Central Med Info
September 15 – October 20 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 here.

LIBYA- INFO

19.10.2019
Italian Foreign Ministry hosts conference on coordination in sending humanitarian aid to Libya
The Italian Foreign Ministry will host a conference on the situation in Libya on October 21-22. According to the Italian agency "Nova", the Italian Deputy Foreign Minister, "Emmanuela del Rey", will open the work of the conference at the level of senior officials, while the conference will focus in particular on the coordination of humanitarian assistance to be sent to Libya. The Italian agency pointed out that the technical meeting is organized by the Italian Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the Directorate General of Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission. The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation is working in Libya through bilateral projects such as the Bridge for Solidarity initiative, launched in January 2018 to help Libyan cities affected by human trafficking by delivering aid to support civilians. The humanitarian situation in Libya is particularly serious in the south of the country, where lack of services, infrastructure and security makes it difficult to deliver aid. The humanitarian situation in Tripoli has deteriorated dramatically due to the ongoing armed clashes since April 4.


10.10.2019
The U.N. Is Leaving Migrants to Die in Libya
The European Union is funding the Libyan coast guard to keep migrants out of Europe and detain them in a failed state—and that leaves them at the mercy of militias and human traffickers.

https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/10/libya-migrants-un-iom-refugees-die-detention-center-civil-war/

02.10.2019
Who are the UNHCR really working to help - refugees or states?
October 3rd is a day upon which the UNHCR "remember and commemorate all the victims of immigration and promote awareness-raising and solidarity initiatives."

With that very sentiment in mind, Euronews has undertaken an investigation into the UNHCR's operation in Libya, where tens of thousands of migrants live in detention camps, hoping to make it to Europe.

We uncover the extent of neglect in terms of care that can be found where migrants wait to be processed. We ask why the UN's humanitarian agency cannot have the required access in Libya when the mother organisation - The United Nations - is working with the Tripoli-based government. We ask why there is a severe lack of transparency surrounding the agency's operation and we talk to some of the migrants involved in the process and allow them to tell their stories.

The tweet that got us thinking
In August, a couple of tweets sent by the UNHCR's special envoy for the Central Mediterranean, Vincent Cochetel, raised more than one eyebrow.

First he expressed concern over what he termed the "radicalisation of migratory dreams", then he added that it is "abnormal" that some refugees refuse language and training classes just because they only want to go to the EU.

He later said he had been misunderstood. Nevertheless, the question arises: why is the UN refugee agency accusing people under their remit, people in need of international protection, of having unrealistic hopes for safety?
According to sources who know the mechanisms of the UNHCR, his remarks are symptomatic of a few things:
- increasing frustration due to the ongoing situation in Libya
- realpolitik
- a progressive shift towards the political disposition of its second biggest donor: the European Union.

**Libya, migration, standards and human rights**
Firstly, the European Union bankroll the [EU Trust Fund for Africa](https://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index_en), counting on the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR to ensure that the migration management and asylum system in Libya is consistent with the main international standards and human rights. "The UN agencies are our main partners in our work in Libya mainly to protect people in need", an EU spokesperson tells Euronews.

Then there is a dysfunctional Libyan government (one of two) which is backed by the UN yet does not recognise the UNHCR - the UN's very own agency - operating in the country without a memorandum of understanding.

Finally, there are more than 50,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers; the majority of them (91%) live in urban settings while 4,673 are estimated to be locked up in 26-30 detention centres often run by unlicensed parties, where human rights abuses are a daily issue.

This is the context in which the UN agency for refugees has to work “with a tenuous status and without ongoing guarantees of security”, points out Dr. Melissa Phillips, an Adjunct Fellow at Western Sydney University and independent migration researcher.

Amid the “hyper concerns on the ‘migration issue’ in Europe, which previously funded detention centres in Libya, nobody has taken a step back to look at the system that needs to be put in place in the country. Everybody is just in reaction mode. Even though it may not be possible to build up an asylum system in the country at this time, greater efforts must be made to establish a system to work on the ground. This includes work visas and recognising temporary labour migrants,” she went on.

The UNHCR, which claims it can only register asylum seekers and refugees belonging to 9 nationalities or communities, (Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, Sudanese, South Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Yemeni, and Somali) is facing criticism from various NGOs and human rights activists for the lack of transparency regarding its Libyan operations. Back in June, former UNHCR staff member, Jeff Crisp, now writing for the Refugee Studies Centre and Chatham House, asked 20 questions that remain publicly unanswered at the time of writing in September. Among them: These questions reflect real concerns voiced by those migrants locked up in detention centres that Euronews had the chance to speak with. They accuse the Libyan staff of the UN agency of neglecting them, of severe delays in registration procedures and of complicity with the heads of the detention centres to the point of covering up their abuses. ❯ SEE PART 2.

**Shooting...or nothing at all?**
When in April 2019 a revolt reportedly broke out in the Qasr bin Ghashir facility, near Tripoli. Refugees described being shot at indiscriminately by militias. UNHCR - who said it evacuated 325 people - sent out this press release suggesting guns were fired in the air. However, both [MSF](https://www.msf.org/) and [Amnesty](https://www.amnesty.org/) concluded that migrants had actually incurred gunshot wounds, and made calls for war crimes investigations into the incident. UNHCR has been asked but has not responded to Euronews on why it published a press release specifically denying this.

Refugees were subsequently transferred into the militia-run Az-Zawiyah detention centre where they reported torture and extortion in its hangar. Here, in June another group of people was shot at while protesting about being deprived of food by the controlling militias. ❯ SEE PART 2.

This centre, where UNHCR operates, has known links to a coast guard unit and is run by the infamous Al-Nasr brigade, whose leader Mohammed Kachlaf is under UN Security Council [Sanctions](https://unitednations.un/members/sanctions) for human trafficking. According to Jérôme Tubiana, a researcher working on sub-Saharan migration, UNHCR alignment with EU policies “even seems to contradict UN global policies as both EU and UNHCR consider acceptable to work with the Az-Zawiyah Al-Nasr brigade although its leaders are under UN sanctions: cooperating with their forces may constitute a violation of the sanctions”.

