



FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY!

5 Years of Alarm Phone



Action of the Seebrücke movement
to protest the mass dying in the
Mediterranean in Berlin, 17 May 2019.
Photo: SEEBRÜCKE



Welcome to Europe! The Open Arms
with around 120 migrants on board
off Lampedusa, August 2019.
Photo: Friedrich Bungert / Sea-Watch e.V.



Blockade of the Main river during a
Seebrücke demonstration
Frankfurt, Germany in August 2019.
Photo: Hagen Kopp



The Welcome United 'Parade-Power-Block'
at the unteilbar demonstration
in Dresden/Germany, August 2019.
Photo: Mazlum Demir



FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY!

5 Years of Alarm Phone



Photo exhibition in Oujda/Morocco,
October 2018.
Photo: Amélie Janda

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Celebrating 5 Years of Transnational Solidarity

Introduction

Five Years of Alarm Phone

Marion Bayer, Hagen Kopp, Kiri Santer and Maurice Stierl

Five years of WatchTheMed Alarm Phone. 60 months during which we came into contact with around 2,800 boats on the various routes in the Mediterranean and accompanied and supported them on their way. 1,800 days during which we were on standby 24/7 for people in distress at sea. Hardly anyone could have imagined this when the project was launched in October 2014 by around 50 activists. Today, the network comprises around 200 members in many cities in Europe and North Africa. We are more deeply rooted than ever in the respective regions and in communities of refugees and migrants. The Alarm Phone has developed into a sort of infrastructure in support of the right to freedom of movement, accompanying the persistence of migration movements in the fight against the EU border regime.

“Ferries not Frontex” is and remains our demand and vision to end death at sea immediately. But today, we seem far from achieving safe passage for those on the move, which would – incidentally – make our project superfluous. We experienced the fabulous long summer of migration in 2015 every day and every night. For a short time, the hope arose that the breakthrough on the Balkan route could bring about a new, open Europe. But the roll-back of control and of fortress Europe began that very winter, and the last few years until today have been marked by the dramatic militarisation and externalisation of European borders. Death and suffering are the intended consequences of EU policies of exclusion and deterrence, accompanied by racist agitation and the increased criminalisation of migration.

Still: let us not forget that, ten years ago, it was not better. In 2010, Berlusconi and Gaddafi had temporarily but completely shut down

the central Mediterranean route. Around that time, thousands who had made it across the Aegean to northern and western Europe were again and again deported back into misery in Greece through the Dublin regime. Then came the Arab Uprisings, followed by the war in Syria, which set new movements and dynamics of flight into motion and which amounted in 2015 to a successful uprising against controls along the Balkan route. No one could have imagined what came next: for several months, these borders and the Dublin regime collapsed completely. Bearing this recent history in mind, who would have had the confidence to predict the developments over the next five years? Will racist and authoritarian regimes continue to gain power and authority – accompanied by more and more violence? Or will there be new uprisings and breakthroughs for social justice and thus the freedom of movement?

Today, almost all societies in Europe but also in North Africa are deeply polarised. How can “our pole” assert itself or even expand? Is a social-ecological transformation towards open, freer and more just societies imaginable? A transformation through which deadly divisions are overcome and the exploitation of the global south halted? This remains the context in which we locate our project: for bridges not walls, toward corridors of solidarity and transnational connections and collaborations against all nationalism and racism, and for global justice.

“Despite and against continued forms of criminalisation and repression, we aim to build and expand infrastructures for the freedom of movement and equal rights for all”. With this in mind, more than 500 activists from all over Europe and North, West and Central Africa met in July 2019 for a joint “Transborder Summer Camp”. Alarm Phone activists contributed significantly to the preparation of this impressive gathering where we exchanged and empowered each other in our daily practical struggles – struggles that have expanded enormously in recent years along all flight- and migration routes. The activist camp inspired us to continue with our daily work at the southern external borders, with all the energy we have.

Our Alarm Phone shift teams work simultaneously on all three Mediterranean routes. In recent years, we have had to adapt our

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emergency plans to the changing realities and dynamics of sea-migration. In 2014/2015, the situation in the central Mediterranean was impacted considerably by the Mare Nostrum rescue operation, then in 2016/17 by civilian rescue operations, and since 2018 by Libyan mass interceptions, closed European harbours, and the criminalisation of sea rescue. In the Aegean Sea we witnessed the breakthrough of thousands of boats directly in 2015, with weeks during which we were in contact with over 100 (!) boats. This was followed by the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016 and its new containment strategy – despite this and the awful hotspot system, boats continue to land along Greek shores. Finally, the passage from Morocco to Spain: for many years, the number of arrivals here remained comparatively low, but in 2018, and for the first time, the western Mediterranean became the route with the most successful crossings. In 2019, financed and pressurised by the EU, the Moroccan regime reacted with fierce repression campaigns against those in transit.

All three sea routes remain contested spaces up to this day. And we are part of this struggle – a struggle for every boat and its arrival in a safe harbour in Europe. We combine our real-time interventions with critical documentation and public outreach. We engage in collaborations with local grassroots initiatives and migrant self-organisations on both sides of the Mediterranean. We understand the Alarm Phone as a concrete enactment of solidarity in transit, part of what is called the “Underground Railroad” for flight movements. We see ourselves as a transnational and multilingual node with multiple connections in a growing network of contacts for the struggle for the freedom of movement.

This brochure is intended to give an impression of what we have experienced over the last five years and what we have built together during this time. “I became aware that borders have no meaning. Everyone is born free,” said a young Tunisian Harraga (“burner of borders”) after crossing the Mediterranean, being arrested in Italy, imprisoned and deported back. In his struggle, and in contact with the Alarm Phone, he discovered his right to mobility. His is one of many impressive experiences, many Bozas*, but also many tragedies – too many to do justice to.

We dedicate our work during these five years to all those who have

lost their lives in the sea or disappeared there. In our daily work we try to remember them – together with their friends, their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers – and fight against death at sea. They will live on in every moment in which we do not give up on overcoming the border regime that killed them.

**WATCHTHEMED ALARM PHONE,
OCTOBER 2019**

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“Hello, my friend, I am from the Alarm Phone.”

How we use our voices to show solidarity and empower people on boats

Marion Bayer

When you talk with travellers on a boat in distress, you have only your voice and nothing else and often only very little windows of time to communicate. There have been more than 2.500 conversations or WhatsApp-chats with people on boats in all three regions of the Mediterranean. Some of these conversations we documented in great detail because we needed to write down every piece of information in order to avoid getting overwhelmed. Others remained in the WhatsApp-chats and on some shift-phones until they broke. And again others only left a trace in the memories of two peoples. This article is the attempt to share some personal experiences to highlight how we use our voices to show solidarity, to build short-term relationships and empower people in moments of distress.

Within five years we learned that small things can be decisive to understand one another. To start a conversation with “hello my friend” and with saying who we are, is a given. In this way we say ‘welcome’ in a moment when everything seems to be blocked. It can make clear that we are neither the police nor the coastguard. It is you and me who will now communicate. We will take time to sort out what is needed.

Sometimes we have difficulties understanding each other – not only because of language barriers. Distress can sometimes make voices shrill and incomprehensible when people are scared to death. Panic can

also make words meaningless. One of the most important tasks is to break first that spiral of fear so that it is possible to speak and understand one another. We have learned over time how much repetition can help when someone is in panic.

Despite these obstacles, we are surprisingly often able to enter a conversation. Besides the facts that you have to collect, you can sometimes convey a sense of solidarity through sound, a sound that will echo still in your ears when the communication has ended.

Sometimes, there are brief conversations that last for maybe three minutes or less – a woman shouting into the phone: “hallelujah, they came already! We are safe!” The sound of the victory cry ‘BOOOZA’, uttered by those who just arrived in Spain is something you will never forget. Sometimes a “thank you we are safe” comes with a thumbs up or a smiley on WhatsApp.

Sometimes there is silence. The battery died or the phone was thrown into the sea to avoid detection by coastguards. Sometimes the voice itself is silenced by the water of the sea. These are the moments when silence can break your heart.

We build relationships – most of them will only last until the final call has ended. Rarely, and only when we are lucky, do we have the time to say goodbye. Saying goodbye as a way to say ‘welcome to Europe’ or instead “the next time, inshallah you will make it” – and to wish strength and pass on with your voice as much energy as you can.

I will never forget one case from the Central Mediterranean, in the night from the 29th to the 30th of May 2019. We started the nightshift and the former shift team handed over a distress case in the Central Mediterranean. A boat with 90-100 people, among them about 20 women and 15 kids had made it nearly to the Maltese Search and Rescue zone. During the day they had already been spotted by the “Moonbird” NGO aircraft. A military plane circled over the boat and a boat of the Italian navy (P 490) was nearby. Nevertheless, Italy and Malta did not respond to our calls for rescue. We got in touch with the boat:

23:47 (29.5.2019): Talked with the people on the boat. “We are exhausted. One of the ‘balloons’ burst, water is entering the boat, we won’t survive

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much longer. ... If we have to wait the whole night, no one of us will be alive."

00:13 (30.5.2019): *Talked with the people again. "It is too much cold. The kids are suffering from the cold, we are afraid for them. They are wet and freezing. There are fifteen kids, the youngest is 9 months, then 3 years, 4 years... We tried to move the kids in the corner of the boat, where is less water. But the boat is not stabile, so moving them is difficult. There are 20 women or so on here. The women are strong but the one who is pregnant is very sick."*

We speak in a way that feels familiar, as if we knew one another for a long time. Hours later, when I switch the phone to speaker mode as I cannot bear to listen by myself anymore, my shift partner points out that this voice sounds like the voice of a friend – an old friend who we met in the struggle against deportations in a group of self-organised refugees. The man's voice on the phone is a younger version of our friend's voice, which seems to build a bridge of friendship.

00:47 *Reached the boat. They are really exhausted. "Some people are panicking. Some people are out of their mind because of fear." Decide to stick to the truth and to tell him that the coastguards are not telling us when they will come for their rescue. He says: "This is not good for us, they will not rescue us. Bad sign." He agrees nevertheless it is important to give people hope to avoid more panic which is dangerous.*

01:20 *Talked with the boat again – again we cannot promise when coastguards are coming. He says: "It is so fucking inhumane what they are doing with us. We are here in the sea for more than a day now. They came with airplanes helicopters and everything. They know where we are and they just wait for the Libyans to come tomorrow to pick our corpses. Those who will still be alive will maybe then also go into the water because they want rather to die than to go back to Libya. Why can't they let any fisher boat save us and then at least to avoid people to die. They can bring us to whatever shitty prison. But this situation here is so inhumane, you cannot imagine how we suffer."*

We tell him that we will stay with them until the end, whatever happens. We promise that we call the coastguards and inform the public to raise

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pressure. He thanks us for being with them.

04:50 *"The sun is here but we are still alone, we can't see any boat."*

He sounds extremely exhausted, it is calm in the background as if they don't even have energy for panic anymore. It is a deadly silence and we just repeat we are with them.

07:50 *Boat called again. "We are so tired." We tell them that we have launched a pressure campaign in Italy and contacted parliamentarians, the media, etc. We also say that there is a cargo vessel 1–2 hours away and that we make pressure to change its course and rescue.*

08:00 *Boat called. "A 5-year-old girl died." We can hear people scream in the background. "One balloon is losing air. We hope the boat can reach us."*

It happens what always happens in these situations: we want to believe that this is not true. That the people only passed on this information to help us raise pressure. The hope that a child might not be dead. In this case we did not find out afterwards what happened. The death of the 5-year-old child was so far not confirmed, though people said after disembarkation that several people had died during the journey.

08:19 *Boat called again. "We see a ship. It is far away but big. Coming from where the sun is." One can feel that people are getting excited.*

08:30 *Boat called. "There is P490 written on the boat." We instruct people on how to prepare for rescue.*

09:05 *Connection to people very bad but they said that a rescue is starting now. He said "goodbye".*

The last words we shared were wishes: "I hope you will reach Italy safely. Take care! Goodbye and hope to see you in another place in another time – somewhere in Europe."

Welcome my friend and goodbye – I hope you will arrive one day in a place of safety and maybe, who knows, we will meet somewhere on the street and we will not know that we had shared this experience. And maybe, one day, another fighter for freedom of movement will remind us of our common struggle through a voice that sounds like the voice of an old friend.

Messages from Those on the Move

“There are no words big enough to describe the value of the work you are doing. It is a deeply human act and it will never be forgotten. The whole of your team should know that we wish all of you, health and a long life and the best wishes in all the colours of the world.”

These are the words that the Alarm Phone received last December from a man who had been on a boat in the Western Mediterranean Sea and with whom shift teams had stayed in touch throughout the night until the boat was finally rescued to Spain. This man was able to support the other travellers by continuously and calmly reassuring them, thereby averted panic on the boat.

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His message is one of many the Alarm Phone receives through different channels. They come in all shapes, languages and sizes; messages of worry when families search for their loved ones, messages of relief from people who narrowly avoided an extremely dangerous situation at sea and some messages of joy, thanking the Alarm Phone for its support. These messages are small but valuable tokens, which inspire us to go on with our daily work.



