



**MEDREPORT**  
**FEBRUARY 2023**

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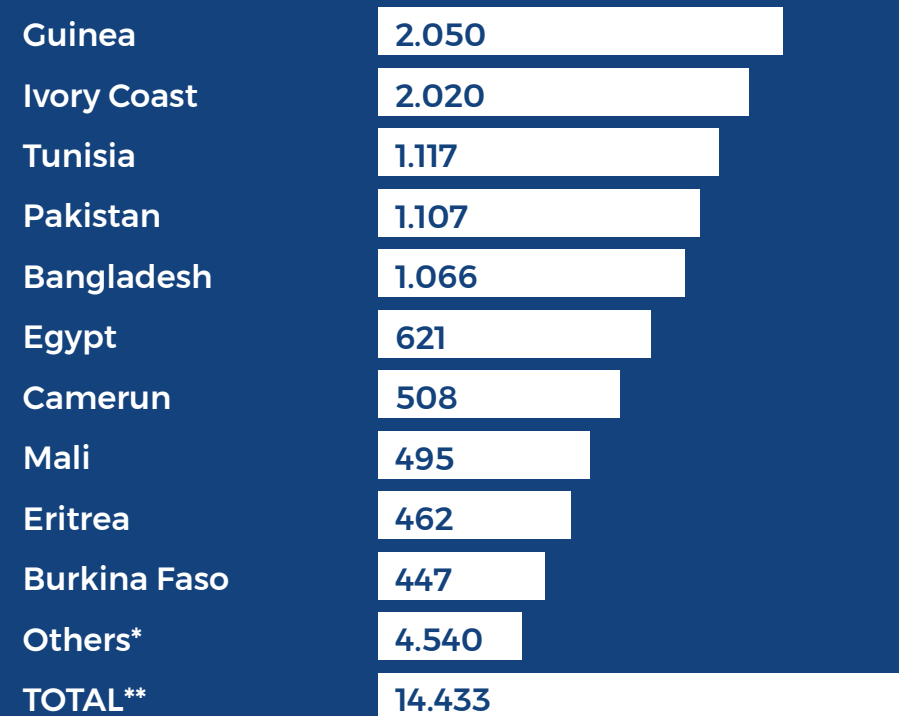
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# WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

In February, the number of people who found themselves forced to flee, cross the Mediterranean Sea and managed to arrive in Italy was 9,474. Among them are 1,205 unaccompanied minors.

The dramatic tragedy in front of the coast of Cutro brings back to the center of the debate, once again, the issue of migration flows in the Italian territory. Numbers to which the Meloni government's strategy, aimed at tightening the grip on the work of nongovernmental organizations and, likewise, political and diplomatic pressure in Europe to change the rules on asylum rights, finds a response.

## NATIONALITIES DECLARED AT THE TIME OF LANDING (UPDATED TO FEBRUARY 28, 2023)



\* The figure could include immigrants for whom they still are identification activities are in progress.

