



September 2026

CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN INFO

ARRIVALS

According to figures from *borderline-europe*, **2.741** people on the move / asylum seekers arrived in Italy by sea in September 2026. This represents a decrease of **5 %** compared to August's figures of this year and a significant decrease of **63%** compared to the figures of September 2025.

The majority of people, **2.091** individuals (**76%**)¹, arrived in Sicily - primarily on Lampedusa. **43** people (**1%**) arrived in Calabria and **321** (**12%**) people arrived in Sardinia. Further **134** (**5%**) people arrived in Apulia, **75** (**3%**) in Campania, and **77** (**3%**) people in Tuscany.

According to our records, **1.676** people (**61%**) were confirmed to have been rescued by Italian authorities. In total, **481** people (**18%**) were rescued by civil maritime rescue services. According to data from *borderline-europe*, Frontex was involved in the rescue of **14** people (~**1%**) in September. Further **44** (~**1%**) people were rescued by merchant vessels and **309** (**11%**) people reached Italian coastal waters (12 nautical miles off the coast) on their own without first being intercepted or rescued. For **217** people (**8%**), no information was available regarding the manner of their arrival or rescue. According to official figures from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, **3.329 people** arrived in Italy in this month. We were able to document arrival figures for September that were **significantly lower**. However, we would like to note that we do not have access to the background information or sources for the figures published by the Ministry of the Interior.

Overview of the data collected by <i>borderline europe</i> ²	
Arrivals of people on the move in Italy by sea	2741
Arrivals of people on the move in Sicily	2091
Rescues by Italian authorities and Frontex	1690
Rescues by NGOs	481
Independent arrivals of people in the move	309
Rescues by merchant vessels	44
Arrivals with no information regarding arrival or rescue	217

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all percentages cited refer to the total number of people who arrived in Italy by sea this month

² The data is provided without guarantee, as the number of unreported cases could be significantly higher

Routes to Europe

The transit countries Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria serve as the primary departure points for the crossing to Italy. In September, at least **1.556 (56%)** of the people who arrived in Italy departed from Libya and **38 (1%)** of those departing from Libya arrived in Malta. Further **168 people (6%)** arrived to Italy from Tunisia⁴. For **1.017 people (37%)**, the point of departure is unknown.

In contrast to August, the departures from Libya remained on a similar level, while those from Tunisia decreased significantly. However, the number of people for whom the point of departure is unknown increased this month. The human rights situation in North African transit countries remains dire for people on the move, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa.

Libya

In September, the [EU-backed](#) lawlessness and impunity continued to foster violence against people on the move in the Central Mediterranean and beyond.

The impact of the [revival of the migration route](#) from eastern Libya to Italy and Greece since 2021 has been particularly noticeable this month. While departures from western Libya continued to be particularly significant for mobility along the Central Mediterranean route, departures from eastern Libya are likely to tie down migration enforcement authorities in Libya's east, shifting their presence away from western Libya. Due to competing groups in the region, [prices for crossings](#) from eastern Libya have fallen. At the same time, there has been an increase in departures from Tobruk, located in eastern Libya. The EU-funded Libyan authorities are responding to this shift with an increase of human rights violations.

[Illegal pullbacks](#) at sea by the so-called Libyan Coast-Guard and [arbitrary arrests](#) on land are taking place. At the same time, the extent of [pushbacks](#) from Libya to other countries increased significantly. Hundreds of people, mainly from [Sudan](#), [Somalia](#), [Iraq](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Chad](#), and [Nigeria](#) were deported. Even people with [infections](#) are imprisoned, tortured, and [expelled from Libya](#) without regard for their condition. While the detention in Libya is linked to violations of human rights, push backs from Libya put people on the move at risk of severe repressions in the countries they are pushed back to. Tobruk and [its surrounding](#) constitute a migration hub for the mobility to Europe in eastern Libya and became the scene for arbitrary mass arrests, abuse, and other forms of racialized and gendered violence in September. On September 23, [more than 2.000 people](#) were arbitrarily arrested by EU-funded Libyan authorities and military forces within several hours. Through continuous raids based on racial profiling the number rose to

³ The number is expected to be significantly higher, but there has been little information about departures or interceptions from Tunisia lately.

[4.000 arrests](#) the day after. Predominantly Black people have been gathered and abused by Libyan authorities

The extent and racially directedness of the arrests reminds of the events in [Tripoli in 2021](#). In these days the Libyan authorities attempted to deter people on the move and other people perceived as migrants in western Libya with human rights violations. This September marked the attempt of the EU-funded Libyan authorities to do the same in eastern Libya.

