



**MEDREPORT**  
**MAY 2022**

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# WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

In May, the number of people who were forced to flee, to cross the Mediterranean Sea and managed to arrive in Italy was 8,963.

Among them were 979 unaccompanied minors.

The pushbacks by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard continued daily this month: violent interceptions on board swift patrol boats against hundreds of people who overcame all fears to try to escape the Libyan horrors.

## NATIONALITIES DECLARED AT THE TIME OF LANDING (UPDATED TO MAY 31, 2022)

Egypt	3.388
Bangladesh	3.084
Tunisia	2.206
Afghanistan	2.031
Syria	1.315
Ivory Coast	887
Guinea	625
Iran	619
Eritrea	571
Sudan	426
Others*	4.264
<b>TOTAL**</b>	<b>19.416</b>

\* 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.

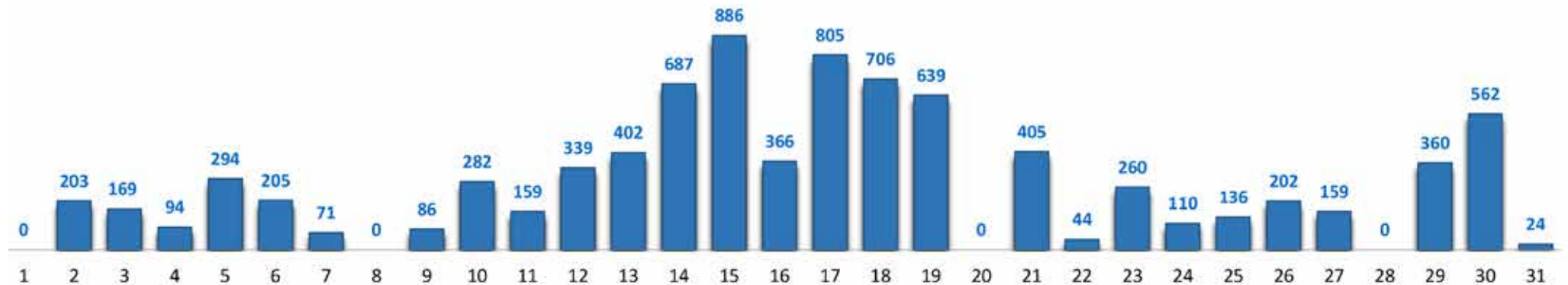
Source: Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic.

The data are subject to subsequent consolidation


On 21 April last, we recall, the European Commission confirmed that it wanted to continue strengthening the operations of the Libyan military by handing them new ships.

The tireless work of the humanitarian ships has made it possible to continue saving the honor of this torpid Europe: a big welcome to the new ship Aurora, with the crew of Sea Watch on board with the technical support of the British NGO SAR-Relief.

Is this, we ask ourselves, the Europe of rights?  
The Europe we believe in?



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.

A white patrol boat is shown from an aerial perspective, moving through dark blue water. The boat is leaving a white wake behind it. The boat has a red hull and a white superstructure. There are people visible on the deck. The text "CHRONICLE OF MAY OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN" is overlaid on the right side of the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# CHRONICLE OF MAY OF THE FACTS IN MEDITERRANEAN

## DAY 2

After five long days waiting for a safe port, the Italian authorities assigned the port of Augusta to the 101 shipwrecked people on board MSF's humanitarian ship Geo Barents.

## DAY 3

An evacuation became necessary on board the humanitarian ship Ocean Viking: a patient in critical medical condition was boarded on a patrol boat of the Italian Coast Guard.

The Libyan armed forces, in two separate operations, intercepted and pushed back 145 people fleeing Libya on a boat. Among them 18 women and 9 children. On the same day, in another operation, the patrol boat Zawiya of the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and pushed back 20 people.

## DAY 4

The crew on board the humanitarian ship of the United 4 Rescue alliance rescued 57 people, who were in distress on board a fragile dinghy.

The Italian authorities assigned the port of Pozzallo for the safe disembarkation of the 294 shipwrecked people on board Ocean Viking, the humanitarian ship with the Sos Méditerranée crew on board.