➡️ SEE PART 2
An EU spokesperson, when appraised of our investigation, made a number of comments. One of which was a denouncement of the aforementioned Al Nasr brigade. "The EU does not support the Al Nasr Brigade and we have worked closely with EU Member States to extend sanctions to traffickers under UN regimes." He added that "none of the coastguards trained by Operation Sophia is on the UN sanctions list."

Charlie Yaxley, UNHCR Global Spokesperson for Africa and the Mediterranean/Libya, notes the difficulties in coordinating any kind of operation in Libya. "The work we are able to carry out in detention centres is limited, as these are run by the Libyan authorities. Our access is restricted and we are limited to carrying out registration, protection assessments, medical referrals/treatment and providing basic relief items. Visits to detention centres are coordinated in advance, visits are never unannounced and access to the UNHCR teams needs to be granted in advance. UNHCR does not consider the detention centres safe for refugees."

So how can this be resolved? The UN recognises the Government of National Accord in Libya, therefore if the 'Libyan authorities' run the centres, shouldn't the UN's agency be granted better access? Yaxley does not shy away from acknowledging that the "situation inside detention centres is appalling" so where is the plan?

Other accusations from sources both within Libya and international aid experts include

- discrimination against migrants living in an urban context;
- corruption in evacuation facilities;
- mismanagement of verification processes;
- a system of protection based on nationalities - creating favouritism;
- hundreds of migrants' messages left unanswered;
- laptops purchased for inflated prices - some more than 5,800 US dollars.

Each will be discussed in part 3 of this investigation, published on 3 October.

**Thirty years to resettle?**

UNHCR's most effective talent lies in the evacuation of refugees out of Libya. However, since resettlements from Libya began in late '17, they were able to resettle some 2,000 a year, which means it would take them 30 years to resettle all those they already registered", argues Jérôme Tubiana. "And this is largely due to EU policies. Because of the lack of slots in Europe, UNHCR in Libya prioritises those they believe are the most vulnerable, young minors, women, families. For single adult males, even very political cases for whom returning home likely means arrest or death, being resettled seems almost impossible". Further, such cases also face the fact that UNHCR agents in Libya know little about complicated contexts such as Eritrea or Darfur. In practice, fundamental criteria for political asylum are thus abandoned in favour of a selection based on numbers and types of individuals accepted by the EU. In fact, demands of asylum seekers are not "radical" at all, they are just asking for UNHCR to fulfil its mandate properly and respect the very principles which justify its existence", asserts Tubiana.

UNHCR's mandate is to find a solution for refugees, but not necessarily one that a migrant will be content with. They simply have to find a safe solution. "Frustration arises from here", a source told us. "Sometimes it is not what refugees want". Melissa Phillips says that all evidence points to the fact that migrants in Libya use smartphones and are well aware of stories such as Rahaf Al-Qunun, the Saudi woman who was immediately granted asylum in Canada after she barricaded herself in an airport hotel in Thailand. "Refugees see this and it sends them a message about a different weight” in the resettlement policies by UNHCR, which celebrated it as a success story. “People have aspirations and desires, it just might be that these dreams are inconvenient for us”.

**Powerless?**

“I can confirm that UNHCR does not have any power to stop or prevent the horrific tortures and rapes against refugees in the official detention centres”, Giulia Tranchina, an immigration solicitor in London who has worked for years with asylum-seekers in Libya, tells Euronews. “Widespread incidents of torture, intentional starvation and war crimes perpetrated against detained migrants and refugees in Libya, as documented in the reports by the Office of the High Commissioner for
Human Rights clearly show how UNHCR is not in a position to be able to ‘improve conditions’ in detention centres and how Europe’s funding and support to the Libyan authorities amounts to complicity in these crimes. The EU’s claims that funding to UNHCR is meant to ‘improve conditions’ in these centres is demolished not only by the evidence but also by UNHCR’s own statements constantly stressing that they don’t manage such centres and often don’t have access or permission by the authorities to assist detained refugees”.

Follow the money
So what is going on internally at UNHCR? “Follow the money is always a good rule”, a professor of human rights told us, referring to this case. Most of UNHCR funding comes from a dozen key donor states but the level of this funding has not kept up with the rising numbers the agency is expected to support, argues former UNHCR official, Jeff Crisp. Almost 90 percent of the agency’s funding is provided by states and UNHCR’s governing board consists entirely of states.

An informed source believes UNHCR fears losing funding from the US (its largest donor by far, contributing more than 40% of its budget alone) thus attempting a closer alignment with the EU. For financial year 2018, the U.S. contribution to UNHCR reached an historic high of nearly $1.6 billion, up $0.2 billion from 2017, when the Trump administration threatened to reduce UN funding by up to 50 percent. In the end, the US decided to spare UNHCR and cut their support only to UNRWA (the UN agency for Palestinian refugees). As for 2019, the US have only slightly reduced their funds pledge to UNHCR and at time of writing have already contributed up to 70 or 80% of it. “It is always difficult to predict if states will actually fund UNHCR to the level they have committed to in the first place. What is sure, is that between 2015-2018, the EU’s contribution to UNHCR’s work has proportionally increased far more than the US’s one which has, on average, remained more or less stable over that period of time”, analyses Marion Fresa, professor of anthropology of international aid at the University of Neuchatel. “This is, however, less due to UNHCR’s willingness to be closer to the EU, then to the way the EU has been addressing the so-called "refugee crisis" since 2015, by funding an ever expanding security-humanitarian apparatus to contain migrants at its borders and externalise refugee protection to its neighbouring countries- an apparatus of which the UNHCR is a part.” Over the past 20 years, the agency has tried to diversify its sources of funding by building partnerships with multinational corporations such as Microsoft, Nike or more recently IKEA, and raising funds from private foundations, NGOs and the wider public. It has also tried to convince non-traditional donor states such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea or China to contribute to its work. “However, the major part of UNHCR’s budget still relies on the same key countries, and its diversification efforts have not necessarily led the agency to be more neutral or less politised” continues Fresa. “First, because UNHCR remains, in any case, an intergovernmental organisation, and as such, its mandate has always been shaped by states' concerns and by a state-centred vision of refugees as being a "problem". Second, to fulfil its mandate (ensure the right to seek asylum and seek solutions for refugees), UNHCR is dependant on states' willingness to cooperate and thus, constantly needs to engage in highly political negotiations with them. Third, building financial partnerships with, for instance, other actors then states does not mean UNHCR will be less political: earmarked funding from big corporations may also have some significant political effects, such as turning refugees into commodities or transforming the protection of refugees into an economical rather then a political or humanitarian issue. So, diversifying its sources of funding does not necessarily make UNHCR a more "neutral" or "apolitical" organisation. Over time, UNHCR has actually become a political player in its own right within the complex field of migration management, defending its own organisational interests and visions of what refugee protection should be”.

