sunk boat with the main purpose of “providing a proper burial to those who had lost their lives”. Elevating itself to the level of an Antigone who buries the dead as a political act, the Italian government glossed over the border policies that produce those deaths, including the VISA regime that force to travel across risky route, the decision to end the Mare Nostrum search and rescue operation, and its responsibility for sending an unequipped vessel to the recovery site. Instead, the prime minister used the commemoration, the burial, to justify its own interventions. The recovery of the boat thus initiated the parable of the social life of the relics and the bodies found, i.e. means through which to perform — and be endowed with — human dignity

and the moral legitimacy of political action (see this [article](#)).

The salvage operation lasted a full year and was divided into five tranches that cost around €22 million. It is worth noting that all the salvage operations focused on recovering the boat's most 'valuable' contents, i.e. the bodies of the migrants; the hull itself was not initially considered relevant, even as forensic evidence, since the bodies and their identity "were not useful for the investigation," which aimed instead at accusing the two boat drivers of facilitating illegal immigration (public prosecutor A. Bonomo, personal communication, February 16, 2016). Italian authorities, in fact, consistently refuse to follow international obligations regarding the identification of the deceased and respect for their families' requests for truth and justice.

After an initial phase concerned with recovering the bodies from the sea-bed, a year after the tragedy the boat was lifted by a special hold and transported to the NATO base at Melilli, next to the town of Augusta. The final stage of the "Operation Melilli" focused on emptying the boat and analyzing the bodies, carried out by a team of forensic experts from the University of Milan (LABANOF), along with the DVI Unit of the Catania Scientific Police, and forensic experts from a range of Italian universities. Medical examiners and research students ascertained the deaths of 723 people, although researchers also collected the fragmentary remains of other individuals; 217 bodies had been found on the seabed near the wreck, and the others were extracted from different parts of the boat.



The anthropologist Amade M'Chreck [referred](#) to the latter operation as a complex "forensic infrastructure" within the military base, which had as its goal not only cadaveric cataloging in order to identify the people who died in the ship and centralize the data for the analyses, but also to set guidelines for future extra-judicial analyses to be performed for identifying deceased migrants. Yet, for those actors who enact "Operation Melilli", it represented an excellent prospect for study and career advancement, while in

terms of identification it could be easily defined an unsuccess.

Stories to be told

There are many stories hidden in plain sight in the history of this boat. You can glimpse them in the cuts that flay the wreck, in the splintering wood, and the dripping rust.

There is the story of how the boat was transported to the Venice Biennale — a gesture that was accused of turning the commemoration of such tragedies into a spectacle, a kind of whitewashing that exploited the suffering associated with the migrant crisis, transforming the wreck into an object for the artistic elite to mourn something morally bankrupt and macabre (see Eleonor Pynter's *Emergency in Transit*, University of California Press).

There is also the story of how the remains on board were never officially identified, despite the involvement of two cutting-edge forensic interventions. On one side, the already mentioned work of the LABANOF team in Milan. On the other, the contribution of forensic experts from the International Committee of the Red Cross, who adapted identification procedures developed in Argentina for the cases of the desaparecidos to the context of the April 18 shipwreck. Their [work](#) allowed for the reconstruction not only of the identities of the recovered bodies, but also of the web of relationships, and the social, economic, and political circumstances that led the passengers to be on that boat. Drawing on the testimonies of survivors, family members, and witnesses, this [approach](#) offers something more: a possible way out of the dead end — both political and practical — into which the forensic turn and its obsession with biological traces has often led us.

Among these stories, and probably among the more pivotal to be told, there is also that of Abas Mdai, who has been searching for news of his brother since 2015. Based on passenger reconstructions carried out by the ICRC, it is possible that Abas's brother was on that boat that tragic night. Despite DNA sampling and extensive forensic reconstruction, the Mdai family has yet to receive any news — no body to mourn, no death certificate, not even a certainty about their loved one's fate. This is a story of waiting, false hopes, and uncertainty — like that of so many others seeking truth and justice, suspended in an unresolved, ambiguous grief.

