Central Med Info

December 15 2019 – January 23 2020

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.

AP reports

06.01.2020
The Central Med Regional Analysis is out!

Dear all, The Alarm Phone’s Central Mediterranean Regional Analysis is out! It covers the period 1 October to 31 December 2019 and discusses key developments, including:

-Civil Fleet and Alarm Phone rescues
-The “borderisation” of Search and Rescue zones
-Non-assistance, interceptions, refoulements by proxy by Europe and its allies
-“Privatised” push-backs to Libya
-Recent shipwrecks and invisibilised deaths at sea

-Messages from behind bars in Libya
https://alarmphone.org/en/2020/01/05/cdental-mediterranean-regional-analysis/
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/121410372683237376
https://www.facebook.com/watchthedmed.alarmphone/posts/2555136564750571

19.12.2019
AP 5 years booklet
Website: https://alarmphone.org/en/2019/12/15/particularly-memorable-cases/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/watchthedmed.alarmphone/posts/253800876474140
Twitter: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1207730480570871812

STATISTICS

03.01.2020
IOM: Mediterranean Arrivals Reach 110,699 in 2019; Deaths Reach 1,283. World Deaths Fall

LIBYA- INFO

22.01.2020
Teenage boy the latest to die in Libyan refugee detention centre

The 16-year-old, from Eritrea, had been in the facility for more than a year and died of an unknown illness and lack of medical care.

16.01.2020
Der Deal, die Hölle und der Tod:

Internierungslager in Libyen
Event in English language
https://www.facebook.com/SeebriecokSchafftschereHaefen/videos/2148616925241972/Uszp5Ty3MD1OD150ToxMDE1NzQ2OTM0NjUwODMwMA/

15.01.2020
EU says Libya not a safe port, committed to improving - Politics - ANSA Med

Exclusive: 2,000 Syrian fighters deployed to Libya to support government

14.01.2020
Turkey ready to 'teach a lesson' to Haftar after Libya talks end without resolution

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuses eastern Libyan commander of running away from negotiations in Moscow - The Libya talks in Moscow came after a ceasefire, initiated by Turkey and Russia, saw a lull in heavy fighting and air strikes on Sunday, though both factions accused each other of violating the truce as skirmishes continued around the capital Tripoli.

According to a draft of the deal which Sarraj signed and which was shared by a GNA spokesperson with Middle East Eye, both sides would create a joint military commission to ensure the stability of the truce. The draft joint statement says a 5+5 military commission would determine the line of battle between the parties, monitor the implementation of the
ceasefire and ensure the sustainability of it. Each side will also assign a representative to join UN-led economic and political dialogue and form a working group on the intra-Libyan political settlement.


09.01.2020
They don’t help’ - refugees condemn UN over failures that drove them to sea

01.01.2020
Tunisia allocates new camp for potential refugees from Libya as fighting escalates

31.12.2019
Making misery pay - Libya militias take EU funds for migrants
Five to seven people are freed every day after they pay anywhere from $1,800 to $8,500 each, the former migrants said. At al-Nasr, they said, the militia gets around $14,000 every day from ransom solicitation; at Tarik al-Sikka, a detention center in Tripoli, it was closer to $17,000 a day, they said. Abdullah later ended up in the al-Nasr Martyrs detention center, where he learned the new price list for release and an attempted crossing based on nationality: Ethiopians, $5,000; Somalis $6,800; Moroccans and Egyptians, $8,100; and finally Bangladeshis, a minimum of $18,500. Across the board, women pay more. (...)

28.12.2019
From Tripoli’s front lines: How Haftar recovered from the setback in Gharyan and what’s next for the advancing LNA

21.12.2019
La machine à broyer - Réfugiés et migrants piégés en Libye
A multi-media project designed to raise awareness of the situation of migrants in the country today. The project gathers data, videos and stories from patients, both in detention and out of detention, trapped in an endless cycle of violence and abuse. This is the first time we have been able to film our teams inside detention centres. It’s a remarkable document to watch and share very widely.


18.12.2019
PRIVATISED PUSH-BACKS OF MIGRANTS TO LIBYA: NEW REPORT AND LEGAL ACTION
This event is the culmination of a collaboration between the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and Forensic Oceanography, a research project based at Goldsmiths, University of London, which will announce two ground-breaking interventions on this controversial practice. Forensic Oceanography will release its detailed reconstruction of the incident and this new pattern of practice (written by Charles Heller), and GLAN will announce the details of the unprecedented legal complaint filed on behalf of SDG, one of the individuals who was intercepted in the high seas by the Nivin and was targeted by the Libyan authorities for his role in resisting being brought back to Libya. The complaint (written by Noemi Magugliani, Itamar Mann and Violeta Moreno-Lax) aims to set a precedent by seeking accountability for human rights violations triggered by this “privatized push-back”. It seeks to show that the Mediterranean cannot continue to function as a lawless space where no legal accountability obtains.

