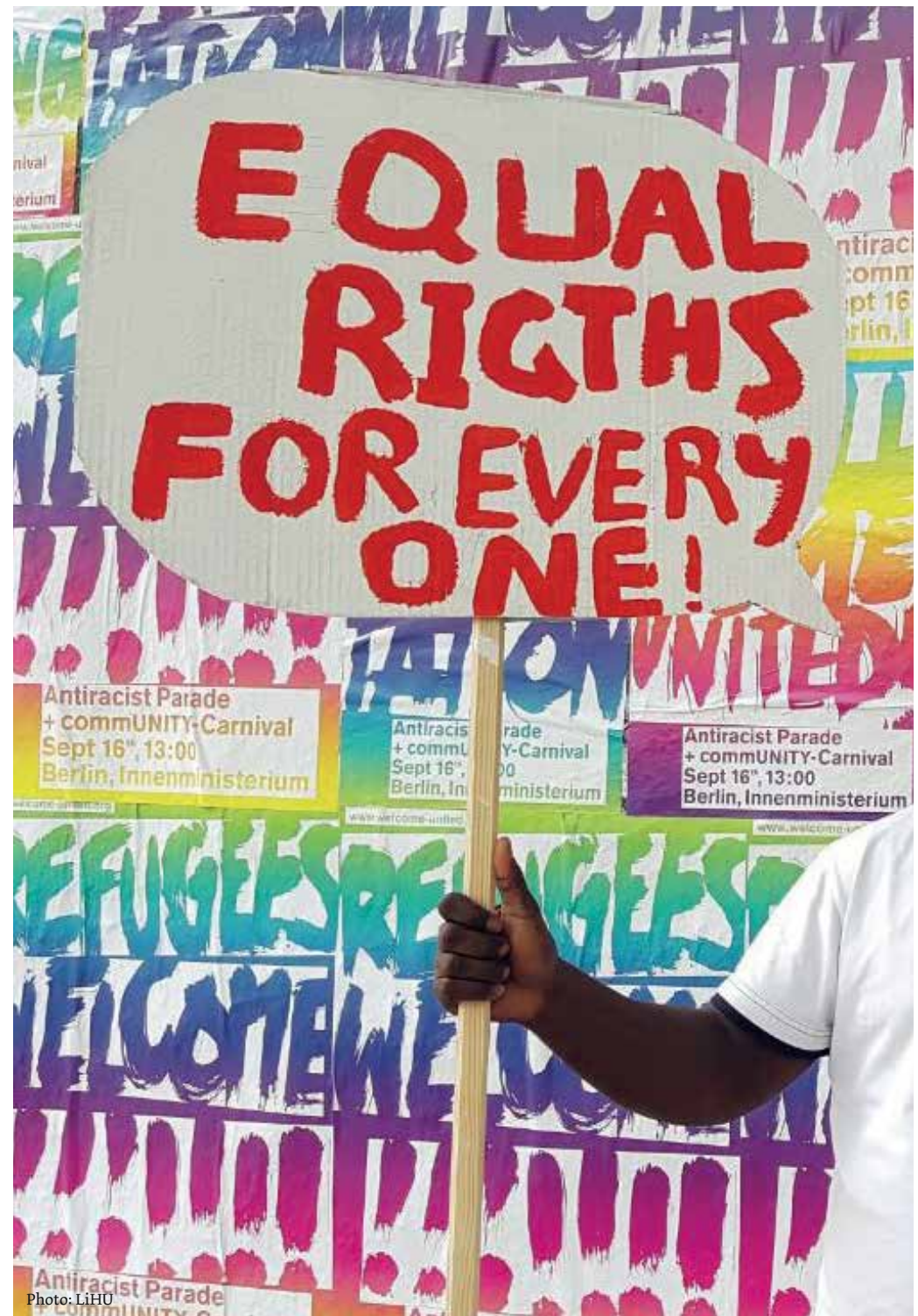




**IN SOLIDARITY  
WITH MIGRANTS  
AT SEA!**

The Alarm Phone 3 years on







Sailingboat during the 'Ferries not Frontex'  
action in the Strait of Gibraltar, September 2016  
Photo: private





Demonstration as part  
of the No Border Camp in  
Thessaloniki, July 2016  
Photo: Moving Europe





## IN SOLIDARITY WITH MIGRANTS AT SEA!

The Alarm Phone 3 years on

Fishermen demonstrating against the docking  
of the 'C-Star' ship of the right wing Identitarian  
movement in Zarzis/Tunisia, August 2017  
Photo: Fathi Nasri (afp)





Banner saying “G20: We’re not all here. The drowned are missing” during the protests against the G20-summit in Hamburg, July 2017  
Photo: LiHU

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# Introduction

Ferries not Frontex- Truck during the  
We'll Come United Demonstration  
in Berlin at 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2017  
Photo: Mazlum Demir

# Introduction

## The Alarm Phone after three years of Acting Disobediently at Sea

**Maurice Stierl**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, as so often before, our Alarm Phone shift team received a message from Father Mussie Zerai. He had been alerted by a boat in distress that carried about 100 travellers. They had embarked from Al Khums in Libya and were in an area nowhere near the main operational zone of the humanitarian NGOs. While we called them repeatedly, we could not get through to them. We were able, nonetheless, to charge the travellers' satellite phone with credit, so that they could keep reaching out – which they continuously did, as we could see from their decreasing credit levels. We informed the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Rome and contacted the Moonbird, an airborne reconnaissance mission launched by the NGO Sea-Watch and the Humanitarian Pilots Initiative. We forwarded the GPS coordinates of the boat and they promised to search the area. Soon after, the NGO plane took off, detected the boat, and passed its updated coordinates to us and the authorities. We received the confirmation of rescue a few hours later.

This distress case was one out of 1840 cases that the WatchTheMed Alarm Phone has dealt with in its first three years in operation. This case, as do many of our cases, exemplifies a novel form of activism, one where a myriad of actors, some who are unknown to one another, come together to form a complex chain of solidarity in order to intervene ever-more rapidly to support those crossing maritime borders. Father Zerai, widely known among East African communities and diasporas, received a SOS signal from a boat and in turn alerted one of our many shift teams that are located throughout Europe, Turkey and North Africa. While the Search and Rescue vessels of the many NGOs were out of reach, we could mobilise the

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Moonbird crew, based on Malta, to embark and carry out an aerial search. Both 'underground' and 'overground', these new alliances emerge to support the travellers in enacting their freedom of movement and their right to arrive safely. These solidarities form not out of thin air but are based on continuous grassroots engagement and exchange at, despite, and against the European border.

Our Alarm Phone turned three years old on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2017, on the third anniversary of a devastating shipwreck where more than 260 people lost their lives or who, more precisely, were left to die. Italian and Maltese authorities knew of their whereabouts and urgent distress but delayed rescue procedures intentionally and were therewith directly responsible for this horrific tragedy. Over the past three years, we have witnessed and taken part in dramatic transformations, from the unprecedented mass crossings in 2015 when over a million people survived their sea journeys and many marched onward and throughout Europe, the violent attempts to close the Balkan route and deter maritime migration via the Aegean Sea in 2016, to the cynical criminalisation and de-legitimisation campaigns directed against NGOs carrying out vital search and rescue operations at sea in 2017. All the while, the death toll in the Mediterranean kept and keeps rising – more than 11.000 fatalities were officially recorded over this period of time, but how many lives were really lost will remain unknown.

Currently, we are facing a time of repression, or what can be described as the 'roll back' of Europe's border regime. As reactions to the mass breakages through its barriers, especially in 2015 and early 2016, we now witness how the EU and its member states create and reinforce cynical obstacles to movement – from border externalisation strategies and intensified cooperation with dictatorial allies, the criminalisation of non-governmental rescuers and the further militarisation of the Mediterranean, to the re-stabilising of the internal Dublin deportation regime and forceful expulsions from the territories of the EU. While some applaud these repressive measures, other societal actors, many of whom were politicised through the mass arrivals over the past years, mobilise against them – the current moment is characterised by an increasing polarisation of society.



In this climate of repression and uncertainty but also uplifting collective mobilisation and struggle, we will continue with our work: documenting, networking, intervening. From its contested border-zones, the architects and practitioners of the EU border regime seek to chase away non-governmental actors who support people on the move. They want to (re-)create a maritime void where their actions are not observed, where border violence is perpetrated without being seen, where the deaths of thousands receive no attention and go unpunished. It is precisely therefore that our ability to look, to listen, and to act 'disobediently' in these spaces remains crucial.

We know that people will continue to migrate, despite the roll back and ever-more violent borders and dangerous paths. In our times of turmoil, of conflict, war and economic exploitation, reasons for cross-border movement are manifold – there simply are so many who want to, and need to, escape. When hundreds break through the fences of the Spanish enclaves in Morocco or arrive by boat in southern Spain and shout 'boza!', when boats land on the Greek islands despite the EU-Turkey deal, or when thousands manage to escape the gruesome conditions in Libya and arrive in Italy, they demonstrate that despite repression migration finds its paths. It is their strength and struggle that inspire our activism, their tenacity that demonstrates an unwillingness to bow to what seems at times an insurmountable border apparatus. Not merely along the Mediterranean but also much further south and east, in countries of 'origin', groups and communities organise to enable and support unauthorised cross-border movements.

While the EU builds barriers, we mobilise along both of the Mediterranean shores to create bridges. The value of the Alarm Phone project cannot be deduced simply from the number of distress calls it receives, but also from the many initiatives, networks, and projects it has supported or helped establish. We imagine the Mediterranean not as a lethal border-zone but a space of encounter, connection, and community. Besides our everyday work of supporting people on the move through our phone activism, 'sister projects' have emerged, including the Desert Phone, Missing at Borders and Boza Tracks, which are presented also in this brochure.

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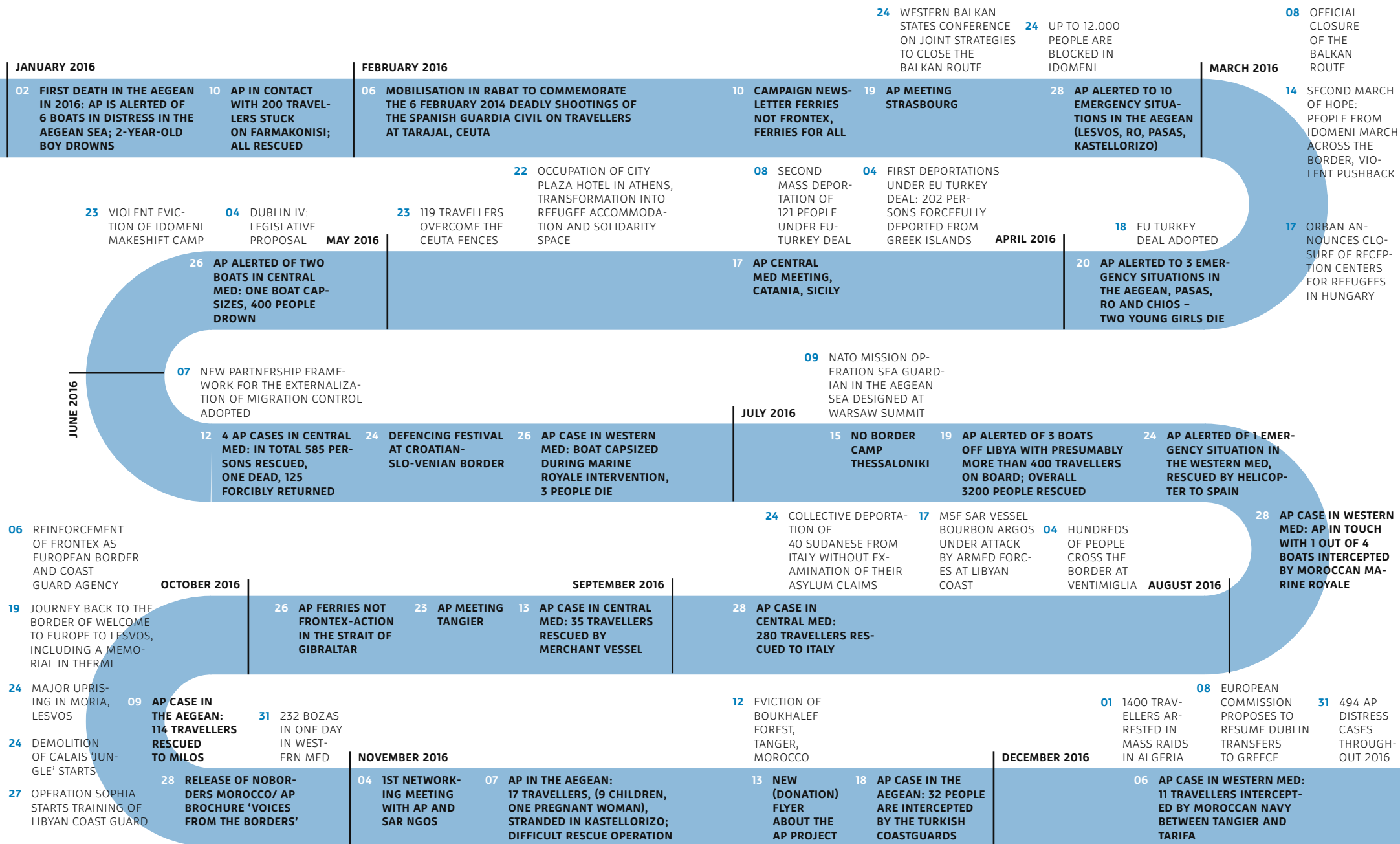
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We have, moreover, engaged in public campaigns to counter the dramatic situation in the Mediterranean. In late September 2017, for example, our Tunisian Alarm Phone members organised a large conference in Tunis, where migrant communities, activists and NGOs from North Africa and elsewhere came together to debate 'Migration Movements around the Mediterranean: Realities and Challenges'. Around the same time in Berlin, more than 1.500 kilometres away, the large demonstration 'We'll Come United' took place, commemorating the March of Hope that broke through several European borders two years ago and thereby ushered the 'long summer of migration' which transformed Europe.

Just like the Alarm Phone network itself, this brochure is an assemblage. It provides analyses of the situations in the three main Mediterranean regions and reflections on some of the memorable experiences we have made over the past three years. It includes interviews, where the voices of some of our members, our friends, comrades, contact persons or travellers we encountered in situations of distress can be heard, and it provides an overview of the different networks and sister projects that the Alarm Phone is involved in.

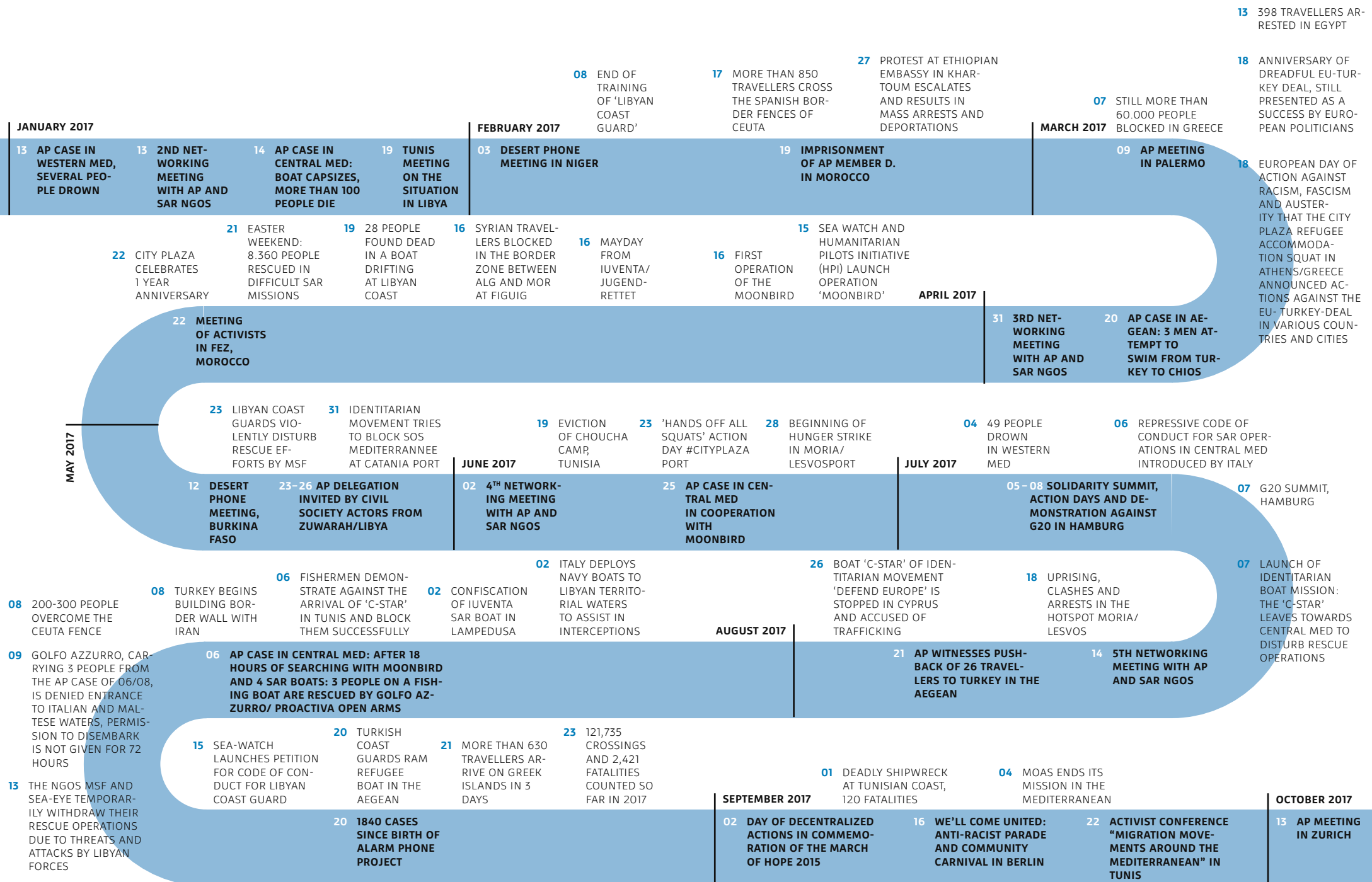
**LET'S KEEP MOVING.**

**THE WATCHTHEMED ALARM PHONE**



31 4581 DOCUMENTED FATALITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND 362.453 SEA ARRIVALS IN 2016







# 2

## Contested Spaces



# Particularly Memorable Alarm Phone Cases

**Maurice Stierl**

When you deal with several hundred emergency cases at sea, it is difficult if not impossible to keep track or to recall what precisely happened in all these cases, with hundreds of rubber dinghies landing on the shores of Greek islands, several dozens of boats being intercepted by the Moroccan Navy and with thousands of travellers getting rescued off the coast of Libya. In addition, as a diverse network whose members are located on three continents, distress cases reach different shift teams and what some experience personally, others may only read about afterwards in our reports. So, while we all have distinct memories of challenging situations that, for one reason or another, stuck with us, there were several emergency situations that are part of our collective memory.