This idea of a humanitarian body having to become a political player in order to be operational within the structures of international politics is not surprising, but it is worth examining how much this inevitable manoeuvring affects its ability to fulfil its remit. Since its establishment, the primary goal of UNHCR has been to hold state signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention accountable for their international commitments and obligations. This
means monitoring states’ efforts to comply with international refugee law and developing standards to guide them in their effort to develop national asylum systems.

Are the UNHCR a ‘fig leaf’ for the EU?

As Sandvick and Jacobsen have shown in the edited volume "UNHCR and the struggle for accountability" (2016), ambitious structural and managerial reforms were undertaken in the early 2000s to improve UNHCR’s accountability towards its donors and beneficiaries. Yet, this had the unintended effects to make the organisation more bureaucratised, "thus, raising new challenges regarding the risk of transforming refugee protection into a merely technocratic endeavour, rather than a political issue," adds Fresia.

“I think UNHCR is becoming progressively less critical in the last years”, says a qualified source who prefers to remain anonymous. “Focussing on marketing branding and celebrity endorsement instead of focussing on refugees as they should be doing”.

James Hathaway, director of the program in refugee and asylum law at the University of Michigan Law School was quoted by development media outlet Devex as saying the refugee convention that the UNHCR enforces is the only U.N. convention that doesn’t have an independent supervisory authority, and that is part of its problem.

Omer Shatz, an international law lecturer at the Paris Institute of Political Studies (SciencesPo) who filed a legal case to prosecute the EU and member states to the international criminal court (ICC), reckons “it is time the UNHCR remains neutral and ceases to serve as the fig leaf of the EU in Libyan concentration camps and the Mediterranean. The situation is under ICC investigation and all actors involved, including UN agents, may be held accountable”.

The same hope is shared by Tranchina (“EU government should stop hiding themselves behind the presence of IOM and UNHCR on the ground”) and Tubiana. “It seems UNHCR is gradually giving up defending asylum law and aligning on EU policies aiming at preventing migrants and refugees south-north movements, from Africa to Europe, pushing them as south as possible, and outsourcing migration control to African governments, without enough care for their poor records in terms of democracy and human rights”.

Cochetel himself gave evidence that UNHCR is doubling efforts to give migrants solutions before they reach Libya: “We must make resettlement work better in the first country of asylum and should remove all incentives for secondary asylum”.

INTERCEPTIONS to LIBYA

18.10.2019

UNHCR - INTERCEPTIONS

As of 18 October, 7,404 refugees and migrants were rescued/intercepted at sea by the Libyan Coast Guard and disembarked in Libya during 93 sea operations. So far in October, 362 refugees and migrants were disembarked in Libya. This week, 260 refugees and migrants disembarked in Tajoura (179 individuals) and Al Khums (81 individuals). UNHCR and its partner, the International Medical Corps (IMC) provided medical assistance and core-relief items (CRIs) to persons at the disembarkation points. Recently, boats have been departing from areas west of Tripoli near Zwara and east of Tripoli near Garabulli and Al Khums.

[More information available here]

13.10.2019

Boat from Tunisia intercepted - allegedly trying to fight Tunisian CG

Migrants, second rescue in a few hours Ocean Viking now has 176 people on board. And 160 arrive in Lampedusa

A collision on board of a fishing boat with 110 people who grabbed the blades and threw objects at the coastguards in Tunis. Two wounded. The boat’s captain was arrested.

Those who left Libya on the usual crumbling rubber dinghy made it; those who left Tunisia, instead, after a real naval battle with the Coast Guard were brought back. While, almost a week after the shipwreck of Lampedusa which killed 30 people (17 of them missing), the search has not even led to the discovery of the boat sunk on a seabed of only 50 meters, a sign that the strength of the currents have dragged him who knows where.

After the wave of bad weather, the flows in the
Mediterranean resume. In 74 last night they were taken on board by the Ocean Viking of Sos Mediterranée and Msf alerted by the switchboard Alarm phone that had received the signal yesterday afternoon. The people, including six minors, were drifting in the Libyan Sar area 50 miles from the coast near the oil platforms. But much more beaten is confirmed the Tunisian route from where they begin to leave even large boats capable of carrying a significant number of migrants. Intercepted and forcibly brought back the 110 who had left on Friday night from the coast of Sfax to Italy. It took eight patrol boats of the Tunisian Coast Guard to stop the fishing boat with people of different nationalities on board, including different women. The Tunisian Minister of the Interior said he had received intelligence on the departure to the Italian coast. But when three patrol boats reached the boat, the migrants put up a strenuous resistance: the commander refused to respect the instructions given by the officers through loudspeakers, naval signals and direct communication. Migrants on board the fishing boat grabbed knives and white arms and threw blunt objects at the patrol boats, slightly injuring two Coast Guard men. Only after the arrival of five more patrol boats did the Coast Guard manage to transfer the migrants on board and arrest the captain of the fishing vessel and 25 other migrants who had thrown themselves into the sea to avoid being brought back. Five more people were arrested at Sidi Mansour, in the governorate of Sfax, on charges of planning to travel to the island of Kerkennah to participate in an irregular departure to the Italian coast.


