

MED REPORT

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LIVING AND RESISTING UNDER OCCUPATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH
TWO ACTIVISTS FROM
MEDITERRANEA WITH
PALESTINE

We had the chance to interview Zora and Emily, two activists from Mediterranea who spent March 2025 in Palestine in the context of the project Mediterranea with Palestine, born in 2024 in collaboration with the nonviolent peace corps Operazione Colomba. Since the beginning of this year the project has been collecting data, images and testimonies on the human rights violations that the Israeli Occupation carries out against the Palestinian population.

We had the opportunity to interview Zora and Emily (editor's note: for the safety of the people involved, these are fake names), two activists of Mediterranea who were in the field during the month of March.

As Emily, coordinator of Mediterranea with Palestine, explains, the final goal of the international observatory in Masafer Yatta is "the drafting of an annual report, which will be published at the end of 2025; but already after the first six months—between the end of June and the beginning of July—a first, more streamlined document will be shared, which will testify and make people understand the importance of an international observatory for the defense of human rights".

Daily activities

"The alarm rings early in the morning, around 6:30am - says Zora, retracing an activist's day - and immediately after we are called by Mfadh, the shepherd who lives in the nearby Humra valley; the morning is spent accompanying the shepherd to the pastures, and then, if we have no other emergency calls, in the early afternoon we accompany the Shawain (other shepherds) to the pasture. If we are not called for this kind of activity, early in the morning we head to the hill overlooking Tuwani (the main village in the region, editor's note) for lookout: we try to spot any threats to the village and observe the movements around the Avat Ma'on outpost and the Ma'on colony."

However, when living under Occupation, the idea of a "daily routine" is virtually unknown—especially for the Palestinian population, but also for international activists. "Very often, we receive calls from Palestinians in danger," Zora explains, "from Tuwani and the surrounding villages—Palestinian shepherds grazing their flocks who suddenly have to face attacks from masked settlers, for example."

The risk of arrest is always very high, as is clear from Emily's account of one incident. "In March, there was a military exercise march. We received photos of these soldiers, all in formation, marching on foot, and it wasn't clear if they would end up in Tuwani."

A testimony of two activists of the Mediterranea with Palestine project

Last summer Mediterranea Saving Humans kicked off a project in Palestine—more precisely within the Occupied Territories of the West Bank in the Masafer Yatta region—in collaboration with the nonviolent peace corps Operazione Colomba.

Since the beginning of this year, the Mediterranea with Palestine project has been an international observatory collecting data, images and testimonies on the human rights violations that the Israeli Occupation carries out against the Palestinian population.

Just a few days earlier, there had been a raid by soldiers on the ISM (International Solidarity Movement, an international organization present throughout the occupied West Bank) house in the Jordan Valley. So, we immediately thought the army might march through the streets of Tuwani as an act of intimidation. On the advice of some Palestinians, we hid our computers in boxes of pasta. All the while, I was thinking: 'We have computers filled with evidence of human rights violations committed in a supposedly democratic state, whose government, at least in theory, should want to identify those responsible for such crimes, and yet here we are, hiding a computer in a box of pasta.' And that's just one example of the many paradoxes of the Occupation."

"The first time I saw the Occupation forces," Zora recalls, "was in Ar Rakeez (a small village bordering Tuwani), on the land of shepherd Shaikh Sa'id: armed settlers were grazing their flocks on Shaikh Sa'id's land, escorted by three settler-soldiers (officially army reservists called up after October 7th, 2023, but essentially colony residents, armed and given soldiers' authority) and five soldiers. Then the police arrived. It was immediately clear how violent and lawless the situation was: two of Shaikh Sa'id's sons were forced to sit in a corner, unable to cross an arbitrary boundary drawn by the soldiers, while the settlers and settler-soldiers could roam freely on land that wasn't theirs, and it was obvious they had a special relationship with the soldiers. That's when we saw the collusion between the Israeli security forces and the settlers. At one point, a settler signaled to the police, accusing Elias, Shaikh Sa'id's son, of doing something, and at that very moment, a soldier grabbed him and took him to the police van, which then arrested him. The next day, one of the settlers from the day before was stationed in the cultivated field belonging to Shaikh Sa'id. After his son's arrest, Shaikh Sa'id kept his distance out of fear of further violence. He called the Israeli police, but as often happens, they never showed up. That was when we became even

more acutely aware of how the strategy of systematic violence, intimidation, and impunity becomes effective over time, creating a deep sense of disillusionment among the Palestinian population."