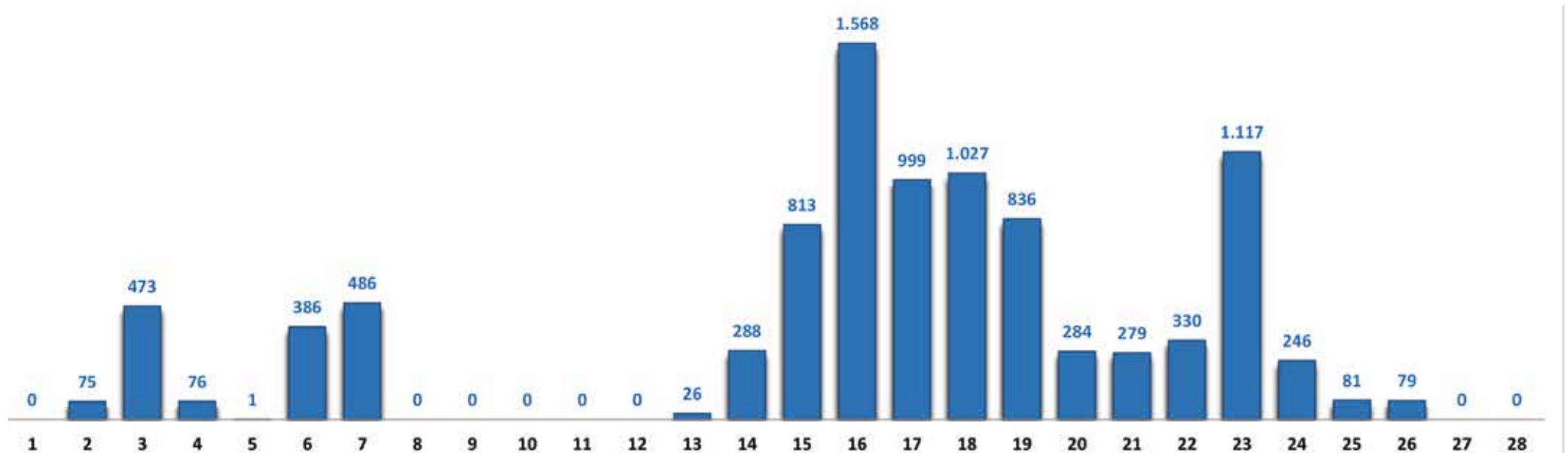
\*\* The data refer to the landing events detected before 8:00 am of the reference day.

Source: Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic.


The data are subject to subsequent consolidation

“One cannot die like this, each of us could have done more.” One of the messages, this, appeared in a banner placed outside the PalaMilone, where the funeral chamber was set up with the bodies of the victims of yet another shipwreck that took place, this time, off the coast of Cutro. The vessel had departed from the Turkish coast with about 180 people on board.

A few hours later, joined by a caique, even more people had boarded. On the evening of three days later Frontex located the fragile vessel, describing it as being in “good buoyant condition.” “Good condition,” yet, which will lead to her breaking in half a few hours later, in the night, with hundreds of lives in the sea. More than half will drown—a number that will increase more and more in the following days.



These data are processed on the basis of information provided by the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic. The data refer to the landing events detected by 8.00 on the reference day.



# **CHRONICLE OF FEBRUARY OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN**

## DAY 3

Another tragedy off Lampedusa: eight victims, including three women, one pregnant, on a boat rescued overnight by the Italian Coast Guard.

## DAY 4

Italian authorities assign the port of Naples for the disembarkation of the 109 people aboard the civilian rescue ship SeaEye 4. Also on board are 2 lifeless bodies. The Italian government, in this way, again imposes unnecessary suffering on migrant people by assigning a port more than 400 kilometers away from the site of the shipwreck.

## DAY 6

On the SeaEye 4's long journey to the port of Naples, the crew requests the medical evacuation of two people in serious medical condition. One of these will die a few hours later in the hospital after waiting for hours for a transfer.

## DAY 13

The team aboard the humanitarian ship Geo Barents rescues 48 people, including 9 minors, aboard a wooden boat in distress in international waters off Libya.

## DAY 14

In the early morning hours, the civilian ship Ocean Viking rescued 84 people, including 58 unaccompanied minors, who were on an inflatable boat in international waters opposite Libya.

A few hours later, Italian authorities assigned the port of Ravenna to disembark the people rescued on board. Italian authorities assign the port of Ancona for the disembarkation of the 48 people rescued from the Geo Barents. The Italian government again imposes unnecessary suffering on those who have already endured hell in Libya and likewise the risk of shipwreck.

## DAY 15

There are reports of a shipwreck off the coast of Libya: 11 dead and 62 missing. A boat from Al Khoms sank while attempting to reach Italy: only 7 survivors.

In the afternoon the civilian ship Aita Mari with the Salvamento Maritimo Humanitario team on board rescued 31 people aboard a small wooden boat. Among them are pregnant women, children and infants. Three days later disembarkation will take place at the port of Civitavecchia.

## DAY 21

The Italian Coast Guard rescued two small boats carrying 54 people. These were intercepted about 25 miles off the Sicilian coast.

A few hours later the civilian ship Aita Mari rescued 40 people aboard a boat 45 miles away from Lampedusa.