On 4 July 2019 Mediterranea's rescue vessel Alex rescued 54 people in distress, after the Alarm Phone had received their emergency call and passed it on.
Photo: Mediterranea

16.05.2019

Text from our log book which notes that we received a call from a boat off of Libya on the 11/5/19. The people were intercepted to Tripoli but someone from the boat called back to thank the shift team for saving their lives

12:50 it is one guy in Tripoli/Libya in prison who was on the boat on the 11th of May which was in contact with us. He borrowed a phone and wanted to thank the shift team from Saturday because they saved their lives. He told me, that MSF had visited them already in the prison.

06.04.2019

Message from a contact in Morocco thanking the network

Salut et merci pour votre impeccable service et pour tous vos temps perdus pour nous aider nous les immigrant en cas de détresse dans la Méditerranée et aussi en cas de maladie et surtout des femmes enceintes. Que la bataille continue! Nous sommes avec vous comme vous êtes avec nous. ONE LOVE / FREEDOM / LA MAIN SUR LE COEUR

18.06.2018

Message from a member of the Alarm phone team in Morocco to the whole network

« Salut 🍀 tout le monde

Aujourd'hui j'ai reçu plein de messages whatsapp de félicitations et d'encouragement de la part des migrants subsahariens a Tanger et en Espagne d'avoir reconnu et apprécié le bon travail que alarm phone a fait le 15 juin. Ils disent qu'ils seront toujours reconnaissants de votre acte de bravoure d'avoir assister et leur accompagner à accomplir leur rêve de vouloir traverser la méditerranée pour l'Europe... De même que moi aussi je remercie toute l'équipe de AP de leur sympathie et de tendresse dans le travaille qui est toujours très stressant.

Merci beaucoup 🍀 »

20.03.2019

Message from an afghan woman with 2 kids, who arrived on Samos

BOAT: Hello miss. Thank you, We are in the samos.

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25

01

5 YEARS OF TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

12.05.2019

Boat to Samos

BOAT: We are survived

01.05.2019

3 survivors of a shipwreck, brought back to Rabat

BOAT: Dieu merci, nous 3 qui sommes rester vivant, nous sommes sauvé. Mais 9 personnes sont mortes 7 hommes et 2 femmes

18.09.2018

Boza to spain!

BOAT: Oui Dieu merci beaucoup

SHIFT: Tu as fais le BOZA? 🍀🍀🍀🍀

BOAT: 🍀🍀🍀🍀

SHIFT: Bonne chance pour vous !!!

BOAT: Merci à vous aussi

18.04.2019

Message from an afghan woman with 2 kids, who arrived on Samos

BOAT: Thank-you, you are very good peoples

24.07.2018

boat intercepted and brought back to Morocco

SHIFT: Salut vous etes sauvez maintenant?

BOAT: Oui Dieu merci par les marines marocaine

SHIFT: Okay. J'espere a la prochaine c'est boza finalement.

Bonne chance!

BOAT: Merci pour la prochaine fois si nous pouvons vous consulter sur ce numéro

04.04.2019

Boat to Chios

SHIFT: It will take a little bit of time. Do you see a boat? Are you getting rescued now?

BOAT: Yeah my friend. We are recieved help. Thank you very much to for helping us

21.03.2019

Boat rescued to Greece

BOAT: **Thank you. I am safe now****23.09.2018**

Boza of a zodiac from Tanger

Merci 🍷 boza 🍷

🙏 dieu la force

07.08.2018

Boza to Spain.

BOAT: **Merci à toi je te souhaite tout le bonheur du monde, que dieu us aides je suis de coeur** 💖**05.08.2018**

Boat with many women and kids intercepted to Morocco

BOAT: **Ils veulent nous refouler derrière Casablanca mais avec notre état on ne pourra pas tenir longtemps nous sommes presque tous malade. J'ai donner l'information a votre collègue. Elle va essayer de faire quelque chose**SHIFT: **OK merci**BOAT: **Merci pour tou****27.07.2018**

Boza to Spain.

Merci 🍷🍷🍷🍷

29.-30.07.2018

Boat pierced so they had to return to Morocco

BOAT: **on est retourné au Maroc, on est sein et sauf. Merci, a la prochaine fois**SHIFT: **Okay. A la prochaine !****09.05.2019**

11 men and 2 women were rescued by Salvatore Maritimo and brought to Spain

BOAT: **Merci à vous, sincèrement. Nous sommes sauvés**

Women on the move

Miriam Edding and Maurice Stierl

When our shift teams get in contact with a boat in distress, we need to collect as many details as possible. Especially when contact to a boat is later lost, we would then at least have some crucial information to pass on to rescuers. Besides asking about the position of the boat, its condition, and the well-being of the passengers on board, we need to find out the exact number of people and what their composition is. We have thus asked thousands of times: How many are on the boat, how many women, men and children? While this seems a basic question, it is crucial also to identify boats after rescue and to be able to exclude the possibility that they are still somewhere out at sea. It is also crucial for the rescue operation itself. Women who are pregnant or the children who accompany women on the move often require treatment even more urgently when they are exposed to the harsh conditions in the Mediterranean.

The European border regime is a gendered regime. It creates hierarchies of mobility, making it nearly impossible for many women to leave their places of predicament in the first place. If they are able to leave, they make particularly gendered experiences, and many are exposed to systemic forms of gender-based violence. The increasing securitisation of borders is the main factor contributing to ever-more risky journeys. Without professional help overcoming borders has become nearly impossible.

When women cross the sea, they often have different experiences than men and are exposed to greater danger, due to a range of factors. Proportionally, more women than men drown when trying to cross the sea. In the Central Mediterranean, they are often seated in the middle of rubber boats, intended to keep them as far as possible from the water and thereby 'safe'. However, it is in the middle of the boats where sea water and fuel gather the most, creating a toxic mixture that burns their skin and often causes grave injuries. There they are also most at risk of being trampled and suffocated when panic breaks out on board. In some of the larger wooden

boats, women often sit in the vessel's hold, where suffocation due to the accumulation of dangerous fumes occurs more quickly, and where, in situations of capsizing, escaping is more difficult. Many women wear longer and heavier clothes than men, making it more difficult to stay above water when they have fallen into the sea, and it has been reported that women leaving from Libya have often insufficient swimming skills. Some women are pregnant, which increases the risk of dehydration, or they hold the responsibility to care for young children that travel with them.

Especially the women we have spoken to and who had fled from Libya tell of unimaginable suffering prior to their departure. They report not 'only' of the violence they suffered while imprisoned in Libya, but also of the violence and exploitation they endured throughout their entire migratory trajectories. For many, the suffering continues in Europe, and the healing and overcoming of traumatic experience cannot begin until they are in a real safe space. Perpetrators of violence against women on the move include militias, border and security guards outside and within Europe, as well as male travel companions.

Women use different strategies to try to stay as safe as possible during their journeys. One of them is to engage in sexual relations with travel companions. As one woman told us, these "sex against protection deals" mean that "Instead of being forced to have sex with many men on my journey I choose to have only one man in exchange for protection against all the others." Another woman described how women travelling across the Sahara would insert material from mattresses into their vaginas in order to protect them against pregnancies. Despite these strategies, many still get pregnant and this leaves women even more vulnerable as they have to take care of a new-born.

Women, and men, who decide to travel towards Europe are often under a lot of pressure from their families to help them escape poverty and debt. Many feel that they have no choice but to risk their lives to support their families back home, and for some a failure to do so comes with social stigmatisation. This need to make money for the family translates into gendered practices and experiences. "My body will get my family out of debt" explained a Thai woman who was on her way from Spain to

Denmark to sell sex. Her family is in debt but still has a small piece of land. Still, she said, before "it is better to keep the land than to use it to repay our debt My body is like a piece of land that I can take with me, but it's falling in value all the time. Land in Thailand does not."¹ Private debt and the intent to support the family is an underreported reason for people to start their journey and a direct consequence of neoliberal policies in place now for many decades.

In many of their home countries, LGBTIQ* people on the move face extremely harsh conditions before they set out for their journeys – of course often reasons for their escape. On their way, they do not have access to community networks that could offer some protection. Often, they are forced to remain as invisible as possible, unable to address their needs.

Given the atrocities that women and LGBTIQ* on the move are subjected to, their common portrayal as victims may seem unsurprising. And yet, what tends to fall out of sight through the constant repetition of such narratives are the moments of survival, political agency, and resistance that demonstrate their tenacity and the ways in which they transform themselves, others, and the spaces they pass through on their journeys. It is time to listen to the voices and stories of those, who are often underrepresented and overlooked. When asking "how many people; women, children and men are on the boat?", our shift teams quite often hear a woman's voice on the other end of the line responding to our questions, being the one calming down her fellow travellers and working together with us courageously to organize the rescue operation. We continue to voice our solidarity with them, with those unable to escape, those on the move, and those who, after arrival, still face extreme forms of violence.

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¹ „My body is my piece of land“ Sine Plambeck in *OpenDemocracy* Sep. 2017

OKTOBER 2017

12 THE CAMPAIGN #OPENTHEISLANDS IS LAUNCHED AS A
JOINT INITIATIVE OF MORE THAN 40 SOLIDARITY GROUPS
AND ORGANISATIONS FROM GREEK ISLANDS AND CITIES,
CALLING FOR URGENT ACTION TO END THE OVERCROWDING
7 OF THE ISLAND CAMPS AND ERADICATE THE INHUMANE
LIVING CONDITIONS THERE

25 WELCOME TO EUROPE NETWORK
AND ALARM PHONE MEMBERS COME
TOGETHER IN THE HARBOUR OF
THERMI/LESVOS IN COMMEMORATION
OF THE DEAD OF THE EUROPEAN
BORDER REGIME

| NOVEMBER 2017

3-4 THE BODIES OF 26
NIGERIAN WOMEN
ARE RETRIEVED IN
THE CENTRAL
17 MEDITERRANEAN

06 50 PEOPLE DROWN DUE TO THE RECK- LESS BEHAVIOUR OF THE LIBYAN COAST- GUARD

11 MOROCCAN POLICE CARRY OUT A MASSIVE RAID AND ARREST 70 PEOPLE IN NADOR

10 NUMEROUS POLICE RAIDS IN THE FORESTS AROUND NADOR

06 GROUP OF 209 PEOPLE
MANAGE TO JUMP THE
FENCE OF THE SPANISH
ENCLAVE MELILLA

NEARLY 40% OF
TRAVELLERS
CROSSING TO GREECE
ARE CHILDREN

JANUARY 2018

10 ACTIVIST HELEN MALENO APPEARS IN COURT IN TANGIER OVER ALLEGATIONS OF COLLUSION WITH PEOPLE SMUGGLERS

26 80 PEOPLE GET RESCUED BY TURKISH COAST-GUARD BUT ONE GIRL DIES AFTER AP IS ALERT-ED TO THE BOAT

03 SPANISH SALVAMENTO MARITIMO REFUSES TO CONDUCT A SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION, DESPITE A PRECISE LOCALISATION OF THE BOAT IN DISTRESS, BECAUSE IT IS IN MOROCCAN WATERS. 3 PEOPLE GO MISSING

30 FOUR PEOPLE DROWN, UP TO EIGHT GO MISSING AND 15 ARE RESCUED IN THE AEGEAN SEA - THE ALARM PHONE HAD BEEN ALERTED TO THEIR SINKING BOAT, NEAR KALOLIMNOS ISLAND

24 THE MEMORIAL
TO THE DEAD IN
THE HARBOUR
OF THERMI ON
LESVOS ISLAND IS
DESTROYED

DECEMBER 2017

FEBRUARY 2018

**25 ALARM PHONE GROUP
IN OUJDA HAS A
MEETING WITH
FAMILIES OF MISSING
RELATIVES AT SEA**

MÄRZ 2018

**15-18 AP INTERNATIONAL
MEETING IN MUNICH**

| APRIL 2018

**RELEASE OF SIX NEW VIDEOS
FROM AP'S "SOLIDARITY MES-
SAGES IN TRANSIT" SERIES**

01 11 PEOPLE DIE IN THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR, HAVING LEFT FROM TANGIER

09 ANOTHER SHIPWRECK CAUSES THE DEATH OF APPROX. 36 TRAVELLERS HAVING LEFT FROM A BEACH AROUND 20KM SOUTH OF TANGIER TOWARDS SPAIN

7-9 AP TUNISIA ORGANISES A WEEKEND OF WORKSHOPS, DEBATES, THEATRE PLAYS, FILM SCREENINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN ZARZIS, IN SOUTH-EASTERN TUNISIA WITH REGIONAL ACTIVISTS

10 SALVINI ANNOUNCES THE CLOSURE OF ITALIAN PORTS TO RESCUE VESSELS

20.835 SUCCESSFUL SEA
CROSSINGS TO SPAIN
FROM MOROCCO FOR THE
FIRST 6 MONTHS OF THE
YEAR

JUNE 2018

24-25 FIRST "PALERMO
PROCESS - FROM
THE SEA TO THE
CITY" MEETING
IN PALERMO

MAY 2018

24 COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD CEREMONY IN SKALA SIKAMINIAS, LESVOS, GREECE

22 FASCIST ATTACK IN SAPHOS SQUARE, MYTILENE. 200 FASCISTS ATTACK 120 MIGRANTS PROTESTING AGAINST INHUMANE CONDITIONS IN MORIA HOT-SPOT