## DAY 5

At dawn, the humanitarian ship Ocean Viking carrying the Sos Méditerranée crew and 294 shipwrecked people rescued in the previous days, landed at the port of Pozzallo. Shortly afterwards, the Italian authorities assigned the port of Pozzallo for the safe disembarkation of all the other shipwrecked people on board the humanitarian ship.

The Turkish armed forces, in coordination with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, intercept a boat with 17 people on board. The pushback to Libya is yet another violation of international law.

## DAY 8

In the evening, the crew on board SeaWatch4 rescued 88 people in distress. On board, therefore, 145 shipwrecked people.

Libyan armed forces intercepted a boat in the area north of Al-Mutrad. 70 people on board, including several women and children. In the same hours of the night, the patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and dismissed 83 people on board a boat fleeing Libya.

## DAY 9

At dawn, the MSF crew on board Geo Barents rescues some 200 people from two boats in distress.

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard celebrates the 'rescue' of 73 people who, on board a fragile boat, were attempting to reach European shores. A 'rescue' behind which lies yet another violation of the principle of non-refoulement.

## DAY 10

Twenty-four hours after the previous major rescue, the MSF crew aboard Geo Barents rescues 59 people in distress on board a distressed vessel.

In the evening, again, after a long five-hour operation, the MSF crew carried out two more rescues. 111 people boarded the Geo Barents.

## DAY 12

The patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, in two separate operations, intercepted and pushed back 153 people, including many women and children.

The Libyan Red Crescent identifies a lifeless body in the Al-Hawatah area in northern Libya.

## DAY 13

The patrol boat Ubari of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and pushed back 75 people who, on board a fragile boat, were attempting to flee Libya atrocities.

## DAY 14

The patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard continues to operate acts of refoulement: in two separate operations during the day, 61 people were refused entry.

## DAY 15

The pushbacks by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard continue. The patrol boat Zawiya pushed back 41 people to Libya, the country from which they were fleeing. The same fate befell the 201 people intercepted by the patrol boat Zuwara.

## DAY 16

The patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepts another 78 people on board a boat fleeing the Libyan coast. Women and children are also on board.

## DAY 17

The Italian authorities assigned the port of Augusta as a safe port of disembarkation for the 145 people on board Sea Watch 4, rescued in the central Mediterranean in the previous days.

The patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted 97 people who were trying to reach European shores on board a fragile boat.

## DAY 18

After many days of waiting, the Italian authorities assigned the port of Augusta for the disembarking of Geo Barents.

## DAY 19

The Sos Méditerranée crew aboard Ocean Viking rescued 158 people in distress aboard two fragile overloaded and unseaworthy dinghies. Among the survivors are six pregnant women, several children and a three-month-old baby.

The disembarkation of the 471 shipwrecked people rescued by the MSF crew on board the Geo Barents, which took place after ten days at sea waiting for a safe harbor to disembark in, was suddenly interrupted: 210 of them were detained on board and sent back to the roadstead. The reason: the quay is used for commercial operations (sic!).

The patrol boat Ubari of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and pushed back 122 people.

The Libyan Red Crescent identifies two lifeless bodies near the town of Zawiya.

## DAY 21

Another violation of the principle of non-refoulement to which 122 people are subjected: captured by local militias, they are taken to the docks in Tripoli.

## DAY 22

During the night, the Sos Méditerranée crew on board the Ocean Viking carried out another rescue operation: the recipients of the intervention were 75 people who were in distress on board a rubber dinghy 42 miles off the Libyan coast. The crew on board the sailing ship Nadir had assisted them in the previous hours.

The Libyan military intercepted and pushed back 84 people on board a boat north of the Libyan coast. Also on board were six women and three children. In the same hours, the patrol boat Ubari of the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted 37 people.



## DAY 23

One day after the previous rescue, the Sos Méditerranée crew rescued 64 people who were in distress on board a fragile wooden boat in the Maltese search and rescue area.

A few hours later, the evacuation of a person in serious medical condition on board Ocean Viking became necessary.

Another pushback of entry for a boat carrying 101 people. The violation took place at the hands of the Libyan military. On the same day, soldiers on board the patrol boat Ras Jadar of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted around 50 people on board a boat north of Tripoli. Women and children were also on board.