## DAY 26

A dramatic shipwreck off the coast of Cutro: The vessel-an old motor vessel-had set sail four days earlier from Izmir and traveled on the Ionian route from the Turkish coast. Surprised by the sirocco storm, the boat broke up near the shore. More than two hundred people were on board, and the death toll grew larger and larger in the following days.



# **MED CARE FOR UKRAINE NEWS FROM THE PROJECT**

In February, Mediterranea Saving Humans' Med Care for Ukraine project continued its activities by bringing basic health care to refugees from war in the city of Lviv.

While Russian attacks are concentrated to the east in the city of Bakhmut, now rendered a pile of rubble, there is no stopping the influx of refugees who just from the east are reaching the west of the country. Overall, the UNHCR estimates that since the beginning of the war there are 16 million refugees who have left their homes under bombs to find refuge elsewhere.

In Lviv, where our outpatient clinic is an operational mobile medical center, operations have been completed to merge the three refugee camps in the city, which have been united into a single citadel in the Shykyv district.

Our primary medical care service is being concentrated in the new camp, in addition to the places of informal shelter, including private homes, churches, monasteries, and old people's homes, scattered around the Lviv city and its surroundings.

In addition to the 15th and 16th medical missions that went to Ukraine with our medical health teams, there was a mission of activists from Mediterranea Saving Humans that accompanied the latest medical expedition to field study the development prospects of the Med Care for Ukraine project.

Our activists held several meetings with the heads of health facilities, associations of psychologists, physicians and representatives of local health facilities to enhance the services of the Med Care for Ukraine project.

In addition, new reception places have been mapped out informally where refugees are in need of food, clothing and hygiene products with continuity. With this project reorganization mission then, Mediterranea Saving Humans will also expand the map of reception places where to distribute the humanitarian aid that is collected every month in Italy by our ground crews and

brought to Ukraine by our caravans. In March it will be the crew from Emilia Romagna guaranteed the supply of humanitarian aid to Lviv. Already starting with the next mission the distribution of aid will be even more widespread among the population civilians and war refugees, as well as our primary health care service will will build bridges with the Ukrainian health care system to improve the care provided by our medical health teams in order to orient and refer patients for clinical tests and specialist visits. An enhancement of the project that is also the result of the experience gained in the field by Mediterranea Saving Humans during these months of development of the Med Care for Ukraine project, which is even more necessary given the continuing of the Russian invasion and thus the conflict, and all that comes with it, from the energy crisis to the humanitarian one, from food shortages to the reception of refugees. A revamping that will give even more force to our intervention in the warring Ukraine.



**6 FEBRUARY IS  
COMMEMORATION  
DAY, AND AGAIN THIS  
YEAR MEDITERRANEA,  
THROUGH ITS EARTH  
CREWS, WAS PRESENT  
IN MANY SQUARES  
ACROSS ITALY AND  
EUROPE. BUT LET'S  
START FROM THE  
BEGINNING: WHAT IS  
COMMEMORATION?**

CommemorAction is a day of presences, demonstrations and protests called both to denounce the violence perpetrated along the borders and to remember the people who have lost their lives due to the militarisation of the borders. 6 February is a sad anniversary with regard to deaths at the border: in fact, it commemorates the Tarajal massacre, which took place on 6 February 2014 in Ceuta. 15 migrants (mostly from Cameroon) were killed by Spanish border police while trying to cross the border between Morocco and Spain.

For the first time, on 6 February 2020, the families of the victims, together with activists, gathered in Oujda (Morocco) to demand truth and justice for migrants who died on their way, to denounce the militarisation of the borders and to loudly reiterate the need for freedom of movement for migrants.

Since then, CommemorAction has spread to many cities: Barcellona, Milan, Berlin, Lampedusa, Paris, Rome, Palermo.



**ADRIA**

**PROTEST  
RUINS  
HORROR  
PROPAGANDA**

# DETAINED BELOW DECK LIGHTHOUSE REPORTS

## HOW ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE HELD IN SECRET PRISONS ON COMMERCIAL SHIPS TO FACILITATE ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS FROM ITALY TO GREECE

A hundred or so activists protested against the shameful ceremony organized by the Italian government and the European Commission to hand over a new patrol boat to Libyan militias.

