



MEDREPORT
MARCH 2023

PH Max Hirzel

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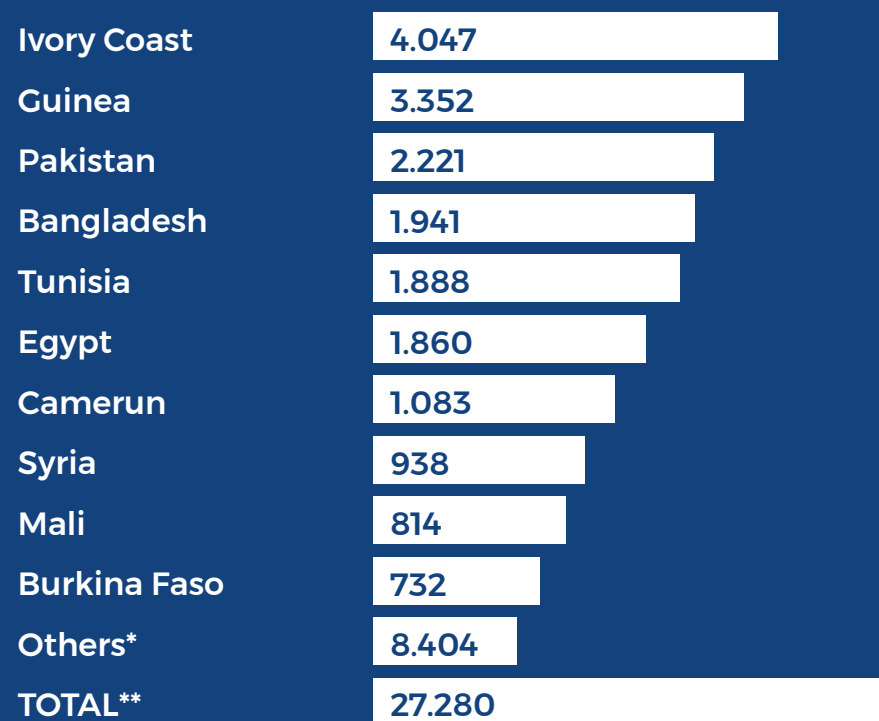
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WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

In March, the number of people who found themselves forced to flee, cross the Mediterranean Sea and managed to arrive in Italy was 12,847. Among them were 929 unaccompanied minors.

The month of March was marked by the many initiatives to remember the Cutro tragedy, which saw the tragic death toll rise to 91. “The whole world should be grateful for what this little ‘neighborhood’ of Brussels lost in the middle of the Mediterranean is doing. We have made welcoming an added value and we will not back down, despite the many difficulties we experience daily, as long as it is necessary.” Speaking these words, Filippo Mannino, mayor of Lampedusa, before the daily landings on the island, which are often autonomous and ignored by the news.

NATIONALITIES DECLARED AT THE TIME OF LANDING (UPDATED TO MARCH 31, 2023)



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

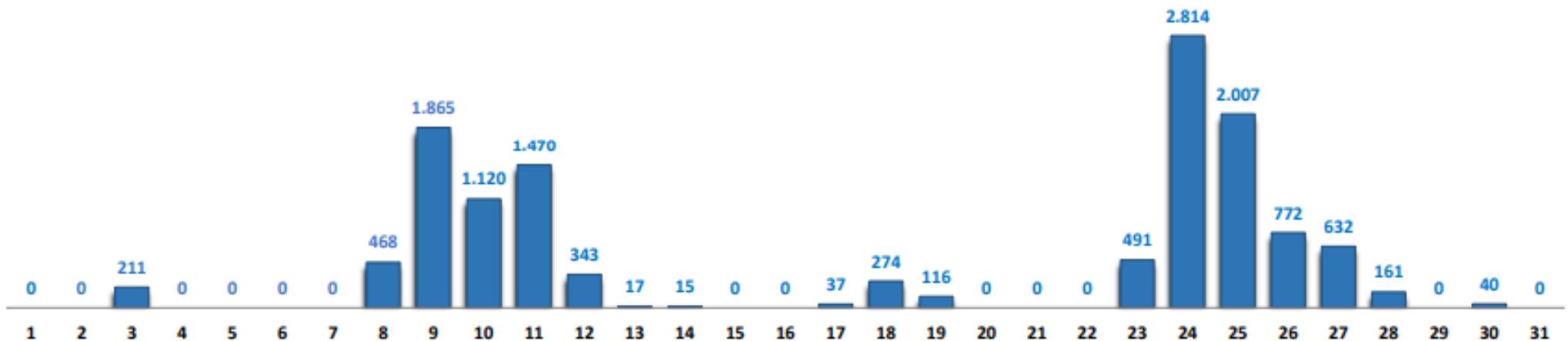
** The data refer to the landing events detected before 8:00 am of the reference day.

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


The data are subject to subsequent consolidation

Today, search and rescue operations in the central Mediterranean are vital, and yet, obstacles aimed at stopping the work of humanitarian ships continue. The ship Louise Michel, in fact, after rescuing five boats with more than a hundred people on board, including women and children, was given an administrative detention, without even any officialdom as to the reasons for the measure.

Only hours later, it was confirmed that the measure was issued under Decree Law No. 1 of 2023, that same decree sought by the Italian government to regulate-or, rather: limit-the activities of nongovernmental organizations. Specifically, the charge for the crew of Louise Michel is that they contravened the order to reach the port of Trapani, heading instead for three other boats carrying dozens of people in distress.



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 MARCH OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN

DAY 9

Overnight, nearly 1,200 people land in Lampedusa. The majority arrive from Sfax, aboard precarious boats. One of them wrecked, resulting in the death of a woman.

DAY 11

In the early hours of the day, the Italian Coast Guard rescued a boat carrying about 500 people in distress. These had been at sea for days and the alert had been sent by Alarm Phone operators.

DAY 12

A shipwreck in the early morning hours: a boat carrying 47 people capsized, resulting in the death of 30 of the people on board. No one intervened for more than 24 hours. The previous day, Italian authorities had given instructions to merchant ships in the area, assuming Sar coordination. The merchant ships, however, merely observed for 24 hours. Military ships, including Italian ones operating in the area for EUNAVFORMED and IRINI, do not appear to have been mobilized. Just days after the Cutro shipwreck, a new dramatic case of non-assistance and delay in rescuing people in distress at sea.

