

APRIAMO IL MERCATO
DI VIA GIAM!

LIBERTÀ
DI
MOVIMENTO

NESSUN
ESERCIZIO
IL

APRITE
IL
MERCATO

MEDREPORT
JUNE 2024

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THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

THE CLOSURE OF THE “EX SILO”

Thursday 20 June saw the evacuation of the “Ex Silos” in Trieste - a dilapidated structure in which people on the move and asylum seekers are forced to live in inhuman and degrading conditions - creating a hole in the reception system which Linea d’Ombra, Mediterranea Saving Humans and the local organisations are asking the institutions to fill through dignified and sustainable solutions in the long term.

THE “WORLD SQUARE”

Mediterranea began operating in the city of Trieste between October and November 2023, responding to a collective solidarity appeal launched by Linea d’Ombra, which has been operating in Piazza Libertà since 2019 to provide basic goods and initial assistance to people arriving through the Balkan route. Linea d’Ombra was born, in fact, as a reaction to the institutional absence of structures and services capable of responding to the needs of people crossing the city without the intention of settling down, but with the will to continue their migratory journey towards other destinations. The constant and tireless presence of Linea d’Ombra in Piazza Libertà - known as Piazza del Mondo (“World square”) - is therefore a political act to condemn violence at the borders and the intentional lack of dedicated policies, which leaves people on the move in a state of vulnerability and invisibility.

The problem, however, is not only in Piazza Libertá: in fact, it is known that the number of places in the reception system in the city of Trieste has been insufficient for several years. Migration is now a stable phenomenon, which does not have emergency connotations either in numbers or in the dynamics of crossing and requesting permanence. However, no action has been taken by the institutional actors at any level (from the municipality to the region) leaving completely by themselves even those asylum seekers who would be entitled – at the very moment they formalise their request at the police headquarters – to be included in a reception process.

Within this scenario, an informal settlement has been created in the building known as the Ex Silos, next to the central station, a dilapidated structure where transients and asylum seekers awaiting reception are forced to live in inhuman and degrading conditions, amidst mud and rats. In these last years after Covid, the Ex Silos has seen peaks of up to 400 people.

In this context, therefore, the Piazza del Mondo, together with the Day Centre in Via Udine and two small low-threshold dormitories kept open thanks to a network of third-sector, activist and volunteer realities (at the local level, Linea d’Ombra, ICS, Comunità di San Martino al Campo, No Name Kitchen, Diaconia Valdese, Donk, IRC, Caritas, Casa Internazionale delle Donne, ResQ, Comunità di Sant’Egidio, ...) have responded to an institutional vacuum.

FORNELLI RESISTENTI: “RESISTING HOBBS”

Mediterranea has contributed to the construction and coordination of a network of realities, more than 40 groups and associations from the city and outside the city, which come together under the name of ‘Fornelli Resistenti’ (“resisting hobs”) and which, through a shared calendar, ensure the distribution of hot meals, food items with a long shelf life and other useful material (clothes, wood, blankets, etc.) every evening in Piazza del Mondo, in support of Linea d’Ombra.

During the last months, the “Fornelli Resistenti” network has also mobilised supporting the local organisations to ask the institutions for the immediate opening of the building adjacent to the Silos – which is the former covered municipal market in Via Gioia – as a reception facility, by organising a protest in Via Gioia on 2 June. The building was inspected on 16 May by the IV commission of the city council promoted by “Adesso Trieste”, and a large part of the civil society and the groups involved in reception activities participated. In that occasion the organisers relaunched a project, already defined but blocked by the current city council, for the opening of a low-threshold and high-rotation dormitory in this space, capable of accommodating not only asylum seekers who do not find reception in the SACs, but also people in transit.

In 2022, in fact, the Via Gioia structure had already been indicated by the municipality itself as a suitable structure to provide an answer to migrants’ needs, avoiding the use of the Silos, a project that was then scuppered for purely political and electoral reasons.

THE EVACUATION OF THE EX SILOS

The pressure to open the former market in Via Gioia intensified in response to the announcement of the imminent evacuation of the Ex Silos by the mayor of Trieste.

The announcement of the eviction was then formalised with an executive order by Mayor Roberto Dipiazza on 7 June 2024. This decision produced turmoil among the city's associations, individual citizens and, of course, in the young people who lived in the Silos. Mediterranea, together with the Fornelli Resistenti network, prepared a petition addressed to the city council for the identification and immediate installation of a suitable space for a low-threshold and high-rotation dormitory capable of responding to the incoming arrivals.