LIBYAN PULLBACKS
15.01.2020
Nearly 1,000 migrants taken back to Libya in the first two weeks of 2020
Hundreds of migrants have been picked up in the Mediterranean this month and sent back to Libya. All the migrants were taken to detention centers, where the UN migration agency IOM has warned they are at increased risk of human trafficking.
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The migrants were picked up by Libya’s coast guard, which is trained and funded by the European Union, and one commercial vessel. Most were disembarked in Tripoli and all were then taken to detention centers, the IOM said in a statement. NGO search and rescue boats reported having rescued 237 others, the IOM said.

High risk of human trafficking: IOM spokesperson

The migrants returned to detention centers are at high risk of being trafficked by criminal gangs that have been able to thrive due to worsening violence in the Libyan capital, according to IOM spokesperson Safa Msehli.

“The security situation gives room to these criminal gangs and to these smuggling groups to prey on the migrants and their wish to leave a rather unsafe country,” Msehli told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. „It’s definitely increasingly worrying,“ she said.

Anais Deprade, a spokesperson for Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), also said refugees and migrants returned to Libyan shores were at risk of „falling back into the clutches of traffickers,“ according to Thomson Reuters. Deprade said MSF knew of migrants who had been sold to traffickers from some detention centers.

Escalating violence blamed for increased departures

More than 1,000 migrants have left Libya since January 1, with fighting in Tripoli at ist worst since the conflict between rival authorities began nine months ago. Migrants who spoke to IOM staff at disembarkation points in Libya said the worsening violence in and around the capital and the deteriorating humanitarian situation were the main reasons for the increase in the number of people fleeing. During the first two weeks of 2019, according to the IOM, no migrants were returned to Libya, but 23 bodies were recovered from the sea during that period.

“The current sudden increase in departures is especially alarming given the very limited search and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean,” the IOM statement said.

“Measures to protect lives and guarantee the safety of these people are not in place” at locations in Libya where migrants are being dropped off, the agency said. “Alternative solutions that safeguard lives must be found to alleviate the suffering of thousands of men, women, and children who are held in inhumane conditions.”

Disrupted air travel leaves migrants stranded

More than 1,000 other migrants who have registered the IOM’s voluntary return program remain stranded in Libya because of disruption to aviation activities. „While our operations and programs continue ..., they have been largely affected, especially with regards safe movement of migrants to transit points and airports. A minimum degree of security is needed for us able to safely assist 500 people scheduled to return home in the coming days,“ said IOM Libya Chief of Mission, Federico Soda.

Germany to host Libya summit

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel is to host a conference in Berlin on Sunday aimed at finding a peaceful solution for the Libya conflict.

An attempt in Moscow earlier this week to broker a truce between the rival groups failed. The Berlin summit was organized in coordination with the UN and will be attended by representatives from the US, Russia, Britain, France, China, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, as well as officials from African and Arab countries and the European Union.


18.12.2019

Forensic Oceanography's new report on privatized push-backs

The use by Italy of merchant ships to push-back migrants to Libya, a practice that was consolidated under Salvini.

https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/nivin

The report is the basis for a complaint in front of the UN Human Rights Committee filed by GLAN.

https://www.glanlaw.org/nivincase

New report about the migrant’s situation in Sicily, borderline-europe

Our new report has been published - The situation of refugees and migrants in Sicily

On 18 December 1990, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers* and Members of Their Families was adopted by the UN General Assembly and is a United Nations Convention on Human Rights. The protection of the UN Migrant Workers Convention covers both migrant*women with worker* status, seasonal and casual workers* as well as people who

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Reside and work illegally in a country. On this special occasion, our 2019 report on the situation of refugees in Sicily will be published. First of all, it deals with the changes in the asylum system created by the “security decrees” of 2018. Further topics are the consequences of the decrees on the accommodation, protection and care system for migrants in Sicily and throughout Italy. Tomatoes and olives come from Sicily as well as oranges and lemons, which can be found on our tables. The report also deals with seasonal work in agriculture, which has been carried out since the 1990s in Sicily mainly by migrant women* and is often linked to exploitation mechanisms at various levels. Sorry - available only in German language, will be translated in English, probably published in March 2020.

https://www.borderline-europe.de/sites/default/files/projekte_files/Sizilienbericht%202019%20final.pdf

**Rescue Operations**

**13.01.2020**

Alarm Phone: Mass escape, forced returns and Civil Fleet solidarity off the coast of Libya, 9-12 January 2020