30.6-21.7. THE ALARM PHONE DOCUMENTS AND DENOUNCES SEVERAL PUSH-BACK OPERATIONS OCCURRING AT THE GREEK-TURKISH LAND BORDER, BY THE EVROS RIVER

29.6. & 1.7 TWO SHIPWRECKS OCCUR OFF OF LIBYA, RESULTING IN MORE THAN 200 FATALITIES

02 CAPTAIN OF MISSION LIFE-
LINE, CLAUS-PETER REISCH,
IS ARRESTED IN MALTA AND
THE LIFELINE IS IMPOUNDED

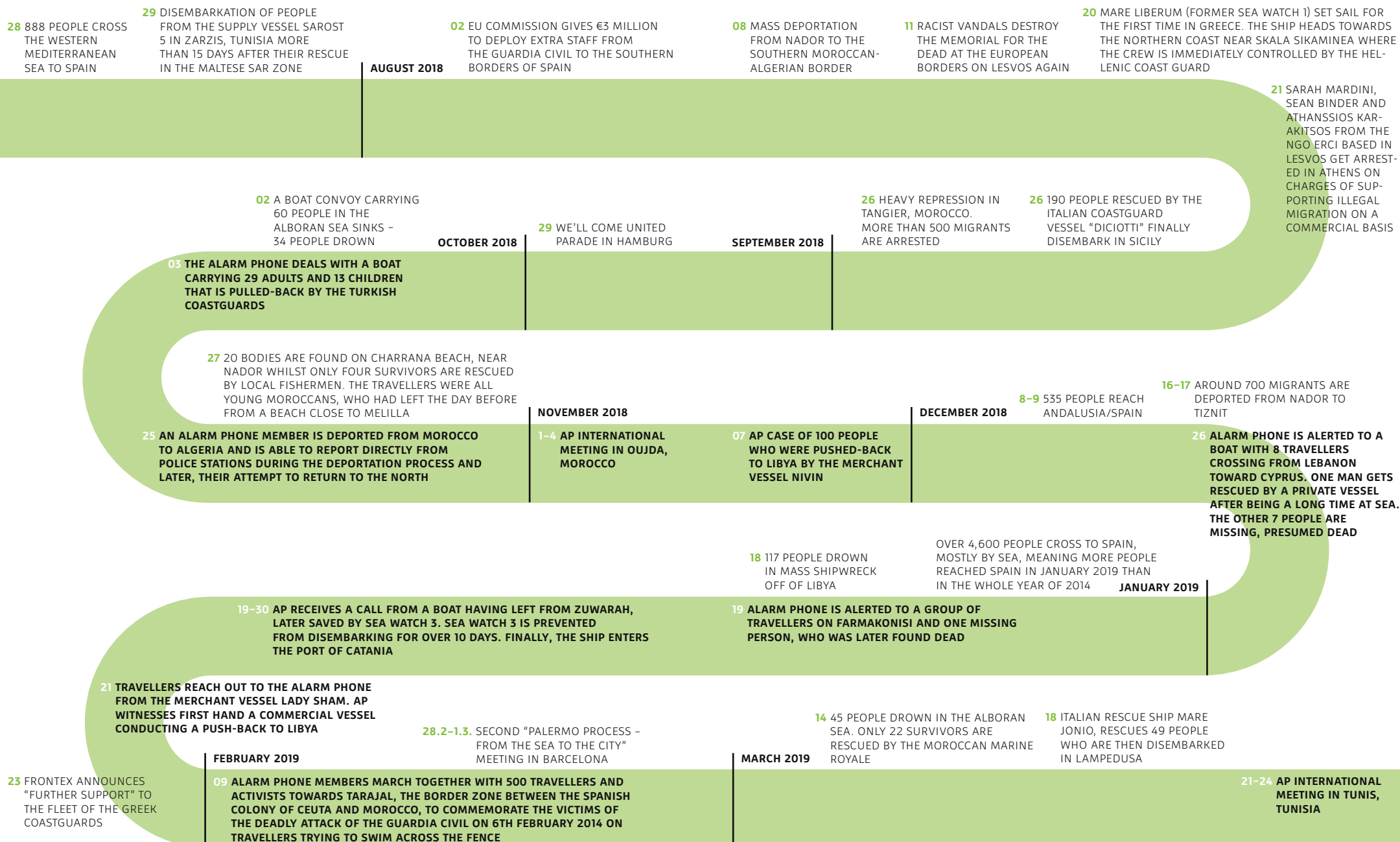
07 THE MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES BEGIN
EVICTING A CAMP OF SUB-SAHARAN
MIGRANTS NEXT TO THE TRAIN
STATION IN FES, HOME TO MORE
THAN 1700 PEOPLE

15 120 MINORS ARE ARRESTED
IN BENI ANSAR ON THE
EASTERN BORDER OF MELILLA

22 ALGERIAN AND MORROCAN ACTIVISTS, SOME FROM THE ALARM PHONE, CALL FOR A MARCH TO THE COMMON BORDER OF THE TWO COUNTRIES, STARTING FROM OUJDA (MOROCCO) AND MAGHNIYA (ALGERIA). THE ACTIVISTS DEMAND THE REOPENING OF THE BORDER THAT HAS BEEN CLOSED SINCE 1994

20 ALARM PHONE MEMBERS CHARLES HELLER AND LORENZO PEZZANI RELEASE THEIR REPORT 'BLAMING THE RESCUERS' ON THE CONFISCATION OF THE 'JUVENTA'

23-29 AP SUPPORTS 91 BOATS IN DISTRESS COMING FROM MOROCCO



27-30 EL-HIBLU 1 CASE. MIGRANTS RESCUED BY THE EL-HIBLU 1 SUCCESSFULLY RESIST THEIR RETURN TO LIBYA AND PUT PRESSURE ON THE CAPTAIN WHO SUBSEQUENTLY BRINGS THEM TO MALTA. ALARM PHONE WAS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED BUT FOLLOWED THE SITUATION CLOSELY. SEVERAL OF THE RESCUED PEOPLE WERE CHARGED WITH TERRORISM UPON THEIR ARRIVAL AND THEIR TRIAL IS ONGOING

APRIL 2019

03 64 PEOPLE HAVING LEFT FROM ZUWARAH ARE SAVED BY NGO SHIP ALAN KURDI AFTER THE AP RECEIVES FIRST DISTRESS CALL FROM THE BOAT

29 MARE LIBERUM, SAILING UNDER THE GERMAN FLAG, IS SUSPENDED FROM LEAVING PORT BY THE GERMAN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

MAY 2019

11 AP REPORTS OF A PULL-BACK AT SEA OF A BOAT OF 35 PEOPLE PERFORMED BY THE TURKISH COASTGUARD

29 AP DOCUMENTS A PUSH-BACK OPERATION OF A BOAT CARRYING 51 PEOPLE IN THE AEGEAN SEA, NEAR SAMOS ISLAND

01 THE AP DEALS WITH A DISTRESS CASE OFF THE TURKISH COAST CONCERNING A BOAT WITH 11 TRAVELLERS. THE TRAVELLERS WERE RESCUED BUT ONE MAN WAS REPORTED MISSING. THE BODY WAS LATER FOUND ON BODRUM BEACH

12 FIRST SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO CROSS THE FENCE TO MELILLA SINCE OCT 2018: OUT OF 100, 52 MAKE IT OVER, THE OTHER HALF IS PUSHED-BACK OR PREVENTED FROM ENTERING TO MOROCCO BY THE SPANISH GUARDIA CIVIL AND THE MOROCCAN "FORCES AUXILIARIES"

17 THE AP REPORTS ABOUT A BOAT WITH 62 TRAVELLERS ATTACKED BY MASKED MEN SPEAKING GREEK AND ENGLISH. SHORTLY AFTER THEY ARE PULLED BACK BY TURKISH COASTGUARD

02 AP COLLECTS THE TESTIMONIES OF THE SURVIVORS OF A RESCUE OPERATION BY THE MOROCCAN COASTGUARD GONE WRONG. ONE PREGNANT WOMAN DIES DURING THE OPERATION. ANOTHER 8 HAD ALREADY DROWNED AFTER FALLING OVERBOARD BEFORE THE RESCUE STARTED

19 MARE LIBERUM LEAVES THE PORT IN SOUTH LESVOS AFTER HAVING WON IN COURT IN GERMANY. THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT HAS NO LEGAL BASIS TO PREVENT THE SHIP FROM HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING. THE SHIP HEADS TOWARDS CHIOS AND SAMOS TO REPORT ON THE OVERCROWDED CAMPS THERE

18 AP IS ALERTED TO 2 BOATS IN DISTRESS. ONE BOAT, WITH 40 PEOPLE ON BOARD, IS RESCUED BY THE GREEK COASTGUARD. THE SECOND BOAT, CARRYING 55 TRAVELLERS, IS PULLED BACK TO TURKEY AFTER HAVING BEEN ATTACKED BY MASKED MEN NEAR SAMOS

20 THE AP DOCUMENTS A PULL-BACK CASE OF A BOAT CARRYING 23 PEOPLE IN DISTRESS NEAR SAMOS

21 TWO ALARM PHONE MEMBERS WITH REGULAR STATUS ARE ARRESTED IN THE STREETS OF TANGIER. THE TWO WOMEN, ONE OF THEM 5 MONTHS PREGNANT, ARE BROUGHT TO THE POLICE STATION AND BEATEN

31 TUG BOAT MARIDIVE 601 RESCUES 65 MIGRANTS. TUNISIA DOES NOT ALLOW THE DISEMBARKATION OF THE TRAVELLERS, MAINLY FROM BANGLADESH, WHO HAVE TO SURVIVE ON THE BOAT FOR ALMOST 3 WEEKS. THE TRAVELLERS ARE EVENTUALLY DISEMBARKED IN ZARZIS, TUNISIA, ON THE 18TH OF JUNE AND MANY ARE DEPORTED SOON AFTER

20-21 THIRD "PALERMO PROCESS - FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY" MEETING IN NAPLES

12 SEA WATCH 3 RESCUES 53 PEOPLE IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS BUT IS PREVENTED FROM DISEMBARKING THEM IN THE CLOSEST PORT OF SAFETY. ON JUNE 29, AFTER 17 DAYS OF STAND-OFF, CAPTAIN CAROLA RAKETE DOCKS IN LAMPEDUSA AND IS SUBSEQUENTLY ARRESTED AND RELEASED

5-6 SEVERAL BOATS WITH 370 PPL ARE RESCUED WITHIN MALTESE SAR ZONE

JUNE 2019

05 THE AP IS ALERTED TO TWO BOATS IN DISTRESS IN THE CENTRAL MED. THE FIRST, CARRYING 75 PEOPLE IS RESCUED BY MALTESE COASTGUARDS. THE SECOND IS RESCUED BY THE CARGO SHIP ASSO VENTICINQUE AND THE TRAVELLERS DISEMBARK IN POZZALLO, ITALY

08 AFTER THE ELECTIONS, A NEW CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT IS FORMED IN GREECE. THE NEW MINISTER FOR MIGRATION POLICY, GIORGOS KOUMOUTSAKOS, ANNOUNCES "A RUTHLESS AND DETERMINED REFOULEMENT PROGRAM"

JULY 2019

9-14 TRANSBORDER SUMMER CAMP IN NANTES, FRANCE

04 THE MEDITERRANEA SAILING BOAT ALEX RESCUES 55 PEOPLE AFTER HAVING BEEN ALERTED BY THE AP

10 CITY PLAZA IN ATHENS, ONE OF OUR LIGHTHOUSES, CLOSES ITS DOORS. AFTER 39 MONTHS OF CREATING A COMMON LIFE IN SAFETY AND DIGNITY, STRUGGLING AGAINST RACISM, BORDERS AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION, THE KEYS OF THE SQUATTED CITY PLAZA ARE HANDED BACK TO THE FORMER EMPLOYEES OF THE HOTEL. ALL REFUGEES LIVING AT CITY PLAZA ARE MOVED TO SAFE HOUSING WITHIN THE CITY

AUGUST 2019

25 MASS DROWNING OFF THE LIBYAN COAST. MORE THAN 150 PEOPLE ARE SAID TO HAVE DROWNED. ALARM PHONE RECEIVES SEVERAL DISTRESS CALLS FROM THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN IN THE DAY PRECEDING THE TRAGEDY

01 OPEN ARMS RESCUES 123 PEOPLE FROM TWO BOATS AFTER HAVING BEEN ALERTED BY AP

09 OCEAN VIKING RESCUES 80 PEOPLE AFTER HAVEN BEEN ALERTED BY THE AP

2

Struggling in the different Regions of the Med

Lifejacket graveyard in Lesvos,
October 2017.
Photo: Lisa Groß

Particularly Memorable Alarm Phone Cases

Maurice Stierl and Miriam Edding

When you receive distress calls every day, or at least several times a week over a five-year period, it is difficult or even is impossible to remember what occurred in particular cases, especially when you are such a large network. The thousands of cases we worked on were not experienced by a single individual but by a range of members in different shift teams. Some distress situations have left deep impressions on us, while others faded away over time. We experienced how migrant travellers sent us voice messages or videos when celebrating their safe arrival in Europe. We experienced how people were in panic while still in distress at sea, with no rescue in sight. And we experienced how our communication to boats broke off and we had to learn hours later that the people had not made it but lost their lives. We cannot pay tribute to this wealth of experiences and impressions. However, we want to re-narrate some recent cases that were memorable for many of us, one from each of the three Mediterranean regions.