The story of Sekou Diabate, instead, is that of one of the few who managed to survive that night, in that shipwreck. He threw himself into the water and swam as long as he could, until he saw a life jacket that

pulled him up. While many celebrate the rescue, it's important to remember that it was the very ship that responded to the SOS which caused the wave that led to the disaster. In that shipwreck, Diabate lost along with many fellow travelers also a cousin — a body he has never been able to recover. The wish of Sekou and his family, including the cousin's son, is to repatriate the remains. What stands in the way is not so much the cost of repatriation, but the lack of a DNA match with the identifying code of the remains. It is shocking that, after so much money was spent to retrieve the bodies, ten years later the identification process has still not been officially completed.

Sekou's story — like that of the 28 other survivors — ties the tragedy to the struggle for legal recognition. After being rescued and arriving in Italy, the then 23-year-old was taken to a reception center: "After everything we had been through, they took us and placed us in a camp. They didn't even grant us asylum," Sekou recounts. He was moved from one center to another and worked as a seasonal laborer picking tomatoes in Puglia. Some of the other survivors went to France and came back, always for underpaid seasonal work. In doing so, due to Salvini's 'Security Laws', they lost any chance of legalizing their status in Italy. "I only managed to convert my permit into a work visa a few years ago," Sekou adds, "and I find it absurd. We migrants don't count for anything — not even in the face of tragedies like this."

The commemoration

To weave a connecting thread between these untold stories, the April 18 Committee of Augusta organized a commemoration at the site of the wrecked boat. Constituted specifically "for the purpose of preserving the memory of the tragic shipwreck" (Enzo Parisi, private conversation, 2020), the Committee is made up of various local organizations such as Legambiente, the local parish, and the CGIL trade union. It is a collective of grassroots activists who, through their long-standing engagement in local environmental, cultural, and social struggles, have extended their efforts to supporting migrants — both the living and the dead.

Year after year, from the ground up, they remember the tragedy and denounce the failures of Italian and local institutions, the state of abandonment in which the boat lies, and the indifference of a society that

continues to sacrifice human lives on the altar of borders.

Over time, the Committee has invited several key figures from these interwoven stories, including Father Mussie Zerai, one of the early founders of the Alarm Phone network. This year, Sekou Diabate also came and stood beneath the boat — offering a powerful, living testimony not only of the injustices of that night, but also of the conditions in which people on the move are forced to live in Italy even after surviving such tragedies. His words were a reminder of the hypocrisy of the Italian government, that appropriates these events for political display, without changing the policies that cause them.



Abas Mdai, too, was present — though through a video message. Alongside him were other members of local civil society, including Carovane Migranti, the Ro La Formichina cooperative, and several ships of the Civil Fleet such as Sea Punk, Louise Michel, and ResQ. Together, we renewed our collective outcry against borders and the visa regime — systems that enforce a racialized differentiation between those who are free to move and those who are forced to risk their lives and, if they survive, to continue living them in a cycle of labor exploitation.

To remember that tragedy today is not only a duty of memory, but a moral imperative. Every unnamed victim, every untold story, demands justice, dignity, and humanity. We cannot allow that pain to fade with time or be reduced to a cold statistic. This is our story — we are all on that boat — and together with the families of the victims and the survivors, local activists and international movements, it is our responsibility to build a movement that says, once and for all: never again.

Giorgia Mirto (Columbia University) and Filippo Furri (Institut Convergences migrations)



CONFLICTING REALITIES: MAPPING DISCREPANCIES IN MIGRANT DEATHS DATA ON THE ATLANTIC ROUTE

In recent years, the Atlantic Ocean has seen an increase of precarious migration, with more and more boats leaving from Senegal, Mauritania, and Morocco toward Spain's Canary Islands. Also estimates of migrant deaths have risen, reaching unprecedented levels. With states failing to systematically document migrant deaths, international and non-governmental organisations have tried to fill this knowledge gap. Their figures, however, often diverge sharply, producing conflicting realities of loss at sea and raising pressing questions about how these numbers are produced and what they mean for activist and humanitarian responses.