Over the past 4 days, the Alarm Phone was alerted to 22 boats in distress escaping Libya, carrying about 1,150 people. 400 people who had reached out to us were rescued to Europe. About 700 people were returned to Libya or their fate is unknown. Repeatedly, we informed relevant authorities to the severe distress of boats off the Libyan coast but repeatedly they did not act quickly or adequately. We don’t know what happened to several boats. We fear interception by Libyan militias or that lives have been lost. We were also informed of yet another privatised pushback. A merchant vessel illegally returned migrants to Libya. Upon arrival in Tripoli, some of the 64 people refused to disembark. According to testimonies, a person was shot by Libyan authorities and thrown into the sea. With the escalation of conflicts in #Libya, we can expect that more people will flee in order to seek asylum in Europe: will they all have to choose between the unbearable violence of war & torture camps or the invisible violence of the sea & European deterrence efforts there? Much of the violence off the coast of Libya over the past days would have remained invisible without the Civil Fleet which plays a crucial role in counter-surveilling the Mediterranean, monitoring the authorities’ anti-migrant deterrence efforts & mass human rights violations. [https://alarmphone.org/en/2020/01/13/mass-escape-forced-returns-and-civil-fleet-solidarity-off-the-coast-of-lybia/?post_type_release_type=post](https://alarmphone.org/en/2020/01/13/mass-escape-forced-returns-and-civil-fleet-solidarity-off-the-coast-of-lybia/?post_type_release_type=post)

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1216680731675709440
https://www.facebook.com/watchthemedia.alarmphone/posts/2562223405204?

**11.01.2020**

AP - Central Med in the last 60 hours... contested space again!

Some of the people who called us in distress at sea were disembarked this afternoon in Valletta, #Malta. Alarm Phone activists were present and welcomed the 99 people who were exhausted but relieved to have survived their odyssey. We wish them all the best, safety, and freedom. [https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1216112215574622209](https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1216112215574622209)
And a second one with the second disembarkation: [https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1216115240355749888](https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1216115240355749888)

**OCEAN VIKING**

**17.01.2020**

Ocean Viking rescues 39 migrants from wooden boat off Libyan coast

The humanitarian vessel Ocean Viking pulled to safety 39 migrants from a rickety wooden boat in the early hours of Friday morning. Almost half of the migrants are unaccompanied minors, the crew said.

The Ocean Viking ship, jointly run by SOS Mediterranee and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), in its first rescue mission in 2020 picked up 39 people traveling on a wooden boat which had begun taking in water around 35 nautical miles off the Libyan coast. The rescue took place in total darkness in the early hours of Friday and
was further complicated by rough seas and strong winds, MSF wrote on Twitter. Among the rescued migrants are 19 unaccompanied minors and five women. A spokesperson from SOS Mediterranee told InfoMigrants French that most of the migrants are of Bangladeshi origin.

Libyan authorities on Friday offered Tripoli as a point of disembarkation for the 39 migrants, but SOS Mediterranee announced it will wait for an alternative. “According to UNHCR and the IOM, Libya is not safe for refugees and migrants, especially in times of war”, the organization said on Twitter.

For now, the Ocean Viking will continue to patrol waters off the Libyan coast for other boats in distress, SOS Mediterranee told InfoMigrants.

More migrant boats setting off from Libya
In the first two weeks of 2020, at least 953 migrants, including 85 children, trying to flee Libya by boat were intercepted and returned to Libyan shores, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Tuesday. NGO search and rescue boats reported having rescued 237 others, the IOM said.

The security situation is considered to be at its worst since the conflict between rival authorities began nine months ago. Migrants who spoke to IOM staff at disembarkation points in Libya said the worsening violence, in and around the capital, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation were the main reasons for the increase in the number of people fleeing. MSF Germany released a statement to the German press agency dpa in which they warned the international community that the situation in Libya could trigger a new refugee wave from the country, as people try to flee war and insecurity. On twitter on the same day, they called the situation in Libya “catastrophic” and said that the policy of returning refugees to Libya must end.


Ocean Viking
20.12.2019
Ocean Viking ship rescues 112 migrants in the Mediterranean – World
The “Ocean Viking” humanitarian vessel, operated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and SOS Mediterranée, today rescued 112 migrants from an inflatable boat 34 miles off the coast of Libya. Among the rescued were 24 women, three of them pregnant, and 38 children, the youngest at three months, the organizations announced in their social networking accounts on Twitter. At the moment, only “Ocean Viking” is in the central Mediterranean, however, it is expected to arrive in the next few hours in the boat area of the Spanish non-governmental organization Open Arms and the ship “Alan Kurdi” of the German NGO Sea Eye. The NGO’s “Sea Watch 3” of the same name, after more than five months blocked in the southern Italian port of Licata, won an appeal in court on Thursday to return to sea. “Sea Watch 3” was blocked by Italian justice after its captain, Carola Rackete, of Germany forced her into Lampedusa on June 29, desperate not to be able to land 40 migrants she had rescued 17 days earlier.

The last landing in Italy was on December 4, when the arrival for the 121 migrants who remained for six days aboard „Alan Kurdi” and „Ocean Viking” was allowed. Their disembarkation at the ports of Sicily (island of Italy) came after the European Commission activated the protocol for the relocation of migrants and some European countries, such as Germany and France, offered to receive some of these people.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) „Missing Migrants“ report, 1,246 migrants died this year in the central Mediterranean in an attempt to reach Europe.