DAY 23

Forum for Economic and Social Rights reports new shipwreck off Tunisia: 5 bodies recovered and 28 missing. People fleeing racist attacks by the Saïed regime and victims of European border closures.

DAY 24

In the night, after Alarm Phone reported a boat in distress, the humanitarian ship Louise Michel rescued 190 people in distress. Later they were all rescued aboard the Geo Barents.

A few hours later, on a report from Sea Watch's Seabird aircraft, the crew of the Louise Michel assisted 78 people aboard a boat in distress. When a Libyan patrol boat arrived on the scene, the situation became dangerous and the crew of the humanitarian vessel rescued the shipwrecked people on board.

DAY 25

In the day, the crew of Emergency's civilian ship LifeSupport rescued 161 people in distress in the central Mediterranean Sea. The three rescue operations were completed in ten hours south of Lampedusa. Italian authorities assign the port of Ortona for safe disembarkation of survivors.

A patrol boat of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard threatens the Sos Méditerranée crew aboard the humanitarian ship Ocean Viking. A few hours later, Sea Watch's civilian Seabird aircraft documents the violent interception and capture of some 80 people fleeing Libya by the same patrol boat.

DAY 26

Just hours after the crew of the Louise Michel rescued 180 people, Italian authorities announced the blockade of the humanitarian ship. No formal, reasoned act had yet been notified.



THE MASSACRE OF CUTRO

**FATAL DELAYS:
30 LIVES
LOST DUE TO
EUROPEAN NON-
ASSISTANCE**

On Saturday, 11th March, just two weeks after at least 79 people drowned in a shipwreck off the Italian coast, Italian and Maltese authorities left once again people dying at sea.

This time, their politics of non-assistance and the delegation of their duties to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard led to the death of 30 people who were on a boat in distress in international waters, in the contested Libyan Search-and-Rescue (SAR) region.

The boat carried 47 people and was adrift at sea. Of these, only 17 people survived due to the intervention of a merchant vessel. The 30 people who died could be still alive, if only the Italian and Maltese authorities had decided to immediately coordinate a proper rescue operation.

These deaths are not the result of an accident. They are the consequence of deliberate political choices. Italian and Maltese authorities could have intervened immediately. Instead, they chose to wait for too long and referred to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard as the responsible and 'competent' authority, thereby wasting the time that was needed to save all of the distressed.

The Italian, Maltese, as well as the Libyan authorities were first informed about the distress case on March 11 at 2:28h CET (see timeline below) by the Alarm Phone. The Oil Tanker AMAX AVENUE, and some time later the merchant vessel GAMMA STAR, were in the vicinity of the distressed boat but passed by.

Several hours later, another merchant vessel, the BASILIS L, finally directed itself towards the position of the boat in danger. Waiting for a better equipped vessel for a rescue operation, it monitored the boat in distress.

The Italian and Maltese authorities decided to wait, in vain, for the so-called Libyan Coast Guard to launch its patrol boats, in order to illegally pull all people back to Libya instead of rescuing them to an European port.

Despite the extremely challenging maritime conditions and the desperate state of the stranded boat, neither the Italian, nor the Maltese or the Libyan authorities activated their resources for a rescue operation – for over 30 hours after the first alert by Alarm Phone. In the past, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center Rome already conducted coordination of merchant vessels in other cases outside their Search and Rescue area[1]. Moreover, the location where the shipwreck occurred was in international waters, outside of Libyan territorial waters.

The boat in distress was within the area of operations of the European mission EUNAVFORMED IRINI and the Italian 'Mare Sicuro' mission, with both Italian and European military assets continuously present.

None of these assets replied to the call for help sent out by Seabird, a monitoring aircraft operated by Sea-Watch, on the radio; nor were they engaged in the rescue operation by the well-informed Italian or Maltese authorities. The Italian authorities delegated the rescue to merchant vessels instead that were not equipped for rescue operations.

Both, delaying rescue and delegating rescue responsibility to merchant vessels not equipped to rescue, are part of a political strategy that focus delivering people in the hands of Libyan militias or abandoning them at sea, causing their death. For the deaths of 30 people, as well as the deaths of innumerable others at Europe's maritime borders, Italy, Malta and other EU member states bear primary responsibility.

As Alarm Phone, Mediterranea Saving Humans and Sea-Watch, we denounce and urge European member states, primary Italy and Malta, as well as the European Union, to end their border externalisation policies and the delegation of duties to Libya. Both have been central factors leading to the death of the 30 people in distress, as well as thousands of others before.

The Italian and Maltese authorities must cease to refer distress cases to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which has an appalling human rights record and has forcefully returned over 100.000 people to inhumane conditions in Libya.

Moreover, the contested Libyan Search and Rescue region cannot be viewed as under the exclusive responsibility of Libyan authorities. Moreover, the Italian and Maltese authorities also have to end their reliance on merchant vessels alone to fulfil their duty to rescue.

Many questions remain open and still need to be answered: Why did the Italian and Maltese authorities fail to intervene and rescue the persons in distress? Why has no EUNAVFOR MED asset reacted to the mayday relay by Seabird? All of these authorities need to provide an account of their role in this case and their failure to act.

We urge the European Union to ensure safe and legal pathways to Europe and engage in coordinated Search and Rescue operations, instead of financing and equipping the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, supporting pullbacks illegal under international law.



BORDER STORIES

TUNISIA 12 YEARS OF SUSPENDED HOPES

Today's Tunisia is certainly not the one dreamed of by the revolutionaries who took to the streets for Mohamed Bouazizi during the 2011 uprisings.

The gesture of the young traveller who set himself on fire in front of the Governorate of the city of Sidi Bouzid revealed the oppressed frustrations of generations of Tunisians and became the fuse that set the entire Arab world ablaze. The "Jasmine Revolution" (a term not liked by protesters) demanded freedom of expression and democratization of the political system and condemned the increase in unemployment and inflation. He had made Ben Ali flee after 23 years of dictatorship, but he had not been able to generate new representative structures capable of transforming demands for change into institutionalized solutions. The unanswered disappointments of a society created the conditions for a man who appeared out of nowhere to become representative of hope, especially to young people, of realizing the dreams bred during the demonstrations.

Constitutionalist, morally intact, independent candidate and far from political fights, Kais "Fata Morgana" Saïed emerges from the swamp of pain of mothers who have seen their children leave their land. After a muted electoral campaign, in the presidential ballot of Sep-

tember 2019 he defeats the media mogul Nabil Karoui with 72.7%. And 12 years after Ben Ali's ouster, he brought Tunisia under the control of one person.