18.10.2019

AP Twitter: BREAKING: the so-called Libyan coastguard intercepts boat from Maltese #SAR!
At 21:32 CEST we talked to the coordinating authority, RCC #Malta, who told us that the LYCG had intercepted the boat from Maltese SAR at 34°47’N, 012°37’E - a clear violation of international law!

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1185306383840878593

AP Twitter: RCC #Malta delegated the operation to an EU-financed militia, who is intercepting the people to a war zone. Malta is fully responsible for this violation of international conventions - unless the LYCG are going to hand over the people to a vessel going in to a Port of Safety.

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1185306383840878593

→ Follow the complete thread:
We just alerted @Armed_Forces_MT, about a boat in distress in their #SAR zone. On board 50 ppl - reportedly includ. 10 women & 5 children. We urge the authorities in #Malta to send a vessel quickly & not delay SAR operations again like at the beginning of this week.

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/118530788352022528

We repeatedly called @Armed_Forces_MT between 15.55 and 17.25 CEST to communicate the new GPS positions of the boat in distress & to ask whether they are taking responsibility for the case but they are again not reachable. We urgently ask the authorities in #Malta to take action!

Alarm Phone, @alarm_phone

The #migrants have been at sea for 17 hours & they are urgently asking for help. Our last contact with them was at 17.00 CEST, when they said: „The boat is leaking.” It’s getting dark in the #Med and we still do not know if #Malta is organising a rescue. Don’t let them drown!

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1185190846565703685

MALTA

September 2019

The Rescue

A flimsy raft, more than 100 souls, and three teenage heroes—or are they pirates?

Abdalla Bari was hungry. It was the morning of March 26, 2019, and Bari and more than 100 other people were floating in a 30-foot-long rubber dinghy in the Mediterranean Sea, somewhere in the expanse of water between North Africa and Italy. Men straddled the boat’s edge, each with one foot dangling above the water and the other inside the dinghy. They formed a tightly packed ring around a huddled mass of women and children. At least one of the women was noticeably pregnant. Another, Souwa Nikavogui, was Bari’s wife. Bari was on the starboard side, near the bow. He was skinny but muscular, with hair fashioned into short, spiky locks; he had a long scar down his right arm. Nikavogui, slightly shorter, with an intense, distant gaze, braced herself to stay upright as the dinghy rocked in the waves. They
were teenagers in love—Bari was 19, Nikavogui 18—and they already had a child of their own. Her name was Fanta, and they’d left her with Bari’s mother, thousands of miles away in Guinea. Fanta was two years old. If help didn’t arrive soon, she would grow up with no memory of her parents.

The cheap inflatable dinghy wouldn’t make it to Europe. Bari and Nikavogui knew that before they climbed aboard in Libya. Their only hope was to be rescued before the boat sank. Bari watched as the bow bent upward, working its way up a wave. A small outboard motor strained to nudge the rest of the vessel over the crest of water. [Hyperlink]

Rescue Operations CM

Ocean Viking – rescue of 182 migrants

17.09.2019

Ocean Viking rescues 48 migrants

NGO-run ship was allowed to disembark group in Italy at weekend

The Ocean Viking migrant rescue ship has picked up 48 people in the waters off Libya, the medical-aid NGO MSF, which runs the vessel with SOS Mériditerranée said on Tuesday. "#MSF & @SOSMedIntl teams have just rescued 48 people from a wooden boat in distress, 53 NM from the coast of #Libya," MSF said via Twitter. "Women, very young children & a newborn are among the survivors now safely onboard the #Ocean Viking, now heading to investigate another possible case". At the weekend the Ocean Viking was allowed to disembark 82 migrants at the Italian island of Lampedusa, a decision that marked a shift in Italian policy under Premier Giuseppe Conte’s second government.

NGO-run migrant-rescue ships were denied access to Italy’s ports under former interior minister and League leader Matteo Salvini, who pulled the plug on Conte’s first government last month. [Hyperlink]

19.09.2019

182 persons safe on board the Ocean Viking

On the 18th of September, in the afternoon, the search and rescue team on board Ocean Viking discovered a boat distress with binoculars. The small dinghy was overcrowded and teams had to use life rafts to mitigate the danger for the people on board. The operation took place 29 nautical miles off the Libyan coast and 73 people – including 18 children – were brought to safety on board Ocean Viking within one and a half hour.

Since Tuesday morning, our teams have been able to save 182 people from drowning – they all now need to be disembarked at place of safety as soon as possible!

Summary of events:

16.09.2019: in the early evening we reached the rescue area with Ocean Viking. Shortly afterwards a potential sea emergency is spotted. During the detailed investigation of this case our teams had to find out that it was an empty rubber dinghy, which lost air in some places. Probably the people on board were intercepted by the Libyan coast guard and brought back to Libya.

17.09.2019 – early morning: From the bridge of Ocean Viking an empty rubber dinghy is discovered again the next morning. Again we have to assume that the people were intercepted by the Libyan coast guard and brought back to Libya.