Documenting the scale of dying and disappearing at sea is a tremendously complex task, given that many boats disappear without ever being found in what are called 'invisible shipwrecks'. Reconstructing these journeys involves piecing together fragments of information from relatives of the disappeared, media sources, activist networks, local witnesses, or government agencies. Those seeking to count the missing must corroborate various, at times conflicting, accounts of boats that departed but never arrived, often arriving at very different estimates.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded an increase in deaths, reaching 1,142 in 2024, their highest figure to date. Caminando Fronteras, a Spanish NGO, reports far higher numbers: a staggering 9,757 deaths in 2024. The gap between their estimates – 8,615 lives – may to some extent reflect different methodologies. IOM relies mainly on media sources while Caminando Fronteras gathers testimonies from survivors, relatives, and communities of origin and transit. Caminando Fronteras' 2024 report made headlines internationally. It was also cited by the president of the Canary Islands in a letter to the European Commission, calling for greater attention to the Atlantic route and increased Frontex involvement.

The Spanish NGO's data also triggered a heightened sense of urgency among non-governmental rescue groups. The Humanitarian Pilots Initiative (HPI), which has carried out monitoring flights in the central Mediterranean in cooperation with Sea-Watch, is now launching an exploratory mission along the Atlantic route to search for migrant boats. As HPI's Ruben Neugebauer told us, the discrepancies in migrant death data pose an operational challenge:



given the vast distances of the Atlantic route, with boats taking up to ten days to reach the Canaries, where should rescue or monitoring assets be placed and which maritime regions prioritised?

Existing data practices offer little help. While IOM's Missing Migrants Project records every presumed shipwreck in its public database, the locations of shipwrecks provided on its maps are often little more than rough estimates, as the project acknowledges. Caminando Fronteras, meanwhile, roughly identifies maritime regions where it suggests that most shipwrecks have happened, but it does not share more detailed information on its data practices and methodologies, hampering attempts to better understand or corroborate its findings.

How, then, should we deal with these discrepancies in data? We need to acknowledge that data and statistics are not innocent. Though often presented as objective, they do not simply describe a singular reality 'out there'. They can produce multiple, and conflicting, realities. Data shape which borders are seen as deadly and which spaces become sites of urgent intervention. Ultimately, it is also a question of responsibility.

If data is never innocent, what responsibility comes with the production of statistics on migrant deaths and everything they set into motion?

Maurice Stierl and Marta Sánchez Dionis

Full article - Border Criminologies, 7 April 2025:

<https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/border-criminologies-blog/blog-post/2025/04/conflicting-realities-mapping-discrepancies-migrant>

CRIMINALISATION

EL HIBLU 3 - SIX YEARS IN LIMBO

"Justice has proven elusive for the Three. They have been punished before even standing for trial: six years in limbo for teenagers has marked them for life. The charges should be dropped, immediately!"

Daniela De Bono, Coalition for the El Hiblu 3

The 28th of March 2025 marked the sixth anniversary of the arrival of the El Hiblu 3 in Malta. Abdalla, Amara, and Kader arrived in 2019, when they were only 15, 16 and 19 years old. Their journeys had already been long and arduous. Strangers to each other, they had travelled separately over many months from Guinea and the Ivory Coast. In Libya, they witnessed and endured unspeakable violence that propelled them north in the hope of finding peace and new opportunities to make a life and find safety.

Yet when they arrived in Malta on 28 March 2019, they were met with further violence. Maltese authorities charged them with 'terrorism' and hijacking a ship and incarcerated them for seven months in Corradino, Malta's adult prison. Facing such extreme charges, these three young men have steadfastly maintained that they are neither terrorists nor hijackers. Rescued by an oil tanker in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, they acted as



translators and mediators between frightened passengers and crew members.

Since then, they have endured a seemingly endless legal process riddled with failures. At the same time, many have supported them in their struggle to clear their names. Last year, the Coalition for the El Hiblu 3 joined with numerous other groups and individuals to celebrate them as Human Rights Defenders for helping to avert an illegal pushback to Libya and for saving lives.

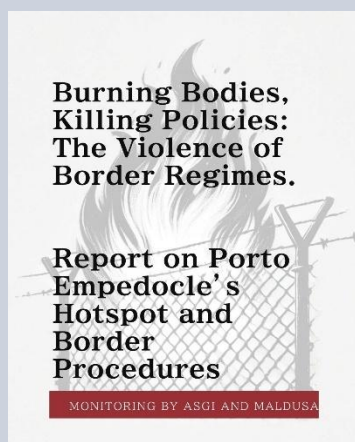
The next court hearing with more submissions on the specific charges will take place on the 12th of June in the court of Valetta. Our solidarity will continue.