What was supposed to be a media propaganda operation, organised by the Italian government to try to give a humanitarian image to the criminal Italy-Libya pact against migrants, has turned into a boomerang.

Activists from many social realities in the Veneto and Emilia-Romagna regions took up Mediterranea's call to contest the ceremony of handing over a new naval vessel to the so-called Libyan coast guard. It is a 300 class patrol boat costing 2.5 million euros, the first of three, paid for by the fund for cooperation with Africa with the European green light. It will be followed by two more Corrubia-class units, former patrol boats of the Guardia di Finanza, which will be refitted by the same shipyard.

These units will not be used for rescue purposes, but to enhance the capacity to intercept, capture at sea, and deport to Libyan lagers thousands of women, men, and children who attempt to reach Italian and European shores every day.

The ceremony was to be the stage for Italy's 'new' policy on mass rejections, banned by the Geneva Convention, but practised systematically since 2017 through dirty work contracted out to Libyan militias. A strategy that is articulated in two combined devices: the criminalisation and forced removal of non-governmental civil rescue vessels from the SAR zone attributed to Libyan jurisdiction, and the strengthening of a ferocious border police disguised as a 'coastguard'.

Instead, the protest disrupted the government's plans, causing reality to burst onto the stage set for the ministers.

As early as 3 p.m. on Monday 6 February, about a hundred activists reached the 'Vittoria' shipyard in Adria (in the province of Rovigo), which has built the new deportation vessels and, at the same time, provides maintenance to the patrol boats of the Tunisian navy, which acts violently at sea against the boats trying to reach Lampedusa.

The police present in force blocked access to the construction site with barriers and armoured vehicles.

At one point, as the procession of the authorities' 'blue cars' was arriving, la protesters broke through the blockade, coming even closer.

Eggs were thrown with red paint on the structures of the construction site, symbolising the blood shed by the innocent victims of the policies that cause the humanitarian tragedy in the central Mediterranean, and shouted their indignation at these policies of death and their shameful celebration. La activists held up photographs from Libyan lagers (provided by Refugees in Libya), so that la tantə journalistsə summonedə by the government could film them. In this way, no news of the 'celebration' could be separated from that of the protest.

The stage, which was only meant to host the government's rhetorical show, became a successful opportunity to continue to denounce the horror of what is happening in Libya and the Mediterranean to migrants. There remains, of course, the danger to human beings of government practices that are the cause of death and suffering for so many, every day.

Though to continue, at sea and on land, in the necessary collective action to sabotage this criminal plan of human rights violations, is a good and just thing. In the face of those who produce death, all together, on both shores of the Mediterranean, by any means necessary.

As Mediterranea, we thank the comrades of the social centres of the north-east, of Officina 31021 of Mogliano Veneto, of the Adl cobas union, Don Nandino Capovilla of Pax Christi, Sinistra Italiana of Rovigo, and all people of good will who joined us in what was simply right to do.

# **MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS**



# WORLD

## MOROCCO

1 February - 4 people lost their lives during an illegal refoulement. A bus carrying 52 people was involved in a road accident in which, in addition to the victims, several people were injured.

## TUNISIA

1 February: Tunisian President Saied declared that the families of the people lost at sea, who have been demonstrating in Zarzis for months, are a danger to the state as they are 'part of a conspiracy against the regime'.

## TURKEY-SYRIA

10 February: A 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit the region on the border between the two states. Tens of thousands of people are estimated to have been killed and more than five million displaced.

**US** 21 February: President Biden introduced an immigration bill that would ban migrants who have not sought asylum in one of the countries previously crossed to reach the US border from entering the US.

## TUNISIA

25 February: Hundreds of people took to the streets to challenge President Saied's discriminatory policies.

The president claimed that migrants from sub-Saharan Africa were part of a conspiracy to make Tunisia 'a purely African country with no affiliation with Arab and Islamic nations'.

## LIBYA

Refugees in Libya denounces the mass expulsions carried out by the DCIM (Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration) in the desert between Libya and Chad. The DCIM is funded by both Italy and the European Union.