A few weeks after Zora returned to Italy, a settler shot Sheikh Sa'id, hitting him in the leg with a "dum dum"—a type of bullet designed to expand inside the body upon impact, and banned since the 1899 Hague Convention on the laws of war. Not only was the settler who fired the shot never identified, but Shaikh Sa'id had to wait on the ground, wounded, for a long time before finally being helped by an ambulance, while his son Elias was arrested for trying to assist his father. Sadly, he arrived at the hospital too late: he lost his right leg.

Another important task for international activists is to spend the night in the homes of families living in the most remote villages of the region. "Families ask for our presence because it helps them feel safer at night—they can sleep more peacefully knowing we are there. If something happens, at least we're present," they explain.

Emily, who was also in Masafer Yatta at the beginning of 2024, tries to compare her two experiences: "2024 felt like a transition period. The Palestinian population was coming out of some very difficult months after October 7th, but little by little, people were starting to dare a bit more. I don't want to use the word 'hope,' but there was a slow attempt to regain at least some freedom of movement—even though, before October 7th, this freedom was already extremely limited for those living in the Occupied Territories. A year later, it seemed that the general feeling was one of deep exasperation; it's definitely a more negative period."

Sumud

“Sumud” (literally “perseverance” in Arabic) is a key concept for understanding Palestinian nonviolent resistance. It means love for one’s land, for one’s fields, and the determination to remain there as a community.

In this context, since the early 2000s, the presence of international activists has become a part of daily life for the Palestinian population.

“On a very human level, being in Tuwani helps ensure that the Palestinian community doesn’t feel completely abandoned, even though, clearly, there isn’t much trust in Europe or the international community. And who could blame them? Still, that human closeness—the fact that someone cares about them—undoubtedly matters. In fact, they always thank us and are always extremely grateful for our presence.”

“Unfortunately,” Emily continues, “many people are terribly confused about the truth and the reality of what happens every day in this region. And hearing these stories directly from someone who has lived through it—someone they may know and trust, or even just an Italian person—carries enormous weight. That’s how it is; we have this privilege, so at the very least, let’s use it for good.”

“One of the reasons activists like us go there,” Zora adds, “emerges when we return home. We have witnessed the harassment, the violence, the apartheid that the Palestinian people endure every day. I believe that, especially in this historical moment, it’s crucial to communicate an objective account of reality, because the way we interpret news about Palestine is so often colored by colonial prejudices against the Arab population.”

“Before I went there,” Zora recalls, “even though I had read a lot, I had no real sense of the Palestinian community’s capacity to come together, to discuss, to consciously coordinate and organize strategies for resisting and fighting against the Occupation. Our work as activists—and especially the approach passed on to us by Operazione Colomba, the way we work in Palestine but also in all the contexts where Mediterranean is present—puts the struggles of oppressed peoples at the center. We are simply tools of their resistance.”

To conclude, Zora leaves us with this thought: “It’s necessary to recognize Palestinians as subjects in their own right. In Masafer Yatta, I saw firsthand that they’re not just the poor and hungry victims we’re used to seeing on Instagram, in images from Gaza or in mainstream narratives. They are political actors who resist and live in a community with very complex social dynamics. So it’s important to acknowledge Palestinian suffering, but it’s equally vital to support their struggle—not just by showing empathy, but by actively standing alongside the resistance movements, amplifying their voices in our own countries, and holding our institutions and societies accountable for their complicity.”

THE EXPULSION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES FROM PAKISTAN

COLLECTIVE, FORCED AND
ILLEGAL DEPORTATIONS



Between March and May 2025, Pakistani authorities have expelled over 10,000 Afghan citizens daily, continuing the forced deportation campaign that began in October 2023, which has so far resulted in the return of over one million people to Afghanistan, often without warning, without rights, and without protection.



At least 80,000 forced repatriations in two months: the crisis of Afghan refugees expelled from Pakistan

Since October 2023, the Pakistani government has launched a large-scale forced expulsion campaign targeting hundreds of thousands of Afghan citizens, many of whom have been refugees for decades. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over one million people have been forced to return to Afghanistan in conditions of extreme vulnerability, often without warning, without rights, and without protection.

Between March and May 2025, Pakistani authorities intensified operations, extending deportations to holders of legal documents, such as Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC). Expulsions have reached dramatic rates: over 10,000 per day in some weeks, with more than 80,000 repatriations in the last two months alone. This is not migration policy: it is a crisis of respect for human rights.

Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghans fleeing wars, occupations, and persecutions for over 40 years. At the beginning of 2021, there were approximately 4 million Afghans in the country, including 1.3 million with refugee

status (POR) and hundreds of thousands with ACC documents. But over 600,000 people lived without any legal documentation.

It is precisely these most vulnerable people who were targeted first. The Pakistani government has accused this population of destabilizing internal security, without ever providing concrete evidence. Instead of offering protection, it has launched a campaign of intimidation and expulsion.

The authorities continue to speak of “voluntary repatriations.” But testimonies collected by Human Rights Watch and other organizations tell a profoundly different reality: arbitrary arrests, violence, night raids, extortion by police, destruction of documents, family separations.

“Police and other officials have carried out mass detentions, beatings, demolitions. They have seized assets, demanded bribes, and destroyed identity documents.” – testimony collected by Human Rights Watch

Not even those with regular documents have been spared. POR and ACC cards no longer offer any guarantee: legal protection has been emptied of meaning.

Border areas transformed into humanitarian crisis zones

In recent months, the border crossing points of Torkham and Spin Boldak have become humanitarian crisis zones. Thousands of families, many with small children, are camped in inhumane conditions, without access to water, medical care, or shelter.

Those who manage to cross the border find a devastated Afghanistan: a collapsed economy, 23 million people in food insecurity, a regime that systematically represses women, human rights defenders, journalists, and former collaborators of international forces. Repatriated people find not protection, but new threats. Many have no home, resources, or possibility of reintegration. They are sent back to a country they have never known or from which they fled as children.

The ongoing collective and forced deportations violate the principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in the 1951 Geneva Convention, which prohibits the return of those at risk of persecution or inhumane treatment.

Pakistan is also party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: the deportation of minors, especially unaccompanied ones, without safeguards or accompaniment, is inadmissible. It is time to say it clearly: these expulsions are illegal.

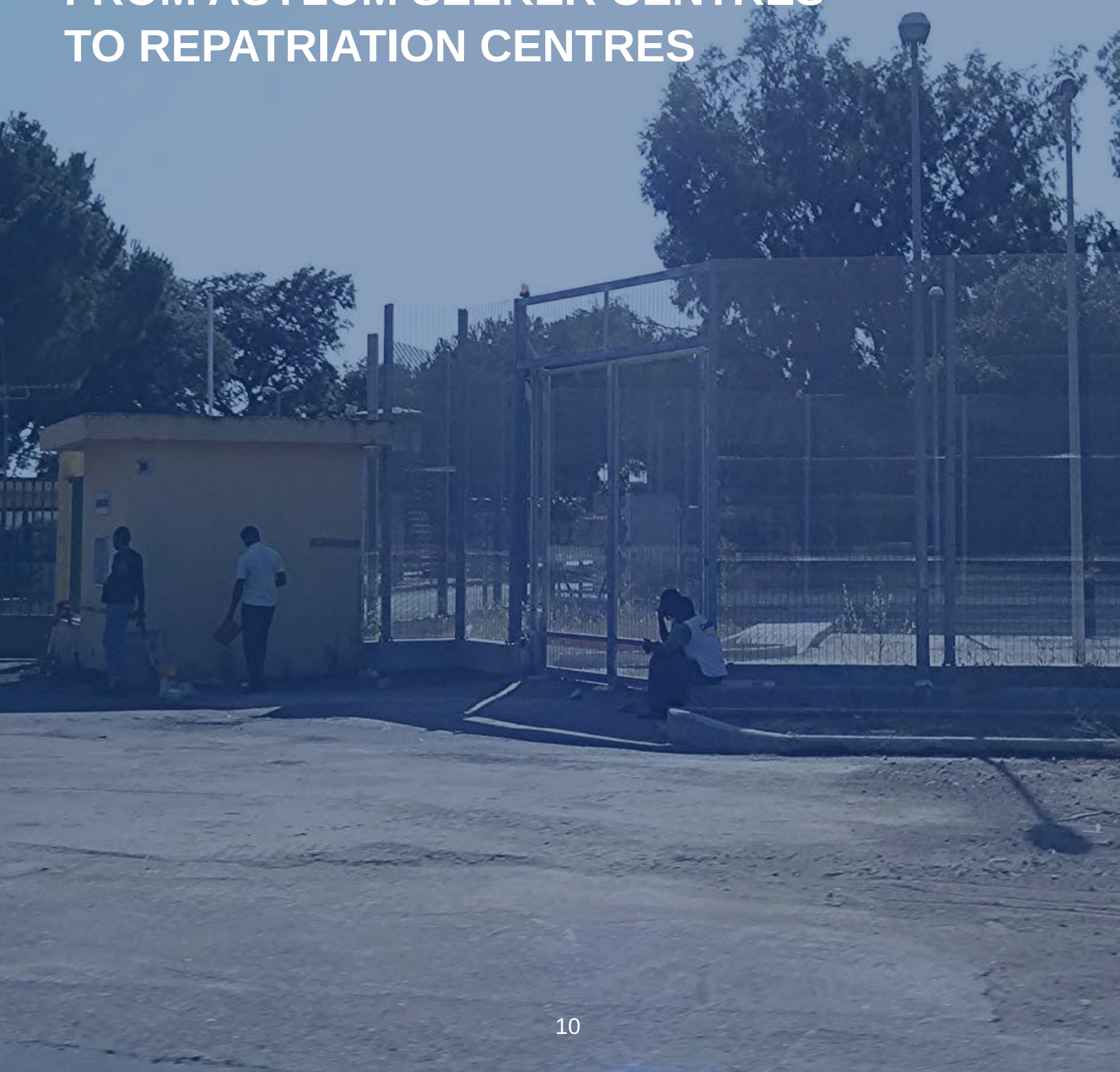
Those fleeing war and repression cannot be pushed back into darkness. Forced deportations to Afghanistan, now governed by a regime that denies fundamental rights, represent a stain on the global commitment to refugee protection. The number of forced repatriations grows every day, while media attention decreases or is almost non-existent, especially in Western media. We are allowing this crisis to become invisible, like many others in many border areas of the world. Here too, the lives, rights, and dignity of millions of people are daily sacrificed in the name of security. Every forced expulsion is a failure of international solidarity.