17.09.2019 – morning: 53 nautical miles away from the Libyan coast our teams discover a wooden boat with binoculars. 43 people – including a pregnant woman, a 4-month-old baby and numerous children – are safely brought aboard Ocean Viking. [Hyperlink]

AP Twitter: BREAKING: About 80 people in distress in the Maltese SAR zone! We have been in contact with the rubber boat for several hours now and #Malta has been updated repeatedly since 6.22am CEST. We hope that a rescue vessel
is on its way! #safepassage
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1174992310276415489

AP Twitter: #Migrant killed by so-called Libyan coastguards. As thousands of others these days, he was fleeing Libya but was intercepted by Europe’s allies at sea. Upon return, with a hundred others he resisted being imprisoned again. He was killed for his will to be free. #Libya is not safe
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1174958002916347904

24.09.2019
Migrants disembark from Ocean Viking in Messina
Ship rescued 182 people, including newborn, in Mediterranean
Messina, September 24 - The 182 people rescued in the Mediterranean by the NGO-run ship Ocean Viking began disembarking in the Sicilian port of Messina on Tuesday.
Many women and 14 children, including an eight-day-old baby, were among the asylum seekers. The interior minister allocated Messina as a port of safety

MALTESE AUTHORITIES
20.09.2019
AP-CASE: 90ppl were rescued by Maltese authorities
Finally, after 13 hours, we have the confirmation that the boat was just rescued by Maltese authorities. Apparently there were 90 people in total on board. While we are relieved, it is unacceptable that the rescue was that delayed, endangering the lives of so many people. 
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1175100110335819776

AP Twitter: BREAKING: About 80 people in distress in the Maltese SAR zone! We have been in contact with the rubber boat for several hours now and #Malta has been updated repeatedly since 6.22am CEST. We hope that a rescue vessel is on its way! #safepassage
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1174992310276415489

21.09.2019
AP Twitter: Never before has the Alarm Phone been alerted by as many boats in the central #Mediterranean in such short period of time. Over the past five days, from 16-20 September, we were called by 10 boats in distress escaping Libya, carrying approximately 720 migrant travellers in total. 
https://mobile.twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1175402384522394946

29.09.2019
AP-CASE: Migrants in critical condition after five days adrift at sea with broken engine
Activist network Alarm Phone says the EU and Libyan Coastguard’s slow response to the tragedy was reflective of the way they respond to migrant distress calls
Two migrants remained in critical condition after having spent several days adrift in the Mediterranean Sea, the UN’s refugee agency (UNHCR) reported this morning. Alarm Phone, an independent support service for people crossing the Mediterranean to Europe, was first contacted by what is believed to be the same boat on September 27. The approximately 60 people on board told the activist network that its engine was not working and that they had left Mistrata two days earlier. A spokeswoman for Alarm Phone told the Star today that it had repeatedly attempted to contact the EU-funded Libyan Coastguard (LCG) for the past two days but they were unresponsive.
“The LCG is often unreachable,” an Alarm Phone spokeswoman said. “We also contacted Italy and Malta’s coastguards and EU Navfor Med [the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean, also known as Operation Sophia]. “Our last contact with the boat was [2am] last night. And in all this time the people were in terrible distress.
“The European authorities kept denying their responsibility for intervention. They said the LCG was responsible and that we should contact them. “Today we heard from different sources that the boat had been rescued by the LCG eventually. And, according to the UNHCR Libya, they disembarked in Libya this morning.” The NGO said the EU and LCG’s slow response to the tragedy was reflective of the way they respond to migrant distress calls. “For two days the European authorities were aware of the situation and didn’t take any action. This is the EU-Libyan policy of non-assistance, which is actively letting people drown at sea. They know that people are drowning and they decide not to intervene. “Libya is not a safe country. It is a country at war. The EU’s co-operation with Libya
is not working.
"Returning people to Libya is sending them back to war to detention centres where it has been documented that torture is going on and women are being raped. “We oppose this policy and think people should never been returned to Libya. People should be brought to a safe port. “We think it is the responsibility of Europe to react to these distress calls especially when the LCG does not respond.”

ARMED FORCES OF MALTA
30.09.2019
AP-CASE: 40 Migrants Rescued by Armed Forces After Spending The Night At Sea In Malta’s Search And Rescue Zone
40 migrants, including two pregnant women and seven children, who were in distress at sea were rescued and brought to Malta earlier today. Armed Forces of Malta picked up the migrants earlier today despite delaying the rescue mission, according to a spokeswoman from the NGO Alarm Phone, who claims to have notified AFM about the incident on Sunday at 5:10 p.m. “At 9.15h CEST we talked to the people on the boat again. They are still in distress in #Malta SAR zone – since yesterday no action has been taken to rescue them. About 32 lives, including many children, are in danger. We demand immediate rescue! #safepassage.” the NGO posted on Twitter. Despite the perilous conditions, those onboard (including pregnant women and children) had to spend the night at sea before AFM rescued them today.

01.10.2019
AP-CASE: Armed forces rescue migrant boat, amid claims of intentional delays
Authorities were asked to help six times before acting, NGO says
More than 40 people were rescued from a migrant boat on Monday. File photo: Jonathan Borg
Maltese armed forces have rescued a group of around 40 people, including two pregnant women and some children, who were on board a boat in distress at sea. An Armed Forces of Malta spokeswoman said the group were rescued on Monday afternoon and were on their way to Malta. However, the NGO Alarm Phone, which acts as a hotline for distressed migrants crossing the Mediterranean, accused the Maltese authorities of delaying the rescue. A spokeswoman said the NGO first informed the coast guard about the boat at 5.10pm on Sunday, telling them those on board included two pregnant women and seven children. "We contacted them three times yesterday and three this morning," she said on Monday. The passengers had to spend the night on a wooden boat at sea, despite not having water or food and in need of medical attention, she said. "This is not the first time this has happened. We had a similar case on September 18 when 45 people were in distress for many hours and a pregnant woman was about to lose her child and it took days for Malta to intervene. "This is a pattern they are using to delay the rescue as a preventative strategy for people trying to cross the Mediterranean." A spokeswoman for the AFM said she could not comment on the claims. Maltese authorities have rescued hundreds of migrants this month attempting to cross from Libya to countries in the European Union.