Central Mediterranean:

"I am very very tired... We are alone in this sea"

On the 29th of May 2019, in the evening, we were called by a relative of someone on a boat in the Central Mediterranean. The boat carried about 100 people. When we spoke to the migrant travellers at 22.00h they told us that they were on a rubber boat and that their engine had stopped. They had left Libya the day before. They were scared about the water coming into their boat. When we obtained their GPS position, we alerted the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Rome. The description

of the boat, a black and white rubber boat, matched the description of a boat that the civil reconnaissance aircraft Moonbird had spotted earlier on the day. This meant that authorities had been informed about this distress case since the morning already.

At 23.40h, the people on the boat called us again, asking for rapid rescue as they thought they could not survive until the next morning: "One of the 'balloons' burst, water is entering the boat, we won't survive much longer. ... If we have to wait the whole night, no one of us will be alive. We don't know how much battery is left." At 00.11h on May 30, we informed also RCC Malta about the situation and two minutes later we spoke to the people again. "It is too much cold. The kids are suffering from the cold, we are afraid for them. They are wet and freezing. There are fifteen kids, the youngest is 9 months, then 3 years, 4 years. We tried to move the kids in the corner of the boat, where is less water. There are 20 women or so on here. The women are strong but the one who is pregnant is very sick." We told them that we informed Maltese authorities and that they needed to stay strong. We agreed to speak again in 30min.

At 00.36am, we informed MRCC Rome and RCC Malta about these developments. We also launched a public pressure campaign, alerting the public to this case of non-assistance. At 00.47h, the people on board said: "Some people are panicking. Some people are out of their mind because of fear." At 00.56h, we spoke to MRCC Malta and asked about what procedures they had initiated. They were un-cooperative and merely said that they don't have any information to share. At 00.59h, also MRCC Rome refused to give us any information, merely stating that the boat was not in Italian waters.

At 01:20h we talked with the people again – again we could not promise when coastguards were coming. The person on board said: "It is so fucking inhumane what they are doing with us. We are here in the sea for more than a day now. They came with airplanes helicopters and everything. They know where we are and they just wait for the Libyans to come tomorrow to pick our corpses. Those who will still be alive will maybe then also go into the water because they want rather to die than to go back to Libya. Why can't they let any fisher boat save us and then at least to

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avoid people to die. They can bring us to whatever shitty prison. But this situation here is so inhumane, you cannot imagine how we suffer.” We told him that we would stay with them until the end, whatever happens. We promised that we would call the coastguards and inform the public to raise pressure. He thanked us for being with them.

02.02h we spoke with the boat again: “The situation is really fucked up. I am sure nobody will rescue us before the morning. We will try to survive but we don’t know if we will.” We tell him he should call in case if anything changes but that we should speak less frequently, to save their battery. At **03.14h**, he said: “I am very very tired... We are alone in this sea.” At **04.50h** we spoke to the boat again: “The sun is here but we are still alone, we can’t see any boat.” He sounded extremely exhausted; it is calm in the background as if they don’t have energy for panic anymore. At **06.04h**, we received another GPS location and forwarded it to RCC Malta. They stated that they were not operative in this case and say that the Libyan authorities were responsible.

At **06.37h** the people called again. “There is a helicopter flying over us, but nothing on the water. Do you see a boat coming to us?” We say we cannot see any movements at the moment. At **07.42h**, we updated their phone with credit. At **07.50h**, the people said: “We are so tired.” At **08.00h**, the people called and said: “A 5-year-old girl died.” We could hear people scream in the background. “One balloon is losing air. We hope the boat can reach us.”

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At **08.19h**, the people called again. “We see a ship. It is far away but big. Coming from where the sun is.” One could feel that people are getting excited. At **08.24h**, we spoke to MRCC Rome – again they refused to state whether they were coordinating a rescue operation. At **08.30h**, the people called again: “There is P490 written ton the boat.” It is an Italian Navy vessel. We instructed the people on how to prepare for rescue, one by one, and children and women first. At **09.05h**, we spoke with the people again. And despite the bad connection, we heard that a rescue had been launched. The person on the phone said “goodbye”.

At **09.40h**, the Italian press agency ANSA confirmed that the Italian Navy vessel P490 had operated a rescue. MRCC Rome nonetheless refused

Boat with 64 people in distress. They called the Alarm Phone and were rescued by Sea Eye’s Alan Kurdi, 3 April 2019.
Photo: Fabian Heinz / sea-eye.org

to confirm the rescue to us, just stating that the media was reporting on the case. The people were later disembarked in Genoa, Italy where they stated that some people had died during their journey.

Western Mediterranean:

'I'm one of three men who survived the shipwreck'

On the **1st of May 2019**, at **5:27am** CEST, we were alerted to 12 people who were missing after having left Morocco earlier that night. Authorities in Spain and Morocco were alerted and they launched a search and rescue operation for the boat. However, the boat remained missing. It was found only in the afternoon of **May 2**. At that time, eight people had already fallen overboard and drowned. During the rescue operation, another person, a woman who is assumed to have been pregnant, died. On **May 2**, at **11.30pm**, we were able to speak to one of the three survivors. After they were brought to a hospital, they feared that the police would come, and so they left. They went into hiding. Here is his testimony:

*I'm one of three men who survived the shipwreck on 1st of May. We started as a group of 12 people, ten men and two women, at **01:00** am local time on the **1st of May** from Tangier. The nine dead people came from Senegal. They came from one village and were very close to each other. They did everything together, slept together, shared meals, for me they appeared like brothers.*

*We contacted you [Alarm Phone] in the early morning of **1st of May**. When I tried to send the GPS data from my smartphone a big wave made the boat capsize. We fell in water and the cell phone get wet. So I couldn't use it any more. We've managed to turn the boat around and to climb into the boat again. We lost three people and also our paddles. The boat capsized again. We lost two more people. Again, we were able to turn the boat around and to climb into it.*

We knew, we are in international waters. We could see the Moroccan coast and were driving further and further into the sea. The boat capsized a third time. We lost another person. Again we were able to turn the boat around and to climb into it.

In the morning we saw big container ships, which did not notice us, despite my

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red clothes, waving and shouting. Again, the boat capsized. We had no strength anymore to turn the boat around and we were sitting on the turned around backside of our zodiac. Two other people died. We were fighting for our lives.

*On the next day, the **2nd of May** around noon we were found by a very big, white ship with Spanish letters written on it, maybe a fishing boat. We were only four people left, three men and one woman. The crew of the big white boat told us to wait for rescue and they alerted the Marine Royal [Moroccan Navy]. We had no strength any more.*

*The Marine Royale arrived at around **1.00–3.00pm** and they started the rescue by throwing a rope to us. I was the first to be rescued. They picked up the second of us survivors. The waves were very high and the zodiac turned around again. The man and the women who were still on the boat fell into the water. The man still had the rope in his hand and could be saved. The woman was carried away by the waves. One man from the crew of Marine Royale jumped into the water to help her, but the woman was gone. After that they brought us to hospital. We couldn't move anymore. We were so tired. I don't know in which city the hospital was.*

Aegean Sea:

'They shouted 'We will save you. Follow us''

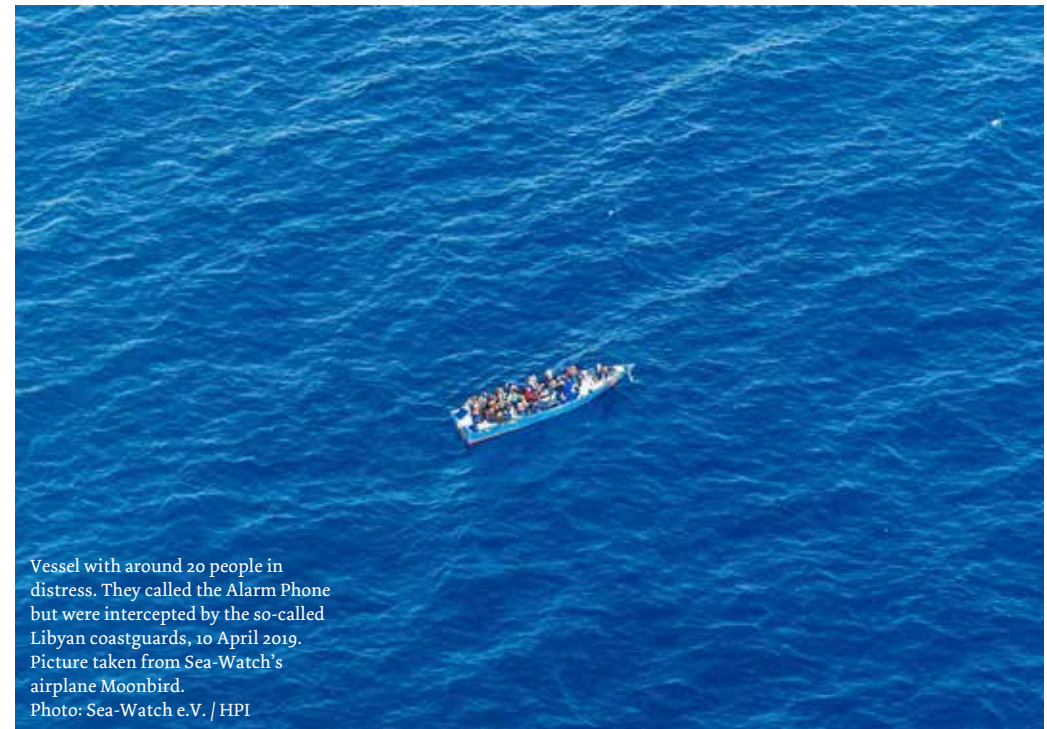
On the **11th of April 2019**, we were contacted by a boat coming from Turkey and moving toward Agathonisi Island with 35 people on board who had escaped from Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Somalia. The group included ten children, among whom were also infants, and five women. There were individuals with severe war injuries on board. The boat was in serious distress and clearly located in Greek waters. During this case we witnessed a "push-back" – the act of returning those fleeing to the state where they had departed from.

Our shift team swiftly alerted the Greek coastguards to the situation. We remained in contact with the boat and received several more GPS locations from the travellers. Although we forwarded all the positions to the Greek authorities, they informed us that the boat had been 'found' in Turkish waters and returned to Turkey.

The testimonies of the survivors and the GPS positions forwarded to us refute this account. Instead they highlight how the Greek coastguards tricked the people to follow them back into Turkish waters by telling them that they were being directed to safety in Greece. When the travellers realised what was going on, they sought to turn around and move again toward Greece. At that point they had reached Turkish waters and the Greek coastguards prevented them from escaping whilst leaving it to the approaching Turkish coastguards to carry out a 'rescue' operation. In their testimony the people on board reported how they were refouled:

"We started around 3:30 am CEST from the Turkish coast. After three hours of driving, first towards Nera / Agathonisi and later slightly towards Farmakonisi, we were stopped at 5:50 CEST by the Greek Coastguard. It was very cold and our kids were screaming from fear. Water was entering the dinghy from the waves. It was a grey and white coast guard boat. There were four officers dressed in blue uniforms. They were making circles around us. They shouted: 'We will save you. Follow us.' They pointed us to go in another direction. We get confused and followed them a little bit. Then we stopped. We understood we were driving back. They ordered us to turn off our motor. We were asking for help. We showed them our kids in the air and begged them to let us stay in Greece. But they said, we were doing something illegal. After 30 minutes a Turkish Coastguard boat arrived and the Greeks left. We were brought to a Turkish police station. It was a one and a half hours drive back. They said if we'd ever try again to cross illegally to Greece, they'd deport us back to our countries."

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Vessel with around 20 people in distress. They called the Alarm Phone but were intercepted by the so-called Libyan coastguards, 10 April 2019. Picture taken from Sea-Watch's airplane Moonbird. Photo: Sea-Watch e.V. / HPI



Man rescued by Sea-Eye's Alan Kurdi. Photo: Fabian Heinz / sea-eye.org

5 years Alarm Phone in the Western Mediterranean

Nina, Lisa and Laura

Every call to the Alarm Phone brings with it its own story that deserves to be heard. In the Western Mediterranean, we have spoken to hundreds of people during their sea passages. The situations in which contacts occurred were manifold, ranging from travellers rowing on tiny rubber dinghies during calamitous weather conditions to huge convoys of up to 80 people crossing the Alborán Sea on large boats with engines. While some people were panicking in life threatening situations, others were still making jokes to Alarm Phone members while being in distress at sea.