Among them were cases of tragic loss, where members of our network experienced directly the violent consequences of the EU border regime. We remember instances where members of our network had to inform relatives and friends of travellers about the loss of their loved ones between Morocco and Spain. We remember how travellers called for help from the Aegean Sea after they had been attacked and were unable to move on. We remember the deadliest situation that the Alarm Phone had to experience, when a boat in the Central Mediterranean sank next to the one we were in touch with, and our contact person witnessed how the boat capsized and with it over four hundred people.

These cases of loss and tragedy stand out, but so do the uncountable moments of joy, when people arrived on European shores alive and called out 'Boza' in Spain, when news came in about the detection of a

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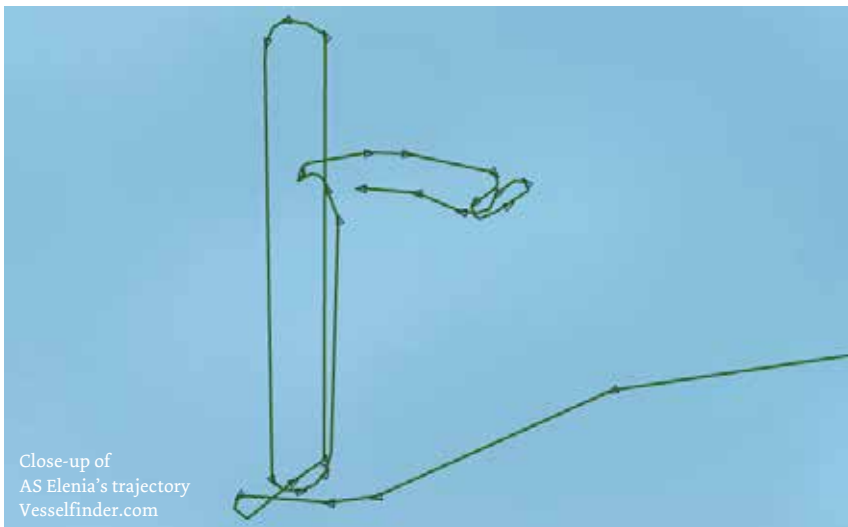
The Moonbird finally detects the boat-people  
Photo: Moonbird Airborne Operation  
[www.sea-watch.org](http://www.sea-watch.org), [www.hpi.swiss](http://www.hpi.swiss)



missing boat after hope had already been abandoned, when engines reignited and boats pushed on, or when after hours of waiting travellers jubilantly informed us about an approaching rescue vessel. While it is impossible to pay tribute to our many cases, even the ones that are stuck in our collective minds, we want to re-narrate three particularly memorable cases, one from each of the three Mediterranean regions.

### The Easter Weekend in the Central Mediterranean, April 2017

The Easter weekend saw one of the biggest Search and Rescue (SAR) operations carried out in the Mediterranean in the past few years, with more than 8,000 people rescued between Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2017. The Alarm Phone was involved in two emergency cases and observed first-hand both the sheer inadequacy of rescue efforts of EU authorities and the crucial contribution of NGOs in preventing instances of mass dying. In one of our cases, we were able to speak to the boat-people frequently, a group of approximately 100 travellers, over a period of more than 12 hours, before contact was lost. We passed on their pleas and demands for rescue to the responsible authorities and supported them throughout this difficult time. The situation was dire and required immediate action but rescue was nowhere in sight and, as a result, the people on board were left in an extremely dangerous situation for one and a half days.



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It was on Saturday morning that Father Mussie Zerai informed our shift team about a boat that had left Al Khums/Libya the evening before. The Italian authorities stated that a SAR operation was ongoing, although the presence of rescue assets in this area could not be verified through vessel tracking websites. Over the following hours, we were frequently in direct contact with the travellers. They were worried and anxious, as they have been at sea already for the whole night. 20 children as well as 10 women were among the approximately 100 travellers on board. In our log-book, our shift team noted: 11.34am: They called us again, they were really nervous [...]. They say the boat is in really bad condition, they are taking water out, but it gets worse, water is coming in, they don't have much petrol anymore, they were begging me really hard to help them, I told them that a ship is looking for them.

Over the following hours, we continuously recharged the credit of their satellite phone, received updated GPS positions and passed them on to MRCC Rome. With no rescue assets in sight, we reached out to Sea-Watch and the Swiss Humanitarian Pilots Initiative to enquire whether they might be able to conduct a search operation with their humanitarian plane Moonbird. The plane took off and started searching the area in the afternoon. Later on, the boat-people informed us that "there is no plane around, there is a ship very far, please ask them to help us". According to vessel tracking websites, this seemed to be the AS Elenia, a bulk carrier. At 4.33pm, the boat-people called out: "we see the plane, we see the plane", but the crew of the Moonbird was unable to spot them. We could see the AS Elenia move toward the boat, and shortly afterwards MRCC Rome confirmed that it would conduct a SAR operation. At 5.30pm, the Moonbird finally detected the boat-people and forwarded the GPS position to MRCC Rome. Before heading back to Malta, the pilots signalled the boat's position also to the crew of AS Elenia, which was not on direct course to the boat in distress. Via radio, they urged them to conduct a rescue operation, but the captain hesitated.

Shortly afterwards, the travellers informed us that the AS Elenia had passed by: "The big boat did not stop, please call them, please help us, the big boat is moving and we have no fuel, we can't follow the big boat."



After informing MRCC about what seemed to be AS Elenia's attempt to avoid a SAR operation, the boat-people told us in the evening that the AS Elenia was returning, only to disappear shortly afterwards again. At about 9pm, MRCC Rome stated that they had instructed the AS Elenia to return once more. We noted in our logbook: 9:52pm: [The boat-people] picked up the phone, they are yelling (hard to understand), they say they are in danger and the big boat is next to them but the rescue did not start yet. I told them to not panic and try to keep calm and tell them to call me again if anything changes.

This was our last direct exchange with them. Afterwards, no contact could be established again. Past midnight, MRCC Rome informed us that the captain of the AS Elenia would not carry out a SAR operation but would stay in stand by and provide water and food to the boat-people. MRCC Rome then informed us that for the next morning rescue assets were ordered to carry out a SAR operation. Over hours and several exchanges with the authorities, Malta finally confirmed at 1.37pm the next day that the people had been rescued. The boat-people involved in this ordeal were at sea for more than one and a half days. For over 24 hours, their distress case was known to the authorities and yet they could not be rescued as no ship equipped for such an operation was available. In this sense, this case exemplifies how despite the coordinating efforts of MRCC Rome, the number of rescue assets present in the area was utterly insufficient.

This absence of rescue forces in the most dangerous area of the deadliest borderzone of the world, however, is not a coincidence. Nor can it simply be attributed to a particularly exceptional situation, considering that the simultaneous departure of tens of boats from the Libyan coasts has been, for several months now, a relatively frequent event. It is instead the result of precise political decisions taken by the EU and its Member States, which first deny travellers legal ways to enter Europe, thus forcing them into the sea, to then consciously limit the presence of rescuing assets, hoping that mass dying would act as a deterrent. While this 'tactic' has, in the past, led to massive losses of lives at sea – such as on the occasion of one of the deadliest shipwrecks ever registered in the Mediterranean, which took place exactly two years earlier, claiming more than

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1,200 lives in less than a week – the tireless rescuing efforts of civil society actors and activists have played a crucial role in averting the repetition of such a scenario. Over the Easter weekend 2017, they ensured that the boat-people we supported, and thousands more, could miraculously survive.

**See for our full report and statement:**

[https://alarmphone.org/en/2017/04/21/constructing-a-deadly-void/?post\\_type\\_release\\_type=post](https://alarmphone.org/en/2017/04/21/constructing-a-deadly-void/?post_type_release_type=post) and a Guardian article on this case: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/21/refugees-stranded-mediterranean-dinghy>

### Violent Push-Back Operation in the Aegean Sea, June 2016

On Saturday morning at 3:59am on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, the Alarm Phone received an emergency call from a boat located between Cesme and Chios Island in the Aegean Sea: "We are about 53 refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq and a few people from other countries in distress in a small boat. There are 14 children with us and 3 elderly." At 04:05am, they contacted our shift team again and said: "The Turkish coastguard is following us." At 4:41am, the travellers reported that they had escaped from the Turkish coastguard and at 4:52am, they informed us that they had reached Greek waters and that the Greek coastguard had detected them. A few minutes later, they forwarded a photo of themselves on the vessel of the Greek coastguard. "The coastguard says we are safe now. They say we reached Europe and they'll bring us to the island."

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As one of the travellers remembered later in a second conversation: "We told them we want asylum in Greece. We couldn't tell them anything more. They didn't allow us to speak. We wanted to tell them we escaped from Turkey where we were not safe. There were 5 officers on this Greek boat and there were two more boats: One from Portugal, I could recognize a Portuguese flag, and another big white boat, where we didn't know from where it was [we recognized it on the photo as a Frontex boat from Romania]. Our position at this time was 38.2602140, 26.1657840."

At 5:22am, we received another message: they had not been brought to the Greek island, but, instead, had been handed over to the Turkish coastguard. "They held their guns on our heads and threatened to shoot if we wouldn't move to the Turkish boat. The boss of the Greek coastguard



said in English and it should be translated for all people: ‘Tell them I will kill you if you come here again.’” As we learned later that day, the travellers were brought back to the port of Cesme and detained.

These dramatic scenes of a so-called ‘push-back’ practice, the illegal collective expulsion of ‘aliens’ from a country’s territory, have played out innumerable times in the Aegean Sea before. As in this case, many of the individuals and groups affected experienced not ‘merely’ forcible returns back to Turkey, but reported of brutal and cynical attacks carried out by often masked and armed special units of the Greek coastguard who

at times physically abused them, removed petrol and engines, or even punctured boats, leaving travellers behind in darkness and life-threatening distress.

This push-back case of June 2016 highlights not only the well-coordinated human rights violations in the Aegean Sea, but demonstrates the EU’s direct implication, in the form of Frontex’s presence. This is a rare case – the EU border agency is notoriously adept at distancing itself from full-on criticism for its involvement in grave human rights violations. In response to the allegations, Frontex first suggested that they were still in



the process of collecting information relating to the incident and thus could not further comment. Later, Frontex falsely suggested that the incident had taken place in Turkish territorial waters, 'and thereafter at the borderline'. Moreover, they claimed that the transfer of the people to the Turkish vessel had been conducted due to 'safety reasons' – once again a blatant lie.

Threatened with guns pointed at their heads, the travellers were forced to return to detention and the danger of chain-deportations from Turkey, even though they had asked for asylum in Greece. People escaping war and death were misled, promised rescue and offered safety in Europe, while, in reality, authorities had seemingly already arranged to return them to Turkey, where they feared persecution. We as the Alarm Phone strongly denounced this inhumane game Europe keeps playing with lives at risk in the Aegean. We condemned the illegal push-back operation conducted by the Greek coastguard in the presence of Frontex boats.

**For the full report, see:**

<http://watchthemed.net/reports/view/521>

**and our statement:**

[https://alarmphone.org/en/2016/06/15/watchthemed-alarm-phone-denounces-illegal-push-back-operation-with-frontex-present/?post\\_type\\_release\\_type=post](https://alarmphone.org/en/2016/06/15/watchthemed-alarm-phone-denounces-illegal-push-back-operation-with-frontex-present/?post_type_release_type=post) as well as an article in the TAZ: <http://www.taz.de/!5310727/>

### Group of eleven rescued in the Western Mediterranean, July 2017

On Tuesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2017, at 6am, we received a call about travellers on a rubber boat without an engine. They were trying to paddle from Morocco to Spain. According to our contact person, they had left at about 1am from Tangier and were now in distress. We immediately reached out to them and they told us that they were 11 people, including 2 women, and in urgent need of assistance. The person on the boat told us that they had been at sea for about 5 hours. We immediately called the Spanish search and rescue organisation Salvamento Marítimo (S.M.). They promised to check on the boat. We tried to call the travellers again to tell them that S.M. was looking for them, but we could not reach them.

At 6.41am, the travellers called us, urgently asking for help and informing us that they could see a white fishing boat. We called S.M. again

and told them about these developments. They informed us in turn that they had tried to call the travellers, but had not reached them. We called the travellers, asking them to get in touch directly with S.M. At 7.50am they gave us more detailed information about the fishing boat, but we did not understand whether or not they had called the Spanish authorities. Meanwhile we could see on the vessel tracking website Marine Traffic that a S.M. helicopter and a vessel were looking for the boat.

At 9.30am, S.M. told us that the Moroccan Navy had rescued a boat with 11 persons on board and that they had finished the search mission. A few minutes later, however, we found out that this was misleading – the travellers told us that they had in fact not been rescued. We informed S.M. that 'our' boat was still waiting for rescue. Around noon, S.M. started another search mission for the boat and actually found it this time. At 12.42pm the travellers confirmed to us that they were being picked up by S.M. We later found a Facebook post which probably referred to this case. It said that S.M. had rescued 11 persons who were expected to arrive in Tarifa around 2.20pm. As in so many other 'Boza' cases, it was due to their incredible tenacity that the group survived, risking their lives while paddling toward a better life.

**For the report see:**

<http://www.watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/675>

The travellers awaiting rescue  
by Salvamento Marítimo  
Photo: Salvamento Marítimo





# Developments in the Central Mediterranean over the past two years

Conni Grenz in cooperation with Sarah Slan and Johanna Lier

Most sea crossings by refugees trying to reach Europe take place on the route between Libya and Italy. Refugees are forced to board overcrowded boats that are not suitable for use at sea, making this route the deadliest. Without the NGO search and rescue boats (SAR-NGOs), the number of deaths would be far higher, because the capacities of the official coast guards are insufficient. Until recently, the Italian coast guard deliberately stayed away from the Libyan coast and EU forces of Frontex and the military operation EUNAVFOR Med focus their efforts exclusively on reducing the number of crossings by fighting smugglers.<sup>1</sup> There is no unified Libyan coast guard, only multiple, autonomous formations, of which some even operate as smugglers.

## The rising Death Toll

In autumn 2015, the number of crossings through the central Mediterranean route dropped due to weather conditions and the opening of the Balkan-Route by refugees. This drop in numbers was not the result of a “successful fight against smugglers”. This was evident when the figures rose to 10,000 people again by early December. Over the Christmas days alone, more than 2,200 refugees were saved.

Beginning in February 2016, the borders along the Balkan-Route were closed, one after the other, and on the 18th of March 2016, the

EU-Turkey Deal was put into effect. As expected, the number of crossings from Libya to Italy started rising again. However, among the rescued refugees only few were from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, meaning only few were from the group of refugees, who were trying to get to Europe along the Balkan-Route. The vast majority of crossings from Libya was and still is from East and West Africa as well as from Bangladesh.

The Alarm Phone received many calls from travellers in distress on the Central Mediterranean route. In many cases Mussie Zerai, an Eritrean Priest, who lives in Europe, put them and us in touch with each other. In light of a continually rising death toll and stricter EU deterrence measures, we started the campaign “ferries for all” in spring 2016.<sup>2</sup> The Alarm Phone also took part in actions to commemorate the deaths of over 1.200 people, who had drowned at sea during one week in April 2015. One year later, on the 18th of April 2016, more than 500 people drowned near the Italian coast. Their boat had capsized as passengers were trying to board another boat.<sup>3</sup>

The Alarm Phone was involved in a similar case on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2016: Refugees on three boats started getting into distress in the southern Mediterranean. The boat, from which we received the call, was carrying more than 500 people and was towing the two other boats. One of these boats, also carrying around 500 people, had already started to capsize. Some managed to swim to one of the undamaged boats, while others managed to stay afloat until rescue came. However, due to the delayed reaction of the coast guard, more than 400 people drowned.<sup>4</sup>

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 alone, more than 5,500 people were rescued. Some had fled from Morocco to Libya to try to reach Italy. During an Alarm Phone meeting in Tangier in September 2016, we discussed the situation and the difficulties of the land route between Sub-Sahara Africa and Libya with people who had fled from there. We also started considering the possibility of setting up an “Alarm Phone Sahara” – a type of emergency phone for refugees traveling from West Africa to Libya through the desert (see article in this brochure).

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## Funding Violence

In contrast to the previous years, autumn 2016 witnessed an increase in crossings from Libya to Italy. In October alone, the number of refugees reached a peak at 27,384, and many fatalities brought the death toll up to one thousand in only one month. As a result, the Alarm Phone intensified its cooperation with some of the SAR-NGOs. Together, we demanded not only an expansion of rescue operations, but more importantly, safe and legal passages to Europe for all. Moreover, in light of the increasing attacks on SAR-NGOs, coordinated action has become evermore important.

In the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2016, a rescue operation of Sea Watch 2 was disrupted by a boat of the so-called Libyan coast guard. Members of the Libyan crew jumped onto the overcrowded refugee boat and started attacking the passengers, causing mass panic. Most of the 150 passengers fell into the water, around 30 of them drowned.<sup>5</sup> In August 2016, there had already been an attack on a rescue boat from MSF (Doctors without Borders) and in September the same year, two Sea-Eye crew members were temporarily arrested by the Libyan militia.

Around the same time, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, two boats from the EUNAVFOR Med-Operation Sophia started a three-month training programme for 78 members of a Libyan coast guard unit, which is under the direct authority of the Sarraj government in Tripoli. Their officially stated goal is to enable the Libyan coast guard to secure their territorial waters. In reality, however, they want to ensure that refugees are caught right off the coast of Libya and brought back to land. EU boats are not allowed to do this thus far.