## DAY 24

The patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, in two separate operations, intercepted and pushed back 168 people.

Another lifeless body arrives on the Libyan coast: the discovery was made by the Libyan military.

## DAY 28

The patrol boat Zawiya of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and pushed back 95 people.

## DAY 29

After days of waiting, another evacuation becomes necessary on board the Ocean Viking humanitarian ship: the recipients of medical assistance are a pregnant woman together with her husband. On the same day, one of the survivors on board, exhausted and desperate, jumps off the ship. The unjustified delay in assigning a safe port continues to endanger those fleeing the Libyan coast.

## DAY 30

In its first operation in the central Mediterranean, Aurora, Sea Watch's new humanitarian ship, rescues 85 people in distress. It is a 14-meter British Trent-class rescue vessel specially converted to operate in the Mediterranean. With a speed of 25 knots, Aurora is one of the fastest ships in the civilian fleet and is operated with the technical support of the British NGO SAR-Relief.

The patrol boat Alanqa 1 of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and pushed back 64 people attempting to escape from the Libyan coast on board a boat.

## DAY 31

The 85 people rescued by the crew of the humanitarian ship Aurora disembark in the safe port of Lampedusa. The first mission, therefore, ends as hoped: rapid intervention, people rescued, safe disembarkation.



# IUVENTA PRELIMINARY HEARING

On the 21st of May 2022, the court of Trapani launched the trial against four crew members of the Iuventa and other 17 defendants of Medecins Sans Frontières and Save The Children.

The trial was suspended a couple of hours after it convened and proceedings will continue. Three of the Iuventa defendants appeared personally in court today on charges of “facilitation to unauthorized entry to Italy.”

The lawyers of the Iuventa asked the prosecution to reconsider its denial for the presence of trial observers and press, but the prosecution refused for now.

The lawyers together with the ECCHR hope the prosecution will reassess for subsequent preliminary hearings.

“Today’s hearing was about transparency. Secret justice is justice of dictatorships and not of a state of rule of law. Today we have regrettably acknowledged that the trial took place behind closed doors.”

Nicola Canestrini, lawyer of the Luventa

“Rescuing people where they can be rescued is the right thing to do. This should never be subject to a political discussion. I am part of the generation which grew up asking their grandparents „what did you do against it?“. I owe the answer to that very question to future generations. Yet, today we face trial for having saved fellow humans at sea.”

Kathrin Schmidt, former Head of Mission onboard the Luventa

**“Independent observation is crucial, given the significant implications of this case for human rights and broader civil society actions. To ensure transparency and public debate, the proceedings should not happen behind closed doors.”**

**Allison West, Senior Legal Advisor with ECCHR**

The Luventa crew decries the continuation of the process and insists that the charges against them should have been dropped in the first place. In the event of a conviction, the accused could face up to 20 years in prison. Amnesty International, ECCHR and Members of the European Parliament also call for the immediate termination of the proceedings.

“The outcome of today’s trial prolongs the murderous reality in the Mediterranean Sea, through maintaining the uncertainty for other search and rescue NGOs of being prosecuted as well. Since our ship was seized in August 2017, more than 10,000 people have lost their lives trying to reach safety in Europe. Not to forget the countless people forcibly returned to torture and death in Libya.”

Kathrin Schmidt, one of the defendants.

# MISSION 11

**Mission 11 set sail in early April.**

**Due to adverse marine weather conditions, the Ionian Sea had to repair in Lampedusa, but we were still on patrol in the Libyan SAR and unfortunately we witnessed two rejections by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.**

## INTERVIEW

# DAVIDE DINICOLA

**FIRST OFFICER OF THE IONIAN SEA**

**AWAITING THE DEPARTURE OF THE MISSION 11.**

**“On board a yacht, while sailing towards Greece, we happened to recover a person at sea: there I experienced that ‘humanitarian situation’ that sooner or later upsets each of us.”**

## **What made you decide to pursue seafaring/ maritime life?**

It has always been my dream to sail, my father is a former sailor but he was happy with the decision. I was enrolled in the scientific school but immediately after the first year I asked to change and go to the Nautical. My father was not happy about it.