With more than 58,000 arrivals to Spain, the Western Mediterranean route was by far the most frequented throughout 2018, with the EU border agency Frontex warning that it would become the next 'migration corridor' to Europe.¹ From June to the end of October, crossings peaked, and the Alarm Phone accompanied an unprecedented number of boats on their perilous journey, with 91 boats in the last week of July 2018 alone. The response was political repression. Crossings declined from November 2018 but still remained high until the end of the year.

Sea rescue: Our experiences in changing realities

Although the Moroccan Navy has long played the part as Europe's external frontier guard, intercepting many of the boats that reached out to us, we tended to have a rather good cooperation with the Spanish rescue organization, Salvamento Marítimo (SM). At the same time and especially more recently, we have witnessed a total lack of engagement from both the Spanish and Moroccan authorities in numerous cases, even if an exact

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GPS location was provided. On some occasions, the travellers had to endure more than a day in severe conditions before managing to paddle back to the Moroccan shore themselves. The Alarm Phone continuously put pressure on the relevant authorities, but often without eliciting a response. Sometimes this politics of non-assistance ended deadly. On 23rd of December 2018, 11 people attempted the crossing. They contacted the Alarm Phone and we called the Coastguards. There was no response. Many hours later, we lost contact to the boat. The travellers are listed as missing at sea, but, undoubtedly, they drowned.²

The socialist government in Spain is eager to reduce arrivals via the Western Mediterranean route. They drastically reformed SAR operations in summer 2018. The Guardia Civil became the commanding authority for Spanish SAR operations. This amounts to a militarisation of the formerly civil rescue agency. SM has since stopped actively patrolling the Spanish SAR zone and often refuses to enter the Moroccan SAR zone. SM's staff, naval and aerial assets were significantly reduced and in multiple cases, boats in distress were blocked by SM until the Moroccan Navy arrived to intercept the travellers. Moreover, SM has stopped tweeting about ongoing rescues. The result is that supporting actors, such as the Alarm Phone, have no access to crucial information. These new policies have undoubtedly been a factor in the disappearance and death of migrant travellers.

Push-backs and land border fortification

Illegal push-back operations occur not merely along the enclaves but also from Spanish islets, as i.e. from Perejil on 17th of March 2019.³ However, they are mostly practiced at the land borders of the Spanish colonies Ceuta and Melilla, often referred to as 'express deportations', for example on the 22nd of August from Ceuta (116 people were illegally removed)⁴ and on the 21st of October from Melilla on 21 October (55 people were illegally removed).⁵ The fortifications at the land borders are continuously augmented. The latest move is the construction of a new fence on the Moroccan side of the Ceuta border and massive investments in security installations on the Spanish side. Due to a wave of repression in northern Morocco in 2015, which involved the dismantling of many forest encampments close to the

enclaves, fewer people have entered Spain by land (from about 11,600 people in 2015 to an average of about 6,500 people in the years 2016–2018). It has not stopped crossings – people continue to exercise their right to move by organising the so-called “attacks” onto the fences, such as in Ceuta in July⁶ and August 2018⁷ and Melilla in October 2018⁸ and May 2019⁹.

Repression and the politics of deterrence

One thing that remains unchanged over the years is the behaviour of the Moroccan state whenever increased numbers of sea crossings incite the wrath of its European ‘partners’.

As a response to the sharp rise in crossings via the Western Mediterranean in June and July 2018, the Moroccan kingdom once again intensified raids on and arrests of black people, with or without legal status in Morocco. The first ones targeted were those in the main transit migration hubs such as Tangier and Nador, but later the wave of repression moved to cities further inland. According to the anti-racist group GADEM, more than 6,500 people were arrested and pushed-back to the south of Morocco or towards Algeria between July and September 2018 alone.¹⁰ These violent and arbitrary arrests continue on such huge scale and remain a daily reality until today. Many of our Alarm Phone members and friends in Morocco have been deported south towards cities such as Tiznit, Errachidia or Agadir several times. These are cities, where many deportees are stranded, living precariously in makeshift camps around the train and bus stations. The deportations to countries of origin also increased. The testimonies of the people detained reveal a total deprivation of the detainees’ rights that should be recognised by Moroccan law. People suffer from police violence and theft of personal belongings. The detainees are kept in courtyards and cells in inhumane conditions, waiting for deportation or to be handcuffed and illegally forced to unknown destinations. And yet, many have not given up, but have returned north, scaling the Spanish fences or taking to the sea.

EU – Morocco relations

In light of the peak of arrivals in Spain in the summer of 2018, the EU

increased its cooperation with Morocco in matters of border control. This cooperation was established in 2007¹¹ during various EU-Africa summits. Especially the EU-Emergency Relief Trust Fund for African countries (EUTF for Africa) was used in 2018 to limit and prevent the movement of people in this area. The EU’s agenda in these agreements on strengthened border management has always been to shift European asylum responsibilities further south. Without doubt, the brutality of police raids and deportation practices are a direct consequence of the influence of the EU on Morocco and its demand to ‘tackle’ unwanted migration. But, at the same time, the relations between the EU and Morocco are contested and multi-layered. For instance, the idea of “regional disembarkation platforms in relevant third countries”, a clear instance of the EU seeking to conscript northern African countries into the mass detention of people on the move, has been rejected by the Moroccan government, as well as by Tunisia and Egypt. Also, Morocco’s new centre for observing international migration movements and policies – the African Observatory for Migration and Development (OAMD) – is an attempt by Morocco to position itself more autonomously within the African Union (AU) when it comes to migration control. This indicates how Morocco is using its position as Europe’s external frontier guard to leverage its political position. It would be too simplistic to understand the interests of the Kingdom of Morocco merely in terms of the financial gains from cooperating with the EU in the field of migration policy. There is much more at stake: the economic and political struggle concerning the Western Sahara, Morocco’s attempt to forge a powerful position for itself in the international political context, inside and outside of the AU. And finally, the relations between the EU and Morocco in border security are also always connected to the question of mobility of Morocco’s own population.¹²

The Alarm Phone in the region

Whilst people are constantly resisting the violent effects of inhumane border regimes by crossing borders clandestinely, they also resist in more visible ways. In open defiance of border policies, acts of resistance take place throughout Morocco, not merely at its territorial edges. Here,

associations and individuals engage in different ways for the freedom of movement for all and the respect of their basic rights. Alarm Phone teams continue to grow throughout the country, deepening ties with local associations, activists and, first and foremost, with communities in transit.

We have facilitated and participated in diverse migration-related conferences, political actions and commemorations in Morocco. Alarm Phone members continue to raise awareness among the communities of travellers concerning the risks and security aspects of the sea crossings. We remain in close contact with the community networks and do the crucial follow-ups of cases on the ground. We search for missing people, monitor arrests and violent attacks, collect testimonies, identify dead people in the morgue and pass information to friends and relatives. Through the Alarm Phone, activists from all the different regions, communities and local struggles in Morocco, have established a crucial network to discuss incidents and political developments and to support each other in solidarity.

We use our experience on the ground, to keep the European public up-to-date and to denounce the brutal realities for people who contest the border regime in the Western Mediterranean. Not much is published based on direct reports from the people concerned and media coverage of the situation in the Western Mediterranean is still astonishingly low. The Alarm Phone is a crucial platform and channel for the traveller's voices, reports and demands. Since no SAR NGOs are engaged in the Western Mediterranean the Alarm Phone remains not only a critical witness, but a crucial actor. Without the courageous work of the members on the ground and the pressure of our shift teams, many rescue operations would not have been initiated or carried out.

- 1 Deutsche Welle (2018): <https://www.dw.com/en/eus-frontex-warns-of-new-migrant-route-to-spain/a-44563058>, IOM International (2018), Mediterranean Update: <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-86436-2018-deaths-reach-1783> [15/07/19]
- 2 <http://watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/1112> [15/07/19]
- 3 https://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/Gobierno-supervivientes-naufrago-Perejil-Marruecos_o_900111052.html [15/07/19]
- 4 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/migrants-who-stormed-morocco-spain-border-sent-back/> [15/07/19]

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- 5 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/spain-returns-migrants-to-morocco-after-storming-of-melilla-enclave/> [15/07/19]
- 6 <https://www.europapress.es/epsocial/migracion/noticia-ascienden-mas-millar-entradas-ceuta-via-terrestre-2018-salto-valla-600-migrantes-20180726161901.html> [17/07/2019]
- 7 <http://resistancerepublicaine.eu/2018/08/24/lespagne-expulse-les-116-migrants-ayant-force-sa-frontiere-a-ceuta/> [17/07/2019]
- 8 <https://www.europe1.fr/international/espagne-quelque-200-migrants-entrent-dans-lenclave-de-melilla-un-mort-3783827> [17/07/2019]
- 9 <https://www.dw.com/en/migrants-force-entry-in-spains-melilla-exclave/a-48710227-0> [17/07/2019]
- 10 <https://mailchi.mp/808145bec8c4/note-expulsions-gratuites> [15/07/19]
- 11 The Euro-Moroccan partnership amounts to ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy) investments of 232 million euros (2014-2019) to strengthen border management.
- 12 For further readings see: El Qadim, N. (2017): *EU-Morocco Negotiations on Migrations and the Decentring Agenda in EU Studies*. In: Weier, S.; Woons, M. (Hg.): *Critical Epistemologies of Global Politics*. Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing. S. 134-152.

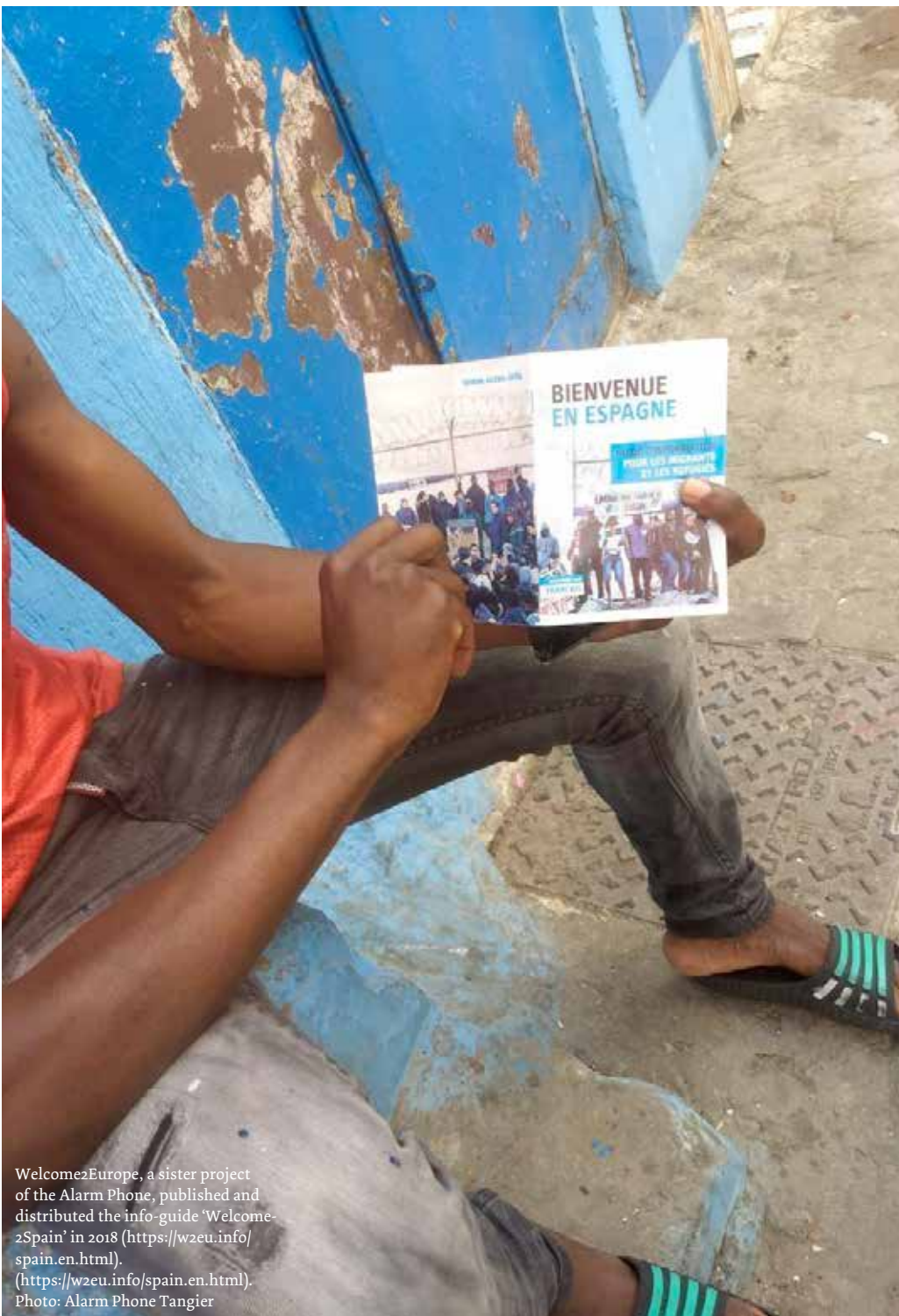
The Alarm Phone in the Central Mediterranean

Maurice Stierl and Hagen Kopp

Today, the situation in the Central Mediterranean is radically different to the situation five years ago, when the Alarm Phone project started. In 2014, the number of people reaching Italy via the sea had quadrupled to the year prior (to about 170,000 arrivals). Many were rescued by the Italian military-humanitarian operation Mare Nostrum but when we started to receive distress calls from the sea, in October that year, the operation was about to end. The resulting rescue vacuum was not filled. Instead, with the Frontex operation Triton and the military operation EUNAVFOR MED, EU institutions and member states ramped up measures to deter migrants from reaching European shores. They, however, did not succeed.