ITALIAN COAST GUARD
03.10.2019
AP-CASE: Italian Coast Guard Rescues 61 ppl in distress
AP Twitter: Despite problems with the engine, the boat almost reached the coast of #Lampedusa by itself. The Italian coastguard just confirmed that the 61 people were rescued. Welcome to Europe!
https://twitter.com/_alarm_phone/status/1179527565494673409

AP Twitter: At 16:16h, the people on board called us again. They say the situation is critical. We informed RCC Malta again. They refused to confirm whether a SAR operation has been launched or not. We demand immediate action!
https://twitter.com/_alarm_phone/status/1179499654889291777

AP Twitter: At 14.30 CEST a boat in distress in Malta SAR zone contacted us. On board there are 60 people, including 2 women - 1 of them is pregnant. They left #Libya yesterday afternoon. Water is entering the boat & they ask for urgent
Some hours later the crew reported that they had rescued 40 people. "We found them in a wooden shell and took them to the Open Arms," they tweeted. "At the same time near Lampedusa, 30 people died in a shipwreck. The search for bodies is still on."

'Malta Coastguard said to leave them alone'
Canals said that Malta's rescue coordination center told the group not to offer the migrants any assistance, saying that Italy would probably send a patrol boat from Lampedusa, about an hour away.

But Open Arms decided to rescue them anyway after waiting five hours because the boat wouldn't have made it to land without fuel and faced adverse weather. All 44 rescued -- 38 men, four women, a 4-year-old boy, and a baby -- were in good condition.

"The surprise was to hear Malta's instructions - who told us to let them continue to sail. We are evidently talking about a vessel in distress, an overcrowded boat without any type of guarantee that it can reach anywhere, and evidently without enough fuel to reach the island of Lampedusa," Open Arms founder Oscar Camps told a news conference near Barcelona.

Malta's government declined to comment, according to the Associated Press. Camps said that if Open Arms had been cleared to rescue the 44 earlier -- instead of waiting five hours -- the ship could have been available to sail to Lampedusa and help in another rescue there -- possibly saving lives. But he said they were not called, which he said was an indication of authorities' reluctance to coordinate with the NGO.

"Once again we denounce that these boats are in distress," Camps said. "They are by themselves, vessels in danger, because of the dimensions, the overweight (overcrowded) and the lack of navigation capacity and little security guarantees they can offer."

"They must be intervened immediately they cannot be left to their own luck," Camps added.https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/20037/spanish-rescue-mission-saves-44-migrants-told-not-to-offer-assistance

OPEN ARMS 08.10.2019
Spanish rescue mission saves 44 migrants, told 'not to offer assistance'
The Spanish non-profit organization Proactiva Open Arms has rescued 44 people from a wooden boat in the Mediterranean. The chief of mission of the rescue boat says Malta told him not to help the group, which included a young child and a baby. The boat was found late on Sunday in Malta's rescue zone, Open Arms chief of mission, Gerard Canals, said.

14.10.2019
Ocean Viking rescues 176 people. Where will they be disembarked?
SOS MEDITERRANEE's crew has rescued 176 people during two separate operations, one on the night of 12 October and one on 13 October. All rescued people are currently safe onboard the Ocean Viking, the rescue ship chartered by SOS MEDITERRANEE and operated with MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières). The first rescue occurred after the Ocean Viking was in copy of an email alert sent by the NGO Alarm Phone to the maritime authorities on the evening of 12 October. The boat in distress was

04.10.2019
Press Release Italian Coast Guard
With regard to the news that appeared in the press about an intervention in the Maltese SAR area, it should be noted that the night between 2 and 3 October, the Guardia di Finanza, with the support of the Coast Guard, intercepted 10 miles from the island of Lampedusa, in Italian territorial waters, a boat with migrants on board who sailed independently, already spotted during the day in Maltese SAR waters by air assets of the same Malta. This law enforcement activity ended with the arrival of the migrants in the port of Lampedusa, for the subsequent acts within the competence of the Police Forces present on the ground.
https://www.guardiacostiera.gov.it/stampa/Pages/comunicato-stampa-04-10-2019.aspx

SOS Mediterranée Twitter: BREAKING: The #OceanViking has just rescued 74 people - including 6 minors - from a rubber boat in distress near an oilfield around 50 nautical miles off the Libyan coast. While exhausted from the dangerous journey, all seem to be stable. https://twitter.com/SOSMedIntl/status/1183154121051910144

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1179401823641378822
https://twi
drifting near Al Jurf offshore oil platform. The offshore oil platform called our ship to grant permission to enter into the restricted zone that spans 3 NM around the platform. Being allowed to get as close as 1NM to the platform, teams proceeded with the rescue operation saving 74 people, all males and including unaccompanied minors. The operation conducted at night was completed at 00:03h.

At 00:25, the Ocean Viking received communication from the Libyan maritime authorities with information regarding a boat in distress, giving its approximate position and requesting the ship to proceed to search and rescue. The Ocean Viking followed the instructions but did not find the boat in distress after more than 9 hours of search. No further information was given by the Libyan authorities upon further request from our Search and Rescue coordinator onboard. It was the first time the Ocean Viking had received a written request from the Libyan authorities to be engaged in a search and rescue operation.

On the morning of 13 October, the Ocean Viking was alerted of another rubber boat in distress and proceeded to its location. At 13:50, our teams completed the rescue of 102 people including 4 pregnant women and 9 children under the age of 16 from an unseaworthy rubber boat in distress.

The Ocean Viking as per maritime law has requested a Place of Safety (PoS) to disembark the 176 rescued people, to the Libyan JRCC. As the Libyan authorities indicated Tripoli as a Port of Disembarkation, we kindly declined as according to international law and conventions no place in Libya can be currently considered a Place of Safety.

"While the Ocean Viking is heading north and most able to assist Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) have been notified, we strongly urge EU member states and the competent authorities to promptly assign us a Place of Safety so that the 176 rescued people can be safely disembarked. These, men, women, children have gone through a terrible and scary journey at sea; having them on the Ocean Viking aft deck is an emergency solution but a rescue can only be considered once they reach a shore when they can be taken care of.", says Frederic Penard, SOS MEDITERRANEE’S Head of Operations.

"It is now the fourth time since the Ocean Viking started operations that we are waiting to be assigned a Place of Safety to disembark rescued people. EU governments have failed so far to set up a predictable disembarkation mechanism in accordance with maritime law. Ad hoc agreements cannot be the solution. We call upon governments to put an end to this unacceptable situation.” – Sophie Beau, co-founder and vice-president of SOS MEDITERRANEE.