In the same month, German Chancellor Merkel went to Mali, Niger and Ethiopia on her 'Africa Tour'. Her official goal was to combat the 'root causes of migration' and she promised, amongst others, the government of Niger 27 million euros to combat "irregular migration." In the following months, a number of vehicles were confiscated and alleged smugglers detained. For the refugees, these measures meant that they had to take even riskier routes through the desert, while the prices smugglers were demanding increased.

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## The Situation in Libya

In January 2017, members of the Alarm Phone met with some SAR-NGOs and activists from Libya in Tunis. The political and economic situation in Libya has further deteriorated due to fights between the opposing governments and the different militias. Violent clashes are part of everyday life. Smuggling humans and goods, exploiting migrants and organising sea crossings in overcrowded, sea-unworthy boats have become the only lucrative source of income for many Libyans. Sometimes, different fractions of the Libyan coast guard cooperate with smugglers and militia, making it difficult for SAR-NGOs to know whom they are dealing with at sea.

The Alarm Phone has also received distress calls from migrants stuck in Libya, but unfortunately it is nearly impossible to support them; even large humanitarian organisations cannot work there without risking the lives of their members. And although the IOM organises the repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin from Libya, the streets are generally too dangerous to actually pass through. For refugees, there is a high risk of being abducted and detained in camps, where people are abused, extorted and even killed. The German embassy in Niger's Capital Niamey reported in a diplomatic report ("Drahtbericht") of extremely serious and systematic human rights violations in Libya. Authentic photos and videos of the so-called private prisons in Libya show, following their account, conditions similar to those in concentration camps.<sup>6</sup> The refugees are thus often left with only one choice: to put their lives in the hands of smugglers and try to reach Europe by sea. One rescued refugee on board of the Juventa, the rescue boat from the German organisation Jugend Rettet, said: "We knew that we might die, but we didn't care; we could not stay in Libya a second longer."

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Nevertheless, a declaration was adopted at an EU Meeting in Malta on the 3rd of February 2017, which set out, inter alia, to create "adequate reception capacities and conditions in Libya for migrants."<sup>7</sup> So far, systematic push back operations have still failed, due to the lack of unity within the Libyan government. Moreover, the proposal by the EU to bring the refugees, who are intercepted right in front of the Libyan coast to camps



in Tunisia, Egypt or even Algeria and Morocco, was rejected by the respective governments. Together with activists in these countries, we must put continuous pressure on the authorities and make use of their diverging interests: The corrupt leaders of African countries of transit and origin are interested in EU resources and in the remittances from refugees, who have reached Europe. They are, however, not interested in accepting numerous intercepted refugees, mostly from other countries of origin.

### Criminalisation of SAR-NGOs and insufficient State Rescue Capacities

In an interview with welt.de in February 2017, Frontex director Fabrice Leggeri, once again, launched a campaign to criminalize SAR-NGOs. He accused them of colluding with smugglers, and said that “we” have to make sure that “we” do not support the businesses of criminal networks and smugglers in Libya by allowing European boats to “pick up” migrants closer and closer to the Libyan coast.<sup>8</sup> In response to this, the SAR-NGOs and Alarm Phone issued a joint statement rejecting these allegations: “People do not migrate because there are smuggling networks. Smuggling networks exist, because people have to flee. Only safe and legal routes to Europe can put an end to the traffickers’ business.”<sup>9</sup>

At the Alarm Phone meeting in Palermo in March 2017, discussions with affected persons from West Africa helped us to gain a better understanding of the dangers and risks refugees face on the route to and through Libya. They explained that it is nearly impossible to make calls from a boat in distress: either their phones are confiscated while detained in Libya or at the latest right before they get on the boat. The few who manage to bring a satellite phone on board, usually don’t know how to use it. It has become increasingly difficult for refugees to have any influence on the conditions of their crossing. They are forced - sometimes at gunpoint - onto completely overcrowded boats, without life vests and without sufficient fuel and food. These boats rarely make it out of the Libyan SAR-zone into international waters, not to mention all the way to Italy.

In light of these growing numbers of boat departures from Libya in spring 2017, the lack of state rescue capacities has become more and

more evident. NGOs often had to conduct rescue operations on their own. On the Easter weekend, the Iuventa had taken in so many refugees that they could not navigate the boat anymore and needed to signal MAYDAY. Only after several hours, other civil rescue boats and Moonbird – a joint aircraft from Sea Watch and the Humanitarian Pilots Initiative – came to help (see article “Particularly Memorable Alarm Phone Cases”). Neither Frontex nor EUNAVFOR Med were seen in the area, whose absence was criticized by the NGOs. This, bizarrely, not only led Frontex to claim that they had never criticized civil rescue organisations, but even to demand legal passages to the EU.<sup>10</sup>

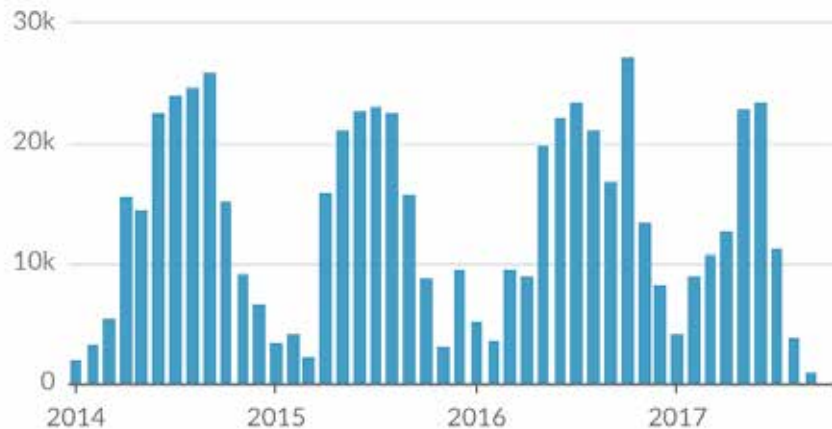
### Italy’s Demands

In May and June 2017, the number of crossings in the Central Mediterranean increased to over 23,000 per month. From January 2017 until the end of July, nearly 100,000 refugees arrived in Italy. In light of this, Italy demanded that EUNAVFOR Med change its deployment directive: other European ports should also accept refugee boats. Instead, however, a joint statement by the EU commissioner Avramopoulos and the French, German and Italian Ministers for Internal Affairs was released on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2017, in which they demanded more support for the Libyan coast guard, more border controls at the southern borders of Libya, more deportations with the help of Frontex and a Code of Conduct for SAR-NGOs. The Code of Conduct forbids, inter alia, the transfer of rescued refugees onto another boat and requires the toleration of armed police on board the rescue boats. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2017, the EU decided to prolong EUNAVFOR Med’s mission until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2018. Italy was satisfied with an additional 100 million euros for the admission of refugees and 500 deployed officers, who would speed up the asylum and the extradition procedures in Italy.

Great confusion was caused by a plea from the EU-recognised West Libyan government of Sarraj. He asked for a military operation in Libyan waters, which was to start on the 1st of August 2017. Sarraj’s opponent, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, in the East of Libya, accused him of compromising Libya’s sovereignty and threatened to attack all boats that were

to enter Libyan waters without his permission. Nonetheless, on the 2nd of August 2017, the Italian parliament agreed to the mission and sent out their first boat, which was, however, only allowed to sail in waters near Tripoli. The crew was also not allowed to return refugees to Libya, but would have to hand them over to the Libyan coast guard. With the prospect of receiving more money from the EU, the Libyan coast guard allegedly brought over one thousand refugees back to Libya within just a few days, in early August.<sup>11</sup>

### Sea arrivals by month



### Right Wing Activities and State Repression

Radical right wing activists from the Identitarian movement started a campaign against SAR-NGOs at sea in spring 2017. They chartered a boat, the C-Star, and announced that they would attack civil rescue boats. After powerful protests by human rights and refugee organisations, they changed their strategy, declaring that they would intercept refugees in front of the Libyan coast to hand them over to the Libyans. Egyptian, Cypriot and Sicilian authorities were only able to temporarily disrupt the operation and on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, Tunisian fishermen, union members and human rights organisations were able to prevent the docking

and refuelling of the C-Star in Tunisian ports. The C-Star still managed to reach the Libyan coast and requested the SAR-NGOs to leave the zone, but shortly after entered a situation of distress itself, though rejecting to be rescued by the NGO Sea-Eye.<sup>12</sup>

Around the same time, state repression against SAR-NGOs increased. After futile negotiations with the Italian government in July 2017, some NGOs refused to sign the Code of Conduct, even though they feared being denied entry to Italian harbours to disembark refugees.<sup>13</sup> SOS Méditerranée signed the Code of Conduct after the Italian Ministry of Interior accepted to add a clause restricting the code's influence.<sup>14</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2017, the Iuventa was confiscated by the Italian authorities, due to a preliminary investigation brought about by the public prosecutor's office in Trapani that is accusing the crew of facilitating illegal entry into Italy. The Alarm Phone and other organisations and activists continue to show solidarity with Jugend Rettet.

In mid-August, the Libyan coast guard fired warning shots towards the boat from Proactiva Open Arms, declared their own SAR-zone far beyond their territorial waters and warned the NGOs of entering this extended zone in the future. Given these circumstances, MSF, Jugend Rettet and Sea-Eye felt that the safety of their crews could not be ensured any longer and suspended their sea rescue missions on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2017. Two days later, some armed Libyans intercepted the Golfo Azzurro and threatened the crew for over two hours. There is great reason to fear the complete exclusion of NGOs from the SAR-zone off the Libyan coast. The EU Commission announced that an expansion of their military operation Triton would compensate for the withdrawal of NGOs.<sup>15</sup>

This criminalisation campaign against SAR-NGOs is intended to have a detrimental effect on the financial and public support that the SAR-NGOs have received so far. The reactions of government agencies, however, show that we are, at the very least, disrupting their deterrence policies and practices. This highlights the importance of the work we do, connected across the Mediterranean. In their continuous attempts to deal with the symptoms rather than the problem itself, the EU is not only investing in military and technology to close down the borders to Europe,



but also collaborating with African governments to reduce the number of refugees fleeing to Europe. It continues to ignore, however, the actual reasons why people are fleeing from their countries of origin in the first place. None of these efforts will change anything about the migrants' motivations to flee. Therefore, we must continue to monitor, document, publicise, criticise and intervene at sea, in political debates, and with direct actions. It is the only way we can assert legal and safe passages and avert deaths.

- 1 The smugglers are usually not sitting in the boats, instead one of the refugees is appointed to drive the boat and is criminalized later.
- 2 [https://Alarmphone.org/en/2016/02/12/newspaper-ferries-for-all/?post\\_type\\_release\\_type=post](https://Alarmphone.org/en/2016/02/12/newspaper-ferries-for-all/?post_type_release_type=post)
- 3 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/20/hundreds-feared-dead-in-migrant-shipwreck-off-libya>
- 4 <http://watchthemed.net/reports/view/514>
- 5 <http://watchthemed.net/reports/view/588>
- 6 <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article161611324/Auswaertiges-Amt-kritisiert-KZ-aehnliche-Verhaeltnisse.html>
- 7 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2017/02/03-informal-meeting/>
- 8 <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article162394787/Rettungseinsaetze-vor-Libyen-muessen-auf-den-Pruefstand.html>
- 9 <https://AlarmPhone.org/en/2017/03/03/european-civil-rescue-organizations-stand-up-against-smuggling-allegations/>
- 10 <http://www.heute.de/fluechtlingsdrama-auf-dem-mittelmeer-frontex-fordert-legale-einreisewege-nach-europa-47015858.html>
- 11 <http://www.faz.net/agenturmeldungen/dpa/kuestenwache-bringt-migranten-zurueck-nach-libyen-15140721.html>
- 12 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/11/migrant-rescue-ship-sails-to-aid-of-stranded-far-right-activists>
- 13 <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20170808/local/stranded-rescue-vessel-heads-north-towards-sicily.655216> - They were only allowed to enter the harbor, when they had problems with their engine..
- 14 <http://sosmediterranean.org/sos-mediterranee-unterzeichnet-verhaltenskodex/>
- 15 <https://www.woz.ch/1733/seenotrettung/eskalation-auf-hoher-see>



Demonstration for the right to freedom of movement, Catania, Sicily  
Photo: Conni Grenz



Arrival of Migrants in  
the port of Pozzallo, Sicily  
Photo: Conni Grenz



# From Morocco to Spain and beyond: collective resistance against a deadly border cooperation

**Carla Höppner and Corinna Zeitz**

The cooperation between Spain and Morocco in migration control can be seen as a paragon of policies of externalisation that the EU tries to implement in other regions, too. In 2016/17, despite an increase in militarisation, more people than in the previous years managed to reach Spain from Morocco by sea or by crossing the fences of Ceuta and Melilla. In Morocco, the persecution of transit migrants persists - people are kicked out of their flats, camps are burned by military agents and people are arrested arbitrarily and deported to the south of the country.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the second regularisation campaign was launched in Morocco. During the first campaign in 2014, 25,000 out of 28,000 applicants were granted Moroccan residence permits. They allow for legal employment but do not protect against repression that sub-Saharan migrants in particular are subjected to. It is possible, that the wave of persecution in early 2017 motivated the departure of many towards Europe. Between January and April 2016, 2,476 people arrived in Spain by sea, while, over the same period of time in 2017, 8,385 arrived. A total of 2,096 sub-Saharan refugees managed to cross the highly militarised fences into Ceuta and Melilla in 2016.

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## Ceuta and Melilla

In 2016, despite the high-tech surveillance at the border, 1771 people reached Ceuta by overcoming border fences and their razor-sharp blades. Due to the spectacular collective arrivals of sub-Saharan migrants, also in 2017 Ceuta receives a lot of attention with regards to issues around migration. In February 2017, 842 people managed to reach the enclave of Ceuta through collective organising and strategising, able to bypass the surveillance technologies. Since then, surveillance measures have increased, intended to block border crossings. The Spanish minister of the interior intends to use drones at the border in the future and the Guardia Civil calls for the reinforcement of its forces.

Morocco keeps using issues of border security as political leverage with Spain. When in conflict with the EU, for example following the judgment of the European Court of Justice to exclude the Western Sahara (under Moroccan occupation) from a free trade agreement between the EU and Morocco, open threats of discontinuing border control are made. The Moroccan minister of agriculture announced after the judgment: “Why should we continue playing the watchdog?”

However, just as in other border regions, the EU prefers to cooperate with dictatorships, rather than with those who try to escape from them. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, more than 100 people, including a member of the Alarm Phone, attempted to reach Ceuta via the fences. They were unlawfully pushed back after having crossed the border and were subsequently arrested in Morocco. After this “push-back”, the detainees were kept in prison for several months without any legal aid, and afterwards, some were deported to their countries of origin. Nonetheless, the mass crossings into Ceuta via the fences show that the borders can be overcome by migrants when sticking together. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, the sub-Saharan communities prevailed again, with 81 crossings via the fences. On August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 187 people crossed border directly at the border checkpoint by simply “overrunning” it.

In Melilla, only a relatively small number of people (325) made it over the fences in 2016. However, 2,500 Syrians who claimed asylum at the border checkpoint arrived also in the enclave. In 2017, Melilla is also the

destination of persecuted members of the Rif movement who fear repression and claim asylum in Spain.

### The sea route

Compared to previous years, more people come from Morocco to Spain by sea again. In 2015, 5,302 arrivals were counted, 8,048 in 2016, and up until August 2017 alone, already 8,385. Overall, there are also more north African migrants among the groups of travellers. In 2016, 31 % of all migrants by boat were from Algeria and Morocco, 69% of sub-Saharan origin. In July and August 2016, there were nearly 1000 arrivals along the coast of Andalusia.

On July 14th, 2017, 26 sub-Saharan women and five children reached one of the uninhabited Spanish islands, Isla del Mar. Aware that there had been illegal pushbacks from the Spanish islands close to the Moroccan mainland in the past, they kept shouting “asylum” when approached by the military forces on the island. The Spanish media reported on their resistance so that the group of women finally managed to be granted admission in Melilla/Spain.

In 2017, in the Strait of Gibraltar, a particularly high number of boat journeys was documented by the Alarm Phone. Our cooperation with the Spanish maritime rescue organisation Salvamento Marítimo (S.M.) varies from case to case. In many situations, the Spanish authorities are highly

committed, sends helicopters to search the sea, and rescues many before disembarking them in Spain. Nonetheless, collaborations between S.M. and the Moroccan Marine Royale too often lead to tragic events.

On June 26th, 2016, the Alarm Phone witnessed a deadly interception practice in the Strait of Gibraltar. A greatly distressed caller from Morocco told us that his brother had left early in the morning in direction of Tarifa (Spain) on a boat with eight people. S.M. asked the Moroccan Navy to assist the boat in distress. The Alarm Phone was then able to speak with a passenger on the boat who informed us about the deadly consequences of this collaboration: The rapidly approaching ship of the Marine Royale caused the migrant boat to capsize and the travellers all fell into the water. The Marine Royale could only retrieve five people alive, a Senegalese woman and two men drowned. Their bodies were not recovered. One of them was the brother of the caller. The survivors published a statement together with the Alarm Phone in commemoration of their lost friends. Many of our callers inform us about similar events clarifying that the Marine Royale, the EU’s cooperation partner, is not a search and rescue organisation but a force to prevent migration.

The problematic cooperation between the S.M. and the Marine Royale also became evident in another Alarm Phone case, on July 11th, 2017 (see ‘Particularly Memorable Cases’, in this brochure). In this distress case, the Spanish S.M. assumed that the Marine Royale had already rescued the boat but when the Alarm Phone contacted a person from the boat in order to have the rescue confirmed, we learned that the boat was still in a situation of distress. Our shift team immediately informed the S.M., which subsequently launched another search and was then able to rescue all travellers. This case also demonstrates how handing over the responsibility for rescue to the Moroccan Marine Royale could have easily had fatal consequences.