23.12.2019
ONBOARD SOS MEDITERRANEE
Activities and observations of our rescue ship in the Central Med
– On the 20th of December, Ocean Viking completes the rescue of 112 survivors from a rubber boat in distress
– On the 20th of December, Ocean Viking completes the rescue of 50 survivors from a wooden boat in distress
– On the 21st of December Ocean Viking requests a Place of Safety
– On the 22nd of December 3 survivors are evacuated via helicopter.
– The same day Italy MRCC indicates Taranto as Place of Safety
– On the 23rd of December Ocean Viking
arrives to Taranto and all 159 survivors are disembarked
https://onboard.sosmediterranee.org/

24.12.2019
162 migrants rescued off Libya land in Italy: NGO

ROME — Some 162 migrants rescued off the Libyan coast have disembarked in the southern Italian port of Taranto, the NGO SOS Mediterranee said on Tuesday. The migrants, including 50 minors and five pregnant women, “were rescued by the SOS Mediterranee Search and Rescue team in two critical rescues in international waters off the coast of Libya on Friday, December 20th,” said the NGO, which charters the Ocean Viking rescue ship along with medical charity Doctors Without Borders.

The first operation involved a rubber dinghy that had deflated and was carrying 112 “terrified” people on board, it said.

Fifty others were plucked from a wooden boat shortly before midnight the same day “in dangerous meteorological and maritime conditions,” the NGO added. The 50 could not be transported to Malta due to adverse weather conditions.

Italian authorities then gave permission for all the rescued migrants to land in Taranto and the operation was carried out on Monday, SOS Mediterranee said. It described both rescue operations as “extremely difficult.” “As the weather was rapidly and severely deteriorating, both cases would almost certainly have resulted in tragedies if help had arrived only a little later,” said Nicola Stalla, the NGO’s search and rescue coordinator onboard the Ocean Viking. Italy renewed a widely criticized 2017 agreement in October with the Libyan Coast Guard to block migrants trying to leave for Europe. Rights groups say Libya routinely picks up migrants in the Mediterranean and brings them back to overcrowded detention centers, where many have been victims of abuse and forced labor. Libya, wracked by conflict since the 2011 uprising against Muammar Gadhafi, has become a major transit route for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere hoping to reach Europe. — AFP

24.12.2019
SOS Mediterranee
Following two difficult rescues, 159 survivors finally disembarked before Christmas

Mediterranean Sea, 24/12/2019 — The teams onboard the Ocean Viking, a rescue ship chartered by SOS MEDITERRANEE in partnership with Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), rescued 162 people in two challenging operations on Friday, December 20th. After the medical evacuation of a woman, her infant child and her sister on Sunday, the remaining 159 survivors disembarked in Taranto yesterday, December 23rd. SOS MEDITERRANEE’s teams are relieved that a place of safety was found in a timely manner in accordance with maritime law, and that those rescued on the brink of tragedy get to spend Christmas in safety. 162 people, including 50 minors and 5 pregnant women, were rescued by the SOS MEDITERRANEE Search and Rescue team in two critical rescues in international waters off the coast of Libya on Friday, December 20th. The first rescue started in complete darkness around 5 am in international waters 34 nautical miles off the Libyan coast when an overcrowded rubber boat, reported in distress during the night, was finally spotted from the bridge of the Ocean Viking. The bow of the dinghy was entirely deflated upon the arrival of SOS MEDITERRANEE’s rescuers. The people on the boat, among them 7 babies, were terrified. Eventually all 112 men, women and children were brought to safety onboard the Ocean Viking. Soon after this first rescue, the Ocean Viking was alerted to another distress case by citizen aircraft Moonbird (Sea Watch). After 8 hours of searching, the wooden boat in distress was spotted. Since the boat had entered the Maltese Search and Rescue Region, the rescue was conducted under the effective coordination of the Maltese authorities. 50 people were rescued in complete darkness around 11 pm in dire weather and sea conditions.

“Both rescues we performed last Friday were extremely difficult. As the weather was rapidly and severely deteriorating, both cases would almost certainly have resulted in tragedies if help had arrived only a little later,” explains Nicola Stalla, SOS MEDITERRANEE Search and Rescue Coordinator onboard the Ocean Viking.