BORDER STORIES

CENTRES FOR MIGRANT PEOPLE IN ALBANIA

FROM ASYLUM SEEKER CENTRES
TO REPATRIATION CENTRES



The centres built by Italy in Albania, initially intended to host migrant people awaiting the outcome of their application for international protection, have been transformed by the Meloni government into repatriation centres for irregular migrant people on national territory. A game of transfers in which national jurisdiction moves beyond borders to respond to clear political strategies.

Furthermore, the decrees of detention of the remaining persons had not been validated by the 18th section of the civil court of Rome - competent on immigration - involving its transfer to Italy. The ruling of the Court of Rome, linked to the debated definition of the “safe countries” of origin, based mainly on a decision of the European Court of October 2024, had effectively blocked the Albania project, which for a few months awaited new use.

The centre in Gjader was transformed into a detention centre for repatriation (CPR), after months in which it had remained substantially empty, thanks to a decree-law approved in March which makes the part initially conceived as a CPR usable as any other CPR present on the Italian territory. The Gjader centre has a capacity of 48 places in the CPR part, which technically could go up to 140 when fully operational, thus leaving the majority of the structure unused, designed to accommodate up to 880 people in the detention centre.

People who have already received an expulsion order are held in the CPRs while waiting to be repatriated. The terrible living conditions of people locked up in CPRs are sadly well known and suicide attempts, riots, beatings and general episodes of violence and self-harm are a daily occurrence. Several parliamentarians and lawyers have made visits and inspections inside the Gjader centre, reporting serious episodes of violence and lack of respect for the fundamental rights of the inmates just a few days after its reopening: in the first weeks, dozens of what are called “critical events” have already occurred, including acts of self-harm, protests and suicide attempts.

Although the centre is not currently overcrowded, as CPRs in Italy are, there are other characteristics that make Albanian centres unsuitable for detaining migrant people, such as extreme isolation or the presence of serious threats to the safety of detainees, said Democratic Party MEP Cecilia Strada and lawyer Anna Pellegrino of the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI).

The “new” Albanian CPR in Gjader

“They will work.”, shouted Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni from the stage of Atreju, the political demonstration that brings together right-wing Italian parties last September. She was referring to the centres for migrant people built at the end of last year in Albania and strongly supported by the right-wing government. Initially, centres were designed to host thousands of asylum seekers rescued in international waters by the Italian authorities - therefore the Coast Guard, the Financial Police or the Navy - and then disembarked directly in Albania pending the examination of their application for international protection. The Italian Government had initially allocated around 65 million euros for the construction of the centres but analyses estimate the maintenance costs at around 120 million euros per year.

