



SAVING HUMANS
MEDITERRANEA

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MEDREPORT
AUGUST 2022

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WHAT DO THE NUMBERS TELL US

In August, the number of people who were forced to flee, cross the Mediterranean Sea and managed to arrive in Italy was 15,998. Among them were 1,705 unaccompanied minors.

The issue of immigration has returned powerfully to TV lounges and rallies of political figures in the run-up to the September 25 elections. Nonetheless, we are witnessing something we have seen before: rescues entrusted almost exclusively to workers aboard civilian ships, overflowing hotspots in dilapidated conditions, and increasing fragility for those in need of help.

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

Tunisia	11.742
Egypt	9.958
Bangladesh	8.727
Afghanistan	4.256
Syria	3.118
Ivory Coast	1.917
Eritrea	1.563
Guinea	1.303
Pakistan	1.271
Iran	1.175
Others*	12.138
TOTAL**	57.168

* 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.

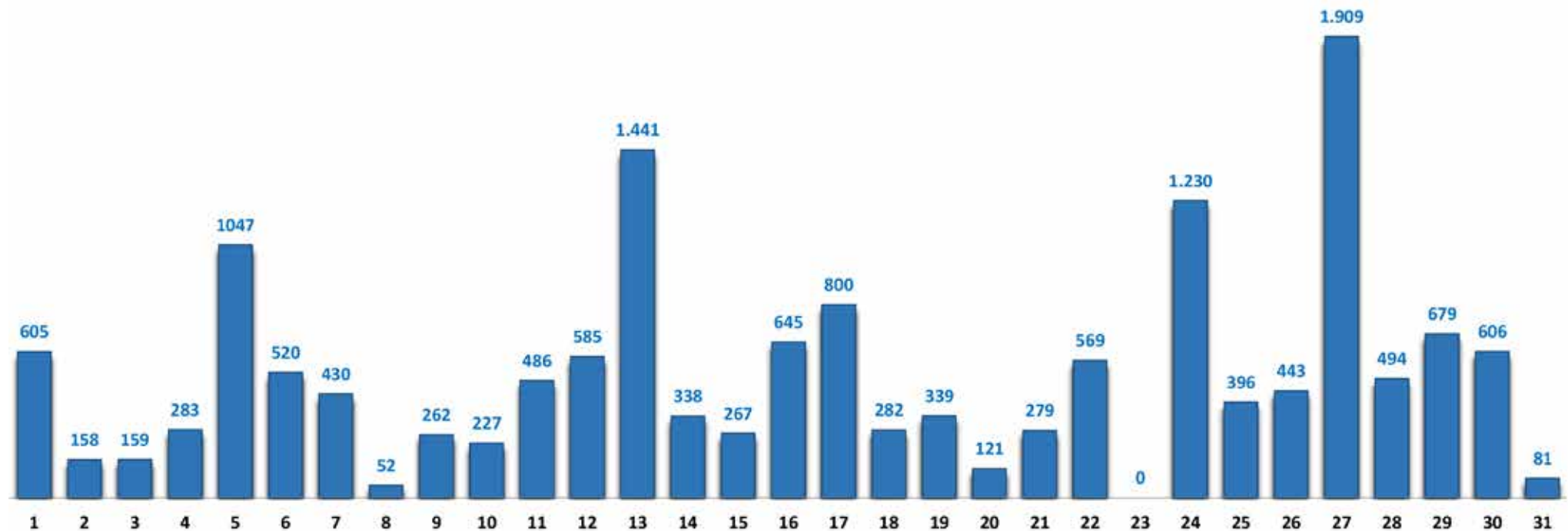
Source: Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic.