We have often witnessed these forms of everyday cooperation between Spain or the EU and Morocco. Due to the daily practice of interception by the Marine Royale, the right to asylum and protection is denied to travellers, and interceptions often cause deadly shipwrecks. The ability of the Alarm Phone to form an ear- and mouthpiece for travellers in

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Day of Protest on the second anniversary of the 'Tarajal case' in Rabat, 6th February 2016  
Photo: Alarm Phone



life-threatening situations at sea continues to be a decisive factor of our work.

### Self-organisation

In Morocco, members of the Alarm Phone are active in different parts of the country. They are an important fundament for the work of the Alarm Phone: They raise awareness in the different communities about the absolutely necessary safety measures to take during risky sea crossings and they distribute our phone number in order to prevent deadly catastrophes. The Alarm Phone groups and individuals in the cities of Tangier, Ceuta, Tetouan, Nador, Oujda and Laayoune organise at the grassroot level, they observe and report on the situation on the ground, and they organise political actions.

The Alarm Phone group in Oujda, for example, took part in organising a caravan from Oujda to Figuig on June 25th, 2017. In solidarity with 50 Syrians blocked in the border region between Morocco and Algeria, the caravan travelled 400km. The 200 participants of the caravan encountered another 350 protesters living in Figuig. After a pushback by the Moroccan authorities, the 50 Syrian refugees had been detained in the no-man's land between the Moroccan and Algerian border for nearly two months. In June 2017, 28 of these people were finally able to enter Morocco. The others went into hiding shortly before.

The Alarm Phone group Ceuta was founded on April 23rd, 2016 after a successful protest campaign against the pushbacks that happen there regularly. By boat, 100 migrants had reached small rocks that lie in close proximity of Ceuta. In order to not to be illegally returned to Morocco by the Spanish Guardia Civil, they protested, loudly claiming their rights. Subsequently, activists who lived in Ceuta exerted public and political pressure on the authorities and as a consequence, all 119 people were admitted to Ceuta. After this joint exercise of resistance, the travelers made use of their right to claim asylum on EU territory.

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### Movements

On February 6th, 2014, the Guardia Civil attacked a large group of migrants that wanted to reach Ceuta by swimming. In the course of events, at least 14 people were killed. The 6th of February has been established as a day of protest. On February 6th, 2016, 400 angry protesters gathered in front of the Spanish embassy in Rabat under the slogan "Stop the war on migrants!", in order to demonstrate against the murderous border policies of the EU. It was the first time that sub-Saharan migrants from all over Morocco gathered at this scale in order to publicly raise their voices for a change in EU border policies. Some of them had personally experienced and survived the 6th of February 2014 in Tarajal. Migrants and groups in solidarity protested in Ceuta, Melilla, Madrid, Barcelona, Strasbourg, Berlin, Rom, Genoa and Idomeni on the same day.

In 2017, the demonstration in commemoration of the deaths of Tarajal in Ceuta took place for the third time. This year, the transnational protest was joined by organisations situated in different African countries. A support network for people in the desert areas joined the commemoration in Niamey (Niger). In Edea (Cameroun) there was a demonstration, responding to the callout of Voix des Migrants. Shortly before, in January 2017, the Spanish judiciary had announced the decision to re-open the previously closed proceedings against the agents of the Guardia Civil who were responsible for the deaths of the 6th of February 2014. In Europe, the largest demonstration against EU migration policies took place in Barcelona on February 18th, 2017. Up to 300,000 participants took to the streets, advocating for the admission of more refugees, safe escape routes and the freedom of movement.

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All these protest campaigns show that civil societies in many different countries work together in solidarity to scandalise the murderous isolation of the EU and to stand up for social justice. We demand safe migration routes for all and point out to those politically responsible that migration will continue in spite of continuous investments into surveillance, militarisation and isolation. Morocco is the EU border zone that has been militarised for the longest period of time. Nonetheless, people continue to claim and enact their right to freedom of movement. Whether

in Morocco, Cameroun or Spain: It is about social rights for people, no matter where they live.

**Numbers and statistics were taken from:**

APDHA 2016: Balance Migratorio Frontera Sur 2016. URL: <https://apdha.org/media/Balance-migratorio-16-web.pdf> und IOM 2017: URL: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean>

**Further literature:**

Voices of the borders - Voix des frontieres 2016. URL: [https://beatingborders.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/brochure\\_voicesfromtheborder\\_voixdesfrontieres\\_2016.pdf](https://beatingborders.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/brochure_voicesfromtheborder_voixdesfrontieres_2016.pdf)

*“The worst thing is when you have the Marine Royale in front of you [...] They even come into Spanish waters in order to bring us back to Morocco [...]. And when they come in order to take us, the water causes waves in front of their big boat. It can happen that we capsize with the rubber dingy. That is dangerous, [...] if you don’t have a life vest or no life ring, you will die. Because they won’t protect you, they won’t intervene. The people are very scared in that moment, when the big boat of the Marine Royale comes. We had such cases: people who fell into the water in plain view of the Moroccan navy. So often people come back from the water and say that one person is missing, that this person fell into the water when the navy came to intercept them.” (Interview with Fadel Fadiga, February 11, 2016, Tangier).*



Day of Protest on the second anniversary of the 'Tarajal case' in Rabat, 6th February 2016  
Photo: Alarm Phone



Protests against Pushbacks  
in Ceuta, 119 Bozas, April 2016  
Photo: Alarm Phone



# Rollback in the Aegean Sea: After the EU-Turkey deal and the blocking of the Balkan Route, the Aegean islands turned into prisons

Marion Bayer and Lisa Groß

From January until August 2017, a total of only 4.000 people arrived on the island of Lesbos, while the number of crossings in the entire Aegean Sea was 12.000. Due to this small number, also our engagement with boats in the Aegean decreased. Nevertheless, we are still regularly contacted by people on boats in distress attempting to cross from Turkey to Greece. Through these direct exchanges, we could witness a massive and painful rollback that changed the face of Lesbos and many other islands in the Aegean.

Starting with the EU-Turkey Deal in March 2016, deportations from the Greek islands back to Turkey were launched, framed as part of a legal deal. In the beginning, deportations happened less often than expected – people fought back by applying for asylum in Greece and by documenting the problems they had been facing in Turkey. The public and media attention on the deportations therefore slowly faded away, but currently,

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deportations are again taking place on a regular basis: Every Thursday, a boat with deportees leaves from Lesbos and deportation flights are also carried out from time to time.

Since the deal, the situation has worsened dramatically: thousands got stuck in terrible conditions in the so-called hot-spots, so that the islands have turned into large prisons. At the same time, thousands got stuck also on the Greek mainland, when the official and controlled corridor along the Balkan Route was closed from the beginning of 2016, step by step. Legally, refugees in Greece have the right to reunite with their families in other European countries, with most of them having relatives in Germany, but the processing of family reunifications became incredible slow. So people were waiting for several month, sometimes years, in inhuman living conditions, locked up in hot-spots and camps where they can neither be heard, nor seen.

A relocation-program, which was launched with many promises, resettled only a quarter of the announced 63.000 people from Greece to other EU countries until today. Finally, the EU Commission even recommended to slowly restart the Dublin-returns to Greece – after the returns had been halted for more than six years, following a decision of the European Court of Human Rights, which considered the conditions for refugees in Greece as inhuman. The announcement came precisely at the time, in December 2016, when five refugees froze to death in their snowed in tents in the Greek hot-spots while others died of smoke poisoning in an attempt to warm up their tents.

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## Unforgotten: the summer and autumn of 2015

When we described the incredible transformation of the Aegean border region in our first Alarm Phone brochure in November 2015, more than 56.000 people had reached the island of Lesbos within only one week. We had been in contact with 100 boats during that week from 26<sup>th</sup> of October until 1st of November. It was at the peak of this extraordinary year of 2015 – toward the end of “the summer of migration”. Through the Alarm Phone, we were in contact with more than 1.000 boats in the Aegean Sea in 2015. This incredible situation will never be forgotten, it is still vivid in



our collective memory and this is also why we chose to narrate the meeting with Safinaz in this brochure, the woman whose WhatsApp chat we had reprinted in our first anniversary brochure.

Refugees were welcomed at their arrival, boat by boat, not only by the local residents of Lesbos, whose laudable efforts gained attention worldwide, but, latest from August 2015 onwards, also by people from all over the world, who came to Lesbos to help. In summer 2015, more and more initiatives became involved also in rescue operations, including anarchist groups from Athens, life-guards from Spain, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) who cooperated with Greenpeace, a German boat from Sea-Watch, and many others. At that time, push-backs and violence at sea seemed to have nearly disappeared in this part of the Mediterranean.

### Not everyone has left...

In the beginning of 2016, authorities began to pressurise activists and volunteers assisting and welcoming refugees at the beaches into registering with them. Activists from Denmark and Spain were criminalized for



Sea-Watch 1 in the harbour of Mytilene/Lesvos, showing solidarity with Jugend Rettet, September 2017.  
Photo: Marily Stroux

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their courageous effort to save lives at sea. Since then, only NGO's who cooperate closely with the coast guards and Frontex are officially allowed to be present there. Nonetheless, some others resist the pressure and still remain present.

The shores of the European Union have been militarized like never before. NATO warships patrol the entire coastline. While they hardly ever intervene directly, their radars detect most of the movements at sea, and once detected, they alert the Turkish authorities to intercept refugee boats. Interceptions and transfers back to Turkey occur on a daily basis. In addition to the Greek and Turkish coast guards, Frontex units patrol at sea. Police, military and Europol are active on the Greek islands. Those who finally make it across, report that they have attempted to cross the sea several times until they finally made it. Today's crossings are again prepared in a completely clandestine fashion. Nothing is visible anymore, which also means that sea crossings are – compared to 2015 – becoming increasingly dangerous again.

### Push-backs still exist but violence is not (yet) systematic

The clock has not simply been turned back – the situation is not like before 2015, when everyone who came anywhere near the 'arrival' beaches at night, ran a high risk of being criminalised. Still today, some NGO's remain on the spots to observe the shores. Volunteers are still travelling to the islands to support, and local people still remain alert, not only on Lesbos but also on the other Aegean islands. While fewer are monitoring the situation now, there are still lively observations of what is happening at sea. This might be the main reason why push-backs by the Greek coast guard and by Frontex still remain exceptional and, for now, it seems like the old practice of daily push-backs enforced with brutal methods and even torture are not returning.

While the political forces within the (border) system have remained more or less the same for many years, it is clear that also some liberal forces exist within. While Syriza played a dirty role in turning the Aegean islands into prisons, thereby fulfilling their part of the EU-Turkey Deal in a shameful way, at least the most gruesome acts of violence at sea,

perpetrated by the Greek coast guard, have decreased. Yet, this doesn't mean that there is no violence at all: the border region is being heavily militarised and leaving someone in a small plastic boat in the hands of the Turkish coast guard to be intercepted and forcing them into risking their lives once again, can be called nothing else than an act of violence.

When we speak of the most awful forms of violence that we have learned about, we mean cases of waterboarding, guns pointed to the heads of people, brutal beatings and stabbing of boats. We shouldn't forget the drowning of three women and eight children, who were killed when their boat capsized in January 2014 while being pulled by the Greek coast guard back to Turkey with a rope, driving at full speed. It's important not to forget that even this was possible at Europe's borders. It is the same coast guard that operates today – no one was sentenced for these crimes.

The push-backs did not fully disappear. We got called several times by people who got attacked at sea by coast guard members, who had only minutes or hours before been threatened by masked men, who had their engine stolen or their boats stabbed and who were left sinking in the middle of the sea. Nevertheless, push-backs don't happen systematically anymore – and this is from our point of view a clear result of the increased attention due to the presence of civil actors.

In the article 'Particularly Memorable Alarm Phone Cases' in this brochure, we describe a violent push-back operation from June 2016, where even Frontex was present at the scene. While in this case the public reaction remained nearly absent, despite coverage in a national newspaper in Germany, in a more recent push-back case, the Greek media reported on it repeatedly, forcing the Greek coast guard to respond. It was on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, at 5.03 am, when the Alarm Phone shift team was alerted to a group of 26 travellers, amongst them 2 children and a pregnant woman. We received a GPS-position, showing that they had reached Greek territorial waters. Not even one hour later we were informed that the Greek coast guards had been trying to return the boat to Turkey. A video showed the boat of the coast guards circling around the travellers, creating waves, which resulted in water entering the boat.

The next day we managed to reconnect with the travellers. They

reported that the coast guards had been very offensive by creating big waves that caused their boat to rock left and right. On the coast guard vessel, men were wearing black and carrying weapons. Water started coming into the boat and the passengers started panicking. Although they pleaded with the Greek coast guards, declaring that they had a sick child with them who needed medical treatment, the Greek coast guard insisted on sending them back to Turkey. Fearing for their lives and those of the children they had on board, a paralyzed child and an 8-months-old baby, they went back to the Turkish coast where the Turkish police showed up to pick them up. Apart from the boat of the Greek coast guard, the travellers informed us that another boat with a Greek, French, Croatian and German flag painted on it was present during the pushback but did not intervene.

The Greek coast guard obviously lied in their statement following this incident. They declared that the boat of the refugees was still in Turkish waters when they arrived, but according to the position we received, the boat had already entered Greek waters. They declared that they only observed the boat and didn't touch it but the video taken by the travellers clearly shows the Greek coast guard boat approaching them and creating waves to scare them. Finally, the coast guard even informed a Frontex vessel, which was actually present at the scene according to the testimonies of the refugees, but apparently, they only watched the push-back unfold.

While this case shows that these violent practices still exist, it also goes to show the obstacles the authorities face, when they continue to use these violent methods. Different to before 2015, more refugees know about the importance of documentation today. In this case, it did not help them directly, but they immediately documented and reported the violence and spread it around the world. Also different than before 2015, they found people to accompany their trip via the internet. Still today, some of the Syrian and Iraqi groups formed during the "summer of migration" who closely accompanied and monitored sea crossings, exist and do their best to empower the travellers. Finally, there are groups like the Alarm Phone, ready to support those on the move and to make acts of border violence public.

The reduced level of violence used against refugees at sea is the



clear result of the presence of critical civil society forces. In times of militarisation, our presence is more needed than ever, especially when the bigger NGOs turn away from these border zones. Sea-Watch has fortunately decided to relaunch its activities in summer 2017, and returned with a “Monitoring Mission Aegean” to observe and document the massive and detrimental impact of the EU-Turkey Deal on the human rights of travellers. Besides them, many others also decided to stay.

### How the islands turned into large prisons

All sorts of international NGOs work inside the overcrowded hot-spots to keep them running, in close cooperation with EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Frontex and the Greek police. The prisons became separate worlds, with their own rules, a machinery of separation. People who newly arrived and wait for registration, are detained in a closed part of the camp, the ‘inside’ of the inside. Latest after 25 days, they will be allowed to leave to the ‘outside’ of the inside, to the open part of the camp. Unaccompanied minors are detained in a distinct section of the prison, where they have to stay much longer, for their own ‘protection’, until a place in

a youth accommodation is found for them, sometimes only months later. Detained are also all those who are “ready to be deported”, and, in another closed section, those who have, in great desperation, signed the agreement to be “voluntarily returned” to Turkey. In every corner of the camp you feel how the management of this self-created crisis has turned into a huge business. While volunteers are still present, everyone who enters, even into the open part of the camp, is registered properly with one of the NGOs. It is forbidden to take pictures. It is forbidden to distribute information. The refugees stuck on the islands keep asking desperately about their future – and there are few answers to all their many questions.

Nearly every day there are outbursts of violence due to the living conditions and long waiting times for registration, also among different ethnic groups, often related to the use of the limited space in the overcrowded camp. The hot-spot Moria on Lesbos burned down twice already – but there seems to be no response, hardly any signs of solidarity, and so these upheavals end with several arrests. On Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017, 35 refugees were arrested in Moria following a protest in front of the EASO-office where people showed banners denouncing the dehumanising conditions and called for freedom of movement for those kept on the island for over 6 months. Following this peaceful protest, there were clashes between some protesters and Greek riot police. Police forces carried out raids and arrested 35 people, who then got heavy fines and were transferred to prisons on the Greek mainland.

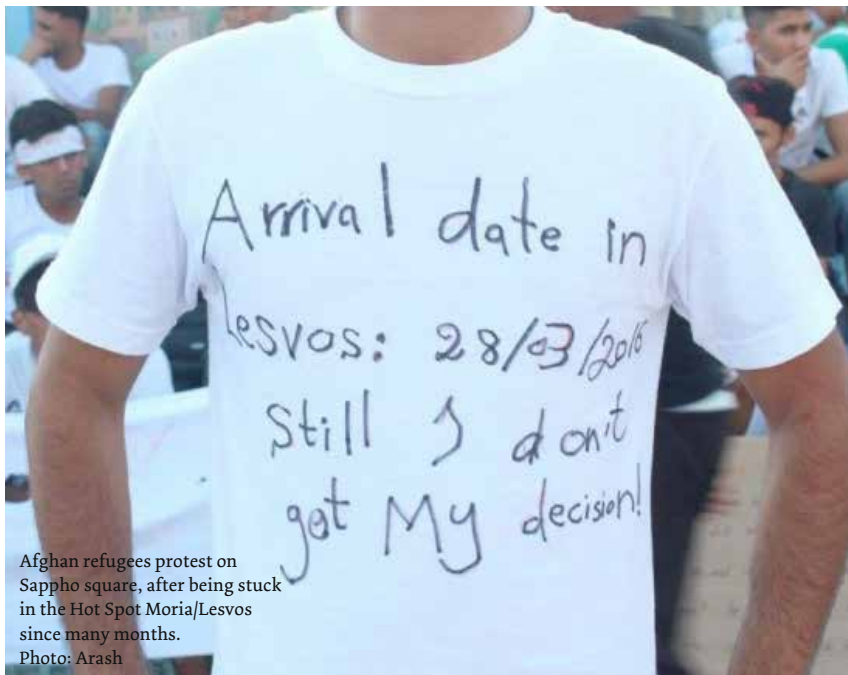
The many NGOs present in the hot-spots create the illusion of assistance and support, while they actually became part of a cruel system that reinforces the misery of all those who are denied the possibility to find the protection they so urgently need. Their suffering seems to be produced in an “ordered” fashion and this technocratic system of dispersed violence becomes ever-more difficult to contest.

