

WATCH THE MED ALARM PHONE AGAINST LEFT-TO-DIE CASES AT SEA

»Our project is no solution,
but an emergency intervention«

Press Release, 8th of October 2014

A Transnational Network alerts as of the 10th of October 2014 in cases of Distress and Push-backs

The Mediterranean Sea in 2014 remains a mass grave for refugees and migrants. In the first nine months of the year there have been more than 3.000 registered deaths. In the last years, nowhere else in the world have more people died when fleeing. Nonetheless, the responsible EU committees decided on the 27th of August 2014 to retract the Italian maritime rescue operation Mare Nostrum and to gradually replace it with Frontex-deterrence in the coastal waters of the EU. This predetermines that the mass dying in the Mediterranean Sea will take on even graver dimensions.

A transnational network of human rights activists cannot stand this unacceptable situation any longer. Since the end of September, in Tunis, Palermo, Strasbourg, Vienna, Berlin and several other cities, about 50 activists have been testing a collective emergency phone for boat-people. The Alarm Phone operates day and night with a multilingual team on standby. It will cover calls from the migration routes in the Central Mediterranean, in the Aegean Sea and between Morocco and Spain. The Watch The Med Alarm Phone cannot itself carry out rescue operations but will raise the alarm if such operations are delayed or even denied altogether.

»We understand ourselves as a pilot project. After a first period we will evaluate our experiences with the phone and decide how to improve to intervene against human rights violations at sea«, says Karim S., a Syrian refugee who had to experience an illegal push-back himself in the Aegean when fleeing in 2013 and who joins the Alarm Phone from Hamburg. The phone number will be activated on the 10th of October and announced and circulated amongst migrants and refugees in important transit-countries in Northern Africa as well as in Turkey.

»We are convinced that the deadly border-regime must be stopped«, activist Lisa B. describes the objectives of the network. »However, as long as it does exist, at least the utmost must be done to rescue. When we notice that these rescue operations do not take place, we will try to exert immediate public pressure.«

The Alarm Phone is supported by organizations on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. The call has been signed by prominent figures, including the French philosopher Étienne Balibar and the Nobel laureate for literature Elfriede Jelinek, but also by a survivor of the shipwreck of the 11th of October 2013 and by self-organisations of migrants and relatives in Morocco, Tunisia and Greece.

Please find the Call to the »Watch The Med Alarm Phone« in seven languages, the list of signees, FAQ-Alarm Phone as well as up-to-date information on the following website: www.watchthemed.net

For the deadly delays in rescue operations, please see the exemplary case from the 11th of October 2013 where more than 200 boat-people drowned: <http://www.watchthemed.net/media/uploads/page/12/Alarmphone-11.10.2013-english.pdf>

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