The only Maghreb country on the road to "democratic transition" has failed to defend itself against the aims of an unexpected despot. Society, Parliament, Government, Constitutional Court: no one was able to stop Saïed, no one was able to prevent him from bringing Tunisia back into his autocratic tradition.

On October 23, 2019, Saïed is sworn in as President of the Republic and immediately demonstrates his personal way of interpreting the office: he refuses to stay in the presidential palace in Carthage preferring his villa in Mnihla, in the Governorate of Ariana, outside the capital Tunis. The first months are characterized by the impossibility of forming a stable government. The breakthrough came in September 2020 with Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi receiving the trust and forming an executive of independent technocrats. We are in the midst of a pandemic and in January 2021 new protests erupt in response to the collapse of the health system, economic difficulties and police brutality.

Mechichi proposes a government reshuffle approved by Parliament, but not by Saïed who denounces the conflict of interest of the ministers of Health, Energy, Labor and Sports. The institutional clash of the President against the Prime Minister and the Assembly of People's Representatives begins.

The Constitutional Court, the only power capable of stopping the autocratic advance, cannot intervene because its members have not yet been appointed.

Saied takes the shot.

On July 25, 2021, he appealed to Article 80 of the Constitution evoking an “imminent danger”: he dismissed the Prime Minister, dissolved Parliament, revoked the immunity of its members, ordered the military to barricade the doors and imposed a curfew.

In February 2022, the Supreme Judicial Council dissolved, guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary. More than 200 judges and lawyers protest in front of the court in Tunis. To calm things down, Saied appoints a temporary Council pending institutional reorganization.

Constitutional referendum, electoral law and parliamentary elections

With the result of the constitutional referendum of July 25, 2022, the President of the Republic receives unlimited powers.

The coalition of party forces against the dictator, the National Salvation Front, is calling for a boycott. The vote does not provide for a quorum, voter turnout reaches 30.5%, but 90% of the votes cast say yes.

In the new institutional structure, the system is dominated by the head of state, while the legislative, executive and judicial powers become simple “functions”

available to Saied without the possibility of impeachment.

The President determines the general policies of the State, the Government merely ensures their implementation.

The Prime Minister is appointed at his discretion, while the magistrates are first proposed by the Superior Council of the Judiciary.

Two months later, Saied passed a new electoral law giving him broad powers before, during and after the vote. The quotas for women and under 35s disappear, while the functions and representative strength of the parties are drastically reduced. Only individual candidates are now admitted and public funding is eliminated favoring the richest candidates. The first legislative elections since the coup d'état are held on December 17, 2022. Turnout drops to 11.22, the second-lowest ever recorded worldwide in an election since 1945. There were no candidates in seven seats. The second round of January 2023 is based on the same levels of participation.

Saied's default risks in the country's institutional set-up, but not its economy.

“If Tunisia collapses completely, there is a risk of a humanitarian catastrophe, with 900,000 refugees”, says a worried Giorgia Meloni during the European Council in March 2023.

The President inherits a crisis that dates back to the time of Ben Ali and that in the last 12 years has further increased bringing the situation to collapse. The pandemic and the Ukrainian war have raised the prices of goods, especially wheat.

There is a shortage of milk, sugar and coffee in supermarkets. Four out of ten young people are unemployed and the public debt exceeds 90%. The funds to run the state's administrative machinery are lacking and without international aid Tunisia is unable to move forward.

Since his inauguration, Saied has been negotiating with the International Monetary Fund for a loan of 1.9 billion dollars, but in return he asks for economic reforms and the safeguarding of democracy.

On February 21, 2023, he delivered a hate speech against sub-Saharan migrants. He accuses them of being part of a conspiracy aimed at the ethnic and cultural substitution of Tunisia.

Words appreciated by Eric Zemmour, French presidential candidate of the extreme right and promoter of the theory of the "Grand Remplacement", but that do not find evidence in reality: only 5% of the total Tunisian population is of sub-Saharan origin, just over 20,000 out of over 12 million inhabitants. Since 2018, the ultra-nationalist and overtly fascist Tunisian Nationalist Party has been propagating similar theories on social media and in the streets about "sub-Saharan re-colonization."

Saied's speech was officially aimed only at people without regular documents, but served as a pretext to legitimize acts of racial hatred against the entire black community, even if they were Tunisian citizens. People burned alive, fired from work, robbed, insulted and attacked with iron bars and knives.

The Embassies of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea are attacked by demands for immediate repatriation.

In those same days I was in Tunisia and I could see with my own eyes the look of terror in the faces of some of the people I met in the suburbs of Tunis. Ashraf is a Sudanese boy who escaped from war, aspiring rapper. He crossed Libya and attempted the Mediterranean route, but was intercepted several times. He was one of the protagonists of the 100 days of struggle of Refugees in Libya between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. After a few months he decides to leave the hell of Libya and cross the border with Tunisia. We meet at night in a bar in Rades, near Tunis. We don't speak the same language, we communicate via google translate. He tells me about his life here and the impossibility of having a normal existence. He works in one of the most popular used clothing stores, but without a regular contract. He is often robbed of his phone and lives literally on the fringes of society. It is registered with the UNHCR who issued him a document that is worth nothing. Worse, he no longer feels he has the strength to fight international institutions. In Tunisia, as in Libya, the UN Refugee Agency too often acts as an enemy of the people it should defend.

In the afternoon of the same day I went to the UNHCR building in Tunis. I wanted to meet Refugees in Tunisia, the movement of struggle born in January 2022 inspired by the protests in Tripoli. As soon as I arrived, I felt the tension rise. On the one hand, about thirty sub-Saharan boys prepare signs. On the other hand, a dozen policemen guard the structure of the UN Agency covered in barbed wire.

I'm hiding out in a fast food place across the street. To shoot videos in Tunisia you need a permit, not necessary if you are mistaken for a tourist. From the inside I can take some pictures, but I feel the eyes on the men in uniform. I eat a hamburger in the hope of not arousing suspicion.

I leave the club to try to get closer to the boys, but I am explicitly cared for by the police. I still. I light a cigarette and pretend to write on my phone. The camera emerges conspicuously from the jacket. I ask to be able to take a picture. The request is rejected with a dry hand gesture.

As I walk a few yards away, I get chased. I look back and notice a taxi passing in my direction. I stop him and climb up. I cowardly ask the taxi driver to take me to my shelter, away from police gazes.