After initial attempts to make them work, the Meloni government was forced to take a step back: some people were not suitable or did not meet the criteria for detention in Albania, and that is why they had been brought to Italy.

While in some CPRs in Italy detainees can carry a cellphone, have conversations with their lawyers and receive packages with food and clothes, none of this is allowed in centres in Albania, where there are not even common rooms. Many of the people transported to Albania, who in several cases came from other Italian CPRs or from Italian prisons where they had already spent a considerable amount of time, had not even been told where they would be taken.

In general, the management of the Albanian CPR is anything but transparent: even the number of people actually detained was uncertain for days and definitive calculations were only possible during inspections by politicians and lawyers. Several dozen people have already been transferred to Albania, but several have also already been freed. The first was a 30-year-old Moroccan man, expelled from Italy on March 31st and brought to Gjader on April 11th, who applied for international protection while being held in Albania. Two days later, the Court of Appeal in Rome ruled that the conditions for his detention in Gjader were lacking, and his detention had become illegitimate. Other migrants were brought back to Italy due to fragile health conditions or the presence of a pending appeal at the time of transfer. However, some people have been repatriated to their countries of origin: before actually returning to the country, they had to pass through Italy again, in what seems like a game of snakes and ladders where migrants are moved like pawns by a government that is looking for a distraction to avoid showing its great failures.

At the end of March, the European Union had legitimized the Meloni government's project by defining the Albanian centres as "compliant with EU law". Magnus Brunner, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, recently stated that the European Union monitors living conditions inside the Italian-run CPR in Albania, verifying that the recommendations regarding detention conditions drawn up by the Council of Europe in 2021 are respected.

Furthermore, he added that the Italian initiative cannot hinder or prevent the implementation of European Union legislation and cannot compromise the rights recognized to individuals by member states, thus recalling the respect of national and international law.

According to Amnesty International, the CPRs do not meet international standards. Furthermore, the non-governmental organization accused the government of having detained the judges who had not validated the detentions, effectively compromising the independence of the institution. The European Court of Justice is also analyzing the Italy-Albania protocol, accusing the country in particular for sending asylum seekers rescued at sea to Albania, thus managing their requests for international protection outside the national territory, and for Italian support to Libya for the detention of migrants, despite the very serious human rights violations committed there.

LET'S TAKE STOCK

MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS

What happened on the migratory routes of Europe, of the Mediterranean, of the world?

What measures have governments taken?

Who provided assistance?

Who, instead, sanctioned, detained or rejected?

Let's take stock.

Libya, April 2

Libya's Internal Security Agency announced the suspension of the UNHCR and ten other non-governmental organizations operating in Libya, accusing them of undermining the country's sovereignty and security.

Morocco, April 2

53 people were rescued in the Atlantic Ocean by the cargo ship Frio Frown and brought ashore at the port of Tan Tan, Morocco.

Tunisia, April 7

The Tunisian government under Saïed ordered the dismantling of several informal camps around Sfax, sheltering approximately 7,000 migrants.

Tunisia, April 24

Tunisian police raided several informal refugee camps in the Sfax area, burning tents and the few essential belongings they found.

Rwanda, April 24

137 refugees were evacuated from Libya to Rwanda through the UNHCR's emergency transit mechanism.

Spain, April 2

In less than 24 hours, Salvamento Marítimo rescued 263 people traveling on five boats headed for the Canary Islands.

Albania, April 4

The Italian government deported 40 people with expulsion orders to the CPR in Gjader, Albania.

Germany, April 8

Germany suspended the UNHCR's refugee resettlement program while negotiations continued between the CDU and SPD parties to form a new federal government.

United Kingdom, April 9

432 people landed in the UK from France after crossing the English Channel in eight boats.

France, April 14

The French government reached an agreement with Morocco for deportations, establishing a joint task force to identify individuals and facilitate their return from France to their country of origin.

European Union, April 16

The European Commission presented its first list of "safe countries of origin," which included Bangladesh, Egypt, and Tunisia, to speed up asylum procedures. This could lead to discrimination against vulnerable people such as political dissidents, LGBTQIA+ community members, journalists, and activists.

Netherlands, April 23

The Dutch government announced that families with children whose asylum requests have been denied must await repatriation to their countries of origin in centers outside the European Union.



