Central Med Info
February 25 – March 18 2019

About our Central Med Info: borderline-europe started in March 2019 to put together information about the situation in the Central Mediterranean Sea for internal research reasons. In 2020 we decided to publish these info-letters. You will also find sources of right-wing newspapers and twitter quotations of “friends” of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. This does not reflect our opinion, but some information is only available there.

LIBYA - INFO

20.12.2018
Asylum seeker to sue UK for funding Libyan detention centres

Ethiopian teenager says he experienced physical abuse, extortion and forced labour. The teenager, who turned 18 a few weeks ago, cannot be named. He lives in London and is waiting for the Home Office to determine his asylum claim. His legal action against the government’s Department for International Development (DFID) for its contribution to funding these overseas centres is thought to be the first of its kind.

The Guardian previously revealed the terrible conditions in a network of 26 detention centres across Libya. The EU’s Emergency Trust Fund for Africa provides some funding for the centres. DFID says that the funding it provides is used to improve conditions in the camps.

Children have described being starved, beaten and abused by Libyan police and camp guards. One said the conditions were like “hell on Earth” [...]


02.03.2019
Refugees in Libya 'tortured' for breaking out of detention centre

Nearly 150 detainees broke out of their cell in Tripoli’s Triq al Sikka earlier this week to protest against abuse. As many as 30 refugees and migrants, including minors, are believed to have been brought to an underground cell and allegedly tortured in Libya for breaking out and holding a protest earlier this week.

An estimated 150 male detainees escaped on Tuesday from the main cell in Tripoli’s Triq al Sikka detention centre, where some of them have been held for more than a year, to lodge their protest with Libya’s Department of Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM).

They protested against the conditions under which they have been detained, and demanded a visit from an official from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), according to witnesses.

The majority of those detained in the past 18 months were returned to Libya by the European Union-funded Libyan coastguard after they tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe [...]


28.02.2019
TPI Exclusive Audio - A Libyan smuggler talks: "Do you want to get to Italy? I’ll take you to Lampedusa, that’s how"

Rates, risks and other details: a trafficker explains on the phone to a migrant how to get on board a boat to Italy

The article criticizes the agreements between the EU and Libya, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, the detention camps in Libya and that traffickers are making a business out of people who want to flee. The trafficker in the video is offering a passage in a boat with few people on board. Especially interesting might be the statements of the Libyan trafficker about SARP.-NGOs. The rest of his words might be a fairy tale...

The video shows a conversation via phone between a trafficker and a man who is
(probably) calling for TPInews. But he tells the trafficker that he is asking for information for his brother, who wants to cross the Mediterranean from Libya in order to reach Italy. The trafficker says that the journey costs 4.500 Libyan dinars (1.000€), he is telling about his Facebook page that shows people who departed in a secure way thanks to his help. If he would not work well, people would not come from Algeria and Morocco. He assures that the brother will arrive safely in Italy; he can travel with a 9m wooden boat, with 25 people on board, the boat will arrive at Lampedusa. The trafficker says that the so-called Libyan Coast Guard will not intercept the boat, because they do not work in this area (Zuwarah), but Zawiya and Tripoli. The brother should not bring any luggage (just some clothes to change); food will be provided by the trafficker; there will even be a taxi to pick him up. He should come with the money and wait at the trafficker’s place, as soon as the weather is good (announced by the Tunisian newspaper), there will be a departure to Italy. It takes 9 to 16 hours. The man who calls asks again, if nobody will block the boat, the trafficker denies. The man says that he heard about someone at sea with a boat helping refugees and bringing them to Italy. The trafficker answers that there were NGOs, but his work is not based on their presence: sometimes they are there, sometimes not. He says he does not need them: he assures that the people will arrive at Lampedusa.

Whole article and video here:
https://www.tpi.it/2019/02/22/migranti-scafista-libico-audio/

25.02.2019
Torture and shocking conditions - the human cost of keeping migrants out of Europe
It’s been heralded as the start of a new dialogue. The first summit between the League of Arab States and EU member states ended with a lofty statement of shared values. European leaders shook hands with their Arab counterparts and discussed issues such as Syria, Yemen and nuclear proliferation. They agreed to tackle the “common challenge” of migration.
Tonight, we’ve new evidence of how Libyan authorities are tackling that challenge.
Footage from inside camps in Libya shows migrants living in shocking conditions. And there are disturbing signs that some migrants are being tortured by people traffickers. This report contains images that some viewers will find distressing ...