The eviction, which occurred on Thursday 20 June, took place throughout the day involving different actors, such as police forces, civil protection, UNHCR and the prefecture. The people were divided into two groups: those with no documents and the asylum seekers under the accelerated procedure were transferred to the CARA in Gradisca d'Isonzo, while those who had only manifested the intention to apply for asylum or were under the ordinary procedure were transferred to facilities in Lombardy.

IN SEARCH OF A (REAL) SOLUTION

The evacuation, which was presented by the authorities as the solution - without, however, providing suitable solutions to protect asylum seekers and people in transit - was in fact a cosmetic intervention aimed only at preserving the decorum of the city of Trieste. As of today, this decision forces the remaining asylum seekers to find alternative places to sleep (even more dangerous than the Silos) and exposes the new incoming people to conditions of marginalisation and precariousness.

In the context of World Refugee and Refugee Day, a praesidium was organised on 22 June in Piazza del Mondo, joined by various local and non-local organisations, to condemn the emergency situation created by the institutions themselves and to reiterate the need of dignified and sustainable solutions in the long term.

**BORDER STORIES
FROM WEST AFRICA
TO THE CANARY
ISLANDS, IN THE
MIDDLE THE OCEAN**



There are 100 kilometers that separate the coasts of North Africa from the Canary Islands. Despite the dangers and difficulties associated with this route, the number of people on the move has been growing in recent years. They leave from Morocco, Mauritania, Gambia, Senegal, following a new route that is longer, more dangerous and not manned by the entities responsible for rescue.

The latest shipwreck off the coast of Mauritania happened at the end of June. Mauritanian officials confirmed that they had recovered the bodies of 89 people on board a large traditional fishing boat that capsized about four kilometres from the town of Ndiago, in the south-west of the country. Departing from the coast on the border between Senegal and The Gambia, the boat was reported to have travelled for six days before capsizing off the Atlantic coast. Only nine people were rescued, including one 5-year-old girl. No less tragic is the death toll, which is said to be over 70.

The boat was heading towards the Canary Islands, in a migratory route that has been increasing in terms of flow in recent months. The greatest danger of this route lies, apart from its length, in the strong currents that are present in the Atlantic Ocean. Currents that reveal the inadequacy of the boats used, an inadequacy exacerbated by the overcrowding imposed by the smugglers. Another relevant aspect to consider is the fact that rescue operations are not appropriate and there are no designated entities. These aspects have also been highlighted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in its report, which states that 'migrants (are) often stranded at sea for long periods on inadequate boats in areas of the Atlantic Ocean without dedicated rescue operations'.

There are 100 kilometres separating the coasts of North Africa and the Canary Islands, but a significant number of boats leave from more distant countries, sailing from Morocco but also Mauritania, Gambia and Senegal.

Despite the dangers and difficulties associated with this route, the number of people on the move has been growing in recent years, an increase that could also be explained in light of increased vigilance in other routes such as the Mediterranean. According to the Spanish government, 39,910 people arrived in the Canary Islands in Spain in 2023, more than double the number of the previous year. A record number that could be surpassed this year, as 19,257 arrivals have already been confirmed for the first six months of 2024, an increase of 167% compared to the same period in 2023. Recent estimates predict that around 70,000 migrants will arrive in the Canary Islands, of which around 10% are likely to be unaccompanied minors.

The difficulties of the Canary Islands in receiving people on the move are clear for all to see. An issue of great concern is the presence of unaccompanied minors stranded on the islands and for which the regions do not seem able or willing to take responsibility.

The island of Lanzarote, part of the Canarian archipelago, recently declared a 'state of social emergency' due to the influx of migrants and the weaknesses of the reception system. In signing the decree, Oswaldo Betancort, President of the local government, also cited the fact that forecasts for the coming weeks and months would see a record increase in the arrival of people on the move. However, it seems that a recent complaint that showed the terrible conditions in a reception centre for unaccompanied migrant minors, which, according to lawyers, do not meet minimum standards of habitability, may also be behind this decision. The declaration of emergency should guarantee the minors 'the

most dignified conditions possible', thus allowing extraordinary decisions to be taken in the face of a phenomenon that is considered extraordinary.

In this social and political climate, Miguel Tellado, parliamentary spokesman for the main opposition force, the right-wing Partido Popular, called on the government to stem the entry of illegal immigrants into the country using all means at its disposal, suggesting measures such as the deployment of the army and navy for more effective border control. In particular, Tellado called for the navy to prevent people on the move from reaching the country. The Spanish Council for Refugees CEAR rejected the proposal, pointing out that international maritime law provides for the rescue of those in danger.