On my return to Italy, I discover that the tents of the protesters' garrison in front of the UNHCR headquarters have been destroyed. Most people fled or were arrested, only a few women and children remained.

As a white and European I enjoyed the status of a tourist well received by all: good people Italians. Yet I cannot forget the words of Yusuf, a Ghanaian boy attacked by Tunisian passers-by near his accommodation. He lived with a hundred refugees in a UNHCR facility near Ariana, probably a few kilometers away from Saied's villa.

“You didn't choose your color and I didn't choose mine. It was God who made us different colors.”

MED CARE FOR UKRAINE RESTARTS, ENHANCED AND STRENGTHENED

The seventh humanitarian aid supply mission for the Med Care 4 Ukraine project was organized by crews from Emilia Romagna.

It was the largest mission of Mediterranea Saving Humans since the start of the Med Care 4 Ukraine project, which provides basic medical care and humanitarian aid to war refugees accoltè in the city of Lviv.

In fact, 7 tons of humanitarian aid was delivered, distributed among others between the large refugee camp in Sikiiv, the Brucovichi monastery, the Roma camp in Kholodvonidka, the informal refugee camp in Striskypark run by the Lviv Polyclinic. And again at private apartment buildings in the Solonka and Brucovichi neighborhoods, to our partners the NGO Insight and the Don Bosko Center of the Salesians, and finally to the St. Egidio Community in Lviv.

Our activists also met with the leaders of Caritas SPES in Lviv, our new partner, and delivered medications to the Med-Psy psychologè association that supports and helps lè war refugees. An ambulance was then delivered to the Dyadkovichi civil hospital, thanks to donations from the local community, the Zhytets association and private Italian donors. A mission, the one carried out in March, that gave new life to Mediterranea Saving Humans' intervention in Ukraine.

A new phase of the Med Care for Ukraine project, with medical assistance to more people and more humanitarian aid for those who suffer the horrors of war every day.

The mission also delivered three power generators to the Community of St. Egidio and a power station to the NGO Insight. Thus continuing our efforts to address the energy crisis facing millions of Ukrainians after the bombing of power plants by the Russians and the terrible humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, a dramatic consequence of the armed conflict, are dozens of power generators that we have delivered to the Ukrainian population through our partners from October 2022 to date.

After a pause for reorganization, the project's medical missions have also resumed, with the arrival of new health teams, consisting of doctors and nurses, taking turns every 10 days or so, bringing basic health care, with our mobile medical clinic, to the civilian population and war refugees. With the beginning of April, we have reached the 18th health mission of the "Med Care for Ukraine" project.

Meanwhile, at the end of March, Mediterranea Saving Humans activists also took part in the "Stop The War now" caravan composed of dozens of Italian associations, both secular and Catholic, who went on a peace mission to Ukraine. The caravan reached the cities of Odessa and Mykolaiv heavily affected by the war.

Especially in Mykolaiv the population is in dire straits, without water or electricity. Few have remained in the city, exclusively women, children and the elderly, while on the streets, which bear obvious signs of Russian shelling, no young men are to be seen.

The caravan distributed humanitarian aid to the civilian population, food and hygiene products that the citizens of Mykolaiv needed tremendously. There were social moments with the townspeople, including an impromptu concert.

A small moment to bring a smile to a community that has been living in terror of war and fear of bombs for more than a year. The caravan was in Ukraine until April 3, before returning to Italy, a very valuable experience that gave us as Mediterranea Saving Humans the opportunity to observe on the ground a part of Ukraine to which we had not yet brought our intervention.

For the month of April, it will be the Berlin ground crew that will organize the eighth humanitarian aid supply mission as part of the Med Care for Ukraine project.

MARE JONIO TRAINING MISSION 14

THEY, WHO STAND IN OUR SEA

Stories from the crew of the only Italian ship active in the Mediterranean

“After you are moved, you should be alarmed”: is the writing taped above the frowning gaze of five children depicted by street artist Demetrio Di Grado on one of the facades of the Zisa cultural yards in Palermo, a former furniture factory whose rooms are now exhibition spaces for theater and film activities.

Giorgio observes her and takes a picture. He has just arrived from Rome on the first Ita flight. With him are Aldo, Viviana and Ludovica. Serena - who arrived from Barcelona the night before - runs up to them to hug them. She is the secretary of Mediterranea Saving Humans, the only Italian aps that rescues migrants in the Sicilian Channel, thanks to the Mare Jonio ship, purchased in the summer of 2018. “Meet the guys from Rome,” Serena says, ushering them to the entrance of a conference room that looks like a small wooden amphitheater.

Inside there are already activists from Turin, the Sicilians and newcomers, some arriving from Milan, some from Athens, some from Edinburgh. They are all in Sicily for a three-day training and education session, in preparation for upcoming sea rescue missions. “It is first and foremost a time to create bonds between us, to consolidate team relationships and create new ones” - began Fabio Gianfrancesco, a young researcher in philosophy and rescue coordinator for Mediterranea.

Only Iasonas is missing - Iasonas Apostolopoulos, to his Italian friends “Giasone” - the other rescue coordinator, a Greek who is considered one of the most influential human rights activists at home. His flight from Athens was canceled due to a strike.

He will still arrive in Palermo by 6 p.m., so we can begin.

In Palermo, the first part of the training is taking place to train the crews that will take turns in the missions that will start, as soon as the Mare Jonio - stopped in the shipyard for bureaucratic reasons - receives the okay from the naval authorities to sail again. For the time being, she is moored in the harbor in Trapani. Mediterranea activists - recently received by Pope Francis at the Vatican - will join her only after completing the first day of training in the capital. Lectures and discussions on the history of migration routes, the deconstruction of stereotypes about migrants and sea rescue techniques.

After a hastily consumed lunch and a few glasses of beer offered for the sake of making friends, the day resumes, continues, and ends with the arrival of Iasonas, to the applause of all. Of those who admire him, of those who have shared nights of blizzard and complicated rescues with him, of those who know him for the first time. Like the video reporter with lush dreadlocked hair, the one who arrived from Edinburgh. Like the many young "land-based" activists, ready for their first mission at sea. And like Max, a photojournalist from Milan who will board as a rescuer. "The ship is very small, we can barely fit ten to twelve people, so they asked me not to limit myself to my "passive" role as a reporter, but to lend a hand as a rescuer. And here I am."