[Violence is omnipresent](#) in the mechanism of migration deterrence. The increase in crossings from eastern Libya has been accompanied by a rise in restrictive measures targeting people on the move, as well as individuals generally perceived as migrants.

This month, a Nigerian journalist published an [investigative report on his trajectory](#) from Kano in Nigeria to Tripoli in Libya. The report documents tales of deaths, starvation, rape, dehumanization, mental abuse, physical assault, abductions, torture, and modern-day enslavement of Black people.

Racism against Black people in Libya intensifies, in part due to widespread online hate campaigns. [Human rights organizations have warned](#) that debates on migration in Libya are increasingly accompanied by misinformation, hate speech, arrests and deportations, particularly affecting people on the move and asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa.

Beginning in the end of 2025, the hate against people perceived as foreigners [chronologically intensified and escalated](#) in September. The nationalist “No to Resettlement” movement escalated from digital and legal measures to physically violent and racist actions. The [attack on an IOM center in Tripoli](#) on September 7, can be considered in the context of this development, which are related to [attacks on migrant aid facilities](#) more broadly. The movement opposes the EU’s migration policy and Libya’s role in this context. At the same time it is directing its hatred toward people on the move, particularly Black people.

Following the [circulation of threats](#) asking people perceived as migrants to leave the country before October 1, there is a risk of escalation. The intensifying situation sparked fear among migrant communities in Libya. The tactic of forced displacement used by the Libyan authorities against people perceived as migrants is systematic. Domestically, Libyan authorities create pressure through uncertainty and racialized violence. In foreign policy, bilateral relations are established and repatriations are organized, which can then be [presented in the international arena](#) as supposedly voluntary returns. These forced voluntary returns are based on the coerced agreements of people on the move and rely on [bilateral agreements with states](#). In September, Libya rebuilt a bilateral channel with [Somalia](#) and [Ethiopia](#).

Tunisia

In Tunisia, too, the government is accused of using human rights violations to [force people](#) into voluntary returns. In September, the extent of forced voluntary returns from Tunisia [increased significantly](#). The demobilization of people on the move leaves them vulnerable and makes them targets of racialized violence. While being stuck in a situation of uncertainty and violence in Tunisia the expulsions framed as voluntary put people on the move at risk in their countries of origin. Human rights organizations report independently of [deadly push-backs](#) and the emerging trend of expulsions to countries other than their home countries as a deliberate push-back strategy.

The case of Giulio Regeni

On September 28, three Egyptian security officials were [convicted by a Rome court](#) of the aggravated kidnapping of Giulio Regeni and sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison. Regeni was a doctoral candidate at Cambridge University, when he went missing on a research trip in Egypt in 2016. His body was found tortured in Cairo. Ever since, the Egyptian authorities [refused to cooperate](#), protected the accused subjects, denied any state involvement, and did not comment on this September's Italian court ruling. Regardless of the ruling, the Italian government intends to [maintain its bilateral relations](#) with Egypt as a key partner for migration and energy security.

Death & Missing

In the Central Mediterranean, the overall number of deaths, missing persons, and people whose fate is unknown increased again this month. According to data from [borderline-europe](#), **12** people died while crossing the Central Mediterranean, and **six** are considered missing this month. Both figures are considerably lower than in August, when **104** people died and none were considered missing. However, the number of people whose fate remains unknown has increased significantly from **21** to **136**. So in total the number rose by around **30%** from August to September.

The [International Organisation for Migration](#) (IOM) has documented **46** deaths and missing people in September, which is significantly higher than our figures. This shows how difficult it is to find information. In mid-September the [IOM](#) also released a report noting that while arrivals decrease, the number of deaths increases compared to last year. According to their figures, **2.292** people have died or gone missing in the whole Mediterranean Sea this year up to September. In the Central Mediterranean, deaths and missing cases also rose from **844** to **996** while the arrivals fell by **55%**. The Central Mediterranean Route therefore remains the [“deadliest known migration route in the world”](#).

These numbers capture only a fraction of deaths and missing cases in the Mediterranean, as multiple shipwrecks remain undocumented

Push- and Pullbacks:

This month, we recorded **26** interception cases, in which a total of **1.184** people were pulled back to the North African coast.

All those intercepted were forcibly returned to Libya. Unfortunately, borderline-europe has no data on pushbacks to Tunisia, which does not mean there were none. These figures are approximate in general. The actual number of unreported cases is likely much higher. Further interceptions and pullbacks to other countries of departure occur as well. Compared to [August](#), when **1.060** interceptions to Libya were documented, the number remained roughly the same. This suggests the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which is largely financed and equipped by Italy and other EU member states, continues to actively intercept boats bound for Europe and forcibly return them to Libya.