But the numbers remain: in the first months of 2024, more than 5,000 people died trying to reach Spain by sea, said Caminando Fronteras, a Spanish human rights non-governmental organisation. This represents an average of 33 deaths per day, the highest number of average daily deaths since the association began collecting data in 2007.

Once again, migrants are reduced to numbers, but they raise the alarm about a new route that could become increasingly crucial for migration from Africa.

THE INVESTIGATION OF DESERT DUMPS



**EU COMPLICIT IN
DEPORTATIONS AND
VIOLENCE AGAINST
MIGRANTS**

The recent international investigation “Desert Dumps” coordinated by Lighthouse Reports, has uncovered inhumane practices and systematic human rights violations perpetrated against migrants in North Africa. This investigation reveals how the European Union (EU), with its financial, logistical and training support to governments in the region, is complicit in collective deportations to the desert or remote areas to make sure that migrants do not reach European territory.

THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation documents systematic and racially specific detention operations of migrants from black communities in Tunisia, Mauritania, and Morocco. The operations put in place follow a specific pattern: migrants are taken from their homes based on the color of their skin even if they have regular status and resources to live in the country. There are videos and documents of racially based selection and tracking procedures in Rabat and Nouakchott; after interception they are taken to detention centers (where in Mauritania Spanish police officers were seen entering) and then deported to remote and deserted areas, and deprived of all personal property. Many of them have died of hardship, or those who have been abandoned in border areas and have been able to tell about it have explained that border guards often sell migrants to human traffickers, who then torture them in order to extort money from their families. Some are deported to the Mali border, an area where there is an active war, while others to the Algerian-Tunisian border.

It is estimated that between Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia, the European Union has funded these “migration management” operations with about 400 million euros.

EU INVOLVEMENT

What is even more disconcerting is that these practices are supported by EU funds and equipment supplied to North African states, with Italy among the main contributors. The testimonies collected speak of thousands of people being deported to the desert in operations coordinated by Tunisian security forces, using vehicles and equipment supplied by Europe.

It was only a few weeks ago that video from the NGO Sea Watch patrol aircraft showed the Libyan coast guard beating a group of migrants who had just been rescued at sea. After being beaten with a stick they were transferred to the Libyan patrol boat (many are provided and paid for by Italy) and brought back. Of the 60 migrants who had been rescued there is currently no trace.

Despite official statements by the European Commission, which claims to monitor the use of funds in third countries and not to contribute to human rights violations, the evidence collected shows a different reality. Documents, satellite images, and survivor testimonies highlight how the EU is aware of and directly or indirectly responsible for the refoulements.

TUNISIA AS A CASE IN POINT

The repressive policies implemented by Tunisian President Kais Saïed have significantly reduced departures to Italy, but at a very high human cost. Detained migrants report inhumane treatment, arbitrary arrests and a general climate of oppression. Tunisia is also in the process of formalizing a Search and Rescue (SAR) Zone at sea, which could lead to further increased control over migrants.

Tunisian authorities, since early 2024, have prevented thousands of migration attempts and seized numerous boats. Police operations have become increasingly aggressive, with mass arrests and deportations to the desert. Currently, more than a thousand migrants are detained in Tunisian jails, while thousands have been repatriated to their home countries with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

One example of what is happening is the transfer of migrants from Tunisia to Libyan prisons, as documented by InfoMigrants. Tunisian security forces arrest migrants and illegally transfer them to Libya, where they are detained in terrible conditions. Libyan prisons are infamous for inhumane treatment that includes torture, sexual violence, and other abuses. People are held in overcrowded detention centers and often without access to food, clean water, or medical care.

Again, many of the surviving migrants tell of being victims of extortion: jailers demand ransoms from family members in exchange for their release. Women are particularly vulnerable, suffering sexual abuse and rape at the hands of guardians. According to Info Migrants, since last September, Tunisian police have sent more than 1,500 migrants of sub-Saharan origin to Libya.

These transfers represent a sad violation of human rights, compounded by the EU's awareness and support for the Tunisian authorities. Despite this, the EU currently continues to provide economic and logistical support to improve Tunisia's security capabilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIONS NEEDED

The "Desert Dumps" investigation exposes the inhumane practices of North African governments, but more importantly it indicts the European Union for its complicit role. The revelations highlight the grave consequences of European migration policies, which not only fail to protect the basic rights of migrants, but actively contribute to a racially motivated regime of oppression and violence. EU rhetoric proclaiming respect for human rights clashes dramatically with actions on the ground, raising questions about the coherence and integrity of its policies.