Dinner over, hunger past, in the small square of the cultural yards, the Mediterranea team -- now dressed in blue from head to toe -- faces a controversial discussion point: where to go after dinner. It is Friday night, the air is warm and Palermo has beaten Modena at home 5-2. The young people - Torine-

se, Romans, Athenians - are united in proposing a tour of the venues in Ballarò, a historic downtown district where once self-managed spaces have become social enterprises, youth hostels, multi-ethnic venues. The result, again, is overwhelming. Let's go to Ballarò.

There is dancing and toasting, with dozens of recent graduates celebrating, until the night slowly rearranges the streets of Palermo, with garbage collectors at work and some young people sticking a poster on a wall. They invite people to attend a rally that will remember the victims of the Cutro shipwreck. It will be held the next day, with hundreds of people in the streets. A little further on there is a Renault with its four blinkers waiting for them. A little later it is already daylight.

Mediterranea activists gather in the forecourt of Palermo's Central Station on their way to the port of Trapani, where the last 48 hours of training, the practical ones, will take place aboard the ship. On the Mare Jonio, Davide, first officer, awaits them. A native of Messina, he is 35 years old, half of which he spent sailing. "I used to work aboard luxury yachts, including Briatore's. Then I realized that it is here, with you, on this ship, that I feel fully myself." He is keen to welcome aboard on behalf of the sailors. He has done everything to be there: in 2022 he overcame a serious illness, now - bright-eyed, strong muscles and hair in the wind - he just wants to get back to sea and train the new recruits. To him the Mediterranea team entrusts the keys to good cheer. And David never disappoints.

Iasonas and Fabio are already at work. They have lowered the lifeboats into the sea and are leading the rescue drills. The Ionian Sea is an anthill of young and seasoned volunteers getting

on and off the lances and getting busy. "It's good to see you again like this," Luca whispers to his friend Beppe, on the deck of the ship, touched. Luca Casarini was among the organizers of the Genoa Social Forum, the network of no-global movements and associations that took part in the tragic 2001 G8. Today, together with Beppe Caccia, he is among the shipowners of Mediterraneana.

It goes on throughout the day with simulations. The rule is "save, do it, repeat" Everything is rehearsed, even hugs, because - as Iasonas points out - "the lives of dozens of people depend on our slightest gesture." Coordinating operations from the ship is Sheila, Palermo's mission leader, the perfect shore for David in matters of good humor. The afternoon passes on the lifeboats and the sun slowly falls asleep behind the island of Favignana. On board it is time for dinner. Capricciosa, margherita, four cheeses. Nothing like a Pizza to bring an Italian team together.

It is ten o'clock when rapper Ghali is surprisingly added to the table. The Tunisian-born Milanese artist has come on board for the "christening" of Bayna, the lifeboat he donated to Mediterraneana. Baptism scheduled for the next day, the last. The one of farewells. After Bayna's launching, the floating anthill breaks up. It's off to Punta Raisi airport. The Whatsapp group sizzles with goodbyes. Someone just before taking off writes "thank you," with an emotional crying face and a little red heart.

Someone else sends part of a poem by Erri De Luca:

Our sea you are not in the heavens,
Thou art fairer than the dry land
even when you raise waves to a wall
Then you bring them down to the ground.
You guard the lives, the fallen lives
Like leaves on the avenue,
Be an autumn for them,
from caress, embrace, kiss on forehead,
mother, father before departing.

MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS



WORLD

TUNISIA, March 3 - After President Saied's racist speech against the sub-Saharan migrants and the continued violence to which they are subjected, a protest took place in front of the IOM (International Organization for Migration) office and the Ivorian embassy, in which protesters demanded the possibility of repatriation.

TUNISIA, March 7 -The World Bank has suspended talks to negotiate a loan to Tunisia. The cause of the halt in negotiations was the hate speech delivered by Saied on Feb. 21. Now the Tunisian economy, already in dire straits, risks collapse.

LIBYA, March 27 - The United Nations Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya said Libyan authorities are responsible for crimes against humanity, including "arbitrary detention, murder, torture, rape, enslavement (including sexual slavery) and enforced disappearances."

MEXICO, March 27 -Forty people were killed and dozens injured in a fire that broke out at a detention center for migrants awaiting repatriation in Ciudad Juárez. A video shows that after the fire broke out due to protests inside the facility, officers closed the building's exits, preventing people inside from escaping.

TUNISIA, March 29 -Police violently cleared sit-ins in front of UNHCR headquarters in Tunis and Beheira and arrested numerous refugees protesting the UN agency's lack of action in the face of an increasingly dangerous situation for the sub-Saharan migrants in the country.

TUNISIA, March 30 -The forensic department in Sfax is close to collapse due to the huge number of bodies of migrants who died trying to reach Europe by sea being brought to the facility.

BORDER ALGERIA-NIGER - The town of Assamaka in Niger, near the border with Algeria, is the scene of a major humanitarian crisis: Algerian authorities are deporting thousands of people, left with nothing in the middle of the Sahara desert.

GERMANY, March 3 -The German Ministry of Transport has approved a legal act imposing higher safety standards for German-flagged vessels of less than 24 meters. German NGOs active in civilian sea rescue retort that this will increase their expenses and accuse the government of making it more difficult for them to operate in the central Mediterranean.

FRANCE, March 3 - Libyan Interior Minister Emad Trabelsi was detained at Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris with a large sum of undeclared money and later released due to his government position. Trabelsi, known for his human and hydrocarbon trafficking, has had several meetings with Italian authorities in recent months.

UE, March 7 - A few days after the Cutro shipwreck, European Commission President Von Der Leyen wrote to Italian Prime Minister Meloni to reiterate that it is Europe's moral duty to avoid tragedies at sea and that she is committed to further funding humanitarian corridors, but also that it is important to prevent departures by collaborating with countries such as Egypt and Tunisia.

GREECE, March 8 - The trial against the Moria 6 has still been postponed until March 2024. The six men, four of whom were minors at the time of their arrest, are accused of being responsible for the fire that destroyed the Moria camp in 2020. They have been in jail awaiting trial for more than two years.

UK, March 8 - The British government has enacted the so-called "Illegal migration bill," which stipulates that migrants who have entered the country illegally cannot apply for asylum, but are immediately deported to their country of origin or a safe third country. The UN has accused the UK of violating the right to asylum in this way.

GREECE, March 15 - Greek Ministers of Migration Mitarachi and Citizen Protection Theodorikakos met with new Frontex Executive Director Leijtens. The meeting ended with an agreement to facilitate the voluntary returns of migrants to their countries of origin.