## EU

1 February: Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic sent a letter to the Italian government calling for the cancellation of the Piantedosi Decree on civilian sea rescue because it is contrary to "Italy's human rights obligations and international law". 9 February: At the end of a meeting between Heads of State and Government in Brussels, the European Union reiterated its willingness to strengthen border controls to prevent irregular migrants from entering EU territories.

## BULGARIA

18 February: 18 people of Afghan origin were found dead inside a truck near Sofia. They were arriving from Turkey and were trying to cross the border into Serbia. There were also 34 survivors, some of whom were still in hospital with symptoms of severe carbon monoxide poisoning.

# SEA

## ITALY

3 February: 9 people died of starvation and cold in a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa. The boat was carrying about 50 people. The survivors were rescued by the Coast Guard.

## SPAIN

4 February: 34 people died off the Canary Islands in the shipwreck of a boat from Morocco. There were 35 survivors, rescued by a fishing boat and brought back to the Moroccan town of Laayoune.

## GREECE

5 February: 5 people lost their lives in a shipwreck off the island of Leros. 40 survivors were rescued by the Greek Coast Guard.

## WEST SAHARA

10 February: 36 people lost their lives in a shipwreck off Cap Boujdour. There are 20 survivors.

## LIBYA

14 February: 11 people died in the shipwreck of a boat from Al-Khoms. 7 people survived and 62 are missing.

## ITALY

26 February: 58 people died in a shipwreck off the coast near Crotona. The boat they were travelling on, coming from Turkey, had more than 180 people on board. 80 survivors are counted, one of whom is in serious condition in hospital. The search for the missing persons continues.

## CIVIL FLEET

Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario rescued 71 people, Médecins Sans Frontières 48, SOS Méditerranée 84, Sea Eye 109, but during the rescue found the bodies of two people who lost their lives and a third died while being transported to hospital.

# ITALY

**ADRIA** 6 February: A few hundred activists demonstrated in front of the 'Vittoria' shipyard to contest the handover ceremony of an Italian patrol boat to the so-called Libyan coast guard, as stipulated in the agreement signed by Meloni during her trip to Tripoli.

**CATANIA** 6 February: The Court of Catania ruled illegitimate the inter-ministerial decree with which the government had forbidden the civilian ship Humanity 1 to stop in Italian territorial waters on 4 November. The reasoning states that the measure hinders the right to rescue and access to the asylum procedure.

**ROME** 15-23 February: The Chamber of Deputies approved the Piantedosi decree on civil rescue at sea. The following week, the Senate also approved the measure, which is now law.

**ACCOMMODATION SYSTEM** 16 February: The report 'The Reception Vacuum', edited by ActionAid and Openpolis, reveals that the Italian reception system had 20235 free places in 2021, contradicting the propaganda rhetoric on the so-called immigration emergency.

**AUGUSTA** 23 February: Geo Barents, the ship belonging to Médecins Sans Frontières, was placed under administrative detention for 20 days, as required by the Piantedosi Decree. MSF

will also have to pay a 10,000 euro fine, but has announced its intention to take legal action against the measure.

**TRAPANI** 25 February: The Court of Trapani denied the possibility of the Prime Minister's Office becoming a civil plaintiff in the trial against the activists of Luventa for 'aiding and abetting illegal entry'.

**LAMPEDUSA** Since 14 February, there have been more than 5000 landings on the island. The local hotspot, with a maximum capacity of 389 people, has also housed 3200 in precarious sanitary conditions. In this situation, a woman died inside the center from an illness.

**TURIN** 4 February: In the CPR in Corso Brunelleschi, detainees staged a series of protests against administrative detention. The police responded with beatings, arbitrary transfers to prison and a ban on access to medical care and communication with the outside world, but now the Turin CPR is almost completely unfit for use due to fires that broke out during the protests.

**CLAVIERE** 8 February: 4 people were rescued during the night while trying to cross the border into France. Because of the wind and snow, they took refuge in a chapel above Claviere, where they were found by the rescuers in a slightly hypothermic state.



# REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM  
CENTRAL  
MEDITERRANEAN



# ARRIVALS

In February, [borderline-europe](#) recorded 6399 people arriving in Italy through the Central Mediterranean route.