### The harbour of Mytilene

Over the last years, we took uncountable pictures at the harbour of Mytilene, Lesbos. Farewell pictures of those who left, who were excited to take the next step towards their desired final destination. Welcoming those

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Afghan refugees protest on Sappho square, after being stuck in the Hot Spot Moria/Lesvos since many months.  
Photo: Arash

who are in transit means wishing farewell to them, and hoping to meet soon again, hopefully in a safer place somewhere in Europe. For us, the harbour of Mytilene was a symbol, one crucial part of the journeys of thousands.

Today, fences surrounding the harbour have destroyed this Aegean point of arrival and farewell. It is not a lively space anymore. While police and Frontex are everywhere, occupying the space, strict entrance controls prohibit people without tickets to even enter the harbour. To complete the miserable scenery, police vans carry prisoners from the mainland to be deported back to Turkey from here.

Collectively we should resist EU authorities who try to turn the Aegean islands, known for their hospitality, into a symbol for Europe's deterrence policies and stand against all attempts to turn Lesbos into a deportation hub back to Turkey.



**Mytilene harbour  
in October 2015.**  
Overcrowded with people  
who move towards the  
open Balkanroute.  
Photo: w2eu

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**Harbour Mytilene,  
September 2017**  
Frontex observes the  
Greek coastguard.  
Photo: anonymous





Family protest for faster family reunification to Germany. Athens, September 2017. They are waiting for many months, separated from their parents and partners. Photo: Salinia Stroux





**Refugees stuck in Lesvos.**  
In the background Turkey.  
Photo: Marily Stroux





# 3

Interviews  
with AP  
members  
and people  
on the move



# The Story of Safinaz

## Berta and Pyoung Whoa\*

During the first week of September 2015, our shift teams were involved in 62 emergency situations in the Aegean Sea. On one of the many rubber boats sat Safinaz\* with her husband and dozens of other travellers from Syria. All of a sudden, their small engine failed them, and they were adrift in Turkish waters. Panic broke out; many were unable to swim and thought they would die. Some were in such panic that they wanted, somehow, to return to Turkey, but most were set on reaching Lesbos Island. While waiting for the departure of their boat, Safinaz had neither slept, nor eaten, and now on the unstable boat with waves coming in, she felt sick. But she took her phone out, thinking about ways to reach out for help. A fellow traveller had written a phone number onto his arm and while nobody really knew what this number was about, Safinaz dialled it, and this is how she reached the Alarm Phone.

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In our first anniversary brochure, we showed some of the WhatsApp distress messages from Safinaz that had reached our shift team member Berta\*. They stayed in touch, also after Safinaz had safely reached Lesbos, and we could thus follow her migration trajectory throughout Europe – via the Balkans to Germany. Nearly two years after our first exchange on WhatsApp, Berta and Pyoung Whoa drove to a small town in northern Hessen to visit her. When she opened her door, we also met her two children, who had only recently come to Germany from Damascus, through family reunification. They had been apart for one and a half years.

In fluent German, Safinaz recounted their experiences on that day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2015, when she feared for their lives. She said, if she had known how it would turn out to be, she would not have migrated in this way. Several attempts to cross the Aegean Sea had failed, and when the engine broke down in Turkish waters, it seemed that they would have to try it once more – if they survived. She said that being aware that Berta



Picture of Safinaz  
Photo: Safinaz



was following their distress case, and thus knowing to be seen and heard, was encouraging and relieving. At some point the engine reignited and the Greek coastguards that we had alerted after the boat entered Greek waters, did not even have to intervene. The boat reached Lesbos independently and landed on a beach in the north of the island – like hundreds of other boats around that time. In Turkey, Safinaz and her husband had ‘adopted’ a Syrian boy, promising his parents to bring him safely to Germany and his uncle there. But first, the three of them were stuck on the Greek island for about two weeks.

During that time, thousands of travellers reached the island, and tens of thousands had to stand in line in the scorching sun for days waiting for their registration, with tensions running high and fights breaking out frequently. The three made it to Athens and took some days to rest. Only a few days earlier, thousands of travellers had left the Keleti train station in Budapest and had launched the March of Hope, which opened the Balkan corridor and thereby cleared the path also for Safinaz. They made it to Hungary, just in time before the fence was put up, and swiftly moved on to Vienna. They decided to go to Hamburg – a place they had heard good things about – but on their way the police stopped them and they were sent to a small German town in Northern Hessen.

She felt welcome, but struggled to find reception for her phone in order to reach out to her family in Syria. Back then, she told Berta via WhatsApp: ‘This place is suitable for horses .. cows .. not for human beings’. But at least it was a quiet place to rest, after their strenuous journey, where she could take up her great passion again. Safinaz is an artist and designer, who draws impressionist paintings and makes sculptures from whatever material she can find. After moving to northern Hessen, she offered art courses to refugees and she is currently working toward an exhibition of her work. In the living room, one of her paintings shows the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, one of the oldest mosques in the world.

Before we leave her place, we promise to meet soon again. She agrees to be filmed for a video clip, in which she tells her story and encourages those who are still on their way to stay strong, to keep struggling. She asks us to send her some questions in advance, so that she can prepare

what to say in German. But the video is meant for travellers and travellers to be, so we ask her to speak in Arabic. She laughs and says, ‘in that case I don’t need to prepare, I know exactly what I want to tell them’.

\* Names changed

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# Refugees in Egypt: Struggling to find Dignity

**Muhammad Alkashef** is a member of the Alarm Phone and an Egyptian researcher on issues related to migration. He got in contact with the Alarm Phone in 2016 and joined the network. “I feel we share the same ground and lots of ideas. The project motivated me to see the bigger picture and look at the whole scene of the Mediterranean region not just Egypt. I think the Alarm Phone is bigger than a hotline project. It’s a magnificent solidarity initiative with different activities, ranging from observing, documenting, consulting, and emergency work to campaigning and advocacy. It was a great experience for me to see how they stand for saving lives and helping people in distress, which is the right thing to do in my eyes!”

## He was interviewed by Miriam Edding

Migration through the Mediterranean has been occurring since the nineties in Egypt, where the migrants were mainly local citizens escaping economic hardships and looking for better standards of living. Egypt is one of the largest African countries that receive different kinds of immigration, documented and undocumented. African refugees moving into Egypt are fleeing political instability, conflicts and civil wars in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia), as well as Sudan. The war in Yemen added the Yemenis to the list of the various nationalities of refugees.

Since the upheavals in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Egypt has become an important place in the regional migration route of Syrian refugees. Egypt made headlines after the drowning of 500 Syrian and Palestinian refugees in September of 2014. But while the Egyptian route was getting less often frequented by Syrians it was becoming one of the few available options for refugees from Africa. The opening of the Balkan route was not

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the only reason why Syrian migration through Egypt decreased. Based on our fieldwork, we can highlight different reasons. First of all, the families wait for legal reunification with their relatives who made it to Europe. In addition, within the Syrian refugee networks we notice that the attraction of living in Europe is not as strong as it used to be, and stories of hardships of sea migrants increasingly circulate. This is probably why many accept staying in Egypt and pursue their registration here.

Moreover, in July 2016, the Egyptian government imposed additional measures restricting the entry of Syrians coming to Egypt that required them to get a visa and security approval in advance. In mid-July, nearly 476 Syrians were deported or prevented from entering the Egyptian territories. Waves of violence and attacks on Syrian refugees escalated after some national media outlets claimed the Syrians in Egypt supported the regime of the Muslim Brotherhood and former President Mohamed Morsi.

Generally, asylum seekers and refugees are negatively affected by the current state of economic, political and social unrest in Egypt and have increasingly faced forms of xenophobic attacks. But already in June 2013 violence against asylum seekers and refugees had escalated, particularly targeting Ethiopians after the Ethiopian government had announced that it would divert the course of the Blue Nile and launch the construction of the Great Renaissance Dam on its territory. Unfortunately, the Egyptian media played an instigating role in the ignition of this violence by portraying Egypt as if it was facing a severe water scarcity crisis.

In Sinai, the situation was way worse. With the ongoing military operations against armed groups, the security of immigrants and refugees in Sinai, many of them are trafficked, suffered great damage. Egypt has witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of refugees who are victims of human trafficking and who suffered from severe and prolonged ill-treatment and torture in the Sinai region during the previous years. In Cairo, more than 400 survivors of trafficking are living. They escaped or were released from ‘torture camps’ in Sinai after they had been sold and re-sold many times in Egypt, in the absence of any intervention to enforce the law, where no arrests or prosecutions were made so far.



The refugees fled their country as a result of life-threatening situations, but they do not find the security or the human dignity they hoped for in Egypt. The Egyptian government has failed in providing the minimum necessary services to protect the physical integrity and secure their belongings. They failed to intervene with communal conflict resolution, which is usually taken up by the local community members and the refugees. The refugees in Egypt suffer from a large degree of marginalization and vulnerability. The existing legal system and the policies of the Egyptian government fail to protect them or give them access to appropriate and effective judicial remedies. Except for spouses of Egyptian citizens, the Egyptian law does not allow refugees to apply for Egyptian citizenship, even if they cannot return to their countries of origin. Moreover, refugees are usually confronted with xenophobic attitudes which can turn very quickly into violent racism, especially in the case of darker-skinned sub-Saharan refugees. These factors combined draw a bleak future for the social integration of refugees in Egypt.

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# We could not ignore this any longer!

Interview by Lisa Groß

**A. is a member of the Izmir Alarm Phone team, who has been actively involved as a migrant rights activist for many years.**

**LISA** How did you get involved in the Alarm Phone?

**A** Izmir is one of the hubs for those, who are trying to cross from Turkey to Greece. As a migrant rights activist living in Izmir, it was impossible to ignore all the violations that were happening in the Aegean – mainly push-backs and interceptions by the Turkish authorities. We were watching desperately, when people were getting detained, deported, violently pushed back and killed at the borders. When we spoke up about this, the answer we got was that these were rumours and that we did not have any evidence. For this reason, when we first met with Alarm Phone members, we were quite excited, because this network was not only going to give us the means to collect evidence, but it also had the potential to prevent violations from happening in the first place.

**L** Despite the shameful EU-Turkey deal and the horrendous situation on the Greek islands, people still cross the Aegean to Greece. What changed since the deal?

**A** Sure, some people still manage to reach the islands, but many are being intercepted at sea or even before embarking. The Aegean Sea became further militarized: NATO boats are patrolling the area and informing the Turkish coast guard, when they see boats crossings, asking them to intercept the boats before they even reach Greek waters.

While the authorities usually release Syrian nationals on the same day of the interception, non-Syrians are directly sent to deportation centres. They can apply for asylum while their deportation process continues, but detention centres are very problematic places – like everywhere else; Turkey is no exception to that. And even if they are released and their asylum procedure starts, there is no long-term solution for them in Turkey.

In Basmane, a district in the center of Izmir, the situation changed completely: Whereas, from summer 2015 onwards the streets of Basmane were full of people, who were waiting to cross and the trips were being organized out in the open, visible to anyone, Basmane is now much quieter. Many people do not want to take a perilous journey, which might result in deportation to Turkey and from Turkey back to their country of origin.

**L Did you ever experience a pushback case in your shift? What role can the Alarm Phone play in these cases?**

**A** The Alarm Phone has become an import preventive mechanism. In the past, authorities were violating migrants' rights, confident that nobody would ever find out that they were violated in their rights, or even if they were, that no one could prove it. Now when migrants inform an actor like the Alarm Phone and we follow up with the authorities, we pressure them to act within the legal framework.

So, pushbacks are happening far less compared to previous years, but since interceptions by the Turkish coastguard are within the legal framework, a lot of people still get intercepted. I have not experienced a pushback case during my shifts with the Izmir shift team, but we heard about such cases from our migrant friends many times. I hope this method will never be used again... It was a horrifying and traumatic experience for everybody on the boat, thinking their lives would be over...

**L What does it mean to be an activist in Turkey these days?**

**A** Since the coup attempt in July 2016, the situation for anybody with a critical view towards the government is quiet dismal – whoever you are, a journalist, an academic, or a human rights defender. Some of our friends are in prison waiting for their trials, which might only take place a year

from now. Others have been dismissed from their jobs without any compensation and explanations. Some NGOs advocating for refugee rights have been targeted by the pro-government media, which claim that these organisations are working for Europe as agents and are producing fake reports about the situation of refugees in Turkey in order to provide more leverage to the EU. This creates anger and fear at the same time. Nevertheless, we continue our work, knowing that we are not doing anything wrong or illegal!

**L Thanks for the your insights! Let's keep fighting together!**



# ‘I support the network with my experience’ – an interview with an activist from the Alarm Phone in Tangier

Carla Höppner and Corinna Zeitz conducted the interview

**CARLA AND CORINNA** How did you join the Alarm Phone?

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**ACTIVIST** The first time I came to Tangier, I was invited to some friends’ house where I spent some time. At that point, I met some activists who came from Europe. We met often. Subsequently, I asked them if I could join the group. Because it’s a humanitarian network in solidarity and because we are the migrants here. We are strangers in this country. Afterwards I went to Laayoune where I spent 8 months. And when I came back to Tangier in September 2016, there was the big Alarm Phone meeting. At that time, I started working within this network. I came to the first day of the meeting and asked if I could take part. Since then, I support the network with my experience and do awareness-raising work in migrant communities by distributing information on the project and by informing interested persons on the risks and realities of crossing by sea.



Three travellers on a small rubber dinghy were finally detected by the Spanish Coast Guard  
Photo: Salvamento Marítimo

**CC Has the situation of migrants in Morocco changed in the past two years?**

**A** Yes, there have been big changes. Before, everybody in Tangier lived in the ghetto. It was easier to get organised together because everybody lived close by. The preparation of the journey was thus easier. But, at the same time, 'Bozas'\* happened less frequently because everybody was there in order to leave and that made us too visible. Controls were easier. There was a lot of pressure. There was also a mafia that was quite strong.

Now, in Tangier, people are more dispersed and you can't tell that we are here in order to travel. Since it's no longer obvious that you are here for the journey, you can get your life in order: you go to the market, just normally, and you find a small job. At the same time, you organise yourself and you try your luck and leave. That's an advantage. It has become more difficult for the police to pursue people before the journey. Even if security has been reinforced, Bozas have become more frequent.

**CC What are the challenges you are facing when working with the Alarm Phone?**

**A** Although I am the last person who joined the Alarm Phone Tangier, I am now practically the only member of the group on the ground. When I arrived, there was a whole collective of people who were part of the Alarm Phone and of NoBorder. But the last person responsible left and now all the tasks and all the responsibilities were transferred to me. That is a challenge.

I think the efforts will be compensated. I already got a bit of experience because I have already worked in the humanitarian sector before I came here. You need to know how to communicate with the migrants on the ground in order to raise their awareness. You need to take some time to talk to them, to give them the right information at the right moment if you want to do this job with them well. I have got some competence in this area. I have learned a lot and I can see some progress. I hope things will be easier in the future for the Alarm Phone in Tangier. I will do my very best.

**CC Is there a case or a situation in your work with the**

**Alarm Phone that has had a particular impact on you?**

**A** Yes. I met somebody who didn't believe in the Alarm Phone. I explained to him several times how it works, but we always had discussions on that topic. There were even some tensions between us because of that. Although he knew a lot of people who took the boat, he did not want to call the Alarm Phone because he had his doubts. For example, he said that the Alarm Phone would call the Moroccan Marine Royale. I told myself that he hadn't understood but that he needed to understand.

One day there was a big boat that left by sea. It was a boat with 46 people. The guy in question was in touch with that boat. I got in touch with him in order to convince him to call the Alarm Phone. Finally, it was me who put the boat in touch with the Alarm Phone. We followed up on the case until 3 a.m. In the end, the Salvamento Marítimo saved them. In this moment, the guy was really grateful and he understood the importance of the project. That was a real pleasure for me with respect to my work with the Alarm Phone.

\*successful arrivals in Europe



# From distressed travellers in the Med to activists in Germany – Asefaw and Kindesha about their political engagement in Hanau

Asefaw and Kindesha were interviewed  
by Maurice Stierl and Marion Bayer

## KINDESHA (name changed):

That Kindesha is still alive seems close to a miracle. He escaped from Libya on a boat in January 2017, during a time when due to the rough weather conditions only one vessel of the NGO Search and Rescue fleet was still operating in that area. When he boarded the rubber dinghy, several engines had to be exchanged, as all of them failed to ignite. They embarked but again and again the engine overheated and stopped. The sea was rough, and nobody thought they would survive. They were a group of 150 people, including many women and children. Suddenly, they saw a red vessel emerge in the distance – the rescue vessel Aquarius of the NGO SOS Mediterranean. A small plastic vessel approached them and Max, a calm guy

with long hair, who had initiated the rescue, informed them about the procedures – people who needed medical care, women and children first, nobody should stand up, and all would be rescued. Kindesha was translating these instructions to the others and one by one they were disembarked. For a whole month afterwards he could not believe that they had made it alive – he said that, when thinking about the incredibly high waves, it is hard to believe, like a dream.

In Catania/Italy he refused to give his fingerprints but two soldiers came and forced him to do so. From a camp in Bari he went to Milan, then via Austria to Germany – all still in January. There was a container train and he climbed into the small space at the bottom and hid there with three other friends. It was freezing cold, and one of them suffered a lot, so they wrapped him into an emergency blanket. They got off in Munich and Kindesha contacted some friends in Germany. They told him to leave Munich and move elsewhere, so he went to the train station which is where the police caught them. This was the first time he heard the German language, spoken by policemen. After registering, the little group was divided and Kindesha was sent to Giessen, then later on to Hanau. He said that he was more fortunate than some of his friends who left Germany due to the threat of Dublin deportation and fled to France, where they got stuck when trying to reach England.

In Hanau, he was told about Metzgerstrasse 8, a building occupied by activists offering free consultations. While receiving support there, Kindesha offered his language skills to support others and translated during consultations. He is still threatened by the Dublin regulation and fears being returned to Italy. But this does not mean that he is hiding. Shortly after arriving in Hanau, Kindesha already started to give speeches in public to share his experiences and to protest against the Dublin system, for example in a church, at Frankfurt airport during an anti-deportation rally, or at the twentieth anniversary of No One Is Illegal at the Documenta in Kassel. He said that he will remain active and keep mobilising people. He is threatened by deportation but does not want to enter Church asylum to find protection just yet – first he wants to join the large We'll Come United demonstration in September in Berlin where he will tell his story.