Numbers of crossings remained high for several years (arrivals in Italy: about 154,000 in 2015, 181,000 in 2016, 119,000 in 2017) – years that saw the crucial intervention of humanitarian rescuers in this space, the deadliest borderzone in the world. Nonetheless, something changed following 2017 and the ‘memorandum of understanding’ concluded between the UN-backed Libyan government and Italy. The so-called Libyan coastguards – trained, funded and equipped by their European allies – launched mass interception campaigns at sea, returning thousands into inhumane detention camps and an active warzone. Consequently, numbers of arrivals in Europe declined drastically in 2018, dropping to about one-fifth of the number in 2017 (about 23,000 arrivals in Italy in 2018). Today, in 2019, this decline has continued, with merely about 5,300 people reaching Europe via the central route until mid-August.

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Welcome2Europe, a sister project of the Alarm Phone, published and distributed the info-guide 'Welcome2Spain' in 2018 (<https://w2eu.info/spain.en.html>).
(<https://w2eu.info/spain.en.html>).
Photo: Alarm Phone Tangier

The Alarm Phone has witnessed these transformations first hand. While, on average, we received one distress case from this region every three to four days in 2015, and every six days in 2016, we worked on a case only about every two weeks during 2017 and 2018. At the same time, while the overall number of calls may have gone down, never before has the Alarm Phone been contacted by such a high percentage of people trying to escape Libya. In 2019, until September 1, boats with over 3,500 people on board have reached out to us, which is over one-quarter of all people who have attempted to reach Europe from Libya in this period.

Of course, these statistics allow only a glimpse into the ongoing struggles at sea and the drama that unfolds in every single case. Cases where people were refouled back to Libya after rescue – such as those rescued by the cargo vessel ‘Lady Sham’ in January 2019 who remained in contact with the Alarm Phone from the Libyan detention cages. Cases where we were never able to reconnect to those who had called us – such as the 50 people who reached out to us on April 1 but were never found. Cases where the location of the people in distress was known, even marked by a smoke can dropped by a European military airplane, but where the 20 people were not rescued to safety but intercepted by the so-called Libyan authorities on April 10.

At the same time, we also engaged in situations where a non-governmental chain of solidarity prevented death or refoulement – such as the case from April 3 this year, where 64 people reached out to us and were later rescued by Sea-Eye’s Alan Kurdi. The 54 people from July 4 who had already survived a night at sea when they called us and who were later discovered by Mediterranean’s Alex. The three boats that alerted us and were rescued by Open Arms between August 1 and 10. Or the 80 people who dialled our number in distress and were rescued by SOS Méditerranée’s Ocean Viking on August 9.

The humanitarian fleet has shrunk significantly over the past years. The constant attempts by EU institutions and member states to obstruct and even criminalise their work has taken its toll. Over the past months, nearly all rescue operations by NGOs led to stand-offs before European harbours and to investigations following disembarkations – strategies

to prevent NGO boats from returning to the Central Mediterranean and bearing witness to how Europe actively turns this space into a death-zone. While every rescue has to be battled over, and while every crew risks persecution, the rescue community continues, undeterred. New boats have launched operations, such as Mediterranean’s Mare Jonio and Alex in 2018 or SOS Méditerranée’s Ocean Viking in 2019, while the non-governmental reconnaissance aircrafts Moonbird and Colibri continue to counter-surveillance the sea.

We should never forget who the principal protagonists of sea-crossings are: the migrant travellers themselves. Despite the many ways in which Europe securitises its borders, people continue to struggle to move, and some still succeed in reaching Europe by boat. They actively seek out new routes and deploy a great diversity of tactics to circumvent Europe’s deterrence apparatus. And, of course, smugglers also adapt to changing developments in the Mediterranean. Over recent months, we have seen how more boats than before seem able to reach European SAR zones or even reach Italy or Malta independently. These cases go largely unreported in the international media.

In particular since the end of May, there has been a market increase in migrant boats entering the Maltese SAR zone. It shows that those fleeing are aware that they have to bridge much longer distances to avoid being intercepted back to Libya. On May 24, for example, the Armed Forces of Malta rescued 216 people from two rubber boats that had entered the Maltese SAR zone. Ten days later, even more boats reached this SAR zones – 370 people were rescued to Malta between June 5 and 6. In May and June, also the number of independent arrivals of migrant boats in Italy and Malta has markedly increased. Following some estimates, there were 115 people who reached Europe in this way in March, 142 in April, 295 in May and even 596 in June – this means that, over the past four months, a total of 1148 people reached Europe by boat without having to be rescued at sea.

Palermo-Charter-Platform-Process

“We ask the civil society to join this process: to create corridors, spaces and projects of solidarity, crisscrossing and subverting all internal and external borders of Europe.”¹

This call was formulated at a remarkable meeting in Palermo in May 2018, largely initiated and prepared by Alarm Phone activists, at a time when it was already foreseeable that Salvini would take over Italy’s interior ministry and would pursue the criminalisation of migration and sea rescue. Leoluca Orlando, the mayor of Palermo, was the host of and inspiration for our gathering. He had invited us to the impressive reading room of the Biblioteca Comunale, which dates back to 1760. A reference point for our meeting was the Charter of Palermo, which Orlando had released in 2015, and which emphasises the right to mobility.

The name of our new transnational cooperation may sound complex but it makes sense: the Charter is a compass for our strategic exchange and our rather informal ‘platform process’. “We are active in municipalities and church groups, we belong to migrant communities, non-governmental organisations and human rights initiatives, we are lawyers, researchers and activists, we are self-organised and supporters. We all build and spread novel structures of disobedience and solidarity.” The central demand for this ‘platform process’ - safe harbours – connects and reinforces our network. Our second meeting took place in Barcelona in February 2019 and our third meeting in Naples in June. “From the sea to the cities” is our collective slogan and following that sentiment, transnational working groups have formed – on the one hand to make our operational cooperation at sea more effective, and, on the other, to better connect solidarity cities across Europe.

¹ <https://alarmphone.org/en/2018/06/17/toward-a-coalition-of-solidarity-for-the-right-to-mobility-and-equal-rights-for-all/>

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Forensic Oceanography

Forensic Oceanography is a project that critically investigates the militarised border regime in the Mediterranean Sea, analysing the spatial and aesthetic conditions that have caused tens of thousands of registered deaths at the maritime borders of Europe over the last 20 years. Together with a wide network of NGOs, scientists, journalists, and activist groups, Forensic Oceanography has produced, since 2011, several maps, video animations, visualisations, human rights reports and online tools that attempt to document the violence perpetrated against migrants at sea and challenge the regime of visibility imposed by surveillance means on this contested area.

By combining testimonies of human rights violations with digital technologies such as satellite imagery, vessel tracking data, geospatial mapping, and drift modelling, Forensic Oceanography has exercised a critical right to look at sea with a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, using surveillance means ‘against the grain’, it has produced spatial analysis



The first Palermo Charter Platform Process meeting in Palermo, May 2018.
Photo: Hagen Kopp

that has been used within existing legal and political forums, supporting the quest for justice of migrants and their families in legal proceedings, parliamentary auditions, human rights, and journalistic investigations. At the same time, through a series of installations and articles, Forensic Oceanography has attempted to spur a debate on the politics of image production in the age of surveillance and on what it means to produce images, videos, and sounds that become evidence and documentation of human rights violations.

For example, in our report “Death by Rescue”, we have analysed the developments in the central Mediterranean following the end of the Mare Nostrum operation. We were able to show how the EU and its member states have sought to keep their rescue means as far as possible from migrants in distress to act as a deterrent. This, however, did not lead to fewer crossings but to a staggering increase in migrants deaths at sea, of which the April 2015 twin shipwrecks that cost the lives of more than 1200 people in a single week were the most harrowing expression.

Through our reports, we have sought to account for and contest the evolving conditions that lead to migrants’ deaths at sea on a structural basis. We continue to pursue this work, frequently in collaboration with the Alarm Phone, which has become an ever more crucial actor in the wake of the growing criminalisation of rescue NGOs. However, if there’s one thing that the last 8 years have shown us is that only a radical transformation of the European policies of migration and its articulation with a broad range of other practices and demands (of which the initiative “From the sea to the cities” is a perfect example) could possibly challenge the deaths of migrants at sea. In this sense, migration at sea remains a crucial node around which to weave many entangled struggles, forming an emerging agenda for radical transformation.

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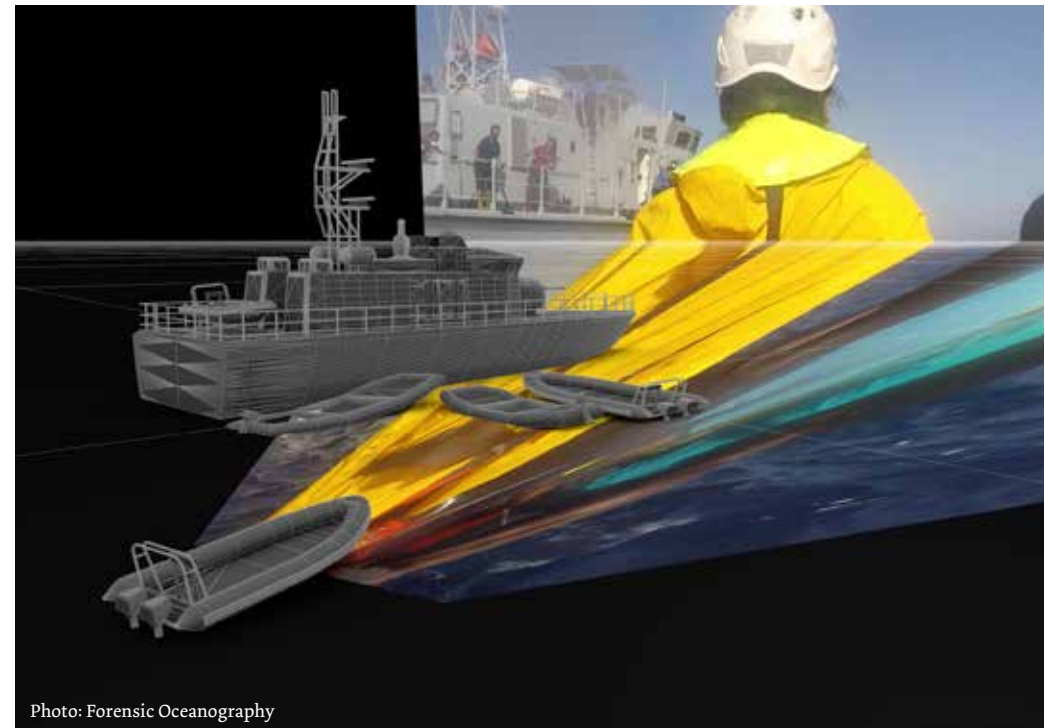


Photo: Forensic Oceanography

“No one can stop the rain”, but Europe tries hard

How Greek and Turkish authorities use push- and pull-backs under the eyes of Frontex and NATO to systematically hinder people on the move from reaching protection in Europe, thereby putting these lives at further risk.

Salinia Stroux

Until today, the Aegean ‘south-eastern’ migratory path to Europe, through the Turkish-Greek border, is a highly frequented escape route for migrants to the EU. Most of them cross the sea with boats towards the Greek islands, often merely a short distance from the Turkish coast. Others cross the land border, marked by the long river Evros/Maritsa.

The Alarm Phone was created in 2014 due to the immanent need for civil political action to stop the dying at sea, but also to monitor and document human rights violations along the borders. Refugees in Turkey and Greece had repeatedly expressed the need for an emergency number that could be reached at any time. In the Aegean region, the Alarm Phone received the most distress calls in comparison to the two other main routes, in particular during the years 2014–2016. After a decline in distress calls, more reached us again in 2019.

When we launched our project in October 2014, it was unclear how we would be able to intervene in order to prevent cases of push-backs, but we knew we had to try to find a way. The period before 2015

was characterised by massive, systematic, and violent push-backs in the Aegean Sea, carried out by perpetrators described as ‘masked men’ and/or the Greek coastguard.

When the new Syriza government took office in Greece in 2015, it did not completely end the era of push-backs in the Aegean, but at least led to a marked decrease in such cases. This decrease has to be viewed also in light of the ‘long summer of migration’, when thousands crossed the Aegean daily and when hundreds of cases reached the Alarm Phone, peaking at the end of October 2015 when 99 boats in distress in the Aegean Sea called the Alarm Phone for help within just one week.