UE, March 28 -The European Parliament has approved 4 measures of the new Migration and Asylum Pact package. The areas are screening of migrants at the EU's external borders, management of migration and asylum, crisis and force majeure in migration, and the status of non-European nationals who are long-term residents in a member country.

MALTA, March 28 -A demonstration in support of El Hiblu 3 was held outside the Valletta Court. The case dates back to 2019 when 3 young men were arrested by Maltese authorities on charges of hijacking the merchant ship El Hiblu 1, which had rescued them, along with 105 other migrants, in Maltese territorial waters. The defense claims that they allegedly only acted as translators for the other passengers, but the trial continues to be delayed and the accused are still in jail.

GERMANY, March 30 - At the proposal of the ministers of labor and interior, the German government has enacted a new immigration law to attract skilled labor to Germany. Now the legislative process involves passage through parliament before the law can be implemented.

GREECE, March 30 -The Greek government has unveiled a package of new immigration regulations. The issues covered are the duration of residence permits for unaccompanied minors and new rules to attract foreign labor. Many migration organizations have criticized the measure, pointing out that the criteria set for granting residence permits to unaccompanied minors are very restrictive.

GREECE - According to the Spanish newspaper El País, over the past 6 years, Greek Border Police have taken at least 2.2 million euros, including cash and material goods, from migrants illegally turned back along the Evros River, the land border with Turkey.

SEA

KOS, March 1 - A shipwreck off the Greek coast has left two people dead and one missing. The Greek Coast Guard rescued the other 27 people on the boat.

LAMPEDUSA, March 3 - The Italian Coast Guard rescued 211 people off the coast of Lampedusa, despite adverse weather conditions.

BRINDISI, March 7 - Emergency's civilian ship Life Support rescued 105 people, who were later disembarked in Puglia.

LAMPEDUSA, March 8 -The Italian Coast Guard carried out 3 rescues off Lampedusa, pulling 124 people to safety.

CROTONE, March 11 -The Italian Coast Guard rescued about 1,300 people on various boats and, after the landings in the port of Crotona, took the people to various reception facilities in Calabria.

LIBYA, March 12 - The failure of Italian authorities to intervene, who were waiting for the arrival of the so-called Libyan coast guard, resulted in the deaths of 30 people. 16 survivors were rescued by a merchant ship.

ALBORAN, March 15 - Salvamento Marítimo rescued 21 people off the coast of Spain and transferred them to Melilla.

TRAPANI, March 15 - The Court of Trapani confirmed that Italy had jurisdiction over the two rescues that occurred in international waters that led to the seizure of Luventa. The Court of Cassation will decide whether the Trapani Public Prosecutor's Office has jurisdiction over the entire case.

REGGIO CALABRIA, March 16 - About 600 people were rescued by the Coast Guard off the coast of Calabria and were then transferred to the rest of Italy by bus.

SIRACUSA, March 23 -The Coast Guard rescued about 450 people about 100 miles east of Syracuse.

REGGIO CALABRIA, March 23 - 295 people were rescued off the coast of Calabria in an operation coordinated by the Coast Guard, in which three merchant vessels and a Frontex patrol vessel also participated.

TUNISIA, March 23 - Five people are dead and 33 are missing after a boat from Sfax sank. The Tunisian Coast Guard rescued the 84 survivors.

SFAX, March 23 - A shipwreck of a boat that left from Tunisia has left 33 people missing. Only five people managed to make it to safety.

ROCCELLA IONICA, March 23 - 325 people of Pakistani origin were rescued off the coast of Calabria by the Coast Guard.



ITALY

LAMPEDUSA, March 25 -The civilian ship Louise Michel, after rescuing 180 people in 3 operations and landing them in Lampedusa, suffered a 20-day administrative detention for violating the Piantadosi Decree.

ORTONA, March 25 - The civilian ship Life Support rescued 161 people in 3 operations and disembarked them in the port of Ortona, assigned by Italian authorities.

SAR LIBYA, March 25 - Libya's so-called coast guard fired on SOS Méditerranée's civilian vessel Ocean Viking during a rescue. The 80 or so people on the distressed vessel were captured by the Libyans. Everything was documented by footage from Sea-Watch's SeaBird civilian aircraft.

AEGEAN, March 27 - 59 people from Turkey were illegally pushed back by the Greek Coast Guard.

MAILAND, March 9 - Bureaucratic inefficiency continues at the Questura in Via Cagni in Milan with 120,000 asylum applications backlogged. A garrison under the Milan headquarters of the UNHCR called for action to ensure that the principle of the right to asylum is respected by Italy.

BERGAMO, March 10 - The third category soccer team ASD Athletic Brighela displayed a banner before a match that read "Mediterranean Cemetery. No more deaths at sea." The sports judge fined the club, which decided to donate the proceeds of the crowdfunding opened on this occasion to Mediterranea and ResQ.

CUTRO, March 11 - A national demonstration was held in Cutro to demand truth and justice for the victims of the Feb. 26 shipwreck, caused by the lack of action by Italian authorities. More than 10,000 people who arrived from all over Italy marched through the small Calabrian village and the beach where the bodies were found.

VATICAN CITY, March 22 - Pope Francis met with a delegation from Mediterranea Saving Humans to reiterate his support for those who save lives at sea. and to share political and human experience in support of migrant people.

ROME, March 25 -The Foreign Ministry has placed Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Georgia and Nigeria on the list of safe countries, despite the fact that they are states where the level of violence is very high. This means that people from these countries will not automatically qualify for asylum in Italy.

MAILAND, March 25 - Five years after his murder, a plaque was placed in remembrance of Abdoul "Abba" Guiebre, a boy killed on Sept. 14, 2018 for racial reasons. The ceremony was attended by his sister Hadiara and aunt Nafi, city authorities, and the "Not to Forget Abba and Stop Racism" committee. Abba gave his name to the two inflatable boats of the Mare Jonio, Mediterranean's ship, donated by the Milan Land Crew thanks to a crowdfunding in his memory.

ROME, March 27 -Mediterranea has written an open letter to the Italian government asking it to stop the attack on civilian rescue organizations in the Mediterranean and establish a fruitful collaboration with the Coast Guard in view of the summer season, which will see a significant increase in the number of people attempting to reach Europe by sea.

LAMPEDUSA, March 28 - Two residents and a tourist found the body of a person who probably died during a shipwreck near Punta Alaimo.