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**ASEFAW** In 2013, when I crossed the Mediterranean, there was no Alarm Phone and there were no NGO rescue vessels at sea, it was a different time. The situation in Libya was hard, me and many friends suffered a lot, some in the prisons without food and water, and some in the places where they were hiding. Some of my friends were injured by Libyan soldiers and I had the phone number of Father Mussie Zerai, so I called him and asked for help. He contacted the Red Cross and they took some of the injured to the hospital for treatment.

When I arrived on Lampedusa in April 2013 with about 280–290 others, I refused to give my fingerprints. A lot of people burned their fingers to erase their fingerprints from their own hands. Due to my refusal, I stayed on Lampedusa for nearly 3 months and was not allowed to leave. I was part of a group that mobilised collectively to protest against the fingerprinting, and we formed a committee. The authorities then stopped giving basic necessities to us, even water, and after a few months we could not sustain our protest any longer. In the end, we were a group of only 25 people, most of the others had left already as they had given their fingerprints earlier. The situation was hard, some tried to commit suicide. Two people who tried to hang themselves could be stopped by friends of mine. Also on Lampedusa, I called Father Zerai and he gave me the moral strength to survive. In the end, they broke my resistance by using a taser against me. I fell to the ground. Then, they took my fingerprints.

A few days later, I was brought to Cantania/Sicily. I moved on to Rome where I stayed for a month and then I took a train to Austria. In Munich they caught us on a bus and we were brought to a police station. They told me to go back to Italy and stole some of the cash I had on me.

I did not go back but continued my journey and finally ended up in Hanau. There we started mobilising against Dublin deportations and founded the group 'Lampedusa in Hanau'. I then also joined the Alarm Phone from the very beginning – I had the personal experience of crossing the sea, so I knew how to support people in these dangerous situations. This project saved so many people and I am happy to be part of a project that struggles for freedom of movement and safe ways. And I was able to meet Father Zerai in person. We spoke together at an event in Freiburg

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in 2015 where I reminded him about how he had helped us in Libya and Lampedusa and he remembered me. He was so important for us, not only at sea. He stood by our side whenever we felt that we were at the end of our strength. I try to give back a little bit.



Frankfurt Airport, 2014  
Protest against Dublin-deportations.  
Photo by: LiHU



# Bocar's story: "There are no safe ways!"

**Bocar contacted the Alarm Phone to report on the hopeless and violent situation in Libya. He also asked us for information on how to travel back to Gambia without risking his life. We were not able to help him. But during our trip to Zuwarah in May 2017, our delegation had the chance to speak to him face to face and this interview is based upon our exchanges back then. In August 2017, we learned that he had arrived in Italy. Despite his great fear of taking a boat again, he found that he had no other option than to escape from Libya.**

**Bocar was interviewed by Miriam Edding**

## **MIRIAM** Why did you start your journey?

**BOCAR** My parents were getting older and in my culture, the son has to take care of his parents when they get old. So, we decided that I would go to Europe to make some money to support my family. I wanted to give something back to them.

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## **M** How did you organize your boat?

**B** For some time, I was in Tripoli, where I searched for a smuggler. In the end, I found somebody who made me an offer for a boat leaving from Sabratah. There is a big market in Tripoli, where a lot of smugglers offer their services. But it is very difficult, because you have no way of verifying what people tell you.

## **M** How did you travel from Tripoli to Sabratah?

**B** It was organized by the smugglers: everything, from the way from Tripoli to Sabratah, to the beach and all the way onto the boat. We stopped in several cities on the way, because we had to pass so many checkpoints. It took us a few days to reach Sabratah. When we arrived, I thought: they have betrayed me and lied to me. There were so many people. I cannot even say how many, maybe a thousand or even several thousand people. In the evening, they pushed a few overfilled rubber boats out, and many people left. But at the same time, new people kept arriving from Tripoli. There were mainly people from West African countries. But a few came from Eritrea and Somalia.

## **M** What was your experience during that night when you took the boat?

**B** We took the boat in the night from Sabratah. The weather was good and calm. But soon after they pushed us from the beach, the waves became very high and our boat was shaking about. It shook a lot. We thought we would all die. Everything was dark and we couldn't see anything. We began to pray. Soon, after about half an hour, a boat came to rescue us. Only God can save you when you are on the water.

## **M** How did you come to Zuwarah and why?

**B** I had been in Sabratah, but it was very dangerous. Black people cannot move freely there. You can get shot, or they might capture you. You cannot move freely and there is no chance of earning a living. So, friends of mine told me about Zuwarah and I went there and now I have lived here since August 2016. I work in construction, but work is hard and you don't

always find any. We migrants live in one house together. In every room, there are 3 to 5 people and we share the rent.

**M How was it to live in Zuwarah?**

**B** Life is hard in Libya. Very hard. Every day I go to the station to search for work. But sometimes, there is no work for a whole day, or even two days. There is nothing else for us to do. We do not have any other places to go except the house where we live. If I stay in the house at night, I think a lot. It troubles my brain, all the thinking and thinking. If I take a coffee in a coffee-shop, I never stay inside. I would always take it and leave the place, because I don't feel comfortable there. However, at least you are still safe in Zuwarah. People respect you. You are not hunted, nobody will capture you. You can even try to find some work. It is, as far as I know, the best place in Libya, and that is why I came here.

**M What did you know about the journey before you took off?**

**B** I did not know anything. It is more than an adventure. I expected it to be hard. But this... It was more than that. Only God can save you. Every step you make is a risk. Every moment is a risk. I would not have left Gambia, if I had known about all this. But I did not know anything about the journey. I want to go home to Gambia now and start something with a little money. I think I can achieve more there than I can here, in Zuwarah.

**M What are you planning to do now?**

**B** It is too dangerous to take the boat. If these fishermen hadn't come to rescue us, we would have died. I have been in Libya for quite a long time now, and I know a lot of stories. I have some friends, who took the boat, and I have called their smugglers, and they keep telling me that they entered Europe. But since they left, I have not heard anything from them or their families back home. So I know, the risks are high. For some time, I am in contact with the IOM to try to go home again. But it is not possible for me as I would have to go to Tripoli. I would have to pass many cities, which are too dangerous. I escaped Sabratah because you can even be shot in Sabratah without a reason. Or they capture you and sell you or force you

on a boat for money. I see no chance to reach Tripoli and to get home from there, but I will never get on another of these boats to Europe.

**M Would you take a safe boat?**

**B** What do you mean by safe boat? For sure, if there was a safe way to enter Europe, I would prefer to go to Europe than to go home. But there are no safe ways.

**M Are you in contact with your family?**

**B** Everybody has some numbers from their family back home. And if people get on a boat, they give the numbers to a friend who is staying, so that he can be in contact with the family and see whether the person reached the other side. But for many people, you will never hear from them again. This is the hardest. I cannot imagine taking a boat and my parents not knowing what happened. They would not have a body to bury, they would not have something to mourn. I could not stand this. It is also for my parents, that I cannot do the journey.



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Community Outreach  
Exchange, Needs  
Interviews  
Distribution of media

Research/  
Documentation

Media Group

AP Shifts  
Forum  
- Alarm phone

Translator-  
Pool

CM- Plane  
App + SAR-Boats  
Networking

Overview of  
Alarm Phone's  
'networking  
and sister  
projects'

Fund Raising

Alarm Phone  
re-sectphone  
Sahara

Missing  
at Borders

# Towards an Alarm Phone Sahara

Dorette Führer and Volker Mörchen

**Countless people lose their lives every year not only in the Mediterranean Sea, but also in the desert. There is no official record but migrants who have crossed the desert as well as actors from the directly affected countries believe that the numbers are as high as in the Mediterranean Sea. In the desert, just like in the Mediterranean, stronger controls and criminalization lead to an increasingly dangerous journey and to more and more migrants losing their lives.**

For some time now, the European Union has been trying to stop migrants before they even reach the Mediterranean. Considering the unstable situation in Libya, the Sahel countries Niger, Chad and Mali are currently of particular interest to the migration regime. Frontex opened an office in Agadez (Niger) and besides the International Organization for Migration (IOM) massively expanding its presence in the border area between Niger and Libya since 2017, high-level government negotiations move toward the realisation of so-called Hot Spots in Niger and Chad. According to the interests of Germany, France, Spain and Italy, big reception camps run by the UNHCR shall arise in these regions.

The aim of these measures is always the same: Reinforced

migration control and the return of people. Whether this will be achieved is more than questionable. Nonetheless, already now, the stricter control and surveillance practices in the desert have dramatic consequences. For example, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, when a group of 75 migrants from Gambia, Nigeria, Senegal and Ivory Coast were left behind in the Ténéré desert close to Seguedine, 52 people died. The 23 survivors walked through the desert for several days until they finally found a water source. There they were picked up by the IOM and brought to the new IOM-Transit-Center in Dirkou. Such cases occur also due to the fact that the army of Niger has currently occupied the few major water sources along the central route. For this reason, the smugglers have to take more difficult ways, which increases the risk of accidents. Furthermore, the drivers often abandon groups if they are unexpectedly tracked down by security force, as unlike before, they are now swiftly arrested and their vehicles confiscated.

But what if the drivers could call the number of an independent network of activists in those or similar situations, able to pass on the GPS location of broken down vehicles without having to be afraid of prosecution? This is where the Alarm Phone Sahara comes into play, which was initiated by representatives of different groups and networks in February 2017 at a meeting in Niamey (Niger). Involved are activists from Morocco, Niger, Mali, Togo, Europe and Burkina Faso, where a second bigger meeting took place in May 2017. An important component during the preparation was an exploratory tour of Malian activists from Bamako via Gao to Niamey, as well as intensive research in Agadez, in the North of Niger.

A key aspect of the work of this new network is first of all to provide independent information for migrants on the way. In many cases, they are purposefully misled by smugglers, e.g. by being sold overpriced tickets for regular public buses. Safety instructions for the desert should be retrievable online and via phone as well as through distributed leaflets at common frequented places of transit, such as major bus stations, to give migrants the opportunity to make their own decisions on the basis of independent information. An important means of communication are the many local radios along the way.

Furthermore, the Alarm Phone Sahara understands itself as a



monitoring centre which is not only trying to document cases of death in the desert, but which is also looking for possibilities to intervene directly. However, the situation in the desert cannot really be compared with the conditions in the Mediterranean – because, among other factors, in large parts of the Sahara armed conflicts are taking place and there are no ‘desert guards’ (analogous to the coast guards in the Mediterranean) who are obliged to rescue in case a distress call comes in. In addition, most of the Sahara region is difficult to access and the affected countries often lack helicopters or off-road vehicles – or simply petrol.

Once the necessary financial resources are available, we will purchase a pick-up truck in Agadez as the first concrete step towards an Alarm Phone Sahara. It could be called via satellite phone in case of accidents or breakdowns, and could carry out rescue operations, deliver water and/or fix up the vehicle. As our project is embedded into a wider network of civic actors who are familiar with the terrain, the local structures and circumstances in the desert, the conditions on site seem good at the moment. The political message and thread connecting all of these actors is the demand for freedom of movement for all and for safe passage – also through the desert.

**For further information and contact:**

<https://www.facebook.com/AlarmePHONESahara/>

Or: [www.afrique-europe-interact.net](http://www.afrique-europe-interact.net)

During the first meeting of the  
Alarm Phone Sahara in Niamey/Niger,  
Februrary 2017  
Photo: Alternative Espaces Citoyens



Checkpoints on the way between Ougadougou (Burkina Faso) and Niamey, where migrants in transit are being picked out  
Photo: Richard Djif





# Missing at the borders

## Hatem

Missing at the borders is a webpage created for the families whose children perished, vanished, or were made to disappear during their journeys to Europe, in order to carry their voices into the world. The Mediterranean Sea has become an open-air cemetery - every year we witness the dreadful running count of lost lives. Yet, in public discourse, the victims often appear as mere numbers, without regard to the fact that they are first and foremost human beings. The unique individuality of each one of them, with hopes and dreams which led them to migrate, is completely ignored and erased. As for the migrants' loved ones, the desperate conditions in which these families are thrust is not even part of the public discourse.

**FAMILIES** living in anguish after the disappearance of their loved ones who sometimes arrive in Europe only to go missing afterward;

**FAMILIES** who might have indications that their loved ones were forcibly disappeared, illegally detained in one of the hundreds of migrants' prisons south of the Mediterranean, built on African soil but with the political and economic complicity of the European Union;

**FAMILIES** forced to pay huge sums of money to free their loved ones from the torture inflicted by human traffickers;

**FAMILIES** who could not bury their deceased loved ones after learning of their passing, because the bodies were never returned to them;

**FAMILIES** who asked for justice when police officers and military personnel were responsible for the death of their loved ones, and the only answer they received was the dismissal of any legal proceedings.

**MISSING AT THE BORDERS** wants to be the voice of migrants who perished,

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vanished, or were forcibly disappeared, by giving a platform to their **FAMILIES**. The webpage will collect video recordings of the migrants' families in an effort to give an identity to each of the lost lives, and to publicize and support the struggles of these families as they fight for truth and justice.

**THE SITUATION OF TUNISIAN FAMILIES:** Between March and May 2011,



Families of the missing migrants in front of the Ministry for Social Affairs in Tunis, December 2016  
Photo: Mohamed Ketbach

501 Tunisian citizens disappeared in the Mediterranean. Their families started searching for them, first by filing missing person reports at local police stations, later by protesting at the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tunis, where mothers staged dramatic acts of protest, some even setting themselves on fire. The cry "where are our children?" rumbled through the streets of Tunis. The families authorized the Tunisian government to send the fingerprints of the disappeared to the Italian authorities, in order to be compared to the fingerprints of those who arrived in Italy. Six years have gone by, and no one has yet made the effort to share the results with the families. Having formed four associations, the families continue to fight to this day, demanding answers from the Italian and the Tunisian governments.

**THE SITUATION OF THE ALGERIAN FAMILIES:** The years between 2006 and 2009 marked a rise in the number of migrants leaving Algeria, particularly from the city of Annaba to the Italian island of Sardinia. In 2007 and 2008, hundreds of young Algerians disappeared on their journeys.

Their families turned to the Algerian and the Italian Coastguards, who responded that the waters had been calm, and that there were no signs of shipwrecks. However, some of the young migrants had been able to inform their families back home that they were about to be intercepted by the police in Tunisian territorial waters - for many of the families this was the last time they heard from their loved ones. Some of the families were able to gather evidence confirming that their children had been stopped by the Tunisian police, and claimed, therefore, that they had been victims of “enforced disappearance”. The families filed complaints in Tunisian and Algerian courts, but have not received any reply to date. Article 2 of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance states:

*For the purposes of this Convention, “enforced disappearance” is considered to be the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.*

Based on this convention, the attorney for the Algerian families, Dr. Kouceila Zerguine, was able to introduce the case of disappeared Algerian migrants to the UN’s Committee on Forced Disappearances. This was a first for a case regarding the disappearance of migrants. The results will be published in a report sometime in 2017.

**MISSING AT THE BORDERS** is promoted by supporters and activists from several antiracist networks from both shores of the Mediterranean:

**Milano senza Frontiere:** <https://www.facebook.com/milanosenzafrontiere/?fref=ts>  
**Palermo senza Frontiere:** <https://www.facebook.com/Palermosenzafrontiere/?fref=ts>  
**Como senza Frontiere:** <https://www.facebook.com/comosenzafrontiere/?fref=ts>  
**Carovane Migranti:** <http://carovanemigranti.org/>  
**Association des travailleurs maghrébins en France:** [www.atmf.org/](http://www.atmf.org/)  
**Alarm Phone:** <https://alarmphone.org/>  
**WatchTheMed:** <http://www.watchthemed.net>

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Families of the missing migrants in front of the Ministry for Social Affairs in Tunis, December 2016  
Photo: Mohamed Ketbach





Families of the missing migrants in front  
of the Ministry for Social Affairs in Tunis,  
December 2016  
Photo: Mohamed Ketbach





Families of the missing migrants in front  
of the Ministry for Social Affairs in Tunis,  
December 2016  
Photo: Mohamed Ketbach



# On the Alarm Phone's cooperation with other networks: Building a large web around the Med

## Tamino

When private NGOs entered the Mediterranean to stop the dying at sea with their own vessels, we as the Alarm Phone got in contact with them to share our experiences and knowledge, and to create a web of collaboration around the Med. This was also the case when the Berlin-based organisation Sea-Watch launched their Search and Rescue (SAR) operation in 2015, first with a 23m sailing vessel and later in 2016 with a larger and more professional vessel. Toward the end of 2016, Sea-Watch launched test flights with a Cirrus SR22 for aerial SAR surveillance and officially started its operation called Moonbird in April 2017. Already on the very first day of their operation, the Alarm Phone and Moonbird cooperated on the same SAR case in the Central Med after which the cooperation intensified.

This article discusses one case of cooperation, which occurred on the 15th of June 2017. It all began with an email by Father Zerai, received at 7:50am Central European Summer Time (CEST). He forwarded a Thuraya satellite number of a migrant boat in distress which had started in al-Khums, Libya. The position of the boat showed that it was still in Libyan territorial waters. Our shift team was not able to reach the phone of the travellers, but when we checked their credit, we could see that they were still using the phone and made a lot of calls. We recharged their phone

with credit every time it was getting low, in order to support their ability to communicate.

At 08:50 CEST we informed Moonbird about our case and requested an operation to search for the boat and to coordinate rescue. Five minutes later, we received another email by Father Zerai, with an updated position. The travellers seemed to have reached international waters by now. However, no SAR vessel that we could alert was in the vicinity. As the boat had left the area under Libyan jurisdiction, our shift team called MRCC Rome. They confirmed that they would launch a SAR operation to search for the boat.