This period witnessed also a change in the way refugees used communication resources. With their smartphones, they started to document the trajectories of their journeys and, where possible, human rights violations. As mobile phone coverage is given in this region, they could also use WhatsApp during their journeys. The importance of this shift – a combination of a form of self-defence and a growing public interest in human rights violations at sea that did not exist before the Lampedusa tragedy in October 2013 – should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless, also over the following years, push-backs and attacks on refugee boats never stopped entirely, as we documented repeatedly. As a survivor of a push-back operation near Chios told us on 11 June 2016:

“We were refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq and a few people from other countries in our boat. The Turkish coastguards detected and followed us until the Greek waters. Then they stopped. We drove for another ten minutes until a Greek boat stopped us. There were five officers on this Greek boat and there were two more boats: one from Portugal and a big boat, which we didn’t know from where it was. The Greek boat took us on board. They said: “You are safe now. You arrived in Europe. We tried asking for protection in Greece. We said we want asylum. They didn’t allow us to speak. We couldn’t tell them our problems or that we are in danger also in Turkey. Then we waited there. The other boats were standing and watching from distance. After 25 minutes a Turkish coastguard boat came. The Greeks held guns on our heads and threatened to shoot if we don’t move to the Turkish boat. The ‘boss’ of the Greek

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coastguards said in English and it should be translated for all people:

‘Tell them I will kill you if you come here again.’ The Turkish coastguards took us and brought us back to Turkey.”

In early 2016, one illegal state practice was replaced by another one, which was the result of the newly enforced co-operation between Turkey and the EU/Greece, the so-called EU-Turkey ‘Deal’. We witnessed now fewer push-backs but an increase in pull-backs by the Turkish coastguard, which were, according to the people on the move, at times as violent as the push-backs carried out by their Greek counterparts. In the following three years, push-back alerts became rare but didn’t disappear from the scene, as we documented, for example, on 21 July 2017, concerning a group of 26 people:

“They reported that the coastguards had been very offensive by creating big waves that caused their boat to rock left and right. On the coastguard vessel, men were wearing black and carrying weapons. Water started coming into the boat and the passengers started panicking. Although they pleaded with the Greek coastguards, declaring that they had a sick child with a chronic condition with them who needed medical treatment, the Greek coastguards refused and insisted on sending them back to Turkey. Fearing for their lives and those of the children they had on board, including a paralyzed child and an eight-months-old baby, they went back to the Turkish coast where the Turkish police showed up to pick them

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The photo was taken on board of the Greek coastguard vessel. In the background you can see the Romanian coastguard vessels that was part of the Frontex mission. The refugees reported another Portuguese vessel which is not visible in the picture.
Photo: Anonymous

up. Apart from the boat of the Greek coastguards, the travellers informed us that another boat with a Greek, French, Croatian and German flag painted on it was present during the pushback without intervening. After the travellers had been pushed back, they were arrested by the Turkish police.”

Since early 2019, attacks on refugee boats and push-backs from Greek territorial waters have reportedly increased again.¹ As a survivor of a push-back on 29 April 2019 near Samos told us:

“We were stopped around 3 am by a small speed-boat which had been heading from Greece towards us. Samos was just 15 minutes away from our position. The boat that was getting closer to us, looked like a black dinghy. I didn’t see any flag. It was dark and we were scared. The speed boat first had its floodlights on but getting closer they turned it off. There were two masked persons on board. I think they were wearing black clothes. They shouted to us stop. My wife is eight-months pregnant. She was crying. There was another woman, nine-months pregnant. The masked persons had a long stick with a knife on top. With that they destroyed our petrol bin and the engine. Our boat couldn’t move anymore. The waves were carrying us back to Turkey. After maybe 30 minutes the Turkish coastguard arrived and arrested us. I think the two masked persons had called them. We were transferred to a police station and held for two days.”

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This increase in push-backs needs to be viewed in light of the newly elected right-wing Nea Dimokratia government in Greece, whose Alternate Minister for Migration Policy Giorgos Koumoutsakos announced “a ruthless and determined refoulement program”. Crackdowns on undocumented migrants have been already implemented in repeated raids in Athens and Thessaloniki while the main political agenda when it comes to refugees is framed in terms of ‘security’ instead of ‘protection’ and ‘deportations’ instead of ‘asylum’.² In early August, Citizen Protection Minister Michalis Chrisochoidis visited the land border in the Evros prefecture to further enhance the securitisation approach to migration policies, emphasising that the country’s security is “non-negotiable”.

Meanwhile, push-backs at the land border between Turkey and

Greece never stopped. Despite an increased documentation of human rights violations, only very few allegations are investigated by the Greek authorities and none of them have led to the conviction of a law-enforcement officer. To the contrary, human rights activists such as lawyers active in the area have been investigated for their assumed involvement with smuggling networks – also without any results. The Alarm Phone was alerted to most push-back cases at the land border in 2018, a year, where crossings through that route had suddenly peaked (2018: 18,014; 2017: 6,592; 2016: 3,784).³

As a survivor of three push-backs at the land border of Evros (30 July 2017, March 2018, 8 April 2018) told us:

“I have subsidiary protection in Germany. In order to help my sick mother to escape Syria, I returned to Turkey through Greece in 2017. I could not help her sadly but I could also not find a legal way back, as the procedure at the German embassy was full of obstacles. Desperate, I decided to enter Greece clandestinely and then return back home from there. I found a smuggler and paid him to assist me to enter Greece. When I entered Greek territory, the Greek army stopped me for a control. They asked who I was and where I was from. They took my passport and my mobile phone. I was brought to a car. I had to wait until the next morning. In the early hours, they brought me to the river and put me in a dinghy. I was returned back to Turkey. I asked for my papers. They kicked me and I fell and hurt my legs and my back. I found myself back to Turkey without any documents. [...] I tried again another four times until I succeeded and I got returned by the Greek two more times.”

Or, as a father, whose family was pushed-back a second time from Evros (22 May 2018), told us:

“When we reached Greece through the land border, we were with my sister’s family together. At some point our group got separated and we were lost. My daughter was with my sister’s family. My wife was pregnant and she had to take a rest, while the others had continued. When we reached Athens for many days we didn’t know if they are alive or not. Finally, we were informed they had been arrested and pushed-back by Greek police. They called us from Istanbul. This was the second time

they pushed them back. We suffer from feeling paralysed, unable to help! They had walked far away from the border into Greece and still police returned them.”

For a long time, the militarised border zone between Turkey and Greece has been a disputed area. Specifically at sea, and until today, different borderlines co-exist and make an exact determination of territorial ‘belonging’ difficult. In the recent past, illegal border crossings by law enforcement officers/soldiers, by army vessels or planes have repeatedly provoked diplomatic conflicts and further raised the question about the exact location of the borderline. A conflict that erupted in March 2018 between the two countries over the unofficial crossing of two Greek soldiers onto the Turkish side was followed by a sudden increase in arrivals from Turkey. A simple coincidence?

Political battles around the border have often played out when it comes to national but also European migration policies.⁴ In light of broader transnational political interests but also dependencies, ‘border management’ has become a significant aspect in both countries’ political negotiations with the EU, connected for example to the ‘debt crisis’ in Greece or the visa policy for Turkish citizens. Fulfilling or rejecting Europe’s demands to control its south-eastern borders, ‘managing’ migration via hot-spots or increased readmissions, or unlawfully stopping refugees from reaching EU territory through push- and pull-backs are all aspects of the ‘power games’ played out in the region – often without clear outcomes.

Less than a decade ago, European and supranational actors entered the region also physically. In 2010, the EU border agency Frontex⁵, considering the Greece-Turkey border the ‘center of gravity’ of its operations, opened their first regional office in Piraeus. Since 2 November of the same year, the agency coordinated a total of 175 guest officers, deployed from 24 member states and Schengen-associated countries, under the auspices of the first so called Rapid Border Intervention Team of Frontex (RABIT).⁶ In 2011, Frontex launched the sea and land operations “Poseidon”.

Later, in February 2016, NATO war ships entered the area for further support. Both Frontex and NATO play a major role in the (early) detection of attempted border crossings by refugees. When detected, and



Identity card of an Afghan young woman found on a beach in Lesvos.
Photo: Marily Stroux

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in close co-operation with the coastguards of both sides of the border, national authorities are called to physically hinder boats from reaching Greek territory or to pull them back to Turkey. Furthermore, the EU has invested a huge amount of money into the technical assistance of Greek and Turkish coastguards, has shared and offered means and know-how for border patrols, and has also become part in the identification/registration of people on the move and their readmissions /deportations.

At first sight, Frontex and NATO attempts to keep their hands 'clean' when it comes to human rights violations seem to be working. Indeed, they claim to focus more on 'collecting critical information' and 'surveillance to help encounter human trafficking' both during sea patrols and in emergencies/rescue. It is however undeniable that they share responsibility for the human rights violations carried out against refugees. In August 2019 the journalistic research center CORRECTIV published a report about human rights violations that raised further awareness about this concerning issue.⁷

The land border has always been a grey-zone in terms of human rights violations, with massive illegal returns carried out throughout these past years.⁸ The prevention of border crossings at sea have been, for some time, more in Greek hands and then for another time period more in Turkish hands. For refugees, the result is the same regardless of whether they were pushed-back from Greek waters, pulled-back by Turkish coastguards (from Greek waters), or arrested even before trying to cross: they are denied their right of access to protection and they are exposed to further life-threatening situations. From the point of view of the coastguards on either side and other border patrolling agencies of the EU or NATO, all these activities have the same aim: stopping what they consider 'illegal' migration. It is clear that what comes into effect here in the Aegean is a border regime based upon the violation of the rights of protection seekers, often exposing them to further life-threatening situations and, in the worst case, death.⁹

The case near Farmakonisi, where 11 people died on 20 January 2014 due to an attempted push-back operation by the Greek coastguard, may be one of the most known tragedies in the Aegean Sea. Despite great efforts

to reach at least legal justice for the survivors and the relatives of the dead, and an extensive documentation of the case by the representing lawyers, Greek and international courts have rejected the case.¹⁰ Also on 19 March 2016, two people passed away - reportedly due to a denied rescue operation.¹¹ Another big tragedy occurred on 16 March 2018 near Agathonisi, where 16 people died and at least three were missing. According to the survivors and their relatives, the people on board had called SOS but were only rescued one day later – too late for most of them.¹²

While deaths of refugees at the border could not be prevented through increased border controls – as cynically and ridiculously proclaimed by Frontex – what we see in the Aegean is a systematic deterrence of those seeking protection in Europe. We insist that civil society has to take action as long as this ‘war against refugees’ is going on: in sea rescue, in emergency phone networks and in the monitoring, documentation and denunciation of human rights violations at the borders.

**MIGRATION WILL ALWAYS BE:
NO ONE CAN STOP THE RAIN.
FOR A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS AND WITHOUT PASSPORTS!
FOR THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT
AND THE FREEDOM TO STAY!
NO ONE IS ILLEGAL! STOP DEATHS AT BORDERS!**

¹ See last regional Aegean report of the Alarm Phone from June 2019: <https://alarmphone.org/en/2019/06/28/alarm-phone-aegean-report/>

² See for more information on recent changes in Greek Migration Policies: <https://rsaegean.org/en/human-rights-sacrificed-in-the-name-of-democratic-rigor/>

³ See: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

⁴ See : <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/greek-turkish-turbulent-ties-worsen-190206060438274.html>

⁵ See statements of the Alarm Phone concerning the involvements and responsibilities of Frontex: https://alarmphone.org/en/2015/02/15/push-back-frontex/?post_type_release_type=post
https://alarmphone.org/en/2015/10/25/frontexslowsdown/?post_type_release_type=post

⁶ RABITs: The Rapid Border Intervention Team of Frontex was established in 2007 but its deployment in Greece is also the first time it comes into action. See: http://www.frontex.europa.eu/rabit_2010/background_information/

⁷ See: <https://correctiv.org/top-stories/2019/08/04/frontex-transparenz/>

⁸ See Alarm Phone statement about four documented push-backs at the landborder in 2018: https://alarmphone.org/en/2018/07/06/four-push-back-operations-at-the-greek-turkish-land-border-witnessed-by-the-alarm-phone/?post_type_release_type=post

⁹ On death during Alarm Phone work, see also: https://alarmphone.org/de/2016/01/31/weekly-reports-january-2016-one-of-the-deadliest-months-ever-in-the-aegean-sea-5/?post_type_release_type=post and https://alarmphone.org/en/2017/12/04/we-could-not-ignore-this-any-longer-interview-with-izmir-migrants-rights-activist/?post_type_release_type=post

¹⁰ See: <https://rsaegean.org/en/syrian-acquitted-for-deaths-of-refugees-in-farmakonisi-case/>
<https://www.gcr.gr/index.php/el/news/press-releases-announcements/item/347>

¹¹ See: https://alarmphone.org/en/2016/06/20/support-for-a-co-ordinated-humanitarian-search-and-rescue-operation-is-denied-does-the-turkish-coast-guard-hold-responsibility-for-the-deaths-of-two-persons-at-sea/?post_type_release_type=post

¹² See: <https://rsaegean.org/en/agathonisipressrelease/>
<https://rsaegean.org/en/agathonisishipwreck-the-case-file/>

10 years after noborder Lesvos 09 10 years of the network Welcome to Europe

On Lesbos in late summer 2009, about 400 noborder activists from various places came together with hundreds of migrant travellers who had just arrived on the coasts of this Greek island, coming from Turkey with small boats. Some weeks earlier already, strong protests had taken place in the detention prison “Pagani”, near the capital city of Mytilene. Ongoing rebellions from inside and demonstrations and scandalisation from outside finally led to the closure of this “hell of Dante’s Inferno”, an important success against the EU policy of deterrence. During the week-long noborder camp, an info point was established at the port of Mytilene, which became a crucial and vivid meeting point for our common fights for the freedom of movement.