After the Nautical School I was lucky enough to embark on the seafarer's life right away and I was truly delighted. My father, now retired, was a 'car guy'. My goal was to 'surpass him' and get to command.

## **And what motivates you to this day to continue doing it, even if with a different mission?**

Undoubtedly, the Mare Jonio experience, which is now no longer just an experience but life in its own right: I have known Mediterranea Salvando Uomini since 2019, which has a totally different inspiration from my initial dreams.

Now, I am very happy to have known this world. In the beginning, I worked on luxury yachts for a few years, where life was wonderful, always in uniform, ready to welcome shipowners/owners, but I was never 100% happy, in fact I was almost annoyed. I always remember one episode in particular: on board a yacht, while sailing to Greece, we happened to retrieve a person from the sea. There I experienced that 'humanitarian situation' that sooner or later upsets each one of us: the owner and the captain on board disagreed, but the sailor and I opposed the 'general staff' (that pyramid system that exists on board a ship) by forcing them to maneuver to recover this man. In doing so we saved his life.

After that I approached MSH and with the experience of Mare Jonio, I can now say that I feel truly fulfilled and happy with what I do.

## **How did you approach the reality of Mediterranea? Did you already know it?**

I got to know Mare Jonio thanks to the media: at the time there was talk of this very famous NGO flying the Italian commercial flag, NGOs were not well regarded at the time, it was 2019, a somewhat gray historical-political period. Not that it is idyllic now, but back then the situation was definitely more suffering. I approached MSH thanks to a Facebook post by a politician I don't like, who shamelessly attacked it, inciting violence: I took the liberty of replying in a subtle way to his comment. Many people liked that reply, they told me they worked for Mediterranea, others had worked for Sea Watch, Ocean Viking.... From there on it was a continuous discovery, an advance in all respects.

## **Was Mission 10 your first mission? How did it go and what did it represent for you on a professional and personal level?**

No, I had done two others in 2019, always with Mare Jonio.

I think Mission 10 was the most important in the history of MSH and probably of all the other NGOs that carry out patrols and rescue in the Mediterranean. Why is it particular and important? The Mare Jonio was stationary for several months, so Mission 10 represented a new beginning, it was Mission 10 but at the same time year zero, a new chapter. Leaving for that Mission brought a lot of worries, we did not know what could happen

to us: we knew that that route was the most critical in terms of number of landings and that it would be really difficult. On the 19th of January at around 23:30, we spotted this 'incredible' boat: more than 100 people aboard a 7-meter wooden and fiberglass boat that was in a very bad shape and had difficulty maneuvering and floating. The team on board (from Mare Jonio) was fantastic, I am lucky to work with wonderful guys with such big hearts. Mediterranea Terra also helped us a lot: the problems of a rescue are not only practical, there's also the psychological factor: waking up and working continuous hours is really hard, there's the stress, the thought of people outside.

Going back to the rescue, we put out to sea with two ribs. The situation was really bad: we could only see who was on top, half the people were underneath them, under their feet. The situation inside the boat was easy to imagine: the smell of diesel was very strong and we were a bit scared. The situation was getting complicated, when we realized that the wooden boat was not easy to maneuver: the Rescue Team was great because we managed to get those little more than 100 people to safety in about four hours. It was excruciating and exhausting but you can't feel the fatigue in those moments because the adrenaline is through the roof and the goal is to get as many people as possible to safety.

At 11.25am the next day (20 January) we spotted another similar boat with another 107/108 people on board. We launched again and rescued them too, this time more easily because it was daylight. The problems came later because at that point we had 214 people on board without knowing where to go: we had asked Lampedusa to enter the port, we were initially denied, and we only entered on 22 January at around 9am to disembark about 140 people. These people who were on board,

however, did not have a closed place to stay: 214 people is too many for the safety of navigation, of the Mare Jonio, but above all for their own safety, so we were a little afraid and frightened. I have to be honest: on board, our mission leader showed us a lot of strength and confidence, and it's fair to mention her name: Sheila Melosu, she was fantastic, as was the rest of the crew.