“The wooden boat was very likely to capsize. The rescue took place close to Lampedusa, where two shipwrecks occurred very recently. The rubber boat carrying 112 people without life jackets could have completely deflated as the
The Ocean Viking raised the possibility to seek shelter near Malta in order to conduct the transfer in a timely manner. However, the Ocean Viking was not granted authorisation to enter Maltese territorial waters. The fear of another diplomatic standoff – in severe weather during Christmas week – arose among the survivors and crew. There was great relief on board when the announcement was made on Sunday night by Italian maritime authorities that Taranto had been assigned as a Place of Safety. “All these survivors endured an ordeal fleeing Libya in this winter season. We sailed through more than 50 knots of wind Sunday night on the transit to Taranto. The rough sea was terrifying the rescued people and it would have been very difficult to remain exposed the elements much longer,” explains Nicola Stalla. “We are relieved to know that they have finally reached a safe place, and that we can resume our lifesaving mission soon.” After yesterday’s disembarkation, the Ocean Viking will sail back out the Central Mediterranean as soon as possible and the SOS MEDITERRANEE and MSF teams onboard are preparing to spend Christmas at sea. A dire need for European rescue assets remains as people continue to flee the horrors of Libya.

https://sosmediterranee.com/press/following-two-difficult-

ALAN KURDI
27.12.2019
German ship rescues migrants from the Mediterranean
The charity ship Alan Kurdi reached a rubber boat carrying 32 migrants, ahead of an impending storm on the Mediterranean. According to the Sea-Eye rescue group, they all said they were Libyan citizens. German humanitarian ship Alan Kurdi rescued 32 migrants in the Mediterranean, the organization Sea-Eye said on Friday. The migrants were rescued from a rubber boat off the coast of Libya, two hours after the Alan Kurdi received an emergency call with coordinates for their location on Thursday night. All of the rescued migrants said they were Libyan citizens, Sea-Eye said. Among them were a pregnant woman and 10 children, the youngest being three years old. Sea-Eye spokesman Julian Pahlke said this time of year was dangerous for migrants stranded in the Mediterranean, as the weather can change unexpectedly. “Had we not found these people, they would have encountered a storm at sea tomorrow, at the latest. Their chances of survival would have been drastically reduced,” Pahlke said. The German rescue ship is now headed to the Italian island of Lampedusa, where it had also transported rescued refugees earlier this month. "How safe can Libya be if the Libyans themselves and their families are putting their lives in danger at sea in order to leave the country quickly?" said Gorden Isler, chairman of Sea-Eye. The Alan Kurdi, which is named after a 3-year-old Syrian boy who drowned in the Mediterranean in 2015, offers humanitarian rescue assistance in the Mediterranean with the support of the Catholic Church. This month’s Christmas Mission has been financed by the archdiocese of the west German city of Paderborn.

27.12.2019
Anatomy of a rescue on the world’s deadliest migration route
The alarm sounded shortly after midnight on Friday. Bleary-eyed volunteers and crew stumbled up to the mess room for a briefing. There was a boat, the ship’s head of mission, Rene Stein, told them. It was about 1.8 nautical miles ahead. Everyone had to be ready. On the monkey deck, the highest point on which you can safely stand on the ship, the volunteer on watch duty could spy a light in the distance. It flashed across the Mediterranean Sea, bright, blinking once or twice before stopping. After a pause, it shone again and again, a sign of life under a smattering of stars. He peered through his binoculars, trying to make out the people on board.
Then, he heard them shouting. As the Alan Kurdi rescue ship sailed closer, the captain lit up the vessel to show he had received the message from those in need. Two lifeboats were deployed, with volunteer drivers at the helm. Once on board, the man clung his baby to him, breathing deeply and then letting out a cry.

https://rescues-159-survivors-finally-disembarked-before-christmas/
He began to vomit. The first began to circle the 8m-long boat, while one crew member asked for information about who was on board. Five women, one of them pregnant, came the answer. There were 10 children, the youngest six months old.

A rescue operation is both fast and slow. It felt fast because everyone’s adrenaline was pumping, but slow because they knew it was important to do everything calmly. Panic costs lives, they had been warned during training.

Paralysed by shock

The first lifeboat came back with four children, a woman and a man. The children were toddlers. They were lifted onto the Alan Kurdi’s deck, some crying, some with faces paralysed by shock. Once on board, the man clung his baby to him, breathing deeply and then letting out a cry. He began to vomit. The lifeboat went back several times, taking children, women and then the men, who stumbled as they were helped up a ladder and down wooden steps. “Thank you, thank you,” whispered one woman, wearing skinny jeans and a headscarf. “No problem,” replied one of the rescue crew. To avoid it being reused by human smugglers and any accompanying accusations that the Alan Kurdi’s crew had collaborated with them, the boat they had travelled in was then destroyed. It went up in flames before the last lifeboat was hoisted on deck, and the Alan Kurdi began to speed away from the Libyan coast.

All of the 32 people brought on board were Libyans. They said they set sail from Tripoli hours before, and were escaping the war. In April, eastern general Khalifa Haftar ordered his self-styled Libyan National Army to advance on the north African capital. In the eight months since, more than 2,000 people have been killed in fighting and roughly 150,000 displaced. In a statement last week, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said air strikes are the leading cause of civilian casualties, “accounting for 182 deaths and 212 injuries, followed by ground fighting, improvised explosive devices, abductions and killings”.