Shortly afterwards, we sent the updated position to the Moonbird. The boat was now at 32°45'N 014°36'E. Moonbird answered: "0712 Copy position. We approach straight. ETA 0750z. Over." – meaning that they would arrive at the position of the migrant boat at 09:50 CEST. Since the aircraft did not have access to current AIS data of vessels in the SAR zone, they asked the shift team to send an updated position of the Vos Hestia,

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At 10:02 am Moonbird spots the migrant boat Alarmphone is in contact with  
Photo: Moonbird Airborne Operation  
[www.sea-watch.org](http://www.sea-watch.org), [www.hpi.swiss](http://www.hpi.swiss)





the rescue vessel operated by the NGO Save the Children, which we did. We believed that the Vos Hestia was asked to conduct a SAR operation for our case, but could not establish a direct contact to its crew.

Already at 10:02 CEST we received a confirmation from the Moonbird via email: "0802 visual on RB. Engine not running. Pos 32d50mN 014d32mE. Pls forward. We do not have contact to VH yet. We continue SAR Westbound. Later coming back again for rescue coordination with VH. Over." The shift team immediately informed MRCC Rome about this new position of the migrant boat. As the Moonbird continued their operation to the west and searched the strip some miles north of the coast of Libya, they passed the Vos Hestia, which had already been informed by MRCC Rome and was approaching the position of our case. Moonbird passed all important information to Vos Hestia and continued its search patterns to the west.

At around 10:23 CEST, we communicated again with MRCC Rome and they confirmed that the Vos Hestia had been ordered to conduct a SAR operation. From our communication with the Moonbird we learned that there were also some rescue operations taking place in the area west of Tripoli. The Moonbird was involved in the SAR coordination and therefore requested the Seagull, a Spanish military aircraft operating under the command of the EU military mission EUNAVFOR MED, to do air surveillance in the east.

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The Seagull, operating north of al-Khums, then forwarded the updated position of our case to the Moonbird, which relayed the information to our shift team. The migrants were now at 32°59'N 014°27'E. We forwarded this position to MRCC Rome and asked the Moonbird to check on our case. At 12:25 CEST, they left the area in the west of Tripoli to coordinate the rescue of the migrants we were in contact with.

For some two hours now we could see that the migrants were not using their phone anymore. Most probably they had thrown it into the ocean, after seeing the military aircraft and fearing criminalisation. Shortly before the rescue vessel Vos Hestia arrived in the area where the migrant boat had been last located, the Moonbird arrived also at the scene. The aircraft found the rubber boat and passed its position to the Vos Hestia so that they



could move more rapidly toward the migrant boat. The email Moonbird then sent to our shift team read as follows: “1055 We can confirm VH has visual contact to RB. 1NM away. SAR ops starting now. Over.”

As MRCC Rome was not sure if this was in fact the boat that we had been in touch with, we asked the Moonbird to fly search patterns around that position to look out for more boats. But the aircraft was not able to locate any further boats in the area. We thus asked the Moonbird crew again if they could confirm that the boat being rescued was in fact the boat in question, and in their response, they sounded pretty convinced: “1109 We can confirm that RB now rescued by VH is your Case. We are now leaving the SAR zone. Thank you for your cooperation. Over.” Since MRCC Rome was not entirely sure if it was the same case, we went through the received GPS positions again, comparing the data with the one provided by the Moonbird and MRCC Rome. After several calls with MRCC Rome, we and they were convinced that the rescued boat was the boat in question. In addition, we received photos of the case by Moonbird. At 23:00 CEST, MRCC Rome confirmed the completed rescue of the migrant boat.

This case shows once again how important civil actors are in supporting people on the move. Our network, which is connected to many other actors, groups and NGOs, is creating a web all around the Mediterranean, to strengthen all existing efforts to rescue people in distress and ensuring successful SAR operations. While the passage through the Central Med, the deadliest borderzone in the world, remains extremely dangerous, we can accelerate rescue operations, raise awareness and struggle for legal and safe routes – which is, after all the only solution to stop the dying at sea.



One Rhib (rigid-hulled inflatable boat) of Vos Hestia is attending the migrant boat and establishing the first contact and communication  
Photo: Moonbird Airborne Operation  
[www.sea-watch.org](http://www.sea-watch.org), [www.hpi.swiss](http://www.hpi.swiss)

# BOZA TRACKS GAL MO GUEUNE FRONTEX! FERRIES NOT FRONTEX!

## Recording Against Borders

Xelu Baye Fall, Rijaal Fall, Max, Khalil

(Wolof)

**XELU**

Takkeu diogue

paré ngagn niou Takkeu diogue?

naniou Takkeu diogue

mani paré nguene niou Takkeu diogue?

GAL MO GUEUNE FRONTEX

il faut que je m'en aille, même s'il faut que je pagaille

j'en ai assez des "aïes" (douleur)

oubilène yène frontières yi

wala niou daw nioune sangou nioune barrières

ouvrez les frontières, enlevez les barrières

je suis clandestin, je suis pas ton festin

je suis clandestin mais pas ton business

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loutakh ma dougou mane nga begue ma deloussi?

eske lolou khel manenako nagou way?

loutakh mane ak yaw doniou niou ay waye?

ay way! Naniou sakou doone ay waye

yone bi goudouna, leudeum na, sori na

barrière bi magg na, guedj mbaboula bi diow na

yone bi goudouna, leudeum na, sori na

barrière bi magg na, guedj mbaboula gui ya na

DOUGOU\_TEKKI\_GNIBI

wakh diou kéneu dou dindi

Mauritanie, Libye outi moniou Takha Touki

bayi léne niou déme

yermandé ti clandestin bi

**KHALIL**

yo I'm a real clandestin

sopi sama destin, fog ma dokh ak sama instinct

yup gueneu ti bi danger

mbeugg barrières, tegui Tanger

coaché Polo, ramer dougou

wala dess ti ndokh bi

dakhanté ak boumla

Takkeu Diogue nguir BOZA

siguil khôle boy, dakh daw gueneu gaw

bougou la képé yobou oujda

bobbalegui, niogui dieme dougou

bobbalegui, meune té oundou

bobbalegui, faw niou Takkeu khole bènene bountou

alhamdou, dougoussi na magui sama town Dakar

di doundou underground

guem sama bopp never back down

si système bou sickness laniou diayanté diémé business

dang dangui takhalé khole founiou diari



LIBERTÉ DE CIRCULATION Ianiou sakou  
 kholate lène sène textes  
 souniou ndite lay indexes  
 guem sène bopp dindi bi complexe  
 signé ay accords, diport seni dôme  
 diapê sène bopp héros  
 tass sa yakar, bosé sa polo  
 remettre la a zéro

Takkeu diogue  
 paré ngagn niou Takkeu diogue?  
 naniou Takkeu diogue  
 mani paré nguene niou Takkeu diogue?

(English)

**XELU**

let's go! let's move!  
 are you ready to go?  
 let's go! common!  
 I say: are you ready to go?

FERRIES NOT FRONTEX

I need to go even if I have to row  
 I had enough of pain

you! open the borders  
 or we will run down these fences  
 open the borders, remove the fences  
 I am a migrant, I am not your dinner  
 I am a migrant but not your business

why did I enter and you want to deport me?  
 is this normal?  
 why can't you and me be friends?

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oh! let's wish to be friends  
 the way is long, dark, distant  
 the fences grew bigger, the sea cries  
 the way is long, dark, distant  
 the fences grew bigger, the sea is huge

DOUGOU\_TEKKI\_GNIBI /// TO ENTER\_TO SUCCEED\_TO RETURN  
 nobody can get in the way of this  
 Mauritania, Libya we travel because we are searching  
 let us depart  
 solidarity with all illegalized ones

**KHALIL**

yo I am a real migrant  
 to change my destiny, I need to go with my instincts  
 to smash the fences, to put a (rubber) boat in Tangier waters,  
 to search a beach, to row for entering,  
 or even to stay in the water,  
 to be chased by the cops,  
 we are going for BOZA\*!  
 lift your head and look! to run fast to be faster  
 if you get stopped, they throw you back to Oujda  
 since a long time we try to enter  
 since a long time it is not possible  
 since a long time we need to find other doors  
 thank God, I came back, I am in my city Dakar  
 I live the underground  
 Glory to me, never give up!  
 it's my problem that they are doing their business  
 going from left to right to make ends meet,  
 to see from where we can pass  
 we are demanding FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT  
 change your laws, I address our leaders  
 believe in yourselves, remove this complex

you signed these agreements, you let your children get deported  
 you even believe that you are heroes  
 but they only disappoint you, creating problems for you  
 that pull you down to zero

let's go! let's move!  
 are you ready to go?  
 let's go! common!  
 I say: are you ready to go?

### Statements

**XELU BAYE FALL** I wrote this song to motivate migrants not to give up because in this life nothing is easy. To immigrate is not easy, you have to tackle the pressure and the suffering all the illegalized ones are confronted with. This is the motivation that allowed me to write this song, because all the migrants want to cross the ocean and the barriers to reach Europe, hoping to find better living conditions there. TAKKEU DIOGUE! Lets' go!

**RIJAAL FALL DOUGOU TEKKE GNIBI — TO ENTER TO SUCCEED TO COME BACK** This slogan was born in Tangier in 2016. For us, it is a cry of motivation, to believe in our aim which is to cross the ocean in order to settle down in Europe and live a better life. But it also means that we don't forget where we come from, from Africa, who needs its children.

Only we can change things for a better life in Africa, especially in Senegal. For this, it is necessary to enter, to be successful and also to return. That's why we are asking for freedom of movement. For the right to go, to stay and to come back for everyone!

**visit also:** [facebook.com/groups/1117135194993628/](https://facebook.com/groups/1117135194993628/)

**MAX** For the song we combined recordings and images from Tangier, Dakar and Berlin. This reflects the idea of the project BOZA TRACKS, to record an album with songs that are produced along the routes towards Europe. The process of recording takes place in different places and studios, and that's a political message: Recording Against Borders. As BOZA

means "victory", we want to give hope and smash the negative feelings of transit with a mixture of different voices that create the sound of the fight for freedom of movement.

**visit also:** [facebook.com/bozatracks](https://facebook.com/bozatracks)

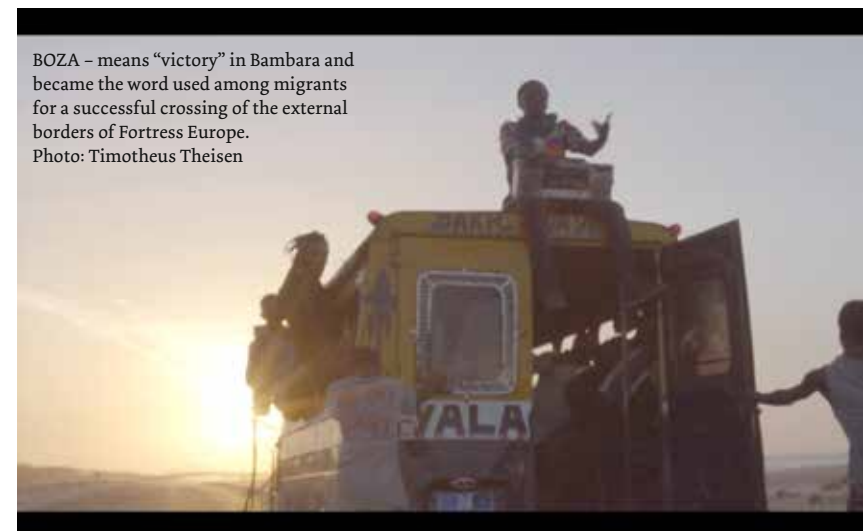
**KHALIL** This song is my life as an illegalized migrant. In fact, that's how I and many others lived for years. From Dakar to Tangier, it's the crossing of the desert or the ocean to the El Dorado, hoping to find a better life. We accuse Frontex that assists the injustices happening at the European border where migrants are tortured, imprisoned and killed. I seize the chance for honouring the friends who lost their lives while trying to cross the sea. RIP.

**Watch the Music Video on YouTube** (Subtitles available):

[youtube.com/watch?v=LtFNjF8ZuVA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=LtFNjF8ZuVA)

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GAL MO  
GUEUN  
FRONTEX

FERRIES  
NOT  
FRONTEX



# From Deterrence through Non-Assistance to Violent Containment at the EU's Maritime Frontier

Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani

Documenting and contesting practices of non-assistance was foundational for the Alarm Phone project. States strategically mobilize the complex jurisdictions that divide the Mediterranean frontier to alternatively justify the expansion of their sovereign rights through police operations or, on the contrary, to retract from their duty to rescue migrants in distress. Following the re-opening of the central Mediterranean by the Arab uprisings in 2011, several cases of non-assistance were documented, such as the 'left-to-die boat' in 2011 in which 63 people died after being abandoned to sea,<sup>1</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 case, when as a result of Italy and Malta's reluctance to carry out rescue, more than 200 drowned.<sup>2</sup> It was in reaction to these repeated cases of non-assistance that our own Forensic Oceanography project as well as the Alarm Phone were initiated.

The events that followed the 11<sup>th</sup> of October case, however, marked a radical – if temporary – break with practices of non-assistance. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, Italy single-handedly launched the “humanitarian and security” Mare Nostrum (MN) operation, through which it proactively patrolled close to the Libyan shores to rescue migrants and disembark them

by default in Italy. However, this break was short-lived. Soon MN came under attack for allegedly constituting a “pull-factor” and was terminated at the end of 2014. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2014, the Triton operation led by Frontex, the European border agency, was launched instead. This operation deployed fewer vessels in an area further away from the Libyan coast. Border control instead of rescue was its priority. In this policy, we can see a shift from practices of non-assistance, to a veritable policy of non-assistance through which the EU and its member states have sought to keep their rescue means as far as possible from migrants in distress to act as a deterrent. As we have shown in our report “Death by Rescue”, this did not lead to fewer crossings but to a staggering increase in migrants deaths at sea, of which the April 2015 twin shipwrecks that cost the lives of more than 1200 people in a single week were the most harrowing expression.<sup>3</sup>

The impunity which has prevailed for the implementation of this lethal policy has allowed it to be perpetuated, as we have demonstrated in our latest report “Blaming the Rescuers”.<sup>4</sup> The EU has continued to refrain from offering proactive Search and Rescue measures, focusing instead on anti-smuggling activities which have made the crossing even more dangerous. As a reaction to the harrowing loss of life, especially in the April 2015 shipwrecks, NGOs courageously stepped in with their own vessels to fill the lethal gap in rescue capabilities. As the crossing of migrants rose over 2016, the NGOs were also accused of constituting a “pull-factor”, just as Mare Nostrum had been before. As a consequence, they faced, and continue to face, a wave of criminalization and intimidation that has culminated over the summer of 2017. As we write, not only do we see the risk of a repetition of the staggering increase in deaths at sea that was the result of the last attack on proactive Search and Rescue. This time, the attack on NGOs' SAR activities is also deeply intertwined with a policy of violent containment: the only “rescue” activities European policy makers wish to see are those operated by the EU funded and equipped Libyan Coast Guard to pull-back migrants to Libyan soil.<sup>5</sup>

Through our reports, which have sought to account for and contest the evolving conditions that lead to migrants' deaths at sea on a structural

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basis, we can see a terrible sequence emerge: practices of non-assistance were illegal and with civil society demanding accountability, they could not be sustained. As a result, they were replaced by a policy of non-assistance that aimed to deter migrants. However, migrants were not deterred, and in the face of this failed policy and pursuing the desperate aim to close the Mediterranean once again, the EU and its member states are opting for a policy of violent containment through the pull-back, detention and relegation of migrants on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Will they succeed? Nothing is less certain, and the “victories” of Europe’s border regime have always proven short lived in the face of migrants’ unruly movements. What is certain is that throughout this evolving context at the maritime frontier, the Alarm Phone has been and remains a crucial tool to support migrants in exercising their freedom to move and to contest the violence of borders.

- 1 For our reconstruction of these events, see our report: [www.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FO-report.pdf](http://www.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FO-report.pdf). Our video animation *Liquid Traces* summarizes our findings: <https://vimeo.com/128919244>.
- 2 <http://watchthemed.net/reports/view/32>, accessed 08/01/2017.
- 3 See: <https://deathbyrescue.org/>
- 4 See: <https://blamingtherescuers.org/>
- 5 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur30/6319/2017/en/>



Photo: Moonbird Airborne Operation  
[www.sea-watch.org](http://www.sea-watch.org), [www.hpi.swiss](http://www.hpi.swiss)



# 5

**Outlook: In  
what kind  
of Society  
do we want  
to live?!**



# In what kind of society do we want to live?!

Hagen Kopp

“On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2017, initiated by civil society, a light aircraft took off over the central Mediterranean, over the world’s deadliest border. Against the mass dying at sea. The supporters all agree: ‘Safe passage. Now!’ The dying of thousands could be ended tomorrow, if people could use a plane or a ferry to come to Europe. A political decision that those responsible in the EU and member states refuse to make. The sea is used as a deadly deterrent. No technology or military operation is considered too expensive to achieve this goal. No deal, including those leading to push-backs and confinement in camps in North Africa, are considered too dirty. With boats and a plane, we are taking a stand against the normalisation of death and suffering. Whenever necessary, throughout the entire summer, in order to observe and to rescue. In a zone with no rights. Toward a welcoming Europe.”

These lines, put together for the launch of the Moonbird’s airborne operation, still accurately depict the ongoing struggles at Europe’s external borders. In order to distract from Europe’s implication in the creation of the ‘deadliest border of the world’, a discourse has been fabricated that blames exclusively the actions of ‘smugglers’. But without the border and visa regime and dangerous routes, ‘human smuggling’ would simply not exist. This strategy to obscure Europe’s dirty deeds, a suitable camouflage, has drastic real-life consequences. From the depiction of NGOs as ‘pull-factors’, to the imposition of the ‘Code of Conduct’, to the ongoing vicious criminalisation campaign of maritime rescuers and allegations that they would facilitate illegal immigration – these accelerating steps

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were taken rapidly. The racist propaganda apparatus, composed of Frontex, politicians who create deterrence policies, as well as the extreme right – situated somewhere between Berlin, Warsaw and Rome – seems to operate smoothly at the moment (September 2017).

But even if rescuers are turned into perpetrators, the truth will prevail: every single person who drowns in the Mediterranean is a victim of consciously accepted forms of structural violence. Or, recalling Jean Ziegler’s words concerning the victims of hunger and starvation in this world: every death at sea is murder perpetrated by the border regime!