It is unacceptable for the EU to turn a blind eye to such abuses, and indeed, to fund and support them. The EU must immediately cease all support for governments that violate human rights, and establish an independent monitoring system to ensure that European funds are not used to support repressive practices.

MSH MONTHLY REPORT ON MIGRATIONS



WORLD

LIBYA, 5 June Several hundreds of refugees were arrested in a forest near the UNHCR headquarters in Tripoli. Most of the people were taken to the Abu Salim lager, while others were taken to other places of detention near the Libyan capital.

TUNISIA, 6 June Thanks to the support of the Italian government, Tunisia started the procedure to declare its own SAR zone in the central Mediterranean, despite the well known constant human right violations by the Tunisian authorities, both on the land and at sea.

LIBYA-TUNISIA, 11 June According to an anonymous UN source, testimonies and images prove that, on 23 January, the Tunisian authorities captured and handed over people on the move to Libyan militias, who deported them to camps. It was estimated that approximately 2000 people suffered the same fate.

EGYPT, 19 June Amnesty International published a report accusing Egypt of detaining and deporting refugees from Sudan. The report accuses the European Union, which funded the Egyptian government with €80 million, of complicity in human rights violations.

LIBYA, 25 June Images filmed in the Libyan lager of Bir Ghanam show the violence and the tortures inflicted to people on the move imprisoned by the Libyan militia.

ALGERIA, 26 June According to Alarme Phone Sahara, 1466 people were pushed back to Niger by the Algerian authorities in the first five months of 2024.

GREEK-TURKISH BORDER, 5 June A group of 17 people were violently pushed back several times across the Greek-Turkish land border near Orestiada, close to the Evros river.

CYPRUS, 7 June 27 people on the move were blocked in the buffer zone between the northern and southern parts of Cyprus, while trying to reach the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member state, to seek asylum.

GREECE, 7 June The last four survivors of the Pylos shipwreck who were still in detention, have been cleared of all charges at the Kalamata Court and released from Greek prisons. All Pylos9 are now free.

SWITZERLAND, 10 June The Swiss National Council passed a motion to deport Eritrean asylum seekers who were refused international protection to a third country. The Swiss government will now try to find an agreement with a third country to enforce this decision.

GERMANY, 11 June The German Minister for Internal Affairs Feaser visited Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss 'border protection, cooperation on repatriations, visa policies and the fight against organized crime' with the Bosnian authorities.

EUROPEAN UNION, 12 June The European Commission presented a 10-point plan to implement the new Migration and Asylum Pact, to be implemented by mid-2026. The discussion focuses on border controls, reception standards and asylum procedures, repatriations and the solidarity mechanism between member states.

GREEK-TURKISH BORDER, 14 June 5 people were pushed back to Turkey by the Greek authorities while they were in the vicinity of Dilofos, near the Evros river, which marks the Greek-Turkish land border.

CANARY, 20 June The yacht Insignia rescued 68 people on a boat in distress in the south of Tenerife. Five lifeless bodies were found on board. They had been at sea for 20 days on the Atlantic Route.

GREEK-TURKISH BORDER, 24 June 14 people were pushed back several times at the land border between Greece and Turkey, near Marasia, along the Evros River.

FRANCE, 27 June

French authorities intercepted and pushed back 153 people on 3 boats in France as they attempted to reach the UK, sailing through the English Channel.

LAMPEDUSA, 1 June A boat in distress with 60 people on board was rescued by a merchant ship off Malta. During the rescue operation, one person died. The survivors were disembarked in Lampedusa.

SYMI, 3 June Seven people who arrived independently on the island of Symi were rescued by the Greek authorities.

IKARIA, 4 June 25 people on a boat in distress were rescued off the island of Ikaria by the Greek Coast Guard and disembarked in Samos.

NIMOS, 5 June 27 people who arrived independently on the island of Nimos, after spending a night in the cold, were rescued by the Greek authorities and transferred to Symi.

CIVIL FLEET, 7 June Geo Barents (MSF) rescued 165 people on three boats in distress and disembarked them in the port of Genoa, assigned by the Italian authorities despite being more than 1,200 km away from the central Mediterranean.

LIBYAN SAR ZONE, 7 June The Seabird aircraft (Sea-Watch) spotted 12 lifeless bodies off the Libyan coast. The so-called Libyan coast guard refused to collect them, so 11 were brought on board the Geo Barents, while the last one was collected by the Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée).