The data are subject to subsequent consolidation

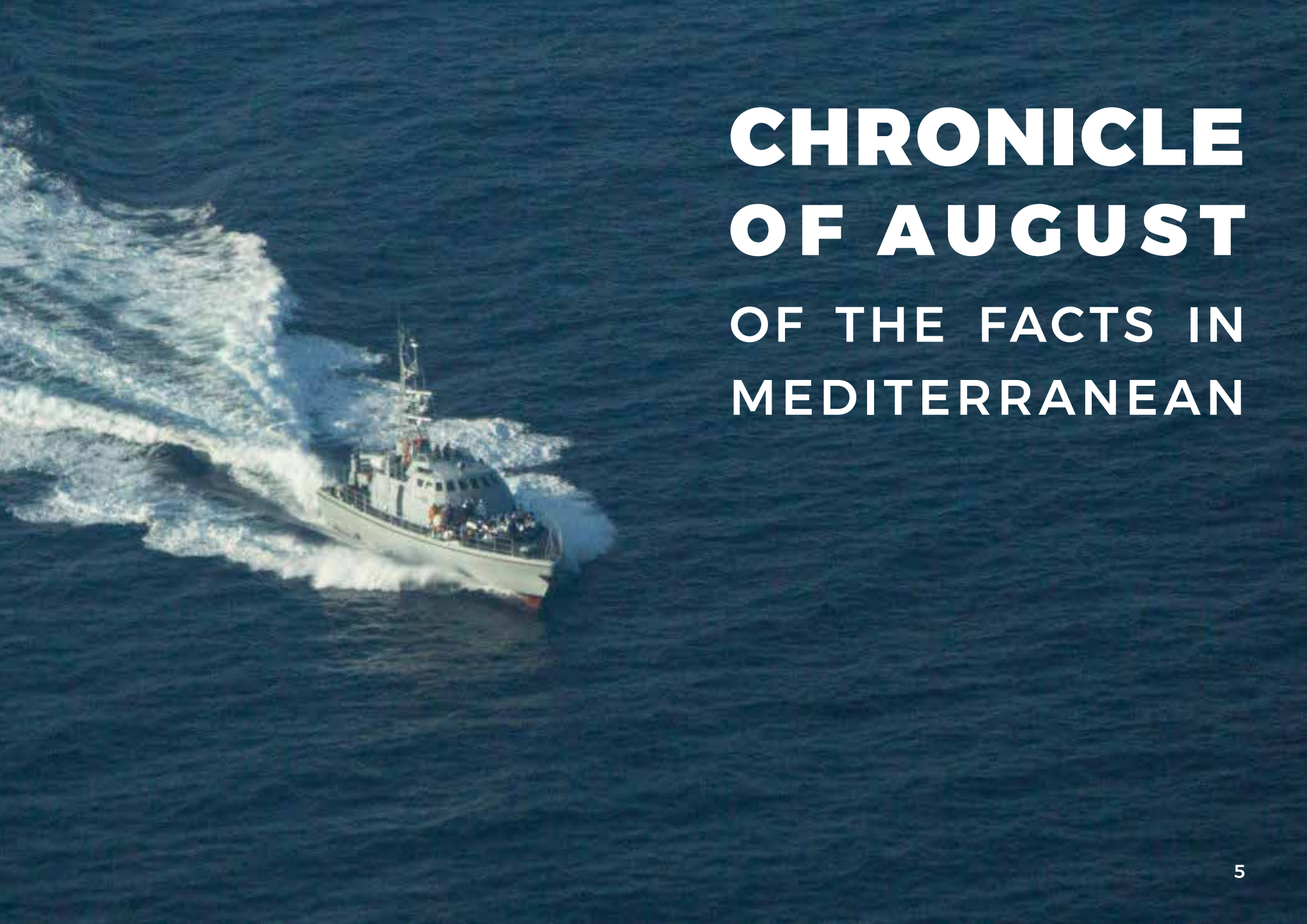
Yet, it bears mentioning that the narrative of a “migration emergency” is unrealistic. A narrative that, moreover, is not reflected in the documents circulated by political forces, which are often filled with confusing, vague solutions or, in some cases, where the issue is even totally absent.