**By telling us what life on board was like, you anticipated our next questions. How did you get on with the crew? And what is and how much does the motivational level influence life on board? Are the ideals enough to compensate for the stress? Is there any particular episode that struck you that you would like to recount?**

There are various other situations that happened on Mission 10. The event that shocked everyone a bit was the salvage of the second barge: as soon as they set foot on the Mare Jonio they started dancing and hugging the people who were already on board (already rescued from the first barge): it was an explosion of tears of joy. I still remember the sailor Giovanni, he started crying - it was the first rescue for him - and asked me how it was possible that there were children of 4/6 months on a wooden boat about to sink.

How can one answer this question? It is amazing, literally, how human violence is still so entrenched in 2022. The adrenaline and the desire to do good doesn't make you feel the tiredness, the pain, it doesn't make you want to drop everything and go home; on the contrary, it makes you want to go back to sea and rescue again.

**The rescue of migrants is within a political framework - of government policies at least. What is your relationship with politics? Has this relationship changed since you are with Mediterranea, which has a strong political motivation?**

I was very aware of the situation especially regarding the issue of migration in general: I am a Sicilian, we Sicilians are used to migrating, my family used to migrate long ago to look for work in Canada, in Germany, in America. When I joined MSH the awareness changed: it is one thing to see this situation from the outside, it is another to see it from the inside, that is, to be publicly attacked on a daily basis by the media, by politicians who think they have the power to justify any of their actions by blaming people who are not just migrants but refugees and fleeing wars and violence. The situation had become very annoying because really excessive terms were being used, resulting in an unjustifiable incitement to violence, and I was even more annoyed by the support these politicians were receiving from a large section of public opinion.

**Soon mission 11 will start, how do you feel? What kind of situation do you expect to find at sea and what kind of institutional collaboration do you hope for given the polarization of international attention on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine? What are your expectations your fears (thinking about governmental responsibility for the detention of migrants on board and their reception in general)**

I expect great maneuvers from Mission 11: we are better prepared after the experience of Mission 10. The landings continue and we are more than confident that we can help many people. On the issue of reception, I am confident: I am convinced that this time the government will be more willing to help us and will do so, given the ongoing conflict. No distinction should be made between refugees and I don't think the government will obstruct this time.

**I am a positive person and, despite everything, I always will be. I am convinced that Mission 11 will end in the best possible way.**

# UCRAINA #SAFEPASSAGE3

## KIEV

“THE FIRST  
HUMANITARIAN AID  
CARAVAN FOLLOWING  
THE AIR STRIKES.”





## **MEDITERRANEA SAVING HUMANS' Safe Passage Mission has just arrived in Kiev. It is the Italian civil society's first convoy to arrive in the capital with humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian people following Thursday night's missile attack.**

Volunteers from the rescue organization, whose mission is to protect life and human rights both at sea and on land, immediately began unloading more than 5.5 tonnes of essential medicines, food, and other basic necessities collected by the city of Bologna for its twin city, Kharkiv.

The convoy consisted of six vans: four from Rome, one from Milan, and one from the region of Veneto. "We traveled through the suburbs of Bucharest and Iprin which were devastated by the Russian assault. Upon entering Kiev, we found a surreal scene. Several buildings were damaged by the bombings, but there was also a strong desire to resist the attacks and return to normal city life," Sara Alawia, the spokesperson for the MEDITERRANEA mission, tells us.

She continues her account, "The trip was difficult. We left Lviv at dawn and took a route along secondary roads, through bombed out bridges and on dirt roads in the woods. We didn't let anyone outside the convoy know our itinerary for fear we would become a high-value target."

Sara Alawia adds, "We hope that the aid collected by the city of Bologna, which we are delivering directly into the hands of the administration of Kharkiv, can be a small contribution to relieving the suffering of that city which is now half-destroyed by the bombings that are still underway today."

"In the upcoming days, we will meet with civil and religious authorities and with Ukrainian associations committed to upholding human and civil rights. And, above all," the mission spokesperson concludes, "we will bring refugees, the most vulnerable people, back to Italy with us, without any discrimination. Because, our message of peace is real and concrete solidarity with the population that is under attack."





# THE LANGUAGE TO UNITE: ESCAPING LITERATURE

## INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR FEDERICA GRAZIANI

Gabriele Suriano

«What's in a writer's hands, more than sentences? ». Zadie Smith posed this question during a keynote lecture she attended in Firenze in 2011, focusing on the topic “Why writing?”. And I wonder, what has a prisoner on his hands, if not exactly literature?