CIVIL FLEET, 8 June The Ocean Viking rescued 64 people on a boat in distress, thanks to a warning of the Seabird 2 (Sea-Watch). The assigned port was Marina di Carrara, over 1000 km away from the rescue site.

GLAROS, 12 June The Greek Coast Guard captured 6 people who had arrived independently on the island of Glaros, near Agathonisi, and sent them back to Turkey.

PASAS, 13 June A group of 17 people who had arrived independently on the island of Pasas, near Oinousses, were captured and sent back to Turkey by the Greek Coast Guard.

CIVIL FLEET, 17 June Nadir (ResQShip) rescued 51 people in distress. 10 lifeless bodies were found on the boat in distress. Two people in critical conditions were transferred to a patrol boat of the Italian Coast Guard, while the other 49 were disembarked in Lampedusa.

ROCCELLA IONICA, 17 June A boat that had set sail from Bodrum, Turkey, sank off the coast of Calabria. 36 bodies were recovered and 11 people were rescued. About 20 people are missing.

CIVIL FLEET, 17 June Ocean Viking rescued a boat carrying 54 people in distress from Libya. The port assigned by the authorities is Civitavecchia, which is three days' sailing away.

CIVIL FLEET, 18 June Geo Barents rescued 48 people on a boat in distress and disembarked them in the port of Naples, assigned by the Italian authorities.

LIBYAN SAR ZONE, 19-21 June The Seabird documented a deportation by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which captured a group of people previously rescued by the merchant ship Mari-dive. Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity) documented 3 more deportations of people from boats that had set sail from Libya.

CIVIL FLEET, 20 June Humanity 1 rescued 106 people from two boats in distress. A third boat, as reported by the Seabird, was intercepted by the so-called Libyan coast guard. Ortona is the, distant, port assigned for disembarkation.

CIVIL FLEET, 20 June Nadir rescued 47 people on a boat in distress south of Lampedusa and landed them on the island.

ZAWIYAH, 22 June 80 people were captured by the Libyan Coast Guard off Zawiyah and deported to Libya.

SICILY, 27 June 2 people lost their lives in a shipwreck in the Ionian Sea off the coast of Sicily. The Italian Coast Guard rescued 48 survivors.

CIVIL FLEET, 26 June The Life Support rescued 47 people on a boat in distress. The authorities assigned Livorno as the port of disembarkation, three and a half days away.

CIVIL FLEET, 27 June Geo Barents rescued 34 people in distress in two separate operations. The Italian authorities assigned the port of Ancona, 4 days away by sea, as port of disembarkation.

REGGIO CALABRIA, 5 June

The court of Reggio Calabria considered as illegitimate the 60-day administrative detention and the fine to which Sea-Eye 4 was subjected last March for violating the so-called Piantedosi Decree. The behavior of Sea-Eye's crew was correct and led to the rescue of 84 people despite threats from the so-called Libyan coast guard.

LATINA, 20 June

Indian worker Satnam Singh died as a result of an accident at work. His employer abandoned Singh and his wife instead of rescuing him.

ROME, 20 June

The Council of State has accepted the appeal by 6 civil society associations against the Italian government's decision to donate patrol boats to Tunisia, which is responsible for many human rights violations. The measure is suspended and a hearing in the Council Chamber will be held on 11 July.

TRIESTE, 21 June

The Ex Silos in Trieste, where hundreds of asylum seekers and people on the move lived, was evacuated by the police. However, the authorities did not guarantee alternative accommodation for the people living there.

CROTONE, 26 June

The Civil Court of Crotona definitively canceled the administrative stop against Humanity 1 for violating the so-called Piantedosi Decree. The verdict states that the so-called Libyan Coast Guard cannot be considered as an actor carrying out rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

ROME, 28 June

The Civil Court of Rome has obliged the Italian State and the shipping company of the merchant ship Asso Ventinove to compensate five people who have appealed for the deportation to Libya, carried out by the merchant ship, coordinated by the Italian authorities on 2 July 2018. In the verdict, the judge states that 'Libya is not a safe place'.

REPORT BORDERLINE EUROPE

NEWS FROM
CENTRAL
MEDITERRANEAN



ARRIVALS

According to [borderline-europe](#) data, 4241 people arrived in Italy in June. This month again the majority of refugees (72%) arrived in Sicily, mainly in Lampedusa. However, arrivals via the Ionian route also increased (10%) with departures from Turkey and arrivals in Calabria. Some boats also reached Sardinia.