Civil Resistance

During September, **eight** ships from the civilian fleet operated in the central Mediterranean and rescued a total of **481** people in distress at sea (**18%** of total arrivals, **7%** lower than in August)

One mission, three rescues by the Ocean Viking

On September 8th, the crew of the [Ocean Viking](#) (SOS Méditerranée) carried out **three** rescues in one operation, all taking place in the Maltese SAR zone. In total, they saved **78** people. The first rescue was a distress call via Alarm Phone, confirmed by the SeaBird 3 Plane (Sea-Watch). **17** people were rescued. Shortly after, the SeaBird 3 spotted another boat in distress close to the Ocean Viking and a further **16** people were saved. The final rescue was an inflatable boat carrying **45** people, first spotted by Frontex and then also by the SeaBird 3. After the Ocean Viking rescued them all, Italy assigned Salerno as their landing port, a quite distant port rather than one closer. However, one of the rescued was a two-day-old newborn in critical condition, so it had to be medically evacuated from the Ocean Viking together with its mother and sister. Italy did not detain the Ocean Viking for this rescue.

New ships for Mediterranea Saving Humans

[Mediterranea Saving Humans](#) is starting October with two new sailboats in its fleet: the Blue Moon and the Blue Soleil. The Blue Soleil was originally part of the "Thousand Madleens to Gaza", a fleet that sought to break Israel's blockade of Gaza. Now it will join the civil sea rescue fleet in the

Mediterranean. The crews consist of members of Mediterranean Saving Humans and eight young activists from the Rome-based collective Nereidi. With five boats now, they will further increase the presence of civilian search and rescue organisations at sea.

Detention, fines and distant ports: How Italy blocks rescue at sea

As always, the Italian government continues to obstruct civilian sea rescue. This month, they assigned a distant port in Tuscany twice, costing the rescue vessels valuable time. This is the same distant-port strategy used for the Ocean Viking. With their [new boat](#), SOS Humanity hoped to bypass this strategy by using a small vessel, so that Italy could not assign distant ports. However, this does not stop Italy from obstructing civilian sea rescue through other means. Directly after the first mission with two consecutive rescues at the end of August, the Italian government [detained](#) the Humanity 2 for 15 days and gave them a 1.200€ fine for not following the order of staying in the port after the first rescue. SOS Humanity denies this accusation. This was the 10th detention of a Justice Fleet vessel.

The [Justice Fleet](#) is an alliance of civilian search and rescue organizations. [Shortly after](#) the detention of the Humanity 2, Italy issued another 15-day detention as well as a fine of 7.500€ to Sea Punk 1, also part of the Justice Fleet. According to Italy, the Sea Punk 1 did not follow the instructions of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard during a rescue operation on September 10th. One of the core principles of the Justice Fleet is not to cooperate with Libya, as it cannot be considered a safe place for migrants. Yet Italy and the EU are still funding Libya and its so-called Libyan Coast Guard, while punishing the civilian rescue operations at the same time for refusing to work with them. However, the [Italian Constitutional Court](#) ruled in 2025 that captains should only follow orders that are compliant with international law and the [Civil Court of Crotone](#) declared already in 2023 the Libyan Rescue Coordination Centre and the so-called Coast Guard to be no legitimate search and rescue actors. Just this month, the court of Naples found the detention of the [Sea-Watch 5](#) in [August](#) 2026, also because the crew did not cooperate with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, to be unjust. It therefore remains to be seen whether this detention of the Sea Punk 1 will also be overturned. However, these court rulings have not stopped the Italian authorities from continuing to detain vessels. They already prevented sea rescue vessels from operating for more than 200 days this year alone.

28 rescued, two bodies and six still missing

On the night of September 29th, [Sea-Watch](#) rescued **28** people with its vessel Aurora. Italian, Maltese and Libyan authorities as well as Frontex had already been aware of a boat in distress after Alarm Phone had alerted them. That was 12 hours before the Aurora arrived. When the Sea-Watch crew reached the scene, the shipwrecked boat was still carrying **five** people and **two** bodies, one of them a child. A further **23** people from the same shipwreck were rescued by the Aurora shortly after, at the Tunisian Hasdrubal gas platform, where they tried to save

themselves. At least **six** people are still missing, including children. Sea-Watch accuses Frontex of being aware of the shipwreck without helping, and has therefore requested Frontex to show them their documents related to the case.

This month again shows the obstructive environment in which civilian sea rescue operates in the Central Mediterranean. Numerous shipwrecks, deaths and failed rescues accompany the continued criminalization of NGOs. While the Italian government tries to drown civilian sea rescue in administrative proceedings, detentions and bureaucracy, people keep drowning in the Mediterranean Sea.

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