Libya is a transit country for refugees fleeing dictatorships and wars across Africa and the Middle East, but, increasingly, Libyans are also escaping themselves. The condition of the fibreglass boat – which had two engines – indicated the people on it either paid more money or were better respected by smugglers, in comparison to sub-Saharan Africans, who are usually crammed into rubber boats, sometimes with faulty engines. The Libyans on board had food supplies for two days, a satellite phone and a GPS. They were able to call for help once they reached international waters, increasing their chances of survival. “Rubber boats are difficult because nothing reflects the colour. Wooden boats are better but they’re rather rare,” Stein, the ship’s head of mission, had warned the volunteer crew in advance. Fibreglass was rarer still.

Caring for the people

“They want to escape,” he said. “They know the chance, the risk of dying during this escape with small boats like these and they know that we [the charity rescue boats] only rescue 30 per cent of the refugees that are in this area. If you have only a 30 per cent chance you don’t leave your country. You don’t go on water unless you’re desperate.” For his part, Doll said rescuing people has made him experience emotions he’s never had before in his life. “It makes me sometimes a little bit sad and also it makes me happy. We can help them, I never had this feeling before.”


29.12.2019

Sea-Eye rescue ship ALAN KURDI docks in Pozzallo and brings 32 people to safety - Sea-Eye - Mission of 2nd Christmas Eve comes to a
The German rescue ship ALAN KURDI docked in the port of Pozzallo on Sunday morning. The 32 survivors sent an emergency call to the aid organization AlarmPhone on Christmas Eve. The Libyan authorities and the civil rescue ships ALAN KURDI and OCEAN VIKING were informed immediately. During the night from Thursday to Friday, the crew of the Regensburg organization found a total of 32 people in a crowded plastic boat. All survivors stated that they were Libyan citizens.

Already on Saturday evening, the head of mission of the ALAN KURDI rescue ship was informed about the assignment of a port of safety by the Italian MRCC. The ship had only been present in the Italian search and rescue zone for a few hours. Earlier on Saturday, the ship had requested an emergency evacuation of ten of the people aboard from the authorities at the Maltese MRCC. Two women and several children had consumed no food or water due to seasickness and stress and were therefore dehydrated. The Maltese rescue control center declined to evacuate.

“We are really relieved that the rescued people no longer had to wait on board our ship. We were increasingly concerned about the medical condition of some people and the upcoming storm,” said chairman Gorden Isler. The human rights observer on board the ALAN KURDI interviewed some survivors. One man reported that he was conscripted for mandatory military service in the Libyan civil war and fled because he did not want to kill people. He and his partner further stated that they considered the crossing the Mediterranean as a last resort. Sea-Eye is still evaluating the interviews.

On Saturday the Italian President Guiseppe Conte stated that he wants to revise Salvini’s security policy. Under the former Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, draconian sanctions against rescue workers and rescue vessels were introduced. Julian Pahlke, spokesman for Sea-Eye on the political developments in Italy: “Salvini’s policy of closed ports must end immediately. The so-called security packages have not only fueled the xenophobic climate, they also contradict international law and fundamental human rights. The President’s announcement must now be followed up with action. We have to find a humanitarian view of this crisis at our shared external borders. At the same time, however, all EU member states must support the Mediterranean countries and agree on a joint distribution of all the people saved.”

### 02.01.2020

**45 migrants missing at sea says Sos Alarm Phone - Asylum seekers made distress call says organization**

Rome, January 1 – A boat with 45 migrants on board has been missing since it launched a distress call 74 hours ago, Alarm Phone, the direct line for migrants in the Mediterranean, said on Wednesday. On December 31, a fisherman told the organization that it had seen a boat with a broken engine in rough seas off Libya. „9ot he99 with coast guards, authorities in Libya, international organizations and our witness“, Alarm Phone reported. „Nobody knows what happened to this boat. „We fear the worst but we hope that in same way they are safe“, the organization said 9ot he migrants.


### SEA WATCH 3

**10.01.2020**

**Sea-Watch rescues around 120 migrants in central Mediterranean**

The German-run private rescue vessel Sea-Watch 3 has picked up around 120 migrants in three rescue operations in the central Mediterranean on Thursday and early Friday morning.

42 migrants were rescued from a boat in distress in the Maltese rescue zone at 4 am on Friday morning, Sea Watch said on Twitter. According to the NGO, the Maltese authorities had been alerted to the boat on Thursday afternoon but “refused to initiate a rescue.” The migrants, among them many children, had contacted Alarmphone, the distress hotline for migrant boats in the Mediterranean, in the afternoon. Alarmphone publicly shared their
the boats in distress without rescuing the people, putting their lives in danger. They engaged in a rescue operation only under the pressure of Sea Watch 3."

The unending issue of migrant redistribution

Various rescue organizations have had run-ins with the Maltese and Italian governments over the past year, as both governments refused to accept migrants without assurances from EU that the rescued individuals would largely be redistributed to other countries. The European Union eventually agreed to commit to creating a redistribution mechanism for migrants in October 2019 but has not finalized a deal to that end yet.