According to our counts, the Italian authorities rescued around 68% of the people who arrived, while rescues by NGO ships accounted for about 23%.

According to data from [borderline-europe](#), Frontex participated in two rescues in June 2024. 4% of the refugees reached themselves Italian coastal waters (12 nautical miles from the coast) without being first intercepted or rescued. Particularly significant this month was the ratio of people who arrived in Italy to those prevented from leaving/arriving due to push-backs. In total, [borderline-europe](#) has counted 2080 push-backs this month, all to Libya. We do not have data on Tunisia, but Tunisia itself claims to have prevented the departure of more than 30,000 people in the first five months of 2024.

This shows how much political effort is being put into preventing people from reaching Europe.

DEAD AND MISSING

According to [borderline-europe](#) counts, 93 people died in the Mediterranean Sea in June and 28 migrants are still missing. As always, it can be assumed that the number of unreported cases is much higher, as deaths are only counted if a body is found and missing persons only appear in the statistics if they are reported missing by relatives or fellow refugees. According to the IOM, five migrants die or disappear in the Mediterranean every day.

IN JUNE, TWO TERRIBLE SHIPWRECKS OCCURRED IN THE IONIAN SEA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, CAUSING SEVERAL DEATHS AND MISSING PERSONS.

On June 17th, 2024, a sailing ship with 67 people on board sank approximately 120 miles off the coast of Calabria on its way to Italy through the Ionian Sea. The ship had set sail from Turkey a few days earlier. The ship's engine allegedly exploded, which is why the boat started to sink. The coast guard was informed of the shipwreck by Alarm Phone in the afternoon of June 16th 2024. On 17 June 2024, when the boat had already half sunk, a French ship rescued the remaining 11 survivors and sent a rescue request to the Coast Guard, which initiated rescue operations. An official Coast Guard press release initially stated that the Coast Guard had been informed of the shipwreck by the French ship.

However, it did not mention the information provided by AP a day earlier. Alarm Phone speculates that the Coast Guard deliberately delayed the rescue. There are strong similarities with the Cutro incident from last year.

Communication from the authorities is very opaque and it seems that informations get hidden. Journalists have to obtain accreditation and pay a kind of 'fee' to access the port area where the bodies are brought ashore. In some cases, access is completely blocked. The coast guard and the prefecture have published different numbers on the recovered bodies. Some say there are 30 bodies, others that there are 35, making it difficult for journalists to understand what is really happening. The Left-Green Alliance also criticises this approach as a political calculation. It is assumed that the Meloni government wants to prevent the case from receiving the same public attention as the disastrous and avoidable Cutro case from last year. This is also evident from the government's constant silence on these deaths: there has not been a single word of condolence.

It is therefore not explicitly an accident or a tragedy, as it is often labelled by the media, because there would have been sufficient opportunity to intervene. First of all, the survivors reported that several ships passed in front of them without rescuing them or calling for help. In the coast guard's latest press release, it was reported that it was aware of the ship three days before the disaster and had not intervened. A further indication that as little publicity as possible should be given is the night and foggy operation by which the bodies were washed ashore without informing the press. The survivors and their families were deliberately taken to different hospitals far from each other to avoid solidarity.

This was criticised by the association Memoria Mediterranea (Mem.Med), which supports the relatives and fights for the identification of the bodies.

NADIR RESCUES 51 PEOPLE - 10 DEAD

On June 17th, 2024, the ship Nadir (Resqship) rescued 51 people whose ship had wrecked on its way to Lampedusa. The crew found 10 dead bodies and had to use an axe to free two unconscious survivors from the sinking ship. Sea-Watch, which first discovered the shipwreck with its reconnaissance aircraft, tried to reach a Libyan patrol boat after the rescue to coordinate the recovery of the dead. However, the Libyan authorities could not be contacted. Sea-Watch therefore criticises: "These people are worth nothing to them and to the European Union, not even in death". The Nadir towed the sunken ship with the deceased to a port and they were buried in Agrigento (Sicily).

PATHS TO EUROPE

FRONTEX

Frontex announced a significant expansion of its operational area in the Mediterranean. The two operational areas around Italy and Greece were provided with considerably more resources (EUR 26.25 million more). Under pressure from Italy, Frontex's Italian operational area was extended from 30 miles from the coast to 138 miles.