El Hiblu3 coalition

More information: elhiblu3coalition.org

REPORT

BURNING BODIES, KILLING POLICIES: THE VIOLENCE OF BORDER REGIMES.



The report, resulting of joint monitoring by ASGI and Maldusa, exposes the contours of a system that confines more than it welcomes, selects more than it protects. A system the Italian government has also sought to export to Albania, further worsening existing

criticalities. The hotspot of Porto Empedocle, through its dynamics of detention and transfer, adds yet another piece to the mosaic of institutional violence that defines the hotspot approach.

The emergency management of migration flows prioritizes speed: lightning-fast screenings, compressed information sessions, and rapid transfers. But at what cost? Individual needs are ignored, rights are sacrificed, and vulnerabilities are abandoned. A system that "rushes through the steps" ends up burning the dignity of those trapped within it. Between the lines of the report, facts emerge that speak for themselves, urgently calling for collective responsibility to confront the injustices and critical issues this system perpetuates.

Asgi and Maldusa, 3 February 2025

Report - <https://www.maldusa.org/it/burning-bodies-killing-policies-the-violence-of-border-regime/>

AMPLIFYING VOICES

DRASTIC OUTBREAK OF RACIST VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK PEOPLE IN LIBYA

A society's first obligation is to protect the dignity of every human being; Libya has long forsaken that duty. In recent weeks, the country has witnessed a brutal escalation of racist violence targeting Black communities. Reports from across Libya reveal systematic attacks, arbitrary arrests, and dehumanizing treatment at the hands of both militias and security forces. This wave of brutality is not a new phenomenon but a manifestation of long-standing racial discrimination embedded deep within Libya's social and political structures. Refugees, migrants, and even Black Libyans are bearing the brunt of this unchallenged violence. At the same time, the Libyan authorities have moved to ban ten NGOs working in the field of migration, cutting off vital lifelines of aid and protection for the most vulnerable. Our organization, Refugees in Libya, urgently calls for international attention, concrete action, and full accountability to halt these atrocities and safeguard the lives and dignity of all Black migrants in Libya.

PRESS RELEASE - 20 MARCH 2025

After hateful agitation against Black migrants and refugees by government officials, Black people in Libya are experiencing an outbreak of racist violence, human rights abuses and discrimination.

Between March 12th and 16th, raids, mass arbitrary arrests, assaults, murders and collective expulsions of Black people have been occurring in Western Libya. The people targeted by this violence are mostly African migrants and refugees, but also Black Libyans and Tunisians. **Here are only a few of the accounts we are receiving from our comrades in Libya:**

In Sabrata, a group of unidentified militias accompanied by civilians raided black people's houses to arrest hundreds and take them to detention centers, murdering at least one Sudanese refugee in the process. Similar raids were conducted in Janzour by the Stability Support Apparatus, Emergency Police and Internal Security. The 6th Support Battalion also arrested hundreds of black people in Al-Serraj.

In Ben-Gashir, Bataillon 444 evicted migrants and refugees from their houses, burnt their belongings and told them to never come back, also warning the landlords that offering accommodation to any

migrant will be considered as facilitating illegal migration.

In Tajoura, the EU-trained Directorate to Combat Illegal Migration carried out a raid where they caught hundreds of migrants and refugees and again transferred them to detention centers. In Al-madina Gadima, a district of Tripoli, similar raids were conducted by the police, the EU-trained Directorate to Combat Illegal Migration and Special Deterrence Forces. Mass arrests also happened in Misrata, where hundreds were brought to concentration camps by unidentified militias. In Ghut-Shaal, another district of Tripoli, a group of Libyan civilians committed a pogrom against black people, targeting all African shops with the permission and complicity of local authorities and security forces.