28.02.2019
Europe’s deadly migration strategy
Officials knew EU military operation made Mediterranean crossing more dangerous.
https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-deadly-migration-strategy-leaked-documents/

Central Med Rescue Ships, situation March, 13

12.03.2019
The commander of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, "If the NGOs come back, there will be more migrants"
"The main reason for the decrease in the number of migrants and arrivals is that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are out of the game. If NGOs return to the sea, and especially in Libyan waters, we will see a disproportionate increase in departures, as well as migrants to the Libyan coast". Abu Ajila Abdelbari, commander of the Libyan Coast Guard’s Tripoli patrol boats, speaks, adding that "If the NGOs’ ships return, we will see thousands and thousands of migrants again. They know that travelling by sea on small inflatable boats is difficult, but if they feel that there is a chance again, that there is someone ready to wait for them at sea and help them, all the foreign people who are working in Libya today will also try to reach Italy. We must not forget also that it has been shown that some traffickers were in direct contact with the NGO staff” […]
https://www.notiziegeopolitiche.net/libia-il-comandante-guardia-costiera-se-tornano-le-ong-aumenteranno-i-migranti/

12.03.2019

- Sea Watch: in Marseille, plans to be back in operation in the Middle of March
- Alan Kurdi: in Palma de Mallorca, plans to be back on the 16th of March
- Mediterranea: in Palermo, plans to leave in the next days (if the Italian Coast Guard is not blocking it again)

➔ left on Saturday and is arriving in the Libyan SAR zone
• SOS Med is still looking for a new ship
• Open Arms: blocked in Spain, legal actions
• Aita Mari: blocked in Spain, legal actions
• Jugend Rettet: plan to take over Seefuchs failed, new fundraising
• Pro Em Aid: Taking over Seefuchs, but no more news...

Sea Watch

11.03.2019
Sea Watch, top-secret investigations. The prosecutors are moving
Interesting article about the ongoing activities of different offices of the Public Prosecutors in the Sea Watch 3 case and not only. The article mainly says:
• The blockade of the SW in front of Syracuse and then in CT will be discussed in the Court
• At least 2 prosecutors are investigating the case of the 15 minors blocked on board
• The Syracuse city council is ready to go to the Court to talk to the judges about the inconsistency of the case
• The investigation does not only concern the SW case but also other arrivals of SAR-NGO ships
• A lot of complaints (letters from associations, lawyers etc. to the prosecutor) arrived at the prosecutor's offices in Rome and Syracuse
• There are 2 statements of the Ministry of Interior with 2 different answers:
  a) the Migration Department says: there is no order to close the ports
  b) the Minister’s Head of Cabinet: these orders are not public and there is no obligation to publish them
• SW case: a letter from 31.1.2019 exists, which is written to the Minors’ Tribunal of Syracuse, which says that the SW has to go to Catania because a lack of places for minors in Syracuse. So, they tried to change the responsibility of authorities in this way → Catania is known for his severe prosecutor against SAR NGOs
• But: Syracuse said before, that there are no irregularities on board of the SW, and even this prosecutor Zuccaro from Catania confirmed it
• The reason that there are no shelter places for minors is not right, the Minor’s tribunal of Syracuse gave shelter places!!!
• SW was not informed officially about the transfer decisions for the minors to Catania - only via phone call
• The mayor of Syracuse confirms: no official orders in written form in the whole case reached him
• So AVVENIRE is reasoning: it seems that someone did not like to leave a trail
• The Councillor for Equal Opportunities Syracuse: Syracuse now is attacked to have not given shelter to the minors, but this is not right, the Court decided to give shelters. this is a clearly political decision (and a lie) - so every discussion was made only by phone and they do not have any prove about the decisions in Rome [...]
 https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/sea-watch-inchiesta-su-atti-top-secret?