Flavio Di Giacomo, spokesman for the International Organization for Migration, keeps repeating that there is “no numerical emergency.”

And yet, as Francesca Paci recalled in the pages of La Stampa, “there is no in Europe, where and fortunately in the aftermath of the Russian invasion more than 9 million Ukrainian refugees were received without a blow, nor even less so in Italy, where there is instead, this yes very concrete, a serious humanitarian emergency in the Lampedusa hotspot, a narrow organizational bottleneck (...).” For the umpteenth time: a fading hope for policies that really take charge of finding solutions.



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 AUGUST
OF THE FACTS IN
MEDITERRANEAN**

DAY 4

After days of waiting, Italian authorities assign the port of Taranto for the 659 survivors aboard the humanitarian ship GeoBarents.

DAY 8

The patrol boat PB P-301 of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepts and repels a boat carrying 214 people. Among them were 11 women and four children. All were attempting to flee the horrors of the Libyan coast. On the same day, other patrol boats operate other interceptions that lead to the refoulement of another 160 people.

DAY 9

The Ras Jadar patrol boat of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, in two separate operations, intercepts and repels a boat carrying about 100 people. On the same day, military personnel aboard the patrol boat PB-200 intercept a boat carrying 116 people.

DAY 14

The so-called Libyan Coast Guard announces that it has intercepted, in two separate operations, some 60 people aboard boats attempting to flee the Libyan coast.

DAY 21

MSF workers aboard the humanitarian ship GeoBarents enable the rescue of 106 people, including 26 women and 42 minors. These were in distress aboard a boat in the central Mediterranean.

DAY 22

Italian authorities assign the port of Taranto for the safe landing of the 106 survivors aboard the GeoBarents.

DAY 24

After a report from Alarm Phone, the Sos Méditerranée team aboard OceanViking spotted one of four empty boats, one of which was without an engine, in the Sar area of Libyan jurisdiction. In the absence of communication from maritime authorities, the fate of those on board remains unknown.

DAY 25

In the night, the Sos Méditerranée team aboard OceanViking spotted a wooden boat in distress, taking on water, less than half a mile from the ship.

The crew promptly intervened, saving their lives. Aboard boarded 41 people, including three women and three unaccompanied minors.

A few hours later, a second rescue allowed 12 people to board from a dinghy in distress, first assisted by Nadir workers. In the evening, a third rescue allowed 119 people to board from an overcrowded and unstable wooden boat. This one was already being assisted by operators aboard Astral.

DAY 26

Operators aboard Seabird, Sea Watch's aircraft, spot four overloaded boats in distress in the central Mediterranean. Drones and aircraft from Frontex and Irini are nearby, but have not yet initiated rescue despite the need for immediate help for these people.

In the night, MSF workers aboard GeoBarents spotted a small boat in distress. On board were 11 men who had fled their home countries and inhumane conditions in Libya. The GeoBarents enabled their rescue.

After two rescues the previous day, the Sos Méditerranée team allows 56 people to be rescued, including 16 women, some pregnant, 2 children and a three-week-old infant.

DAY 27

Operators aboard Seabird, the Sea Watch aircraft, document yet another failure to rescue in the Sar area of Maltese jurisdiction. Seabird had informed a Vroon company vessel of a boat in trouble: the captain refused to intervene. This is not the first time the company has refused rescue or been involved in illegal refoulements.

Yet another rescue by the Sos Méditerranée team: 87 women, men and minors were spotted on an overloaded wooden boat in distress in the search and rescue area of Maltese jurisdiction. A few hours later, a seventh rescue brought 32 people on board, including 6 women and 1 child. These had spent more than two days at sea.

DAY 28

Overnight, the MSF team aboard the GeoBarents conducted another rescue following an Alarm Phone alert. 25 people, including five minors, were aboard a small boat in distress located in international waters near the Libyan coast.