The numbers published from UNHCR (9369), IOM (9985) and the Italian Ministry of Interior (9470) are significantly higher and the reason behind this is that there was not clear and public information about certain arrivals.

While during the first weeks of the month it remained pretty quiet, the arrivals increased very quickly from the middle of February, when with the return of good weather, more than 2700 people (fleeing from Tunisia) disembarked within three days in Lampedusa, where the hotspot is to be seen close to collapse hosting around 1500 with a capacity of less than 400 places; regarding these events, Alarm Phone claimed: “it is not an emergency, but a political choice!”, given the fact that a dignifying reception is a right that every protection seeker should have.

Since January 18 (date of the mission to Tunis by Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani) 3,800 people have arrived from Tunisia alone and since the beginning of Meloni’s government, more than 40.000 people disembarked in Italy (94% more than last in the same period last year).

These numbers on the rise are not to be considered as an emergency (in such a populous country where, moreover, the majority of new arrivals has the final goal to travel towards nor-

thern Europe), instead they expose the misleading propaganda of the right wing government, that, after realizing that a “naval blockade” was not feasible, found another enemy: NGOs; actually, of the around 40.000 arrivals above, only around 8% were rescued by NGOs, notwithstanding the “pull factor narrative” (you can read about it in the last CMI).

Yet, argues Alarm Phone, “thousands of people - with their stories, their faces, their wishes - managed to reach Lampedusa autonomously and regardless of NGOs rescue”.

The Crack-down on NGOs is not only conducted through a populist propaganda, but also through some concrete measures that really obstruct the rescue of many refugees: among others, the law decree and the assignment of distant ports (you can read about these topics below, in the “Civil resistance” paragraph).

In spite of everything, NGO rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean this month were led by: Sea-Eye (Sey-Eye4), Emergency (Life Support), Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario (Aita Mari), SOS Méditerranée (Ocean Viking) und MSF (Geo Barents). They managed to rescue 466 people, around 7% of the total.

# DEAD AND MISSING

In February again too many people lost their lives attempting to cross the Central Mediterranean. borderline-europe counted a total of 118 people who died on the route and 137 people who are still considered missing.

In the same period of time, UNHCR registered 213 and IOM 248 dead and missing people.

Almost ten years after the tragic migrant shipwrecks off Lampedusa in October 3 and 11 2013 fairly nothing has changed and people continue dying in the same place with the same tacit consent of the European Union and its member states.

Proof of this is the big and tragic shipwreck happened off the Italian coast of Calabria: on February 26th, a wooden boat snapped in two due to the rough sea and at least 69 people (many more are suspected) fell victims of these events. The boat departed from Izmir (Turkey) and carried between 150 and 200 people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Somalia and Palestine. Frontex already sighted the boat the night before and passed the message on to the Italian authorities; according to the journalist Sergio Scandura, it seems that the shipwrecked were considered as irregular migrants and therefore a police operation (law enforcement) was launched and not a save and rescue (SAR) one: as a result, two GDF boats were sent but went back before they reached the boat due to hostile weather conditions.

The law enforcement classification would explain why it was the yellow flames (without the Italian Coast guard coordination) that searched for the boat. SAR operations, on the other hand, are led by the Coast Guard, which is equipped with 300- and 800-class patrol boats, capable of facing nearly any sea, in any weather conditions.

So, according to Orlando Amodeo, rescue doctor in Crotona and for many years medical director of the state police, “those migrants could have been rescued and it is not true that the sea conditions made it impossible to approach the migrants” as similar rescues were made in similar weather conditions in the past.

There is currently a rebound of responsibility going on between Frontex, the Coast Guard and the Guardia di Finanza, who are trying to absolve themselves of blame.

Unfortunately, other fatal accidents happened in February: at the beginning of the month, one terrible maritime disaster off Lampedusa resulted in the death of eight people (three women, one of them pregnant); two people are still missing, the latter being a four-month old baby and a man who tried to recover the body of the baby, according to the survivors departed from Tunisia.