15.10.2019

Rescue ship "Ocean Viking": Italy leaves 176 refugees ashore

Authorities in Italy have allowed 176 migrants and refugees to land, according to SOS Méditerranée. Employees of the aid organization were relieved. Italy has granted 176 refugees aboard the rescue vessel "Ocean Viking" permission to go ashore. This was announced by the organization SOS Méditerranée on Twitter. As a port of call was assigned to the ship Taranto in southern Italy. The "Ocean Viking" is already on its way to the destination port. The operation was "relieved that the 176 survivors will be safe without undue delay."

BREAKING: The Italian authorities have assigned #OceanViking the port of Taranto in the south of Italy as a safe place. We are relieved that the 176 survivors will be safe without undue delay and are heading north now. The civilian rescue ship had rescued the migrants on the Mediterranean off the coast of Libya over the weekend and then waited for a chance to land the people of Europe. The "Ocean Viking" is operated in addition to SOS Méditerranée by Doctors Without Borders.

A few weeks ago, Germany, France, Italy and Malta had agreed on a temporary distribution of migrants. But there is still no comprehensive distribution mechanism. Italy and Malta in particular insist that people be distributed to other EU countries. Civilian ships with migrants on board therefore had to stay out longer at sea until they were allowed to call at a port.

25 people arrived safely in Lampedusa
13.10.2019
AP Twitter: Yesterday, a relative told us about a boat coming from Zuwarah #Libya with several families on board. Although we never established direct contact to the approx. 20 people, we informed the Italian coastguard. Tonight the relative confirmed that the boat has arrived in #Lampedusa!
https://mobile.twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1183447055391477760

14.10.2019
We spoke to the people in distress again. They say water is entering the boat. Malta & the so-called Libyan coastguard don’t respond adequately or at all. #Malta is just monitoring from the air and waiting for #Libya to intercept. No time to waste, they need rescue to Europe now!
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1183842900058226689?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

15.10.2019
DO NOT LET THEM DROWN – AP CALL
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1184047212269113344
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1184047212269113344?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

SHIPWRECK LAMPEDUSA

07.10.2019
Shipwreck off Lampedusa, about 30 deaths feared
A shipwreck occurred at night a few miles from the coast of Lampedusa. The patrol boats of the Coast Guard and the Guardia di Finanza, which have so far recovered the bodies of two women and 22 survivors - including women as well - who have already been transferred to port, are operating on the spot. There were about fifty migrants aboard the shipwrecked boat. According to an initial reconstruction, when the patrol boats arrived to proceed with the transhipment, the migrants all moved to one side and, due to the rough sea, they overturned the boat. The missing persons are being searched with the use of air and sea units of the Coast Guard and with a patrol boat of the Guardia di Finanza. There are also 8 children among the missing: according to what we learn, the survivors have told the men of the Coast Guard and the GDF who have helped them. On board the wooden boat there were mostly Tunisians and sub-Saharan.

http://www.ansa.it/amp/sicilia/notizie/2019/10/07/migranti-naufragio-davanti-lampedusa_d819636e-8900-400d-a286-bd6f67d1b70.html?__twitter_impression=true

22 migrants were rescued off Lampedusa in a rescue operation coordinated by the Port Authority of Palermo during the night between October 6 and 7.
In the late evening of Sunday 6 October, the Coast Guard Operations Centre in Rome received several reports from the Palermo CUR (Single Response Centre) concerning a boat with about 50 migrants who reported being near the island of Lampedusa.
Once the first information was acquired, under the coordination of the Coast Guard of Palermo, research activities at sea were started with the use of a patrol boat Class 300 of the Coast Guard of Lampedusa and a unit of the Guardia di Finanza that was already in the area on patrol. Around 00:15 a.m. the Coast Guard patrol boat, engaged in research activities, sighted at 6 miles from the island of Lampedusa the overloaded and already skidded boat and after a few minutes also the Guardia di Finanza unit arrived.
In order to proceed with the transhipment operations, the naval units were approaching the boat, but the adverse weather conditions and the sudden displacement of the migrants caused the overturning of the unit. The immediate intervention of the patrol boats and the deployment of the Coast Guard’s maritime rescuer enabled 22 of the migrants who had fallen at sea to be rescued, 18 of them by the Coast Guard unit and 4 by the Guardia di Finanza patrol boat. The lifeless bodies recovered so far. The search for the missing persons is currently underway with the use of Coast Guard units and a Guardia di Finanza patrol boat.
Update no. 1
A total of nine bodies of migrants have been recovered, victims of this night’s shipwreck off Lampedusa. In addition to the two bodies found in the immediacy of the rescue, another seven dead bodies were recovered this morning by two Coast Guard patrol boats, after being spotted by a Coast Guard helicopter engaged in research activities. The search for missing persons continues.
Update no. 2
With reference to the shipwreck that occurred in the night between 6 and 7 October off Lampedusa, we inform you that the search for missing persons is still ongoing through the use of the aircraft ATR42 "MANTA" Coast Guard and helicopter "VOLPE" Guardia di Finanza. During the course of the day, moreover, a patrol boat will be sent to the research area with on board specialized personnel from the Coast Guard's Underwater Units who, using a special underwater robot - the R.O.V. (Remotely Operated Vehicle) -, will make a first attempt to inspect the seabed in order to identify and inspect the wreck. The Palermo Coast Guard coordinates the operations.


PRESS RELEASES ITALIAN COAST GUARD

15.10.2019
Press Release Italian Coast Guard
At dawn of today, with a call from a satellite phone and subsequent sighting by an aircraft of the international operation EUNAVFOR MED, the Coast Guard Operations Centre in Rome was reported the presence of a boat in distress with about 180 people on board 35 nautical miles south / west of Lampedusa, in the Maltese SAR area. MRCC Rome immediately informed the Maltese Authority that, assuming the coordination of the search and rescue operation, it requested the collaboration of Italy, which sent two patrol boats of the Coast Guard and one of the Guardia di Finanza on the spot. The three patrol boats reached the boat, which was found to be in precarious conditions of buoyancy, and then proceeded to tranship the migrants. Currently, the three patrol boats are heading towards Valletta pending the identification of the POS (place of safety) by the competent Maltese authorities.