Federica Graziani, scholar of philosophy and literature, gave a practical demonstration of the matter during the project “Fiorire nel pensiero” (lit. “blossom through thought”) by the association A Buon Diritto: a creative writing workshop, lead by Ivan Talarico, within the prison of Frosinone. The text realized by the detainees who took part to the activity made it possible to put together the book “Letteratura d'evasione”, published by Il Saggiatore.

Literature rarely had a role within the prison system, where areas are usually overcrowded, characterized by high rates of recurring violence, bad detention conditions. Furthermore, we must also consider the deep-rooted belief that reclusion has the only goal to punish the detainee, denying the evident social advantages and cost-savings resulting from the rehabilitation of former prisoners.

To open the prison: this sentence feels like a paradox but, behind it, there's a hidden possibility – perhaps the only one to get to a fairer society. To connect detention facilities with society and vice-versa. Taking care to break the segregation – from a judicial, repressive and therefore human perspective – which continues to permeate detention structures.

«What's in a writer's hands, more than sentences?» therefore Zadie Smith asked. The British writer reminded us to take into account the possibility – more comedic than tragic- «to be an excellent chair maker who has made a chair surplus to demand, unnecessary in this economy, that nobody wants, or needs.» Escaping literature shows the need of reminding people living within a correctional institute. Inside of it, there can clearly be excellent chair makers that we, «who live on the outside and who knows what we ever think about», may need.

## **INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR FEDERICA GRAZIANI**

**Literature, is by definition and mission, metaphor of a boundless horizon. Jail, in the meanwhile, is a brutal absence of freedom. Federica, which may be the role of literature within correctional institutes, in your opinion?**

The project has been conducted within a suburban penitentiary, suffering from a lack of treatment programs, meaning those activities that materialize the art. 27 of the Italian Constitution, namely committing detainees towards what is awfully named as “re-socialization”, the re-introduction to society. In my experience, as author of this project, I could notice how this

kind of activities, which are usually related to work and learning, handle a relapse that may seem remote from the steamy peaks of literature. My interest was to overcome this thought.

The jail environment tends towards a jumble of conversations detention-only-oriented: besides the compulsory limitation of freedom of movement, but – some way – the restriction happens also through the speeches, words, environment, imagination. The jail speeches on jail become common and omni-pervasive: the detainee's whole life revolves around the crime. The latter is a part of that biography, an important and brutal part, but still a part of that biography. The attempt to work with literature and make them, as they actually became in the end, authors. The main goal was to summon all the other parts belonging to these people. To summon them, first of all, to their own awareness.

On one side literature requires a suspension of judgment, on the other side, the multiplication of points of view. To break the repetitive constriction inside those walls. Ivan Talarico's work, has been instead, to start from the analysis of one's biography and then step by step moving imagination towards more fantastic areas. It seemed like the whole work started from an inner sight, getting in the end to an expanding gaze getting to describe the other from oneself.

**Which difficulties have you faced during this project?**

The actual issues were different from the ones we expected. What happened among the participants, even though they shared the same cell as fellow inmates, is that they came to know each other better on things that would never emerge

differently. The participants knew the crimes that led their fellows to jail. By writing about one another, they found new complicities and also distances. The participation rate has been high, constant and intense. We chose not to put boundaries in any way in the participation in this workshop. At the beginning we asked ourselves whether difficulties with the Italian languages could compromise the writing work that could be made. Then, actually, it happened that people with poor knowledge of the Italian language could improve their skills during the project. It also happened, in the meanwhile, that a distance arose between them and those who were more skilled in the Italian language. This issue has been solved all along the project.

There has been the possibility to elaborate it and, maybe, to acknowledge the matter that writing also means letting the beneficiary read and understand, to get closer to readers. We could then notice how people with a poor vocabulary were more committed in trying to find a range of feelings with more complex words.

### **A relevant part of a writer's work is also this: the target reader. May I ask you, what's the condition of libraries within prisons?**

The picture is mixed. A bad exemplarity of the penitentiary system is that the life conditions of the detention experience are different from one place to another.