SEA

Lesbos, April 1

A boat sank off the island of Lesbos. The Greek Coast Guard reported that at least seven bodies were recovered and 23 people survived.

Civil Fleet, April 3

Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity) rescued 88 people in distress on two boats and disembarked them at the distant port of Genoa.

Libya, April 3-4

Two boats that departed from the Libyan coast were intercepted, and the approximately 148 people on board were deported back to Libya by the so-called Libyan coast guard.

Civil Fleet, April 5

Life Support (Emergency) rescued 215 people on three boats and disembarked them at the port of Naples.

Civil Fleet, April 5

Aita Mari (Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario) rescued 108 people on two boats and brought them to the port of Salerno.

Civil Fleet, April 6

The sailing boat Safira (Mediterranea Saving Humans) rescued 28 people in the SAR zone under Maltese and Tunisian responsibility and disembarked them at Lampedusa.

Tripoli, April 8

A boat that departed from Tripoli sank off the Libyan coast. Of the 37 people on board, only three survived.

Civil Fleet, April 12

Following alerts from Alarm Phone and the Seabird 3 aircraft (Sea-Watch), Safira assisted 50 people in distress until the Italian Coast Guard arrived, completed the rescue, and brought the people safely to Lampedusa.

Ikaria, April 14

A boat sank in the Aegean off the coast of Ikaria. 16 survivors reported the shipwreck, but the number of victims is unknown.

Farmakonisi, April 14

Two people died off Farmakonisi due to a shipwreck, while 39 others were rescued and disembarked at Leros.

Augusta, April 15

The Italian Coast Guard rescued 37 people fleeing Libya in the south of Sicily and brought them to the port of Augusta.

Lampedusa, April 16

18 people in distress were rescued off Lampedusa and safely disembarked on the island thanks to an Alarm Phone alert.

Sabrata, April 17

72 people fleeing Libya are reported missing between Lampedusa and Libya; they had departed from Sabrata five days earlier.

Civil Fleet, April 18

Life Support (Emergency) rescued 82 people in distress on a boat and disembarked them in Ravenna, a port assigned by Italian authorities even though it was four days' sailing from the rescue site.

Sicily, April 22

The Italian Coast Guard rescued about 90 people south of Sicily after a 24-hour wait and 20 emails sent by Alarm Phone reporting on the boat in danger.

Libya, April 24

75 people fleeing Libya were intercepted and deported by the so-called Libyan coast guard.

Civil Fleet, April 26-30

Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) rescued 126 people on two boats and disembarked them at Marina di Carrara, the port assigned by Italian authorities, 1,100 km from the Libyan SAR zone where the first rescue took place.

Civil Fleet, April 28

Aurora (Sea-Watch) assisted over 160 people on two boats until the Italian Coast Guard arrived, completed the rescue, and disembarked them in Lampedusa.

Lampedusa, April 29

46 people were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard after an Alarm Phone alert, and were disembarked in Lampedusa.

Civil Fleet, April 30

Humanity 1 rescued 68 people on two boats in distress and disembarked them at the port of La Spezia, assigned by authorities despite being more than 1,200 km from the Central Mediterranean.



Rome, April 7

The Italian state and several organizations, including the Community of Sant'Egidio, signed an agreement to evacuate 700 Afghan refugees to Italy through humanitarian corridors.



borderline-europe

REPORT

BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM THE CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN

Arrivals

The increased violence against people on the move (PoM) in Libya and Tunisia and the improved weather conditions in the Mediterranean have led to a large number of people crossing to Italy in the past month. For example, 1400 people reached Italy via the Central Mediterranean route during the course of the first weekend of April.

According to Borderline-Europe's numbers, 6330 people reached Italy by sea during the course of April 2025. Most refugees (5485 people, which correspond to 86.7%) arrived in Sicily, mostly in Lampedusa. The Ionian route played a secondary role in April; Borderline-Europe counted only one watercraft that arrived through this route. It carried 25 people who reached Roccella Ionica in Calabria from Libya.

Overall, Borderline-Europe can show that for about 74.2% of arrivals were watercrafts from Libya, but the percentage is most likely higher. The percentage of departures from Tunisia this month is 3.7%, slightly down compared to the previous month (4%). By our count, Italian authorities rescued around 46% of those arriving, while NGO vessels provided first aid in four cases. 19% of rescues were carried out by NGO vessels, with 1206 people in distress at sea rescued. According to data from Borderline-Europe, Frontex was involved in 21 rescues in April. 540 refugees (8.53%) reached Italian coastal waters (12 nautical miles from the coast) on their own without being intercepted or rescued. In some cases, they were taken to a safe port by Frontex or the Italian Coast Guard after reaching territorial waters. For 7.9% of arrivals, no information on rescue was available.