TURIN, March 1 - Sixty organizations in Turin wrote a letter to the police headquarters and UNHCR denouncing violations of foreigners' rights, including the inability to apply for international protection and the long time it takes to renew or apply for a residence permit when they go to the Immigration Office in Corso Verona.

TURIN, March 18- Former Turin Prefect Claudio Palomba was questioned as part of the investigation launched after the death of Moussa Balde in the Turin CPR. Prosecutors want to verify whether Palomba, who was in office at the time of the events under investigation, fulfilled his obligations to verify and control the situation inside the CPR.

BORDER ITALY-FRANCE, March 19 - Italian and French activists demonstrated along the border between Claviere and Montgenevre against the militarization of the Alpine border and the criminalization of solidarity, which make it increasingly dangerous for migrants to cross in a difficult environment.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM
CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

Borderline-europe recorded 10.805 people arriving in Italy through the Central Mediterranean route in the month of March. Among our total count there are arrivals about which we got informed via internal sources that have not always specified whether the people spotted off the coast of Italy have finally arrived or not: we assume that they are among the boats that arrived..

The numbers of arrivals published from UNHCR and the Italian Ministry of Interior are respectively 13.126 and 13.216.

Arrivals have almost quadrupled in comparison to the numbers of the same period last year (more than 27000 instead of 6500). In particular this month, the peak days were between the 9th, 10th and 11th of March - when more than 4400 people disembarked in Italy in three days - and between March 24 and 25 - when more than 4800 people disembarked on Italian shores in just two days; these numbers were only usual in the summer months in previous years.

As usual, it is complicated to find the direct reason for the increase of arrivals but one could trace it in two phenomena: better weather conditions (as we reported in the last issues of CMI) and the increasingly complicated situation in North Africa and Tunisia in particular, where President Saied is bringing forth a harsh racist propaganda against migrants; more on this under the paragraph “Ways to Europe” below.

Nationalities

Ivory Coast turned out to be the main nationality represented among people arriving to Italy by sea since the beginning of the year (of the total number of migrants who arrived in Italy this year, 14% is Ivorian). To follow, there are Guinea (12%), Pakistan (8%), Bangladesh (7%), Tunisia (7%), Egypt (6%). In this context, it is important to mention that the Italian government has also designated Côte d’Ivoire as a Safe Third Country in a decree of 17 March, which should facilitate deportations.

DEAD AND MISSING

Once again, too many people lost their lives trying to cross the Central Mediterranean in March. borderline-europe counted a total of 90 people who died on this route and 120 people who are still considered missing.

UNHCR and IOM recorded 156 and 83 deaths and missing persons during the same period.

Day after day more and more bodies of the victims of the Cutro shipwreck (February 26) are found in the sea; as said by the mayor of Cutro, in order for them to be properly buried, one hopes that the sea will return one by one the bodies of the people who fell victims of this catastrophe. To the date of April 3, the last body that was found is of a young man, therefore the confirmed death toll rises to 93.

A few days after that Shipwreck, another tragedy was taking place off the coasts of Benghazi, in Libya: 30 of the 47 people on the move fleeing towards Europe died in international waters; in fact, they were not territorial waters but in the Libyan SAR zone. According to international law, if the state that has competence on the SAR (Search and Rescue) zone (in this case, Libya) does not start the coordination of the search and rescue operation, this should be rapidly done by the first state that receives information on the situation of distress (in this case, Italy). This point was stressed by many NGOs that want to highlight Italy's and Malta's responsibility for this event and generally raise awareness on the lack of Assistance (not) provided

by European governments in the Sea. Only 17 people survived this shipwreck due to the intervention of a merchant vessel. Despite this, President Meloni carelessly declared that 'the government has a clear conscience regarding the situation of migrants'. Unfortunately, another invisible shipwreck happened on the Libyan route this month, this time off the coasts of Tobruk; rescue teams have recovered 15 dead bodies (all of them from Syria) and 25 are still missing: the boat sank while trying to move the people from a smaller boat to a bigger boat before heading to Italy.

Even though the Tunisian route is usually less dangerous than the Libyan one, this month there were numerous deadly shipwrecks off the Tunisian Coasts; according to the spokesman of IOM Flavio Di Giacomo, the reason for this is that migrants departing from Tunisia are less equipped (e.g. they do not have satellite phones to call for help) and there are no rescue missions operating on that stretch of sea.

Among other tragic events: at the beginning of March during a rescue operation started by Italian authorities 20 people were rescued and the body of a young woman was recovered; on March 9, 14 people fell victims of a shipwreck off the coast of Louata (in the Sfax governorate, Tunisia) and the rescue operation saved 54 people from Cameroon and Ivory Coast; in the middle of the month, we learned from Alarm Phone that there was another wreck off Sfax during which "one of the two boats

capsized. Some bodies were washed ashore, many are missing (33 people). Only five people survived”; on March 23, another accident caused 5 victims. Their boat, with 38 people on board, sank off Al Louza. Five people were rescued but 28 are reported missing. The migrants were all from sub-Saharan Africa, predominantly from Ivory Coast. They left from Sfax; the day after, a total of 34 migrants from sub-Saharan African countries were missing following a shipwreck off the Tunisian coast. The sunken boat - which left from the coast of the Sfax region for Italy - had 38 migrants on board, four of whom were rescued.

On March 25, two “sea barges” carrying sub-Saharan migrants wrecked in Malta’s Search and Rescue Zone. 8 people are dead. Both Italian and Tunisian authorities intervened and in total 97 people were rescued to Lampedusa.

Unfortunately, most likely many other incidents happened this month but either they got confused among the many unclear information, or worse, they remained invisible to the media’s eyes.

PUSH AND PULL BACKS

In the month of March, a great number of people was intercepted off the North African coasts: more than 781 people fleeing from Libya were forcibly intercepted by Libyan Authorities in the Mediterranean Sea and taken back to the country. The Tunisian coast guard also forcefully prevented 4054 people from crossing to Italy. The number of unreported interceptions is probably much higher.

On March 25, Alarm Phone was alerted to a boat in distress with around 84 people; SOS Méditerranée could have rescued the boat but instead they were threatened by the so-called Libyan Coast Guards, which finally intercepted those people back to Libya.