A few hours later, a third rescue allowed 61 people who were in distress to board a fragile wooden boat. Among them were 21 minors. In the evening, a fourth rescue allowed 79 people to board, including 32 minors.

DAY 29

Over the weekend, more than 1,000 people arrived independently in Lampedusa.

A fifth rescue by MSF's team aboard GeoBarents allows 18 people who were in distress aboard a boat in the central Mediterranean to board.

DAY 30

Just hours after the last rescue, a new rescue operation by the MSF team aboard the GeoBarents saves 41 people from drowning in the central Mediterranean Sea.



UKRAINE MISSION

SAFE PASSAGE 4

**MEDI CARE
PROJECT**

UKRAINA RISKS INTERNAL HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE, INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MUST BE RELAUNCHED

The activists of **Mediterranea Saving Humans** who initiated the 'Med Care in Ukraina' project, which started its activities by bringing basic healthcare to war refugees in the city of Lviv, have returned to Italy.

It is a project that will continue throughout the autumn, involving a relay rotation of volunteer doctors, nurses and psychologists, for the operation of the new mobile medical clinic, and continuous loads of humanitarian aid, especially medicines.

Mediterranea has taken charge of the reception center for refugees in the Sikhiv district on the outskirts of Lviv, set up with prefabs and run by the Salesian Fathers, where 350 people are currently housed, including 110 children.

It is here that our organization's health workers will be on duty, as well as at the Lviv train station.

The mission also saw a series of meetings with Ukrainian civil society realities, including those responsible for the '**Woman in march**' project, which provides humanitarian and medical aid to vulnerable women and the LGBTQIA+ community in the war-torn country thanks to 12 communities located throughout Ukraine.

We started the Med Care project and brought humanitarian aid to the regions of Lviv and Ternopil, and what we have seen worries us greatly, the flow of refugees within Ukraine remains massive, refugees from the bombed or evacuated cities of the East pouring into the west of the country where there are not enough facilities to accommodate people fleeing the horror of war.

In the Sakhiv camp alone, one of three container camps in Lviv, there is a waiting list of at least 2,000 people living on the streets in Lviv at the moment.

The arrival of cold and snow will lead to a very dangerous internal humanitarian crisis.

In Lviv, those who are lucky today are in a tin container and those who are less lucky have no roof. As temperatures drop and the conflict continues, there is a risk of hundreds of deaths from cold, hunger and hardship.

Ukraine cannot cope alone with assisting war refugees: we need to give new impetus to international solidarity so that in a few weeks we do not find ourselves facing a humanitarian catastrophe.

The Ukrainian health care system is in crisis, especially the care of refugees arriving from the east and settling in the west of the country.

We have been visiting and administering medication to people who have not seen a doctor for some time, many of whom were receiving treatment for chronic illnesses that have been interrupted.

Our next relays will bring support to Ukrainian healthcare in crisis due to the war, trying to provide as much supplementary care as possible.

Mediterranea's mission also brought aid to the Don Bosco center in Lviv, one of the main engines of internal solidarity in the country, to the city's central station where medical aid is coordinated, to the 'Internat' center for psychiatric distress in Ternopil and to refugee families with children, also in Ternopil.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM
CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

borderline-europe registered 16,268 people arriving in Italy in August after fleeing across the central Mediterranean. The Italian Ministry of the Interior puts the number of new arrivals at 15,733, while the UNHCR speaks of 15,672 protection seekers and the IOM of only 6,657 refugees who arrived.

According to the annual dossier of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 45,664 protection seekers arrived on Italian shores between January 1 and August 11 of this year. This is 40.3% more than in the same period last year. In addition, 6,070 unaccompanied foreign minors (+8.3%) were registered and 137 alleged smugglers (+41.2%) were arrested. According to the report, the most represented departure points are in Libya (24,809), Tunisia (12,536), Turkey (7,039), Algeria (620) and Lebanon (595). In terms of nationality reported at the time of arrival, 20.5% were from Tunisia, 19.3% from Egypt, 16.7% from Bangladesh, 7.8% from Afghanistan, 6.2% from Syria, 4% from Côte d'Ivoire, and 3.2% from Eritrea.

