

FAQ

10 QUESTIONS POSED TO THE WATCH THE MED ALARM PHONE PROJECT

1. What is the project able to do if it cannot organise rescue operations itself?

The Alarm Phone offers the affected boat-people a second option to make their SOS noticeable. The alarm documents and mobilises in real-time. In this way, pressure to rescue is built-up, wherever possible. Additionally, in this way push-backs of refugees and migrants could be stopped.

2. What will be done practically if coast guards do not launch rescue operations despite the SOS and the alarm?

If coast guards do not act promptly, it will be sought, on the one hand, to enforce rescue operations through public pressure. On the other hand, attempts will be made to alert cargo ships and tankships in vicinity to the vessel in distress.

3. On what experiences does this project build upon and what are its available means?

The team members train with handbooks that incorporate experiences of people who have been contact persons of boat-people already for years. They use online-maps and draw from the know-how of the monitoring project Watch The Med which investigates cases of death and failure to assist in the Mediterranean Sea since 2011.

4. In which regions of the Mediterranean Sea is the project actively involved?

The project is actively involved in all three regions through which migrants and refugees attempt to reach the countries of the EU: The Aegean Sea (between Greece and Turkey), the Central Mediterranean Sea (between Libya/Tunisia and Italy) and in the Western Mediterranean Sea (between Morocco and Spain). While the situations in the respective regions vary, in all of them human rights violations occur time and again through left-to-die cases or push-backs.

5. Who is in charge of the project, who runs the hotline and how is it financed?

The Alarm-Phone is carried out by volunteers, most of whom have been active at the external borders of Europe for many years: in networks such as Welcome to Europe, Afrique Europe Interact, Borderline Europe, Noborder Morocco or Watch The Med. They are involved in local groups, in research and/or in campaigns in the mentioned three regions. Activists of the project are based in Tunis, Palermo, Melilla, Tanger, Cadiz, Marseille, Strasbourg, London, Vienna, Bern, Berlin and other cities. Some members have made their own personal experiences of crossing sea-borders in the past. The project is financed through donations.

6. Who supports the project?

The project is supported by a wide spectrum of civil society members on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea who have signed our call. Amongst them are well-known intellectuals and journalists, survivors of shipwreck tragedies as well as relatives of those who disappeared when travelling to Europe. The project is endorsed by self-organisations of migrants, who have experienced the deadly borders themselves, and by outraged citizens who regard the present situation as unbearable.

7. How will the Alarm Phone number be disseminated?

The number of the Alarm Phone will be disseminated mainly through direct contacts with migrant and refugee communities in the important transit countries of Northern Africa and in Turkey. Soon leaflets will be distributed that inform about the risks of crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Besides notes on how to reduce the risks, the Alarm Phone number will be provided.

8. How is the relationship to the coast guards and the responsible authorities?

This project focuses on the rescue of boat-people and their rights and protection. In this respect, cooperation with coast guards will be sought and on the 10.10.2014 they will be informed of the launch of the project. The critique of the deadly border regime is directed first and foremost to the politically responsible actors of the EU.

9. How does the project relate to so-called people smugglers?

People smugglers only exist due to, and as long as, border regimes exist that prevent refugees and migrants from the ability to enter countries legally and that forces them instead onto secret, expensive and dangerous routes.

10. What are the short- and long-term goals of the project?

In the short-term, the project focuses on rescue missions and the prevention of human rights violations. The death of refugees and migrants at sea could already be a matter of the past if the border- and visa-regimes were dissolved. Insofar, the project aims to create a Mediterranean space of mutual solidarity, with open borders for all people.