There's the example of the main metropolis' jails, in the richest regions of Italy, with better conditions and therefore also very rich libraries, then there's also the world of suburban prisons, which are usually decaying, small, cold. The latter usually contain very poor libraries and the access is not guaranteed due to the shortage of stuff.

### **Different detention for same crimes.**

Yes, there's inequality on the conditions, which is at the base of many of the problems faced within prisons.

### **Annie Ernaux writes that literature is like "giving shape to desire", "hat taste of going beyond and to go beyond by writing". Has literature represented this also to the students of your course?**

I believe that literature is a fundamental part for every kind of sensitivity, to give shape to existence, and therefore to make a wish come true. I think some wishes have been intercepted, wishes of escape, evasion, for some of the people participating in the workshop. According to my sensitivity, it is not a matter of success or failure: this binary point of view is just what I want to avoid.

# REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE



## NEWS FROM CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ARRIVALS

According to our counting, 7,933 people arrived on Italian shores in May. UNHCR counted 7,683 and IOM 8,080 people for the same period. The Italian Ministry of the Interior speaks of 8,655 arrivals. In the month of May, it is impossible to understand the origin of the large differences in the counts of the individual governmental and non-governmental bodies. However, this shows even more how urgently there is a need for an independent and overarching European body to monitor the situation on the Mediterranean and during landings.

After the route across the Ionian Sea became quieter at the beginning of the year, the dangerous route from Turkey, Lebanon or Eastern Libya to Italy is being used much more again. More than a third of the people who arrived came via the Ionian Sea. More on this and on the arrival conditions in Puglia and Calabria can be found in our current issue of the newsletter "Sirocco".

# PULLBACKS

3,288 people were intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard on their way to Europe in May and detained in Libyan detention camps. 419 people were returned to Tunisia by the Tunisian navy.

For years, IOM Libya has published a weekly graphic overview in which pullbacks to Libya are shown. Since 23 May, however, these processes are no longer referred to as “interceptions” but as “people disembarked back”. This small linguistic change has above all a great political significance, as it legitimises illegal pullbacks to Libya.

# DEAD AND MISSING

33 people died in the central Mediterranean Sea in May alone. 88 people are missing after boat accidents, but their bodies could not be found. UNHCR speaks of only 96 and IOM of 114 dead and missing. We must always remember that we are talking about human beings and not simple numbers.

Meanwhile, there are new investigations and findings on a tragic accident off the Lebanese coast on 23 April. On board a boat that later sank were Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians. The Lebanese navy was able to save 48 people from drowning, while at least seven, including a little girl,

could only be recovered dead. Dozens are still missing today. Many of the survivors testified that a deliberate collision on the part of the Lebanese navy with the unseaworthy boat of the refugees led to the capsizing. This is denied by the Lebanese government. Moreover, there is no official statement confirming the number of passengers, missing or dead. The government shows no effort to identify victims or search for missing persons. Refugees, survivors, and relatives are demanding an all-inclusive clarification and protection of the rights of refugees.

On 6 May, a sailboat with 110 refugees on board arrived autonomously at a beach in Siderno (Calabria). The waves caused it to crash uncontrollably in a jetty. Many of the refugees went overboard. Although the boat was only a few metres from the shore, there was great panic. Two people drowned.

Another boat capsized in Tunisian territorial waters. 76 people are presumed dead in this accident, but only one body was recovered.



# PATHS TO EUROPE

Repeatedly, we witness Malta's refusal to coordinate and rescue maritime emergencies in its own, very large, search and rescue zone. Maltese authorities, supported by Frontex, seem to watch refugee boats for a long time with the aim that the so-called Libyan coast guard also comes to Maltese search and rescue waters to take people back to Libya illegally. This behaviour was increasingly observed by civil organisations in May, documented and in some cases fortunately prevented. The cooperation of merchant vessels and sea rescue NGOs is very positive.

On 06 May, Alarm Phone informed competent authorities about 34 people in distress off Benghazi, Libya. As the only actor in range, the merchant vessel BerlinExpress was able to stabilise the boat but could not take the people on board due to the rough sea in the Maltese search and rescue zone. Together with Alarm Phone, SEA EYE 4, which was still far away at that time, the German shipping company of the BerlinExpress and the MRCC in Bremen, a rescue by BSG BAHAMAS and a transfer to the SEA EYE 4 could be organised. The Maltese authorities could not be reached during the entire rescue of almost four days.