At the same time, on June 20th, 2024 Frontex conducted a long-announced training session with the Italian and Greek coast guards and several other national and international organisations to train regional cooperation and joint rescues in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. In addition to Frontex and the coast guards, the training session involved the Italian Guardia di Finanza, seven ships, two aircraft and two helicopters. At this point, however, a question arises: where were all these actors three days earlier? On June 17th, 2024, a dramatic shipwreck occurred at this very spot in the Ionian Sea, between the Greek and Italian SAR (Search and Rescue) zones. To date, 41 people are dead and 24 others are missing. Such a rescue mission would have been necessary in this shipwreck, but the rescue was probably deliberately delayed. Increased EU funding and expansion of power taste bad if all cooperation does not work or is not used in an emergency.

NEW SAR ZONE IN TUNISIA

Tunisia has now defined and announced its new SAR (Search and Rescue) zone. We have already reported in the last MIC that Tunisia can receive more funding from the EU through its SAR zone. These are intended to prevent more refugee departures, which is entirely in line with Italian and European policy. The SAR zone is defined as an area of responsibility in which the respective coastal State is responsible for coordinating assistance in cases of rescue at sea. Until now, Libya, Malta and Italy were responsible for the international waters off the Tunisian coast. Now Tunisia can not only rescue people in its own SAR zone, but also intercept refugees and bring them back to Tunisia legally. It is therefore not surprising that the outer limit of the Tunisian SAR zone extends to Italian territorial waters, which are 12 nautical miles off Lampedusa, where most refugees arrive in Italy. Sergio Scandura, an Italian journalist, cynically remarked: 'the government, while it was at it, could have urged Saied's regime to take the Tunisian SAR border as far as Donnalucata for an aperitif'. He alluded that the Italian government is doing all it can to reduce the number of arrivals and that the establishment of the SAR zone certainly has a political motivation.

The project of the ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development) and the German Federal Police has a similar political motivation. It provides training for the Tunisian coast guard and is financed with EUR 13.5 million of EU funds. The project description uses fine words like 'includes the protection of human rights and the principles of the rule of law',

but the reality is very different. The testimonies of the people who were ‘rescued’ by the Tunisian coast guard show that there is no question of human rights protection (see also Lighthouse Report).

MALTA IGNORES RESCUE REQUESTS

Alarm Phone, a 24/7 hotline for people in need at sea who therefore have a second option besides the coast guard to call for help, reported an emergency to the Maltese authorities in early June. It concerned a boat with 32 people that was in the Maltese SAR zone. The Maltese authorities did not respond to the emergency call and did not initiate rescue. However, this is not the first case where the Maltese authorities did not respond to rescue requests and did not initiate rescue. NGOs and human rights organisations have criticised this approach for years. Malta repeatedly coordinates pushes and pulls out with the so-called Libyan coast guard, but does not carry out any rescue operations. Since Libya is not a safe port, this action is illegal under international law and the Maltese prime minister has been indicted by the International Criminal Court. However, Malta is not the only one ignoring rescue requests and collaborating with the so-called Libyan coastguard: this is a structural European problem where political agendas take precedence over respect and enforcement of human rights.

PUSHBACKS

FRONTEX ACCUSED BY THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

Refugees in Libya and front-LEX filed a lawsuit with the European Court of Justice against the executive director of Frontex, Hans Leijtens. They demanded to stop air surveillance outside the EU borders and to stop sending geolocation to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Between 2021 and 2023, there were more than 2,200 emails in which Frontex transmitted refugee location data to Libya, which led to numerous push-backs. Frontex is thus enabling the human rights violations refugees are exposed to in Libya. Consequently, the case against Frontex for crimes against humanity against refugees is now in progress.

TUNISIA HAS BLOCKED 30,000 DEPARTURES

Tunisia brags about having already prevented 30,000 refugee departures to Italy this year alone. Meloni and Piantedosi see their policy of agreements with Tunisia as the main reason for this achievement and are celebrated in Italy for their ‘success’ in reducing the number of arrivals by more than 60% in the first half of the year (compared to the previous year). In the last issue of CMI we reported on the serious human rights violations that push-backs and the general situation in Tunisia and Libya entail. Frontex also takes an unusually critical view of these kinds of agreements in a document from its Africa-Frontex intelligence community (AFIC) mission: Frontex itself states that

the agreements and the prevention of departures will not stop anyone from fleeing. They will simply lead to a shift in migration routes (as can currently be seen in the Canary Islands). With this categorisation, Frontex is essentially depriving itself of much of its raison d'être and undermining the entire Italian and European migration policy. If we take Frontex's argument that no law or agreement will stop refugees to its logical conclusion, we would need a constructive talk about how safe escape routes and freedom of movement can be implemented to prevent people from dying on the run.