While between August 2021 and July this year, 977 people arrived in Italy through “humanitarian corridors” from Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Niger, Iran and Pakistan, another 185 could be evacuated from Libya and 5,544 people in need of protection from Afghanistan.

More surveys and figures can be found in the official dispatch of the Italian Ministry of Interior.

For comparison: according to borderline-europe, 43,203 people landed in the Italian coastal regions in the period in question.

In addition, it seems important to us to mention that the published figures of state authorities are linked to both political and economic interests on the part of the receiving countries.

The arrival figures are decisive for the financial resources that are allocated to the receiving countries by the United Nations as well as the European Union.

Refugees are instrumentalized as a means of financial pressure. The extent to which numbers are politicized can be seen in the increasing restriction of freedom of information in Italy and, for example, in the attempts of the Italian coast guard to make previously published information about rescue operations disappear (see also the 12th issue of our Scirocco).

This puts the focus on the numbers of arrivals on land and not on the people who are rescued from distress at sea or lose their lives during the crossing. An independent monitoring of current developments, like *borderline-europe* is doing in the central Mediterranean Sea, where the people are the center of attention, is therefore necessary and essential.

The reasons for the higher number of arrivals compared to previous years are diverse and complex. Among other things, migration in recent years has been significantly influenced by restricted international mobility and border closures in the wake of the spreading Covid 19 pandemic.

However, the worsening social, political and economic instability in many countries of transit and origin, as well as the worsening global climate change, are also contributing massively to an increase in migration figures. While in Libya at least 32 people were killed in ongoing fighting between rival militias just a few days ago, in Tunisia the fear of a return to dictatorship, the catastrophic human rights situation and the ongoing economic crisis are forcing many young Tunisians in particular to look for a better life in Europe.

Meanwhile, the election campaign in Italy, which continues to be fought on the backs of refugees, is entering the next round. While Matteo Salvini (Lega) is stirring up fear and hatred of asylum seekers through security concerns and plans to relocate reception centers to North Africa in the future, Giorgia Meloni is trying to win over potential voters with her demand for a sea blockade.

However, the fact that such a plan would be neither compatible with international law nor promising does not seem to interest the leading candidate of the post-fascist party “Fratelli d’Italia,” who is ahead in the election polls.

Nor does the emergency administration on Lampedusa interrupt. Even after the Italian Minister of the Interior, Luciana Lamorgese, had promised to promote the transfer of the arrivals from Lampedusa to the Italian mainland, the deliberate inability of the Italian authorities to find adequate solutions was already evident in the middle of the month. This was also the case during the last weekend of August, when well over 1,000 people on 50 boats reached the Pelagic island within 24 hours.

Also on the island of Pantelleria, a little further north but only 65km from Tunisia, there was a landing of 20 boats with a total of 392 refugees in the same period. Previously, the lack of reporting on arrivals on the island as well as the inadequate legal and care situation for refugees within the reception structures on Pantelleria had been sharply criticized in a report by ASGI (Association for Legal Studies on Immigration).

On the route across the Ionian Sea, which was equally exceptionally busy in August, 5,260 people reached the coasts of southern Italy (more on this in the section “Routes to Europe”).

PULLBACKS

In August, Libyan militias were confirmed to have intercepted 2,096 protection seekers on their way to Europe. Sea-Watch reports that more than 100,000 people have now been forcibly returned to the civil war country since 2017. The Tunisian coast guard confirmed the repatriation of 2,409 people in the same period. According to its own figures, Tunisian authorities had already prevented 7,000 Tunisians* and 8,700 other third-country nationals from crossing to Italy in 2022 alone. Similar to Libya, Tunisia also repeatedly uses so-called preventive measures on land to stop escape attempts and subsequently detain protection seekers on flimsy charges.