According to official data from the Italian Ministry of Domestic Affairs, 6328 people arrived in Italy during April. We were able to verify similar data for this month's arrivals, but we would like to point out that it is not possible to access the background of the data published by the Interior Ministry.

In April, a joint rescue of around 50 people in distress at sea involving Frontex, the ship "Safira" of the Mediterranean Saving Humans NGO and the Italian Coast Guard demonstrated that cooperation between the civilian rescue fleet and state institutions is indeed possible. After Eagle 1 (a frontex reconnaissance aircraft) reported the fiberglass vessel drifting at sea, the Safira headed to the rescue site as quickly as possible, where it arrived at the same time as an Italian Coast Guard watercraft, which eventually took the people on board. The crew of the Safira supported the rescue operation until the end. Borderline-Europe expressly welcomes this form of cooperation and emphasises that it should be the norm.

Pushbacks

This month we recorded 631 interceptions in the Central Mediterranean, where boats carrying refugees were pushed back or returned to the North African coast. 602 people were pushed back to Libya and 29 to Tunisia. These data is not certain, as the number of unreported cases is likely much higher.

Dead and missing

The number of dead and missing people in the Central Mediterranean is increasing month by month. According to data from Borderline-Europe, 71 people lost their lives while on the run during April and 120 people are still missing this month alone. The fate of 303 people is uncertain. Again, the number of unreported cases is likely much higher.

The individual fate of Hardi Karokh, originally from Kurdistan, highlights the brutal reality behind these numbers. The ship on which Hardi attempted to reach Europe last April sank near the Italian Coast. Only ten people survived, out of the 73 people on board, and Hardi wasn't among them. His father, Karokh Ismail, managed to find his son's grave in Italy only one year later, in April of this year, after taking a DNA test. Now he's trying to arrange the repatriation of his son's remains. He had to leave Italy early: his VISA had expired.

April 18th marked the 10th anniversary of one of the worst shipwrecks in recent history in the Mediterranean. A ship with over 1000 people on board capsized off the coast of Libya. The destination was the Italian island of Lampedusa. Only 28 of them were rescued by a Portuguese merchant ship; the Italian state's sea rescue mission Mare Nostrum had been replaced a few months earlier by Operation Triton under the leadership of Frontex. The explicit purpose of this operation was to secure Europe's external borders, not to save lives. The CivilMRCC team has published a readable categorization of the event, its political consequences and its resistance in the latest issue of ECHOES.

Borderline-Europe's latest publication, "Streiflicht Italien: Verlorene Leben, unerzählte Geschichten" (= "Spotlight on Italy: Lost Lives, Untold Stories"), also deals with deaths in the Mediterranean.

Routes towards Europe

Evacuation of refugee camps in Tunisia.

In early April, Tunisian authorities cleared out several self-managed camps in the region of Sfax: police officers destroyed tarpaulin huts and burned food and personal belongings. Even the small makeshift health centers have been razed. The affected migrant people have nothing left.

The situation for people from sub-Saharan Africa had already deteriorated massively in 2023. After Tunisian president Kais Saied called the migration a "conspiracy of foreign powers", the refugees, who were previously employed as day laborers, were forced to take refuge in olive groves to escape the violence unleashed against them. On top of this, since the migration deal with the EU was signed in August 2024, the Tunisian National Guard has intercepted almost all watercrafts carrying migrant people, many of whom are deported to the deserts of Libya and Algeria upon their return. Before the evictions, around 20,000 people lived in makeshift camps set up north of Sfax, where an average of five people died each month due to poor living conditions, in particular for the lack of medical care.

While, according to the spokesman for Tunisian National Guard Housse Eddine Jebabli, some refugees have been hosted by the Red Crescent and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), most of those affected by the evictions travel completely destitute in small groups. Additionally, a Senegalese refugee reports that his friends were taken by bus to the desert areas bordering Algeria and Libya and were abandoned there.

According to Jebabli, efforts are being made to push migrant people back to their countries of origin and some are willing to do so "voluntarily". On April 8, a group of refugees gathered in front of the OLM headquarters in Tunis to demand the acceleration of repatriation procedures to escape the misery of Tunisia.