15.01.2020

Safe ports in Italy for 240 rescued migrants aboard Sea-Watch 3, Open Arms

Italian authorities have assigned NGO rescue vessels Sea-Watch 3 and the Open Arms with almost 240 rescued migrants on board the ports of Taranto and Messina, respectively. Four EU countries agreed to receive the migrants, yet a binding quota system for the distribution of migrants rescued at sea is still not in place. After several days at sea, Italy has agreed to allow migrants rescued by the Sea-Watch 3 and the Open Arms private rescue vessels to disembark at two southern Italian port cities. German-run Sea-Watch 3, carrying 119 migrants, was assigned the port of Taranto while Spanish Open Arms, with 118 rescued migrants, will dock in Messina. That’s according to a
statement by Il Viminale, the Italian Interior Ministry, from Tuesday. European Union member states France, Germany, Portugal and Ireland have agreed to „welcome“ the migrants aboard the vessels, the ministry added. „We are happy that our guests can finally step on safe land, but there is still a lot that needs to be changed,“ Sea-Watch wrote on Twitter. Last Thursday and Friday, the Sea-Watch 3 had picked up 119 migrants in three rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean. Following the rescues, the NGO accused the Maltese government of deliberate inaction when it comes to saving the lives of migrants and refugees in Mediterranean waters. The Open Arms had taken aboard 118 people, including pregnant women, children and babies, in two separate rescue operations on Friday, January 10.

Still no binding quotas
An informal deal on redistributing migrants rescued at sea has been in place since September 2019 between Germany, France, Italy and Malta. However, the EU subsequently failed to establish a binding distribution quota system. This disagreement among EU states led to migrants sometimes spending weeks stranded at sea last year. Oscar Camps, founder of Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms, on Tuesday said he was hoping that an agreement on an „automatic disembarkation and redistribution mechanism“ would be reached quickly. Camps also called for the cancellation of the agreements between EU member states and war-torn Libya due to the attacks of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard on private rescue efforts in the Mediterranean.

OPEN ARMS
12.01.2020
72 more migrants rescued off Libyan coast
72 more migrants were rescued off the coast of Libya by the Spanish Rescue Group, Open Arms Friday. The migrants included 15 pregnant women, children and babies. The charity said the migrants were from Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Mali and Guinea. Open Arms said, those who were pulled from the unseaworthy vessel had been in a state of panic and the rescue was carried out under the watch of the Libyan patrol team.
Two of those rescued had thrown themselves overboard and had to be pulled to safety, it said. Earlier, Open Arms said it also saved 44 migrants from Bangladesh and Morocco off the Libyan coast off a dinghy that had run into difficulty. On Saturday, 12 migrants drowned and 21 others were rescued in the Ionian Sea near the Greek island of Paxos after their boat took in water and sank.
The Gregoretti Case
21.01.2020
Migrants: ship Gregoretti, yes to the trial for Matteo Salvini
EN: The Senate has given the ok for the trial against former minister of the interns Matteo Salvini in the Gregoretti case. The proposal of President Gasparri to deny the request for authorisation to proceed has been denied. The 5 senators of the League voted in favour of the process after Slavini called them to do so. As he said, „I am ready for prison“.

Salvini is trying to use the election campaign in the region of Emilia-Romagna (and Calabria, elections are on 26.01.2020) for a “victim strategy“, he has announced a hunger strike and also carried out other media-effective actions, e.g. ringing with running cameras at an apartment where a Tunisian family lives. There he then asked in front of the cameras in the intercom: “People say you are a drug dealer, is that right?”

20.12.2019
Court of ministers accuses Matteo Salvini of abusing power
The Catania court of ministers has spoken out against former Italian interior minister Matteo Salvini. The far-right politician could face kidnapping charges because he refused to let a ship with rescued migrants aboard dock. The Catania court of ministers said League leader Matteo Salvini abused his powers as interior minister by “depriving 131 migrants aboard the Italian Coast Guard ship Gregoretti of their freedom from 12:35 am on July 27, 2019 through the afternoon of July 31", in a letter
submitted on Wednesday. The court of ministers has spoken out in favor of continuing with a kidnapping case against Salvini. The 5-Star Movement (M5S) announced it will vote in favor of the authorisation to proceed -- even though the party collaborated with Salvini's League from June 2018 to July 2019, when the two parties formed an allied government.

Prosecutor wants to shelve the case

The Catania prosecutor's office had asked to shelve the case against Salvini. They argued that "the three-day wait can't be considered an illegal deprivation of freedom" given that the "limitations continued in the hotspot of Pozzallo" and that "there is no State obligation for an immediate disembarkation." The local court of ministers sees things differently. They believe that Salvini "consciously deprived the migrants of their personal freedom," which "forced [them] to remain in critical psycho-physical conditions."