16.10.2019
Press Release Italian Coastguard about the shipwreck 06.-07.10.2019
With regard to the shipwreck that occurred in the night between October 6 and 7 off Lampedusa, yesterday, October 15, was made a further survey in the area of sinking of the unity of migrants in collaboration with the motorboat Galatea Arpa Palermo. The Unit, equipped with Side Scan Sonar, in the afternoon found a trace trace of the boat sunk on a seabed of 61 meters at a distance of about 300 meters from the point of shipwreck. Subsequent surveys with the ROV (Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle) of the Coast Guard's diving units confirmed the finding of the wreck. Around the unit, lying on the seabed, at least twelve bodies were found. The number of dead bodies, however, can only be ascertained following further underwater reconnaissance that has been carried out on the seabed.


TWEETS
Concerning the shipwreck last night near Lampedusa
Shipwreck off the coast of # Lampedusa. About 30 migrants are still missing while survivors for the moment are 22. The corpses of 2 women were brought to land tonight. The boat, departed from Tunisia, had abt 50 people on board, Tunisians and western African migrants
https://twitter.com/fladig/status/118107618373399004

MSF Twitter: After a day of searching, this evening # OceanViking has received instructions from Italian authorities to continue searching for survivors and bodies from the tragic shipwreck that happened off the coast of # Lampedusa Sunday night. We will continue our search at dawn.
https://twitter.com/MSF_Sea

16.10.2019
Press Release Italian Coast Guard
With regard to the rescue of a boat with about 180 migrants that took place yesterday in the area of Sar Maltese, we inform you that the two patrol boats class 300 of the Coast Guard and the naval unit of the Guardia di Finanza, with on board the migrants transshipped yesterday, arrived this night in Lampedusa. The presence of a large number of people on board, including women and children, already for many hours at sea and without any possibility of finding shelter indoors, as well as deteriorating marine weather conditions, have led to the identification of Lampedusa as the port of landing.

18.10.2019
Press Release Italian Coast Guard about the shipwreck 06.-07.10.2019
The Coast Guard's Underwater Units are currently diving, with the aim of recovering the bodies of the victims of the shipwreck that occurred in the night between 6 and 7 October in the waters off Lampedusa. 16 underwater operators take turns in the recovery activities that take place on a seabed that reaches up to 60 meters, with a time spent on the bottom that, for safety reasons, cannot exceed 10 minutes. The teams are composed of two divers, each of whom is in constant connection with the surface vehicles through a guide cable managed by an operator. All this, under the supervision of a diving officer and with the help of two nurses specialized in hyperbaric medicine. On board the support vehicles there are also two divers ready to intervene in the event of any problems for diving operators. The hyperbaric chamber of the Lampedusa hospital centre is also alerted for any emergencies. In the area forbidden for the occasion - Corps patrol boats provide the security frame and a Coast Guard helicopter is ready to intervene in case of emergency. Below is a link from which you can download a video contribution of the underwater operations that took place yesterday.

TRAFFICKING LIBYA – ITALY

06.10.2019
INFO LIBYA: trafficker/CG Zawiyah-"Bija" was invited 2 years in Italian reception centers and in Rome! In May 2017, Abd al-Rahman Milad, known as Bija, took part in a meeting with Italian officials and a delegation from the so-called Libyan Coast Guard at Cara di Mineo. Bija, the trafficker and Coast Guard Boss of Zawiyah.

04.10.2019
The hidden negotiation. From Libya to Mineo, the negotiation between Italy and the boss
When the minibus with tinted windows enters the Cara di Mineo, only a few people know the composition of the mysterious delegation from Tripoli. It is May 11, 2017. Italy is negotiating with the Libyan authorities to block the departure of refugees and migrants. Today we know that Abd al-Rahman al-Milad, the notorious Bija, also attended the meeting that day, without leaving a trace in the entry records. The numerous images obtained by the newspaper Avvenire through an official source, document that morning which remained in secret. Accused by the UN of being one of the most brutal traffickers of men in Libya, master of life and death in prison camps, author of shootings at sea, suspected of drowning dozens of people, believed to be at the head of a real mafia dome branched in every political and economic sector of the Zawyah area, he had obtained a pass to enter our country and be accompanied by the Italian authorities to study "the Mineo model", from where over 30 thousand migrants have passed in recent years. Unspeakable agreements that continue even now, despite repeated complaints from the United Nations.
https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/dalla-libia-al-mineo-negoziate-boss-libico

05.10.2019
Hidden negotiation. The boss's trip to Italy: Bija visited other migrant centres
A month after Bija's landing in Sicily, something strange happens: suddenly the departures of immigrants and refugees from Libya fall to an all-time low, with a reduction of more than 50% for each month. It goes from about 26,000 in May - the summit in the Cara di Mineo is on 11 May - to almost 5,000 in September. The statistics elaborated by Ispi researcher Matteo Villa, bring to mind Leonardo Sciascia, according to whom "the only safe things in this world are coincidences". And yet, on the organization of that meeting, the mystery continues. According to sources close to the then executive Gentiloni, Mineo's meeting was suggested by the International Organization for Migration, the IOM, a United Nations agency that also has officials in Libya. On the contrary, the UN reports that the meeting was organized by the Italian ministries involved in various ways in the management of the migration crisis together with the Libyan government, which had transmitted the list of participants.
https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/il-giallo-del-negoziate-segreti-migranti-libia-trafficanti
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 Coast Guard. These Coast Guard 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" Coast Guards.

Kontakt

borderline-europe
Menschenrecht ohne Grenzen e.V.
https://www.borderline-europe.de/
mail@borderline-europe.de
jg@borderline-europe.de