Libyan “security authority” suspends humanitarian aid.

As reported by Agenzia Nova, on April 2 the Libyan “Internal Security Authority” (ISA) announced the suspension of ten civil society organizations: among others, UNHCR, Terre des Hommes Italia, Medici Senza Frontiere and Norwegian Refugee Councils were affected.

ISA is a coalition of armed groups active in eastern Libya, which Amnesty International accuses of several human rights violations. The “security authority” justifies the suspension of operating licences with the “promotion of values” that would be in contradiction with the Libyan identity - such as Christianity, atheism or homosexuality - as well as with money laundering and “favoring demographic change”: ISA accused the NGOs in question of pursuing the objective of settling “irregular migrant people” on Libyan territory under the guise of humanitarian aid.

According to Fluvio Vassallo Paleologo, migration expert and lawyer, the work ban imposed on NGOs could indicate a gradual reunification of the “security services” in Libya - part of this process is also the deterioration of living conditions of sub-Saharan migrant people in Libya, already subjects to continuous attacks.

Civil resistance

In April 2025, 19% of all rescues were carried out by NGOs. The “civilian fleet”, the civilian sea rescue service, was able to save a total of 1211 people. NGOs ships were involved in the rescue of 182 people before they were brought ashore by state authorities or Frontex. Six multiple rescues were carried out this month, including the triple Life Support rescue.

This rescue mission has once again highlighted the challenges civilian sea rescue organizations face in the Mediterranean. On April 5, the ship of the NGO Emergency, rescued 215 people in distress at sea in the Libyan SAR zone in three consecutive missions within a few hours. Alarm Phone had reported the first rescue: a sunken vessel with 93 people, many of whom are now considered missing. Shortly after, another 78 people were rescued from an overcrowded watercraft, followed by 44 people in a third operation. Among those rescued were several minors, 83 of whom were traveling unaccompanied, and several women, some of whom were pregnant.

Despite the serious emergency situation and medical assistance on board, the Italian Ministry of the Interior did not assign the Life Support to the nearest port, but to Ancona, which is approximately 1,200 kilometers away from the rescue area. Only after the express request of the crew was the ship authorized to take 44 particularly vulnerable people ashore in nearby Syracuse. Even the port of Naples, where the remaining 171 survivors were finally allowed to disembark on April 8, was approved only after consultations with the authorities.

A few days later, on April 17, Life Support again rescued 82 people from an overcrowded rubber watercraft off the coast of Libya. Again, among those rescued were many children and young people. This time, the Italian Ministry assigned the ship to the even more distant port of Ravenna, which they reached on April 22nd, after a further five-day journey.

The NGO strongly criticized the decision, since the hijackings not only prolonged the suffering of the already weakened people on board, but also significantly delayed the following rescue operation.

According to Emergency, this practice is in line with the current State strategy: NGOs ships are often assigned to ports in northern Italy, a procedure that not only delays humanitarian aid but also limits the ships' operational capacity. Since 2022, civilian rescue ships have had to travel 275,000 more kilometers.

The president of SOS MEDITERRANEE clearly stated: "A distant port is a rescue mission denied".

Frontex has to comment on push-back allegations for the first time before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has taken an important decision in the case FM v. Frontex: it decided to rule on Frontex's objection of inadmissibility only together with the substantive examination of the case. This means that, for the first time in a proceeding of this kind, Frontex is required to provide a substantial defence and to respond to the detailed and substantiated allegations.

The case was brought by NGOs Refugees in Libya and Front-Lex on behalf of FM, a 29 years old Sudanese asylum seeker. FM is stuck in Libya without access to an asylum procedure or protection from crimes against documented migrant people in that country.

The case is directed against Frontex's systematic cooperation with the Libyan coast guard, in particular through the transmission of information on refugee vessels, which leads to migrant people being pushed back to Libyan camps in violation of international law.

Specifically, the lawsuit accuses Frontex of an unlawful omission under Article 46(4) of the Frontex Regulation, namely that it has not stopped transmitting information on the position of watercrafts in distress at sea to Libyan actors.

Similar complaints against Frontex had previously usually been rejected on the grounds of inadmissibility without any further examination. However, this time the court decided to examine the case on the merits, a development with potentially far-reaching implications. This is an important step towards the rule of law at EU's external borders, effective legal protection for those affected and against the current impunity of Frontex.



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