The Maltese authorities did not respond, despite being alerted by a Tunisian fishing boat reporting that it seemed like there were some dead bodies onboard. Prosecutors in Agrigento (Sicily) have “launched an investigation into the incident”.

In the middle of the month as well, on February 14th, there was a dreadful shipwreck off the Libyan coast whereby 11 migrants were reported dead and 62 missing (and therefore presumed dead); according to IOM, the boat, which carried around 80 migrants, departed from Tripoli.

Moreover, an investigation into four financiers about the shipwreck of the “Heaven” boat in August 2020 off La Castella (Calabria) was closed. The boat had had an incident and four people drowned trying to save themselves. According to the prosecutors, the financiers would have taken control of the boat instead of transferring the passengers on a safer boat. They did not notice the fuel cans near the engine and when they started it the cans exploded, people jumped into the water and died because the officers would not have made the migrants wear life jackets before starting the rescue. In short, according to the prosecutor’s office, the tragedy could have been avoided.

## PUSH AND PULL BACKS

This month, a great number of people fell victim to interceptions. More than 967 people who were fleeing from Libya were forcibly intercepted by Libyan Authorities in the Mediterranean Sea and taken back to the country. The Tunisian coast guard also prevented 1259 people from crossing to Italy.

As reported in previous issues, Italy and the European Union are not only conscious of this situation, but they are actively contributing to these cruel practices with fundings and bilateral agreements.

On February 2, Italy’s Memorandum of Understanding on Migration with Libya was automatically renewed for another three years; Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned that “assisting Libya’s coast guard, knowing that it will facilitate the return of thousands of people to serious human rights violations, makes Italy and the European Union complicit in such crimes”.

According to HRW, with the support of the Italian government, the so-called Libyan coastguard has intercepted over 108.000 people since 2017.

On February 8, there was a ceremony in Adria (Veneto), during which the Italian government gave the TS-LCG 300 vessel to its Libyan counterpart; the boat has a capacity of 200 people and quoting Italian Foreign Minister Tajani, it is a service handed over to “strengthen Libyan activities against human trafficking”, totally ignoring the undignifying and inhumane conditions of

the places these people are going to be sent after returning to the coasts of Libya.

Many protests followed as a result.

On 21st of February, fifteen of the migrants disembarked in Salerno were rejected.

The Salerno Police Headquarters served a “refusal of entry order” on the grounds that they were from a country not at war, Algeria. Only two women and three minors (accompanied by them) who were part of the group will be allowed to remain on Italian territory. Another Algerian national, however, was detained as an alleged smuggler.

## WAYS TO EUROPE

Of the almost 12.400 migrants (as at 21st February 2023) who disembarked in Italy this year, 1515 are of Guinean nationality (12%), 1367 are of Ivorian nationality (11%) and 967 are from Pakistan (7,8%).

Consequently, it is clear that there has been a change in the prevalence of nationalities of migrants compared to last year, with an increase of Guineans and Ivorians, while in 2022 the majority was represented by Egyptians and Bengalis.

## CIVIL RESISTANCE

### DECREE, DISTANT PORTS AND MSF CASE

As reported in many of our publications, the NGOs’ work is obstructed in every way possible by the Italian government. First of all, through the law decree that in fact forces the NGOs to spend a good part of their time at sea sailing towards distant ports, and that was recently voted in favor by the Chamber of Deputies and by the Senate (we reported about this in the last issue of the Scirocco).

A concrete example of how the decree hinders the work of NGOs can be seen with the events involving Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in late February:

On February, 24 the MSF’s ship Geo Barents was due to depart on a new rescue mission, but instead it received a 10 thousand Euro fine from the Capitaneria di Porto of Ancona (Port Authority, it is subordinate to the Ministry of Transport) and a 20 days administrative detention (namely, it won’t be able to leave the Sicilian port of Augusta where the ship is now). At first, it seemed it was because of its penultimate mission (when it conducted unauthorized multiple rescues), instead it was said that it violated the code of conduct for NGO ships by not coordinating sufficiently with the Italian authorities during the latest mission (which ended in Ancona with the landing of 48 people).

Generally, many different entities took side against this decree, among others the UN and Amnesty International, both worrying that it could hamper the provision of life-saving assistance by Civil rescue operators in the Central Mediterranean, resulting in more deaths at sea.