INTERCEPTIONS

17.03.2019

RESTRICTED UE/EU RESTRICTED
EUROPEAN COMMISSION DELEGATION TO SPAIN MONTHLY REPORT

The last six months have been characterized by a positive upward trend of LEAG capacity to fulfill their institutional tasks at sea in their areas of responsibility. This, combined with a reduced presence of NGO vessels in the area, has led to the LEAG actual near null effects and in many cases a specific need for LEAG capability to control in the western part of the country (Syracuse area). The high incidence of LCNS interdictions when migrant boats take to the sea has enabled the rescue of more migrants at sea, whilst also contributing to reduce the number of deaths at sea. This improved capacity of LEAG to intervene on the scene in a timely manner, combined with the EUNAVFOR MERCSAR naval presence in the high seas, has achieved a twofold result: on one hand, it has hampered the smuggling business through a determent effect and with a related impact on their profits from illegal activity. On the other hand, the LCNS have discouraged migrants from using this route to reach Europe.

The positive results achieved in the last 18 months by the LEAG have continued their favorable trend all over the country, and the LEAG has been sustained on not only with the presence of a maritime security provider in the area (comparing to shared maritime situations) but also with training, equipment and maintenance.

https://twitter.com/rgowans/status/1107281767915012097

15 March 2019

FLASH UPDATE
Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) rescued 855 persons at sea

https://twitter.com/rgowans/status/110662364220039169
11.03.2019
Migrant Rescue watch Twitter: #SAR Op 08.03.19 - #Vos Triton rescued 54 migrants incl. 2 women from 1 boat. All disembarked safely @ Tripoli NB. MedA & humanitarian aid provided. Migrant Rescue Watch @rgowans 9. März UPDATE #SAR Op 08.03.19 - Libyan Coast Guard in response to distress call tasked SV #Vos Triton to assist 1 rubber boat w. 54 migrants near Bouri Offshore Field. Rescued disembarked safely @ Tripoli NB. Upon MedA all transferred to Triq al Sekka ImmDC for P&A #TogetherForRescue
https://twitter.com/rgowans/status/1104006303205281794

11.03.2019
Alarm Phone Twitter: Today in the morning another pushback to #Libya took place. The supply ship #Vos Triton under flag of Gibraltar returned 54 ppl from international waters to #Tripoli. We don't know yet which authorities were involved. It is obvious though that #Vos Triton violated intl. law.
https://twitter.com/Alarm_phone/status/110406303205281794

08.03.2019
Flavio di Giacomo (IOM) Twitter: Today 54 migrants have been returned to #Libya by a Gibraltar-flagged commercial ship. They were in international waters. Migrants rescued in international waters should never be sent back to Libya, which is NOT a safe port.
https://twitter.com/UNmigration/status/110402657431674883

Giacomo OIM Italia retweet: Today the EU spokesperson said that "according to international law EU ships must not bring rescued #migrants back to #Libya, even if the rescue operation takes place in the marine area for which Libya has declared its jurisdiction" (source: @dpa) #Asso28
https://twitter.com/UNmigration/status/1104042657431674883

CRIMINALISATION

25.02.2019
The centralised number that helps migrants (and traffickers?)
The video reports that the AP states that it is better to have a Thuraya on board, but that a used Thuraya costs 500 Euro, and as that this sum is quite high it can be paid only by the traffickers. They are saying that this is the number and now everyone knows that he/she has to call this number to be rescued. They are saying that the AP is reacting immediately and will call the Coast Guard and NGOs, after this AP starts to spread the news on the social media in order to make pressure for the rescue operation. Seems to be that the journalist in the video. Further, they explain who the AP is – the AP is living only from donations and everything is running on a German bank-account. Also, the 47 migrants from the SW who land in Catania had called the AP when they were at sea, the journalists say. But a normal phone is not enough, the migrants need a special phone, and AP is counselling to not start without a Thuraya. But a used Thuraya costs nearby 500 Euros and there are people who suspected that only traffickers have the money to buy one and so it might be the traffickers in most of the cases who are calling. So, AP could be a "helping hand" for the traffickers. A high official person (who?) told Panorama (the weekly magazine) that this is a criminal act. But this is difficult to know for the AP and so AP is continuing to answer on the phone.

Glossary:
AP: Alarm Phone
IOM: International Organisation of Migration
Migrant Rescue Watch: Account of R. Gowans, a person that seems to know a lot about the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. We do not share his opinion about the so-called LCG and the SAR NGOs.
So-called LCG: so-called Libyan Coastguard. These coastguard units since long time are the subject of criticism because of the human rights violations they have committed, their frequent unavailability and the impossibility of attributing them to a government or to militias, for this we call them "so-called" coastguards.

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