## Freedom of movement is and remains a human right

“...one day we will be held accountable for all the people who lose their lives while searching for a better life.” These are the words of Leoluca Orlando, the mayor of Palermo, which he uttered in an interview with a Swiss newspaper in July 2017. With impressive clarity, he re-stated this sentiment which underpins his advocacy work for years now, in another interview: “Every human being should be able to decide freely, where he or she wants to live. No one should be forced to leave. Freedom of Movement is a human right.” He is no longer alone with this position. Similar voices have emerged from the town halls in Naples and Barcelona, radically opposing the current militarisation of borders and the criminalisation of migration.

Are we seeing how communal politics responds with empathy and reason to the dominant politics of exclusion on national and supra-national EU levels? Are these attempts that may, together with heterogeneous civil society movements, grow stronger and spread further to counter the virulent racist propaganda that we see everywhere? In times of an exacerbating polarisation of society, is it possible to strive for the creation of pillars on which an open Mediterranean space can be built and that lead us closer toward solidarity and borderless alternatives? Can the emergence of solidarity cities on both sides of the sea carry us closer toward the realisation of ferries (not Frontex) for all?

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## Against racism from above and below

The long summer of migration in 2015, the break-through in the Balkans and the 'wave of welcome' have demonstrated what is possible. The border regime and right-wing propaganda, mobilised from above and below, were pushed into the defensive. Instead of fear and security concerns, openness and the readiness to offer help dominated, even if only for a couple of months. We should never forget these experiences, in spite of and against the ongoing 'roll back'. The recently created movement for justice continues to exist and its fundament has become stronger, at least in the main countries of arrival. In Germany alone, more than 430.000 people have succeeded in their struggle for a legal residency status. During the first half of 2017, another 190.000 people followed. This is unprecedented in our recent history and has become reality despite and against the excessive tightening of laws and extreme deportation measures.

New migration chains are thus emergent, through legal family reunification as well as continuing forms of informal migration. This is and will be the reality of things which heterogeneous social movements struggling for equal rights have to defend, on all levels, against complex forms of racism. The call for the 'We'll Come United' demonstration in Berlin has found the right tone: "Our society has formed a diverse multiplicity, not merely for the past two years, but for hundreds of years. Who actually still resides where their ancestors were born and who actually still works at their place of residence? People have always been coming. People have always been leaving. There is no justification for unequal rights. Whether you are from Syria, Greece, Macedonia, Nigeria, Morocco or Baden-Württemberg. Whether it's about the right to housing, education, work, mobility or the right to health care. Social and political rights exist for all those who are here. Without exception, and from the very start."

## Keep escape routes open!

Intervention, documentation, networking: For three years now, the Alarm Phone has been active in all three regions of the Mediterranean. We are convinced that the establishment and further development of everyday structures are the most sustainable means to contest dominant deterrence

and externalisation policies and discourses. We conceive the Alarm Phone as a way to offer solidarity to those in transit, and as part of what can be called the 'underground railroad' of irregularised migration movements. We are a transnational and multi-lingual nodal point with diverse ties to growing networks that struggle for freedom of movement.

'Ferries not Frontex' remains our central slogan. FFM substantiated this claim when making the case for 'Ferries now' in May 2017: "Those who seek election, are not supposed to support the call for ferries, when, in fact, significant parts of society no longer feel represented by political elites who reinforce letting-drown policies? Do not be afraid! Access to safe ferries would mean that hundreds of thousands would come. Their arrival would be a concern for some, but for none a threat. It would be the economic stimulus package that Europe so urgently needs, and remittances would be the most significant economic 'aid' for Africa. And already after 1–2 years, the ferries would carry a lot of people also on their way back, full of those who would visit families or return for good. Do not fear migrants! Fear inhumanity! Fear the drastic injustice and the cynical failure to assist! There is a fundamental right to migrate, but there is no right in the world that allows people to starve to death and drown."

Every day, we experience how much suffering and death the politics of exclusion produces. How deep wounds are inflicted by fences that grow higher and higher. We also know that conditions and types of struggle remain diverse. But because of that we feel it is crucial to create and reinforce connections and form common struggles for equal rights and freedom of movement. Locally and transnationally, from external European borders to urban centres, in everyday life and through political campaigns: new structures and forms of mobilisation have developed that are underpinned by tenacious and continuous engagement, able to set in motion new dynamics of resistance.

CLEARLY, WE LIVE IN CONTESTED TIMES.

**THE WATCHTHEMED ALARM PHONE**

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Frontbanner during the  
We'll Come United Demonstration  
in Berlin at 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2017  
Photo: LiHU





**Lampedusa in Hanau**  
 Demonstration on 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2017  
 in solidarity with the criminalised  
 rescue organisation Jugend Rettet.  
 Picture by: Fish in Water Films







Rescue operation by Sea-Watch  
and Jugend Rettet in the  
Central Mediterranean Sea  
Photo: Sea Watch e.V.





Pictures of the 'Ferries not Frontex' Action  
in the strait of Gibraltar, September 2016  
Photo: privat





Welcome to Greece guide.  
<http://w2eu.info>  
Photo: Dorothea Köhler



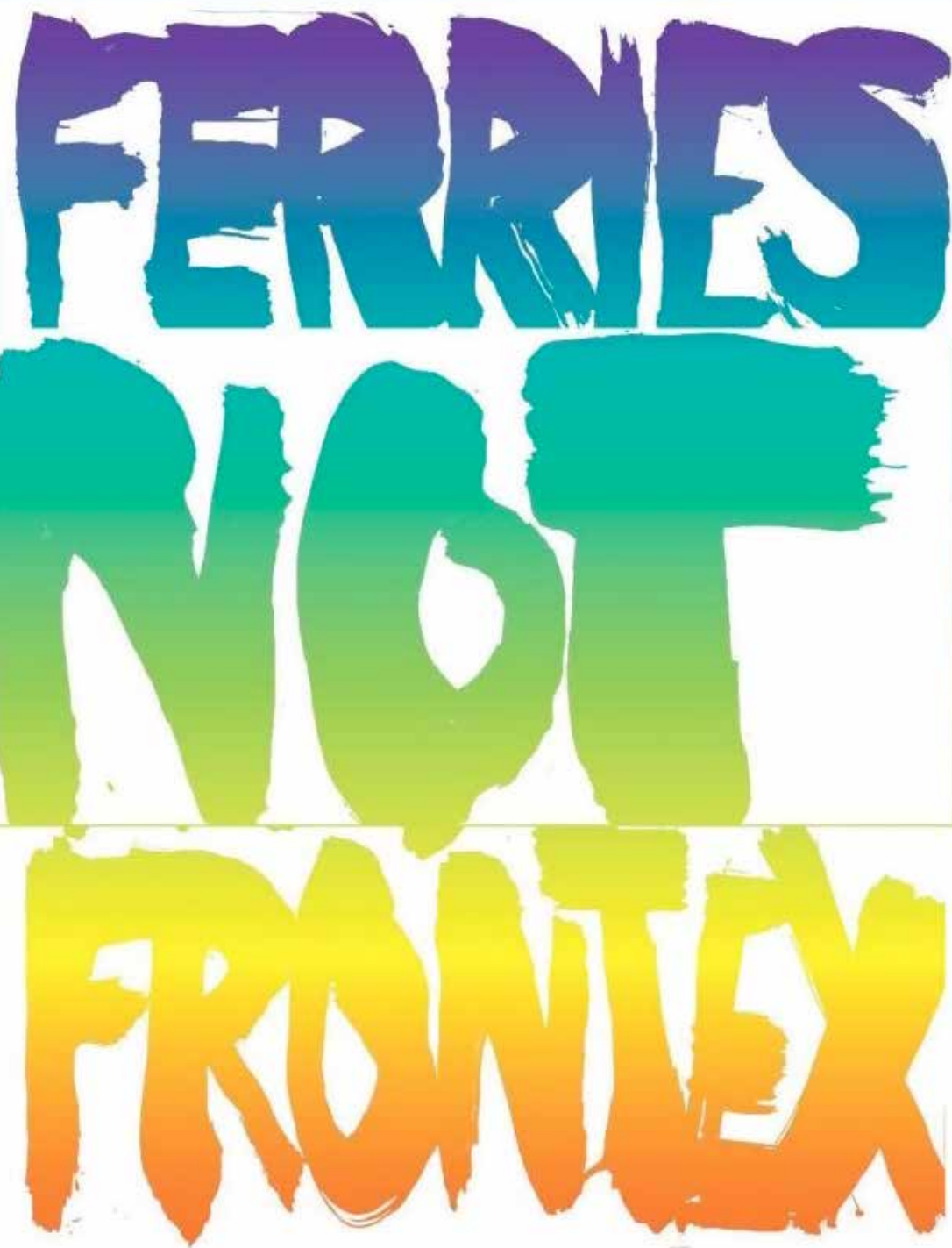
Welcome to Italy guide.  
<http://w2eu.info>  
Photo: Carovane Migranti



'Ferries Not Frontex' Action in solidarity  
with the criminalized civil rescue NGO's  
in Cologne, May 2017  
Photo: Alarm Phone Cologne







# NETWORKS

## AFRIQUE EUROPE INTERACT

Afrique-Europe-Interact is a small, transnationally organised network that was founded in early 2010.

<http://afrique-europe-interact.net>

## BOATS 4 PEOPLE

Boats 4 People is a coalition of 14 organisations in 7 countries created to defend the rights of migrants at sea.

[www.facebook.com/boats4people](http://www.facebook.com/boats4people)

## BORDERLINE EUROPE

borderline-europe is a non-profit association, independent from political parties or governments.

[www.borderline-europe.de](http://www.borderline-europe.de)

## FORSCHUNGSGESELLSCHAFT

### FLUCHT UND MIGRATION

FFM has been in existence since 1994 and is a non-profit association of research and documentation.

<http://ffm-online.org>

## MOVING EUROPE

Moving Europe is a small network founded in late summer 2015 and it was permanently present in cities along the Balkanroute in 2015 until July 2016. It is still active with monitoring and for the networking process with various groups along the Balkanroute.

<http://moving-europe.org>

## NOBORDERS MAROCCO

No Borders Morocco – Morocco Migrant Solidarity is a loose network of activists- migrants-people, based in/between Morocco and Europe.

<https://beatingborders.wordpress.com>

## VOIX DES MIGRANTS

Voix des Migrants is an initiative organised by and for migrants to show the situation of migrants and refugees and to sensibilise and mobilise them to fight for their rights.

[www.voixdesmigrants.com](http://www.voixdesmigrants.com)

## WATCHTHEMED

Watch The Med is an online mapping platform to monitor the deaths and violations of migrants' rights at the maritime borders of the EU. Initiated in December 2013 as a part of theBoats4-People campaign by various networks.

[www.watchthemed.net](http://www.watchthemed.net)

## WELCOME 2 EUROPE

Welcome 2 Europe provides information to refugees and migrants that might be useful on their journey to and through Europe.

[www.w2eu.info](http://www.w2eu.info)

# THANKS

## THE ALARM PHONE WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

### ... ALL THE THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

who called us when they faced situations of distress: your confidence and courage were gifts to us. It is your determination that animates us and allows us to struggle on.

### ... FATHER MUSSIE ZERAI

and all our active **CONTACT PERSONS OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS**, who shared and forwarded to us cases of distress and who inspired us with their knowledge and commitment.

### ... THE HUMANITARIAN FLEET IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA –

and particularly our friends of **SEA WATCH** and **JUGEND RETTET** – with whom we cooperated in countless SOS cases and whose tenacious engagement prevented that thousands more lost their lives when they had to cross the sea.

### ... ALL THE BRAVE FISHERMEN

who rescued hundreds of people in distress in the various areas of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

### ... ALL THE CREWS

of cargo vessels who did not hesitate to quickly react to SOS calls and helped, even if they were not equipped or trained to conduct rescue operations.

### ... ALL THOSE COASTGUARD MEMBERS

in rescue operation centres and those who went out to sea and gave their best to rescue migrants and refugees in distress and who, unlike some of their colleagues, were not involved in violent and inhumane practices, including non-rescue, push-backs, attacks and interceptions.

### ... ALL OUR FRIENDS

who shared their own experiences of crossing the sea on boats with us: Exchanging with you gave us a much better understanding of the whole situation.

### ... ALL OF OUR UNCOUNTABLE

friends who listened to our shift-team members when they needed someone to speak to.

### ... ALL OF YOU WHO STRUGGLE

every day for freedom of movement and equal rights for all.

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# DONATIONS

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WE ARE ALWAYS HAPPY TO RECEIVE DONATIONS FOR OUR PROJECT. IN ORDER TO CONTINUE WITH OUR WORK, THE ALARM PHONE PROJECT REQUIRES FURTHER SUPPORT IN ORDER TO:

- **RUN THE HOTLINE**, to reach out to the satellite phones of boat-people and to charge these phones online with credit
- **SPREAD THE EMERGENCY NUMBER** via visiting cards in various languages in migrant communities
- **DISTRIBUTE LEAFLETS** with information about risks at sea
- **CREATE MATERIALS** for campaigns against Frontex and the border regime
- **UNDERTAKE NETWORKING** and research trips to the different transit regions

## ACCOUNT FOR DONATIONS

Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht & Migration Sparkasse der Stadt Berlin

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BIC: BELADEBEXXX

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# GLOSSARY

**AIS** Automatic Identification System. Automatic vessel tracking system. Vessels are localized by satellite or base stations on land.

**BOZA** (Bambara language) Victory. Call of West African migrants when they reach Europe.

**'CODE OF CONDUCT'** The European Commission asked Italy to draw up a 'Code of Conduct' for NGOs carrying out search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. It intends to increase pressure on civil rescue organisations and threatens their life-saving search and rescue operations.

**EU DIRECTIVE** 2001/51/EC Directive of the European Union from June 2001 that obliges carriers to pay for the return journey of an asylum applicant in case asylum has been denied. As a consequence, transport companies generally do not accept migrants without valid papers.

**EU-TURKEY-DEAL** On March 20, 2016, this agreement came into effect. It sets out that all 'new irregular migrants' arriving in Greece from this date onwards should be returned to Turkey.

**EU NAVFOR MED** European Union Naval Force Mediterranean. EU military operation launched in June 2015 to fight 'traffickers' in the Mediterranean Sea.

In summer 2017, it was prolonged to the end of 2018.

**FRONTEx** Border agency of the European Union, founded in 2004 and based in Warsaw. Main tasks are the coordination of national border polices and the protection of EU borders against 'irregular' immigration. Symbol and main actor of Fortress Europe.

**HARRAGA** (Arabic) those who burn [the border]. Self-description of North African migrants who cross the Mediterranean by boat without visa.

**HOTSPOT** Registration centres deployed by mobile → **Frontex** teams at particular sites of the EU border to assist screening and speed up deportation. The first Hotspot was opened on the 17th of September 2015 in Lampedusa, another one in October 2015 in Moria on Lesbos.

**IMO NUMBER** International Maritime Organization number. Seven-digit number to uniquely identify a ship or a ship owner's company.

**INTERCEPTION** Stopping of migrants at sea within the territory of the state they left and forced to turn back to the state of departure by the corresponding border police. This must not be confused with a rescue or → **SAR** operation.

**IOM** International Organization for Migration. Intergovernmental organization for migration management founded in 1951. Cooperates closely with governments.

**MARE NOSTRUM** Air and naval operation of the Italian navy to conduct large scale → **SAR** operations in the central Mediterranean, carried out for one year in 2013/14, able to rescue about 150.000 migrants.

**MOONBIRD** Civil aerial reconnaissance mission in the central Mediterranean Sea, initiated by Sea Watch and Humanitarian Pilots Initiative to be able to spot boats in a wider area and to coordinate rescue operations.

**MRCC** Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. Primary search and rescue agency for coordination and control of → **SAR** operations.

**PULL-BACK** Same illegal removal of migrants at sea from the destination state's territory as described for → **Push-back**, but carried out by forces of the state of departure – usually with knowledge and consent of the destination state's authorities.

**PUSH-BACK** Illegal removal of migrants at sea from the destination state's territory to international waters or the origin state's territory by forces of the destination state. The migrants are deprived of their right to apply for asylum. See also → **Pull-back**.

**SCHENGEN AREA** Area of European countries with a common visa policy and no general controls at their common

borders. Still, spot checks are carried out and lately, wider border controls were reintroduced.

**SAR ZONE/OPERATION** Search and Rescue zone/operation. The Mediterranean is divided into national SAR zones. In case of a boat in distress, the corresponding → **MRCC** is obliged to launch a SAR operation in order to rescue that boat.

**THURAYA** Satellite phone provider from the United Arab Emirates and shorthand for the satellite phone itself. The coverage extends throughout the entire Mediterranean Sea.

**TRITON** Border security operation by → **Frontex**. Started on November 1, 2014 following → **Mare Nostrum** but with a smaller budget and its principal task is border control, rescue remains a secondary issue.

**WATCH THE MED** Online documentation and mapping platform to monitor the deaths and violations of migrants' rights at the maritime borders of the EU. Initiated December 5, 2013 as part of the Boats4people campaign. <http://watchthemed.net>

**ZODIAC** Familiar term for an inflatable rubber boat. The French company Zodiac is the main producer of that type of boat that is often used to cross the Mediterranean. Equivalent expressions are rubber dinghy or just dinghy.

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**[www.alarmphone.org](http://www.alarmphone.org)**

**[www.watchthemed.net](http://www.watchthemed.net)**

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Published on our third anniversary, in this brochure we reflect on the many experiences we have made as the WatchTheMed Alarm Phone in supporting people on the move between October 2014 and October 2017. In this period of time, our hotline project has dealt with more than 1840 emergency situations in the three main regions of the Mediterranean Sea and, thereby, has directly taken part in struggles over freedom of movement. The historic year of 2015, when more than one million people came to Europe across the sea, was followed by a period of harsh repression, when the EU border regime reinforced its deterrence apparatus to an unprecedented extent. As a result, thousands more have lost their lives at sea and many more remain imprisoned in unbearable conditions and are prevented from escaping. Nonetheless, whenever our phone rings, we are reminded of how those on the move continue to find their path, stubbornly defying human-made barriers while enacting their right to move.