PUSH-BACKS BY THE SO-CALLED LIBYAN COAST GUARD

On June 19th, 2024, a violent push-back by the so-called Libyan coast guard took place, documented by Seabird (Sea-Watch reconnaissance aircraft). Approximately 60 refugees were rescued by a civilian merchant ship in international waters and brought on board. The Libyan coast guard arrived with speedboats and wanted to take over the refugees to deport them to Libya. The crew of Seabird communicated by radio with the crew of the merchant ship with the aim of convincing them not to hand over the refugees to the so-called Libyan coast guard. They informed the crew that this was illegal and violated international law, since Libya was not a safe port. The captain replied that his hands were tied and that he had no choice but to hand over the refugees. In the video recording of Seabird, you can see how the so-called coast guard boarded and beat people with brutal force and dragged them to Libya.

ANOTHER PUSH-BACK COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED

Another push-back could have been avoided by the Italian authorities on June 20th, 2024. The crew of the Humanity I had already performed two rescues and had 106 people on board when they received another rescue request via Alarm Phone. Since they were nearby, they asked the Italian authorities to coordinate the rescue and could also have taken the people on board. However, the Italian authorities delayed the process considerably, responding only after an hour and a half and ordering the Humanity I to continue its journey. In the meantime, a vessel of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard had already arrived to take the people back to Libya. The Italian Maritime Coordination Centre is therefore responsible for the fact that people who could easily have been rescued by Humanity I were returned to Libyan torture camps.

RESISTENZA CIVILE

In June, 22 missions were performed by sea rescue organisations, in which a total of 990 people were rescued and 293 people were assisted by rescuers at sea, such as by distributing life jackets until the coast guard arrived. Nadir (RESQSHIP) was involved in six rescues this month and rescued a total of 53 people, assisted 143 people and recovered 10 bodies. Aurora (Sea-Watch) rescued 41 people and assisted 65 people with life jackets until the coast guard arrived. Geo Barrents (MSF) rescued 278 people and recovered 11 bodies in four missions. Humanity I (SOS Humanity) rescued 292 people, Mare*Go (Mare*Go) 43 people, Life Support (Emergency) 47 people, Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) a total of 185 people, Totamar III (CompassCollective) and Seapunk I (Sea Punks) each assisted in one mission and Sea Eye 4 (Sea-Eye) rescued 51 people. These numbers and missions make the need for the civil fleet clear.

In nine of the fourteen rescues performed by NGOs, the ships were assigned very distant ports. They had to unnecessarily travel long distances to Marina di Carrara, Genoa or Ortona. This is clearly a political calculation, as the government wants to keep the civil fleet out of the Mediterranean for a longer period of time. The journeys to remote ports take several days, during which NGOs cannot perform further rescues.

GOOD NEWS:

SEA EYE 4 AND HUMANITY I WON IN COURT

The arrest of the Sea Eye 4 in March 2024 was illegal. This has now been confirmed by the court in Reggio Calabria, with a great success for Sea Eye and the entire civil sea rescue organisation. They were accused, on the basis of the Piantedosi Decree, of taking refugees on board despite the fact that the so-called Libyan Coast Guard was ready to take people on board and they had defied the instructions of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. However, the NGO would have violated international law if it had handed the people over to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, as Libya is not a safe port. The court found it incorrect that the coast guard's instructions were not followed, especially since the so-called Libyan coast guard threatened the crew with firearms, according to eyewitnesses. The court in Crotona similarly justified the decision to release the Humanity I, which had also taken legal action against the detention under the Piantedosi Decree and which was fully accepted. The court stated: "The activity carried out by the Libyan Coast Guard cannot be classified as a rescue operation due to the way in which it was performed".

THE SEA EYE 5 ARRIVES

Sea Eye announces that from summer 2024 it will support civil sea rescue with a new ship. Sea Eye 5 will be stationed in the central Mediterranean and will have a medical centre on board. The deployment of the new ship is seen as a response to the current political situation, in which rescue operations at sea are increasingly limited and restricted

The delivery of a patrol boat to Tunisia was initially suspended and then cancelled

Some Italian NGOs, including ASGI, ARCI, the Mediterranean platform Saving Humans and others, had filed a lawsuit against the handing over of the patrol boats to the Tunisian government. As a result, a moratorium was imposed suspending the donation to the Tunisian government for the time being. Unfortunately, the joy was a bit premature, as the Council of State in a resolution dated July 4th, 2024 lifted the handover freeze and authorised the deliveries.

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