Our comrades on the ground also report multiple cases of sexual violence against women and at least two documented cases of murder of Black persons. In Tarik Al-madar, on the night of Friday, 14 March, a pregnant woman from Niger was killed by a Libyan citizen. She got hit by a car while the victim and her husband were coming back from the mosque. The number of similar incidents is likely much higher than what is currently known. Comrades on the ground also report Black people being fired from their jobs and expelled from their rented houses and apartments, solely on the basis of their skin color.

Up until now, the dehumanization we have seen and experienced in Libya against migrants and refugees has been mostly for profit. EU-supported militias and criminals arbitrarily arrest people in order to enslave them in construction or to work in households and fields. If they refuse or run away, they are mistreated and tortured and their families are forced to pay ransoms. The racist dimension we are witnessing now is a novelty. This violence follows inflammatory hate speech and conspiracy theories propagated by Government of National Unity (GNU) authorities against migrants and refugees, and its motivation is a xenophobic and racist desire to expel all black people from the country. This racist violence colludes with EU goals of "preventing irregular migration" and follows several meetings of the EU ambassador with GNU authorities to discuss "combating human smuggling and border management". This closeness, and the EU's silence about the racist violence in Libya, indicates the EU's tacit encouragement of this

violence as long as it serves its anti-migrant objectives.

The extreme violence of these crimes, their scale, the blatant discrimination and their racial motivation make them yet again **crimes against humanity**. **Who is responsible?** Refugees in Libya and its Alliance have identified some of those allegedly responsible for these abuses. This is not an exhaustive list, but we wish to see all these individuals brought to court to respond for their criminal actions, either in Libya, in the EU or in The Hague:

- **The Libyan Government of National Unity** holds the highest political responsibility for the crimes committed. In particular, Prime minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh and Minister of Interior Emad Al-Trabelsi are personally responsible for spreading dehumanizing hate speech encouraging genocide and ordering the violent attacks.
- **Libyan militias, security forces and warlords** are the direct perpetrators of this violence, as well as failing to prevent racist violence from civilians. Among them, we have identified these actors as main alleged perpetrators:
 - The EU-trained Department to Combat Illegal Migration (DCIM) and its head Mohamed al-Khoja

- The Libyan Police, headed by the wanted war criminal recently released by Italy, Osama Elmasry Njeem.
- The RADA Special Deterrent Forces and its head Abdul-Raouf Kara
- Even if most Libyans are peaceful and some have bravely raised their voices in solidarity, **some Libyan civilians** are being complicit in these violent crimes, fire migrants from their jobs, expel them from their homes, and hand over their Black neighbours to the police or even perpetrate the racist violence themselves.
- **The European Union** has been funding, training, equipping and politically supporting the DCIM and other Libyan forces to prevent people from reaching Europe by any means, despite overwhelming evidence that these actors were involved in crimes against humanity. In the last months the EU delegation in Libya has met with GNU and Haftar authorities to agree on further cooperation on anti-migrant action. A [communication to the ICC](#) already identified the high-ranking officials implicated. But also mid-ranking officials are instrumental in this criminal cooperation. Two of these officials are:
 - Nicola Orlando, EU ambassador to Libya, who coordinates political and material support to



Picture: Refugees in Libya

the Libyan criminal actors and refuses to publicly denounce their abuses.

- Francisco Joaquin Gaztelu Mezquiriz, key European Commission official who has been for years funding the Libyan Coast Guard, DCIM and other criminal actors despite knowing of the crimes they were committing.

The GNU authorities are publicly expressing intent to eliminate all African migrants from Libya and encouraging security forces and civilians to use violence in order to achieve these goals. Civilians and militias are perpetrating this violence, while the EU keeps training, equipping and supporting them. We fear for the lives and safety of our friends and comrades in Libya. **We denounce this chain of violence as an ongoing genocide against black people in Libya.**

Therefore, we call to action to all the actors involved to stop the violence:

- We demand an end to the hateful agitation spread by the Libyan GNU and to the violence that has resulted from it. Assaults, collective expulsions, torture, detention and discrimination must end, and those responsible must be held accountable. Vulnerable populations in Libya, such as refugees of war must receive adequate protection.
- We call on the Libyan civil society to resist the racist agitation and instead act in solidarity with those victimised by the attacks.
- We demand that the EU member states open safe pathways through their embassies in Libya and humanitarian corridors. Those in immediate danger need to be evacuated to safe places. The funding of and cooperation with Libyan authorities, such as the DCIM, Coast Guard and

other actors involved in crimes against humanity need to stop immediately.