While the situation in Libya remained similar to other periods of the year, the situation in Tunisia has deteriorated dangerously. To get a sense of the enormous number of people who were forcibly taken back to the country they were fleeing from: on the 9th of March, Tunisian Coast guard units in Sfax, Kerkennah, Mahdia and Sousse thwarted 25 sea border crossings and intercepted 1008 migrants (54 Tunisians and 954 from Sub-Saharan Africa); on March 18, the Tunisian Coast Guard intercepted a total of 635 people from various sub-Saharan African countries who were aboard boats in distress in the stretch of sea in front of the governorates of Sfax and Mahdia during 18 operations; and between March 22 and 23, the same Tunisian Coast Guard units, thwarted 30 sea crossing operations off Sfax and Chebba and intercepted 2,034 migrants, including 9 Tunisians.

WAYS TO EUROPE

Tunisia

Even from the numbers published by the Italian Ministry of Interior it is more and more evident that most of the migrants coming to Italy nowadays depart from Tunisia, in particular from the city of Sfax. From the beginning of the year until March 13th, around 12.000 people have arrived in Italy, departing from Tunisia (there is an increase of 788% in comparison to last year). These numbers show that the Tunisian route has now become the most used. The Libyan route is now in second position with around 7000 arrivals.

Actually, it has been common for people to flee from Tunisia to Italy for many years: with the difference that now the departures have increased and while in the past the people on the move were mainly young Tunisians, now they are mainly of sub-saharan origin, upper-middle class Tunisians and families.

Following the word of the spokesman of IOM: instead of focusing on the pull-factor narrative that the media is excessively promoting, one should remember the real drivers of migration, namely the push factors; in this case, the deterioration of the economy (general unemployment of 16% since COVID hit), politics (with a democratic deficit and Saied's authoritarian regime) and above all social situation in Tunisia, characterized by a strong racial discrimination.

After Saied's political attack on sub-Saharan migrants in the country, NGOs and associations have recorded incidents of vio-

lence and racism: sub-saharan migrants, as well as young Tunisians, have no choice but to leave.

In March, we counted a total of 5076 people who departed from Tunisia.

Calabria

As regards harbors, Lampedusa is still the most frequent for migrants, and Calabria is now the second one. The crossing from Turkey to Calabria lasts from five to seven days of navigation and is only the "last step of a journey started many months earlier" for people mainly coming from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Armenia. Once in Turkey these people have two possibilities: either they walk through the deadly route in the Balkan countries (almost impossible to do as a family or for children in general) or they depart from Turkey with boats; they could stop in Greece, but the push back politics is harsh, the chances of arriving safely in Europe are accordingly low. Therefore, many are choosing to depart from there to Calabria or Apulia. According to Luigi Achilli, researcher of the European University Institute, the increase of migration from Turkey to Italy (mainly Calabria) could derive from the fact that border controls in Turkey are now more loose and previous agreements with the European Union are enough to stop the crossing towards Greece and not Italy.

Nevertheless, arrivals from Libya are still numerous and in fact recently 650 people arrived autonomously in Calabria from Tobruk, Libya.

The hub for rescue and first reception in Calabria is the port in Roccella Jonica, in the province of Reggio Calabria where we counted 1357 arrivals this month (with 2623 arrivals in the whole region of Calabria).

Mercenary Wagner Group

Instead of concentrating on the concrete reasons why the arrivals of people on the move increased in March, Italian media gave overexposure to a debate led by some members of the Fratelli D'Italia party, who accused Russian paramilitary group Wagner to be responsible for the surge of arrivals.

Nevertheless, Emadeddin Badi, a Libya expert and researcher at the Global initiative against transnational organized crime, said that "Italian officials are trying to use Wagner as a scapegoat, but this has no basis in reality" and "the Libyan coast is indeed controlled by numerous criminal groups, but Wagner so far has no 'known' influence in this illicit market."

This was probably more of a political move from the right wing party, and as was stated in "Frontiere" (newsletter about migration of Internazionale): "it is the attempt to involve not only Europe but even NATO and make border defense a military issue, no longer a humanitarian one, with the involvement of the Italian navy".

CIVIL RESISTANCE

NGOs active this month

In March, the NGOs active in the Central Mediterranean were: GeoBarents (MSF), LifeSupport (Emergency), Louise Michel (Louise Michel).

They saved 639 people (5,9% out of the total of people who arrived in Italy).

Geo Barents

Geo Barents was finally freed from the 20 days of detention; straight after being released it departed from Augusta for a new mission of search and rescue in the Mediterranean, where they succeeded to rescue 190 people this month.

An appeal was filed against the illegitimate detention of the ship.

Life Support

Emergency's ship Life Support, which at the beginning of March was the only NGO's ship in the Mediterranean managed to save 266 people who were in a situation of distress off the coasts of Libya in its third mission. Emanuele Nannini, the head of mission of Life Support, stated "Migrants were without life

preservers: without us there would have been another Cutro massacre”; the ship was drifting and they had almost no gasoline left.

The harbor assigned was the one of Brindisi, once again we see the assignment for the umpteenth time of a distant port, a practice established in recent months, as we reported in the last issues of CMI.

Louise Michel’s Detention

Louise Michel returned to be active in the Central Mediterranean this month, managing to rescue 183 of people on the move during four different operations; once they all disembarked in Lampedusa, the rescue ship was seized by Italian authorities.

According to a press release of the Italian Coast Guard, after having carried out the first rescue operation in Libyan (SAR-) waters, the vessel contravened the given order to reach the port of Trapani, heading instead for other three operations on which, moreover, Italian Coast Guard vessels were already heading for rescue.

However, Morana Milijanovic, head of mission of the ship, stated in an interview with La Repubblica that after the second operation and the assignment to the safe port of Trapani, other maydays were launched by Frontex aircrafts and according to international law, they responded to them, since nobody else did. In the last operation the Italian Coast Guard arrived, nevertheless, they stood by and did not intervene even though there were people in the water in front of them.

Ocean Viking vs so-called Libyan Coast Guard

This month, Ocean Viking had to suffer vexations from the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

The organizations SOS Méditerranée and Sea Watch (whose civil surveillance aircraft Seabird 2 monitored the distress case) accused the so-called Libyan Coast Guard of having prevented the rescue of many people in distress on March 25, by firing shots in the air. They were in fact threatening the rescue ship Ocean Viking of SOS Méditerranée, going “dangerously close” to the ship and then aggressively intercepted the 80 people in distress in international waters (as reported above); consequently Ocean Viking had to move away from the area. According to a tweet of the journalist Sergio Scandura the shots were coming from the vessel 656 “Zawia”, which was furnished by the Italian government to “Libyan criminals passed off as members of the alleged coast guard.”



MEDREPORT
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PH Max Hirzel