According to the High Commissioner of the UN Volker Turk, the decree about NGOs has “increased the risk that migrants are intercepted and brought back to Libya, a place that the UN cannot deem safe”; to this words, the Italian undersecretary Nicola Molteni lamented: “these are ideological and unfounded critiques”.

Another way of obstructing the NGOs’ work is through the fact that for some time now, NGO’s ships have been assigned with unbelievably distant harbors to disembark people rescued at sea risk: only this month, Geo Barents had to go to Ancona (5 days of navigation), Ocean Viking was sent to Ravenna (4 days of navigation) and Aitamari and Life Support to Civitavecchia (4 days of navigation). Many of the rescued people witnessed or experienced the unspeakable acts of violence suffered in Libya.

This month, the NGO ship Sea Eye 4 was active as well; at the beginning, it was notified to disembark in Pesaro (Marche), but the harbor was five days distant and following the request for a nearer port, the ship was directed towards Napoli (Campania). On board were 109 people (and two dead bodies, whom the Sea Eye 4 were not able to rescue), who were rescued through two different interventions. Sea-Eye criticized the Italian government for not allowing them to move people to a closer port.

Responses from the other civil rescue organizations protesting that this practice of assignment of distant ports is “against international law and the best interest of the survivors” remained unsurprisingly unheard.

## IUVENTA

On February 10, there was the longest and most heated hearing in the ongoing trial against sea rescuers from the Iuventa crew, MSF and Save the Children. It dealt with the “inadequate interpretation and government’s request to appear as a joint plaintiff”.

The judge rejected the objection of the lawyer of the Iuventa Crew that the quality of the interpretation during the interrogations would have been insufficient (even though numerous experts deemed them to be unsuitable).

The request of the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the Prime Minister to join the trial, in order to sue the accused for damages, was discussed at length.

The defense lawyers submitted a request for the exclusion of the parties, stressing that their application was full of errors, both in form and content, and therefore inadmissible.

On February 25 the judge finally blocked the decision on the Prime Minister’s Office participation in the trial, while the Ministry of the Interior was “formally admitted as a third party, but still without addressing the substance of its claims”.

More hearings are to follow in March.

## NEW SHIP SAFETY ORDINANCE IN GERMANY

This year, a new ship safety ordinance is expected to change the Ship Safety Regulation in Germany.

This would increase the requirements for smaller vessels, therefore hampering the work of smaller German NGOs; in a nutshell, those ships would need a safety certificate and some technical requirements must be met (from which the ships are currently exempted).

The sea rescue organizations under German flag that are potentially affected are: Mission Lifeline (Rise Above), RESQSHIP (Nadir), r42 (Imara), Mare Liberum, Sea-Watch (Aurora), SARAH (SARAH).

According to Sea Watch: “the changes would not lead to more safety on board, but would only impede our work”.

## HUMANITY 1

A piece of good news concerns a decision taken by the court of Catania, which ruled against the Italian government and the selective landing, that the rescue ship Humanity 1 was forced to conduct on November 5, 2022; on that day, after many days of navigation, Humanity 1 was assigned with the port of Catania; some days before, however, the Interior Minister together with the Defence and Infrastructure Ministers, had issued an act that prevented the disembarkation of the refugees, providing the rescue only for the people in “emergency conditions”.

In fact, the first shipwrecked that were to disembark were the 144 in poor health conditions; 35 people had to stay on board and according to the government were to leave the territorial waters. Nevertheless, they disembarked on November, 8.

In the meantime, they had expressed their intention to apply for international protection and they had made a precautionary appeal with the Court of Catania.

From a juridical point of view, the fact that, in the end, all the persons disembarked means that “the matter of the dispute has ceased” (namely, the sentence is no longer needed).

However, the court must decide on the costs of the proceedings, attributing them to one or the other party. In this case the court condemned the ministries of the Interior, Defense and Infrastructures, because their decree was contrary to both national laws and international standards, since it hampered the right to rescue and access to the asylum procedure, with the consequence of having to “select” who from the 179 refugees who were rescued could disembark in Catania.



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