The motives for the dangerous flight from Tunisia or Libya across the central Mediterranean are almost always linked to previous experiences of violence, discrimination, torture and/or exploitation. A system that, as Alarm Phone denounces in its Central Mediterranean Analysis for the first half of 2022, is willfully maintained in the European fight against flight and migration. The massive violence to which refugees are subjected in countries of transit and origin is not being addressed; instead, the EU is promoting an endless cycle of arbitrary detention, escape attempts, and pullbacks. Instead of working out alternatives and upholding the fundamental right to asylum, the EU has settled for a practice of systematic

human rights violations that is doomed to fail in both the short and long term.

According to a question from Green member of parliament Erik Marquardt to the European Commission, the EU is now also planning to finance the Egyptian coast guard with a total of 80 million euros, so that it can prevent people from fleeing from Egypt to Europe and drag them back into the country. And this despite the fact that the general human rights situation in Egypt is also more than worrying.

Particularly in the past weeks, it was again very clear that European leaders seem to prefer to let refugees drown in the worst case than to take them in. First and foremost Malta, which still does not fulfill its responsibility to help people within the Maltese search and rescue zone, as a recently leaked Frontex report officially confirms. In addition, it recently emerged that Malta ordered a merchant vessel that had already changed course to assist a boat carrying refugees in distress not to do so. While in exceptional cases the Italian coast guard intervenes in the north of the Maltese SAR zone, it is preferred to resort to the so-called Libyan or Tunisian coast guard, which intercepts people hundreds of kilometers away from the North African coasts and forces them back to the countries from which they had previously

fled. This practice is not only well documented, but happens almost daily. As previous incidents have already shown, a recent statement by the so-called Libyan Maritime Distress Control Center makes us wonder once again who the EU is actually relying on to supposedly save lives at sea. Accordingly, people in distress at sea could allegedly not be “rescued” due to “other missions” as well as the armed conflicts in Tripoli.

However, it is by far not only Malta, but also the other European states, which are also actively involved in the cost-intensive monitoring of the central Mediterranean area as well as in the coordination of pullbacks in the form of their border protection agency Frontex. Just recently, for example, a ship previously handed over by the Italian coast guard to the so-called Libyan coast guard was again sighted in the port of Messina.

PATHS TO EUROPE

The increasing presence of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard in the west of the central Mediterranean, but also the political situation inside Libya usually leave people no other option than to choose the particularly long and dangerous route from the east of Libya (Kyrenaika) towards Italy. As in the previous month, August again saw several large-scale rescue operations of former fishing boats that had left Libya days earlier.

While on August 16, about 50 nautical miles off the Calabrian coast, 490 people were rescued from distress at sea by the Italian Coast Guard, two similar rescue operations occurred again a few days later. In the Italian Maritime Rescue Zone in eastern Sicily, about 600 people and another 645 refugees were evacuated from a total of three fishing boats. Most recently, a former fishing boat from Syria with 448 asylum seekers reached the harbor of the small Calabrian town of Catanzaro Lido on its own. Fortunately, this time all the refugees seem to have survived the risky and arduous crossing.

Sergio Scandura, journalist on Sicily, denounced in this course again the not existing information and communication willingness of the Italian coast guard. According to a ministerial decree, Italian state authorities are obliged to

provide the press with “prompt, objective and uniform” information that is “timely, regular” and “accurate, complete and consistent.

The increasing closure of the EU, as well as illegal pushbacks in the Greek-Turkish border area, are also prompting more and more people to board sailboats from Turkey to Calabria. Although these may be designed more for longer sea journeys than conventional inflatable boats, this does not make fleeing across the Mediterranean any less dangerous, as a shipwreck involving an estimated 50 dead off the Greek island of Karpathos also shows.