- We demand that the EU, first of all, publicly condemns the racist hate speech and mass violence committed by the GNU and its militias against migrants, refugees and black people. We demand, secondly, that the EU takes responsibility for the crimes being committed by the forces that were trained and equipped by the EU. The EU must immediately stop the funding and training of Libyan military and police units. Failing to do so only keeps reinforcing the EU's role as enablers and co-perpetrators of these crimes.
- We call upon the ICC to expand the scope of the investigation on Libya into the crimes against humanity being committed against refugees, migrants and Black people. The court must also end the unjustifiable double-standards and start investigating the EU and its member states as co-perpetrators of crimes against humanity in Libya due to its instrumental support to the crimes being committed.
- We also demand the UNHCR to publicly denounce the violence happening to refugees of war and asylum seekers and look for ways to offer protection and push states to expand resettlement and humanitarian corridors for people to escape Libya.

As refugees, migrants and Black people in Libya we may not have the weapons to defend ourselves from your racist violence. But we have our voices and we are not afraid to use them.

Refugees in Libya and Alliance with Refugees in Libya

Website: www.refugeesinlibya.org

REPORT FROM THE MOBILISATION OF THE NETWORK AGAINST MIGRANT DETENTION

On March 15th 2025, the Network Against Migrant Detention NAMD held a transnational assembly attended by activists and groups from Italy, Hungary, France, Germany, Bosnia, Austria, Greece and Tunisia. During the meeting we addressed the increasingly oppressive policies that are taking hold across Europe and beyond, together with matters such as deportation and confinement of people on the move as well as the increasing militarization of borders, emerged forcefully. We are facing a historical period

in which the conjuncture of wars ferociously fueled by the sovereigntist and authoritarian oligarchies is dangerously merging with a securitarian turn that precisely in the control and selection of free migration finds one of its most violent spaces for manoeuvre. A historical phase that poses the necessity to get reorganized with new forms of struggle and cooperation.

A central theme of the assembly was indeed the urgent need to build a transnational, European and

Mediterranean movement capable of opposing the policies of mass detention, deportation, apartheid and territorial segregation. During the rich and articulate discussion, the priority emerged of building political networks and campaigns capable of responding to the violent attack that, especially on a European scale, is being waged against the rights and freedom of people on the move.

In this regard, we focused our discussion on the New European Pact on Migration and Asylum and its repressive measures, such as the acceleration of screening procedures, the opening of new detention centers for adults and minors, agreements with third countries for extra-territorial deportations, and the further erosion of the right to asylum with border procedures. We have strongly denounced how these measures aim in an unprecedented way to erode the fundamental rights of migrants, treating them as commodities to be rejected or included in segregating and subservient forms, while the European asylum system, we would like to point this out, is being progressively dismantled.

Several emphasised how crucial it is to join forces to stop the opening of new pre-removal detentions centers, i.e. CPRs, in Italy as much as in Europe. This privatized and dehumanizing detention system just cannot be accepted. It is precisely in reference to this issue that we have reiterated a double intention,

trying to widen the participation of territorial realities in our network as much as possible: on the one hand we intend to continue to contest, through monitoring, denunciations and mobilizations, the very existence and operation of the CPRs and other detention centers currently active, and on the other hand we will be ready and well organized to do our utmost to block the opening of new state lagers.

While starting from our territorial practices, we have repeatedly affirmed the importance of maintaining a transnational posture and approach in the fight against the border regime and its racist, oppressive, parasitic and violent nature, as violations of the fundamental rights and the dignity and independence of migrant people know no borders and are rather reinforced and multiplied through them, with the collaboration of the different populist, sovereigntist and right-wing governments that are emerging at all latitudes. The violence suffered by people on the move along the Balkan route, in North Africa, on Europe's internal borders or in America are the result of policies of selective and subaltern rejection and inclusion that continue to destroy and make precarious the lives of millions.

NAMD Transnational Assembly

To be informed about the next steps and mobilisations:
againstmigrantdetention@gmail.com



Picture: NAMD

MOBILISATIONS

JOIN THE F.LOTTA!