Salvini defends himself

"The fact that I'm risking 15 years in prison for having defended my country's borders on the basis of international agreements leads me to say that in Italy there's a problem," Salvini said. "I thank the majority of the judiciary, which is objective, fair, and independent. But there's a part that is political and throws money away. I'm curious to see what position M5S will take, as on the analogous case of the Diciotti it voted against authorisation to proceed," Salvini said. M5S leader and Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio responded promptly, saying: "This isn't about doing a favor or not for someone," Di Maio said. "In January or February of this year we were called to recognize the overriding public interest in blocking a ship. But we're talking about a ship blocked in July, when the other European countries that were called on offered to redistribute the migrants," he said.


31.07.2019

Migrants stuck on Italian Coast Guard vessel allowed to disembark after EU nations agree on redistribution

Italy has announced that it will allow 116 rescued migrants currently on the Italian Coast Guard’s Gregoretti vessel to disembark "within hours," bringing the latest standoff with the European Union regarding the redistribution of migrants rescued at sea to an end. Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said that after a number of EU countries had agreed to share responsibility of looking after the migrants on the Gregoretti he would "give authorization (for the migrants) to disembark in the coming hours."

An EU Commission spokeswoman had announced earlier that France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal would join the Italian Roman Catholic church in caring for the migrants. The Commission did not specify how exactly the migrants would be shared between the host countries. "Job done, mission accomplished," Salvini tweeted after announcing he was finally willing to let the ship disembark.

Dozens of migrants had been forced to remain docked on the boat in Sicily for five days after Salvini refused to allow them to disembark without European reassurances. They were saved from drowning on the same day that at least 115 other migrants were killed in a shipwreck off Libya last weekend — the deadliest tragedy in the Mediterranean so far this year, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Plans for lasting solutions

French President Emmanuel Macron announced last week that 14 EU member states had approved a permanent plan to redistribute refugees rescued in the Mediterranean, signaling hope for a long-term solution. However, the proposal still drew criticism from Salvini especially against the backdrop of the current situation involving the Gregoretti, as both the current situation and the future plan still involves allowing migrants to disembark on Italian territory before being redistributed. While the comparatively short amount of time between the docking of the ship and the decision on redistribution raised hopes of the European Union truly working towards finding lasting solutions with Italy, another stand-off with the EU appeared to be just around the corner, with Salvini on Wednesday formally banning the Alan Kurdi — a privately run rescue ship owned by German charity Sea-Eye — from entering Italian waters after saving 40 migrants from waters off Libya. While Salvini’s closed-harbor policies are particularly harmful to non-governmental rescue operations, they also
Affect his own coast guard fleet: a year ago, more than 150 migrants were stranded on the Italian Coast Guard's ship Diciotti for over a week before an agreement between the Catholic Church, Albania and Ireland allowed them to disembark.

Support from Pope Francis
Pope Francis on Sunday called on the international community to "act swiftly" to help avoid further deaths at sea by avoiding political stand-offs. "I am renewing my call that the international community act swiftly and decisively to avoid that such tragedies repeat themselves and guarantee the safety and dignity of all," he said on Sunday during his weekly Angelus address on St Peter's Square.

29.07.2019
Italy forces 130 migrants to stay on docked coast guard vessel
Italy has allowed a coast guard vessel carrying some 130 rescued migrants to dock in Sicily. But it says they must not disembark until other EU nations agree on their redistribution among the bloc's member states.

An Italian coast guard vessel carrying some 130 migrants rescued in the Mediterranean has finally been allowed to dock in Sicily, but its passengers will not be allowed to leave the ship until Brussels decides on which countries will take them in, Transport Minister Danilo Toninelli said on Sunday.

The EU had to give a clear response "because the migration issue concerns the whole continent," Toninelli said in a statement. His words echo those of hard-line anti-immigration Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, who had previously not allowed the ship to dock, while insisting on Friday that other EU countries had to commit to take in the migrants before they would be allowed to disembark on Italian territory.

The ship, the Gregoretti, was given permission to dock in the Sicilian city of Augusta overnight to Sunday after six migrants were taken for medical treatment to the island of Lampedusa and a pregnant woman and her family were allowed to leave the vessel on Saturday.

Tragedies at sea
The migrants were rescued from two rubber dinghies on Thursday evening after they got into difficulties after sailing from Libya. The rescue came on the same day that 110 other migrants are thought to have died at sea off the Libyan coast in what has been called "the worst Mediterranean tragedy."

The EU is struggling to find ways to deal with the problem of migrants, mostly from Africa, who seek to reach Europe via the perilous route over the Mediterranean. In recent months, Italy has refused several times to allow rescue ships to dock until it is clear how the migrants they are carrying will be redistributed in the EU. This has led to ships carrying rescued and often exhausted migrants spending days or weeks at sea. Italy is one of the European nations to bear the brunt of a mass influx of migrants coming over the Mediterranean, many of them fleeing conflict or poverty in their home countries.

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.

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