Less than a week later, it was again SEA EYE 4 that was able to take on board 24 people in distress at sea in the Maltese search and rescue zone. The Maltese authorities had previously explicitly instructed the merchant vessel ROSS SEA to observe the case from a distance and not to rescue.

This clearly contradicts international maritime law. SEA EYE 4 was able to bring all survivors ashore in Pozzallo on 15 May.

Eventually, on 15 May, the Malta MRCC instructed the merchant vessel MSC Valeria to ignore a distress at sea and continue its own voyage. The 26 people already reported to Alarm Phone at this point that their boat was filling up with water and they had no food or drinking water left on board. After two days at sea, they were rescued by the Italian coast guard.

In Sardinia, after a long break, boats started arriving again. Most of these departed from Algeria. Meanwhile, the islands west of Sicily also recorded sporadic arrivals of refugee boats. Most of these depart from Tunisia. An arrival of 34 Tunisian refugees ended for all of them in the deportation prison in Trapani without any examination of the reasons for their flight. This is a practice that often happens to North African citizens from Tunisia and Egypt, but which is hardly ever reported on.

# CIVIL RESISTANCE

1,562 people were rescued by NGOs in May and brought to Italian shores.

Once again, the trial between former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and the civilian rescue ship Open Arms negotiates about the distress of refugee boats at sea. Salvini's lawyer Giulia Bongiorno twists the roles and puts Open Arms on trial. A new, previously inadmissible video is supposed to prove that the rescue of Open Arms was not a maritime emergency. As has been pointed out several times, this calls into question the unseaworthiness of the completely overcrowded refugee boats, which often lack propulsion, and which also usually have neither enough drinking water and food nor enough fuel on board for a crossing to Europe. This fact is highly problematic and legitimises a non-intervention and drowning of refugees by European authorities.

Standoffs with civilian ships, i.e., the time during which all coastal states block the allocation of a safe port, are becoming longer again. Most recently, in May, Geo Barents had to wait 11 days for a safe port, Ocean Viking 12 days and Sea-Watch 4 even 14 days. All three ships were eventually able to dock in Italy and had highly traumatised people and medical emergencies on board during the unnecessary delay of the disembarkation.

When the Geo Barents (MSF) was finally allowed to dock in Augusta on 19 May after 11 days of waiting, the disembarkation of the 472 survivors on board was interrupted after six hours and the ship was ordered to leave the port of Augusta, even though 238 rescued people were still on board. In their desperation, six survivors jumped into the sea the next morning to swim back to the harbour.

Only on 21 May the disembarkation of the remaining rescued was completed in Augusta. The Italian authorities did not give any reasons for the delay in disembarkation.

Meanwhile, the monitoring sailing vessel Nadir (RESQSHIP) was able to prevent an illegal pullback to Libya by stabilising the boat before the arrival of the so-called Libyan coast guard. The patrol boat of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard circled around the refugee boat and the Nadir several times. The boat already had refugees from another illegal interception on board. One of these persons jumped into the sea during the encirclement, hoping to avoid a pullback to Libya. He was rescued by speedboat from RESQSHIP. Together with the 74 people from the stabilised inflatable boat, he could be taken on board by the Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) a few hours later.

Again, the sailboat Nadir (RESQSHIP) together with the sailboat Astral (Proactiva Open Arms) prevented another tragedy a few days later on 24 May. While Maltese authorities once again refused to rescue and coordinate, the two sailing vessels were able to distribute life jackets to 110 people on a wooden boat in the Maltese SAR zone - shortly before the boat capsized. Only thanks to the life jackets and the quick intervention of the two monitoring ships, all 110 people were safely transferred to life rafts and the Astral, which was able to bring them to Lampedusa after three days.

The new speedboat Aurora (Sea-Watch) had its first successful mission at the end of May. Again, from the Maltese SAR zone, with the help of Alarm Phone and Nadir, 85 people whose boat was already filling with water were rescued to Lampedusa.



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