F.lotta is organizing a massive run towards and across the external border of fortress Europe, an occupation of the central Mediterranean sea. We want to repoliticize the space, where the state has successfully managed to discipline rescue associations into a tight operational framework and to normalize the presence of preventable deaths. We are a colorful multitude of independent boats, coming from different backgrounds: independent sailors, associations, sea workers and more, united into a spontaneous network.

We will sail from Lampedusa heading South, crossing that sea that has become a highway for weapons and goods and a graveyard for many people, as a consequence of the racist, capitalist and neo-colonial project of fortress Europe. We will stage the protest



during 3 days at sea in September, to mark the 10th anniversary when people on the move started to march from Hungary towards Germany and forced open the internal borders of the fortress.

We are independent, grassroot, self-organized. If you have a boat, or could mobilize your network, or want to know more about F.lotta: please reach out on Signal at: [@hedgehog.25](https://t.me/hedgehog.25)

18TH OF APRIL 2025 – 10 YEARS AFTER THE LARGEST SHIPWRECK IN RECENT MEDITERRANEAN HISTORY, WE CALL FOR OPEN BORDERS TO END DEATHS!

2ND CALL FOR THE TRANSNATIONAL CHAIN OF ACTIONS IN AUTUMN 2025

On April 18, 2015 – exactly 10 years ago – the catastrophe that was waiting to happen after Italy and the EU ended proactive rescue operations, materialised. An overcrowded fishing vessel carrying migrants from across Africa and the Indian subcontinent capsized in the middle of the night in the waters between Libya and Italy. More than 1,100 people sunk within minutes, making this the largest shipwreck in recent Mediterranean history. The families of the deceased and those who disappeared continue to mourn their loved ones. We have not forgotten either and we support the commemoration of this shipwreck, which is organized by the solidarity committee in Augusta today.

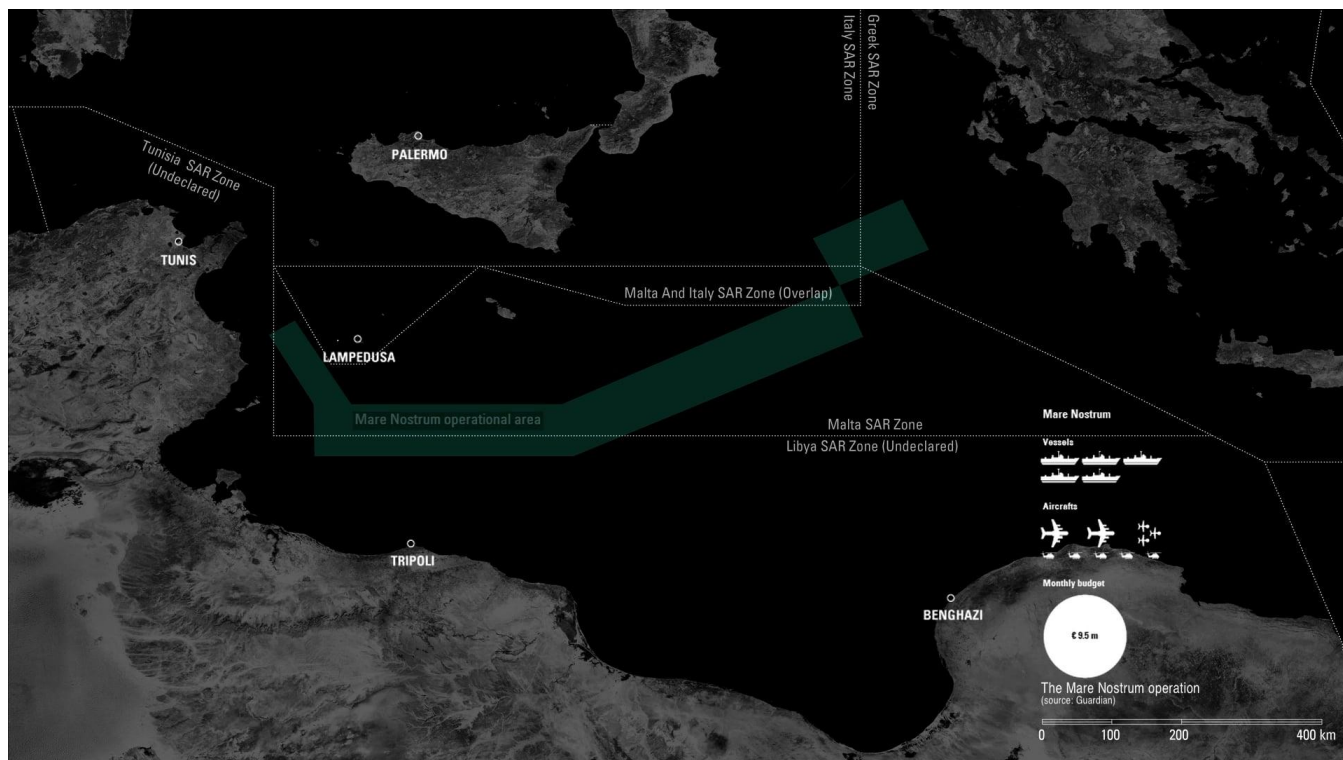
Despite the responsibility of EU policymakers and agencies such as Frontex for this shipwreck that was clearly demonstrated, even Jean Claude Juncker, then President of the European Commission, admitted “*it was a serious mistake to bring the Mare Nostrum operation to an end. It cost human lives*”, there has been no accountability for this policy-driven catastrophe. The EU has perpetuated its discriminatory and militarised migration policies, which force illegalised migrants to embark on