DEAD AND MISSING

In recent weeks, countless people have again fallen victim to the European border regime. In August, for example, at least 35 people seeking protection died in 8 confirmed cases on what is still the world’s deadliest escape route. It is highly unlikely that there are people among the additional 118 missing who made it safely back to land. As confirmed by various agencies, just a few days ago there was another shipwreck in which 21 people are believed to have died off the coast of Libya.

The comparatively much lower figures of the UNCHR (76), which assumes about 1,200 drowned or missing refugees at sea in the first half of 2022, and IOM (82) again raise questions for us.

CIVIL RESISTANCE

The “civilian fleet” welcomed two new sea rescue vessels to its ranks in August. While the Open Arms Uno (Proactiva Open Arms) set off on its first mission at the beginning of the month and was immediately able to rescue 101 people, the Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity, formerly Sea-Watch 4) was ceremonially christened in the port of Vinaròs in Spain.

The Geo Barents (Medecins Sans Frontières) was also able to successfully carry out numerous rescue missions in recent weeks. While the ship was still on its way to the area of operation, 106 people were rescued from distress at sea in the Italian SAR zone. This was the first time that a rescue mission by an NGO ship was coordinated by the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Rome. After the rescued were allowed to go ashore in Taranto a short time later, the crew was able to rescue 267 people from seven boats within a few days in the immediately following mission. These were also able to go ashore in Taranto after seven days. Likewise, the Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) was able to rescue 466 people seeking protection within a very short time in its last mission. After eleven days, it was assigned Taranto as a safe port. In the meantime, there were seven medical evacuations from the ship. The continued outstanding cooperation with civilian actors in the air as well as on land favored a quick intervention in both missions and prevented worse.

When the sailing ship Astral (Proactiva Open Arms) was guided to a distress at sea by Alarm Phone and Sea Bird 2 (Sea-Watch) as part of their 94th mission, the crew did not yet know that the wooden boat had already capsized. As a result, 40 people could be rescued from the water, one child is considered missing. According to its own information, at the end of its mission the Astral had either successfully rescued 235 people itself or provided them with first aid.

Last but not least, the sailing vessel Nadir (RESQSHIP), which is mainly used for monitoring purposes, was again heavily deployed in August. After the crew had already provided first aid to 461 people in a total of six operations, 59 refugees were evacuated from an overcrowded rubber dinghy. Although the Italian authorities are well aware of the limited care facilities on the Nadir, they decided to assign Lampedusa as a safe port to the ship only after eight medical evacuations and more than 40 hours of waiting. The Sea-Eye 4 (Sea-Eye) and the 87 rescued people on it also had to wait another eleven long days for the allocation of a safe harbor by the Italian Ministry of the Interior. In the meantime, the Sea-Eye 4 has already departed on its fifth mission this year.

In view of the recent events, it becomes clear once again how indispensable civilian sea rescue as well as civil society resistance against the state abandonment of life in the central Mediterranean is. At the same time, however, it should be the task of the European states, as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) also demands in a recently published statement, to open up safe routes to Europe for people fleeing: “No one should be forced to risk their life in a rickety boat or on an unseaworthy ship in search of safety and

protection,” says Susanne Zafrini, Head of Office of the IRC in Italy. Of course, the civil actors in the central Mediterranean are aware that we are still far away from creating safe escape routes. Accordingly, Sea-Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières and SOS Méditerranée issued a joint press release calling for the urgent implementation of a governmental search and rescue program in the Central Mediterranean to prevent further deaths.

Finally, some good news: as the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Luxembourg ruled earlier this month, civilian sea rescue vessels may be inspected for compliance with safety regulations, but may not be seized by government authorities unless there are valid reasons for detention. Sea-Watch, which had filed a lawsuit against the detention of Sea-Watch 3 and 4 in the course of arbitrary port state controls, spoke of a “victory for sea rescue”. The ruling also provides “clear legal certainty for NGOs” and ensures that sea rescue ships “continue to do what they do best: Rescuing people instead of being arbitrarily stranded in port.” The full case law can be viewed [here](#).



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