dangerous journeys. The EU and its member states did not reinstate proactive rescue missions, and the non-governmental actors who desperately tried to fill the lethal rescue gap they created have been criminalised. As a result, border deaths have continued, and more than 30.000 deaths have been recorded over the last 10 years across the sea.

All over Europe and in North Africa racist agitation is increasing as a strategy of divide and rule. Higher fences and walls are under construction, in the various borderlands, but also in the heads of big parts of the population. Even more violence, pushbacks and death in border zones are legitimated by racist narratives, while the right to move and to seek protection or a better future is more and more criminalized.

Today, we are in thoughts with the survivors, and the families of the deceased who disappeared during the 18th of April 2015 shipwreck. The memory of each life that was lost strengthens our determination to struggle against the EU’s lethal border regime!

In 2025 we are recalling the most tragic outcomes of left-to-die policy, but also the power of migrants’



struggles for freedom of movement and solidarity which we witnessed 10 years ago during the “Summer of Migration”. We do so to break the normalisation of migrants’ deaths, and re-opening our sense of possibility for new forms of struggle.

We want to raise our voices together to say: We refuse this lethal and unjust border regime! Migrant deaths are not inevitable! Freedom of movement is a possibility, we saw it, and we see it every day in the cracks of Europe’s borders! Solidarity still exists and can be the basis for a beautiful society where everyone can live free and equal! We want to come together, and through common struggle, create a space for joy and hope in these dark times.

In this spirit, we have spread already a first call for a transnational chain of actions in late summer and autumn to demonstrate the strength and creativity of our movements through a wide spectrum of activities.

First initiatives and mobilizations are in preparation for September and October 2025: a two-day protest in Geneva in front of the UNHCR and IOM headquarters and against the continuum of camps and detention from North Africa to Europe; a journal edited by comrades from Ljubljana to remind us of the amazing movement of migration 10 years ago in

the Balkans and its tenacity and continuity; a regatta of sailing boats named F.lotta around Lampedusa against ongoing practices of abandonment, push backs and death at sea; a caravan in eastern Germany to empower refugees in camps and to take a stand against deportations and the deprivation of rights; a transnational conference in Rabat to celebrate the 20 years of self-organisation of migrants and 10 years of establishing a shelter for women and children in transit.

Within the next weeks and months, we hope more initiatives along the various routes of flight and migration as well as in the arrival cities will crystallise and join this decentralized process. We will create a common frame with at least a shared calendar and with materials in digital and printed formats to interconnect all events. We invite all self-organizations and all solidarity groups and networks for the rights of people on the move to contribute to this transnational mobilization.

Contact us, if you have ideas and proposals and if you want to be updated: chain-of-action@tsc25.net

Coalition for Free Movement

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