In the middle of these struggles, the idea of Welcome to Europe (w2eu) was born: to build daily structures and to provide useful multilingual information to empower and to support refugees and migrants in transit in their right to move to their desired destination. We tried to build connections to the various countries of arrival and destination and within the years, the network grew with every friend who arrived somewhere.

In September 2019 it is 10 years ago that this noborder camp took place. We can look back at an impressive common history of collective encounters and of organising projects, protests and of commemorations. Last but not least, we can look back to the emergence of innumerable friendships, which spread with and through w2eu all over Europe. A month later, in October 2019, the Alarm Phone turns 5 years old – a network very active along this eastern route to Europe, and in a sense Welcome to Europe’s younger sister that says ‘welcome’ to people crossing the sea.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing rollback of the deadly EU border regime, 10 years of Welcome to Europe is also a renewed promise for the future: we will tear down these borders and will go on with our struggle until the freedom of movement and equal rights will be reality for everybody.

<http://infomobile.w2eu.net/files/2019/07/w2eu-10years-booklet-EN-201906-screen.pdf>



3

Solidarity on the Move

The We'll come United 'Parade-Power-Block' at the unteilar demonstration in Dresden/Germany, August 2019.
Photo: Mazlum Demir

Rest in peace!

ALPHA CAMARA

On a raging sea, men,
Women and children curse time.
Their compass has lost its bearings,
The death knell of perdition resounded
Like the hearse siren.
The weather is not in the mood,
The waves rebel and break the hope
In drops of tears.

Under a icy sky, the cries resound
In the depth of the night. What to do about it?
They sing their distress in chorus.
They're calling for help,
But no one hears their cries of distress.
This world is deaf!
And the ships sink into the belly
Of the ocean!
To the gods of the seas,
Human flesh is given as food.

In the light of day, like floating wrecks,
Dead bodies bathe in the waters
Averages of the Mediterranean.
Bodies that flow from aborted dreams.
Bodies that leave behind them
The inconsolable tears of families
And communities.
This day is as dark as the sky in the end of a storm,
It's a day of mourning,

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Negro fishing floods the screens
All over the world.
The situation is sad!
My Africa is amputated of its valid arms.

I'm crying!
I'm crying!

The flame of my Africa is extinguished
In the tumultuous waters of the Mediterranean.
It is my youth that sinks into bulimia nervosa
His dreams of the West.
The lights in garlands trace
Furrows of hope in his innocent eyes,
And it follows the path of all dangers.

I am sick of these African powers
Who suffocate their peoples!
I am sick of this world of barbed wire
And heartless walls!
My youthful disenchantment inside
From the four walls of suffering,
The world is indifferent to its fate.
She then tries to free herself from the neck
From the confinement by digging his grave
In the depths of the seas.

How Europe externalizes its borders:

The case of Morocco

Sarah Slan & Osama Abdullah

In 2018, the Western Mediterranean route became the main gateway for people passing through as well as coming from Morocco to enter Europe,¹ increasing the importance of Morocco for EU migration policies, specifically the externalization of its borders. Considering these developments, we would like to take a look at the EU's collaboration with the Moroccan Kingdom focusing on the latest June 2019 joint agreement and the implications it carries.

The Moroccan Kingdom was already a key partner of the EU in its efforts to halt migration before 2018, having received more than 100 million Euros of European taxpayers' money over the past decade to this end. Yet, in 2018, it became clear that the European Commission was ready to give more.² In July of last year, the EU executive branch had already designated 55 million Euros to reinforce its plan to externalize its borders in Morocco and Tunisia (half of these funds were designated to Morocco, half to Tunisia).³ By the end of 2018, a one-time payment to Morocco of 140 million Euros had been agreed upon by the EU in order to reinforce border security and curb migration to Europe.⁴ Since May 2019, Spanish politicians have been asking Brussels for a multiannual fund for Morocco of around 50 million Euros yearly.⁵

EU-Moroccan relations are, however, not as straight forward as the money flow may make them appear. There have been diplomatic tensions for several years. One major issue pertains to agriculture and fisheries,

trade deals and the rulings by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that excluded the disputed Western Sahara from these agreements. In early 2019, the EU temporarily resolved this issue by extending the deals to the disputed Western Sahara, thus providing a space to discuss EU-Moroccan partnership priorities for the coming years.⁶ Hence, finally, after four years, representatives of the EU and Morocco sat down for the Association Council meeting on 27 June 2019 to “reinvigorate” their relations.⁷

The joint declaration that was adopted in the meeting, speaks about enhancing bilateral trade relationships between the EU and Morocco, increasing economic integration as well as about expanding cooperation on internal and external security challenges. “Mobility and migration” is laid out as one of the two “key horizontal fields”, beside climate change, in which “specific operational measures will be carried out.”⁸ Morocco's sovereignty is emphasized in the statement, which declares that the consultation and cooperation on mobility and migration will be conducted “in compliance with national powers and the full implementation of Morocco's national strategy on migration and asylum.” Moreover, the following key objectives are put forward: “the prevention of and fight against irregular migration, against trafficking in human beings and in migrants, (...), stepping up the management of the sea and land borders, mobility, in particular improving the mobility of professionals, legal migration, return, readmission and reintegration, visa facilitation and the development of mutually beneficial human exchanges, in particular for students, young workers and young volunteers.”⁹

This joint declaration is just one of many examples of how EU policies focus on the prevention of migration through increased border security and control, and on the return of migrants to their home countries through deportations.¹⁰ Moreover, the exclusionary and discriminatory quality of EU migration policies is highlighted by wordings such as “improving the mobility of professionals”, which condemns most migrants as ‘unwanted’. While the declaration claims that democracy, justice and human rights will be the guiding principles, the authors deploy a militaristic language that shows a commitment to fighting ‘irregular’ migration and human trafficking, a practice that has proved futile in halting

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migration time and time again. These practices mostly benefit military and security contractors.¹¹ An additionally worrying factor in the declaration is the statement that Morocco's "political stability" and its "many reforms" are what make Morocco an important partner to the EU. There is no mention of the deteriorating developments in the Kingdom, the many reported human rights violations or the impairments of basic freedoms.¹² No commitments or actions are demanded from the Kingdom in order to halt the human rights abuses and the blatant disrespect for the rule of law by Moroccan authorities. The repeated mention of democracy and human rights in the agreement can therefore not be seen as more than a symbolic or technical gesture. The EU is not only willing to turn a blind eye to the brutality used by Moroccan police and security forces, but it even partakes in unlawful acts.¹³ In other words, by deepening its "strategic, multidimensional and privileged relation" with Morocco, the EU has become an accomplice in the atrocities and cruel realities experienced not only by migrants, but also by many Moroccans on a daily basis.

Indeed, the according to the Moroccan government 30,000 blocked attempts for the period between January and May 2019 and the current decrease in arrivals, as compared to the same period last year,¹⁴ seem to prove that these joint efforts are effective. However, these numbers create a false narrative. The measures adopted by the EU have not and will not halt what the EU and Morocco refer to as «illegal» migration. While EU officials celebrate these numbers, they scarcely admit that this decrease in arrivals comes at the cost of an increased death rate¹⁵ and a striking increase in human rights violations. The absence of adequate solutions beyond the nation state, the demonization of and fear mongering over migration, rather than the celebration of its benefits, and the impediment of open and safe routes for people in need of safety, come at a high cost. EU border externalization generates increased militarized borders and zones of repression and confinement. It enhances the criminalization of the act of migration, while creating spaces where the oppressors of people on the move are not only rendered unaccountable for their actions, but where they are even rewarded for them.¹⁶

- 1 <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/79514>; See also the article "5 years Alarm Phone in the Western Mediterranean" in this book.
- 2 <https://euobserver.com/migration/142511>
- 3 <https://www.apnews.com/ecb9078cf280471b9e06f19babf3225d>
- 4 https://elpais.com/politica/2018/10/21/actualidad/1540145118_055655.html; <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/79514>
- 5 https://elpais.com/politica/2019/05/24/actualidad/1558721313_924409.html
- 6 <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/79514>; <https://mipa.institute/6866>
- 7 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2019/06/27/morocco/>
- 8 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/27/joint-declaration-by-the-european-union-and-the-kingdom-of-morocco-for-the-fourteenth-meeting-of-the-association-council/>
- 9 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/27/joint-declaration-by-the-european-union-and-the-kingdom-of-morocco-for-the-fourteenth-meeting-of-the-association-council/>
- 10 https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/expanding_the_fortress_-_1.6_may_11.pdf
- 11 <https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2015-10/fluechtlinge-zaun-europaeische-union-stacheldraht-ungarn>; <http://www.themigrantsfiles.com/>
- 12 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/morocco/western-sahara>
- 13 For more information see the article "5 years Alarm Phone in the Western Mediterranean" in this book; <https://mipa.institute/6866>
- 14 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
- 15 https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?migrant_route%5B%5D=1378; <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
- 16 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/spip_1.pdf



Soldier of the Moroccan military
patrolling the coast around Tangier,
November 2018.
Photo: Maurice Stierl

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Albatros

MOHAMED IBRAHIM TOURÉ

Yes, my heart felt lost in an adventure of migration which turned my
heart and then my soul upside down
But being a sensible person I forgot my personal pains to help other
humans as vulnerable as me
My challenges and my engagement have become a weapon to me, for
helping

Yes, I am Alarm Phone, the voice of the ones without rights
I fight for freedom
Oh yes, freedom of movement

I am proud to be on the right side.
I am the albatross, yes, vast bird of the sea.
I am Alarm Phone, I am alarmed because of those whose rights are
neglected, those deprived of their freedom of movement

My symbols, they are well known:
The first one is freedom
My second is movement
Freedom of movement is my fact.

I am Alarm Phone!
Long live my ideals.

Interview with S.

S. was born in Senegal. He attempted several times to cross the Mediterranean from Morocco where he became an active Alarm Phone member in Tangier. Since March he is back in Senegal.

Constance D-K.

CDK You do a particular work within the Alarm Phone. Can you tell us how you got there?

S In the house where I grew up, there was a big poster of Yasser Arafat on the wall, we were not a family of followers. Freedom is a struggle and that's where a person has to fight. In Senegal you have to be revolutionary, there is no choice. I was in the movement: Enough is enough. I was subjected to repression and police violence at that time. It forged me. I was prepared to fight within Alarm Phone.

At one point, I felt insecure. So, I came to Morocco. Not to stay, just to cross over. At that time, there was no control and repression like today. You could try the crossing every day. I went on the programme¹ 14 times, I hit the water 11, 12 times, but the Royal Navy intercepted us each time. I stayed in Tangier. I had a family to feed and it was not that easy to be there wasting my money in the sea. I knew someone in the programme business. I was helping him out. At one point, I had a good grasp of how things were going.

In 2015, a friend invited me to an Alarm Phone meeting. I thought I could bring something from there. I picked up some material, started distributing the Alarm Phone number and raising awareness. That's how I started briefing them before they left, giving them information. Since

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I was not working, I was totally dedicated to it. I did not mind spending nights awake doing that. You have to manage situations as they come. It is a fight and we are going to continue.

CDK Can you tell us what your role with the Alarm Phone is today?

S I act as an intermediary between the people who leave and the shift teams. It is easier for me to communicate with the people who leave to avoid misunderstandings. I understand better what they want to explain than a European.

And when people are at sea, I stay in between. If there are decisions to be made, sometimes I make them. Because I have already set out on the sea, I know the difficult conditions of the crossings.

For example, sometimes I know from the conditions that the convoy will not succeed. And sometimes a decision must be made to contact the coast guard, even if people do not explicitly ask for it. Because help doesn't come right away, and if people are too exhausted or drift out into the Atlantic Ocean, with conditions that are getting worse, at some point you have to make decisions. These are difficult decisions, but at least they enable people to stay alive. As long as you are alive, you can go back.

My work is also to document people who die at sea. It is important. The families need to know, repatriate the bodies and bury their loved ones. To do that, you have to identify the dead. But in Tangier, the gendarmerie is waiting for you at the morgue with a multitude of questions and you can be followed afterwards, if you are a simple migrant. But little by little, I became the sub-Saharan representative at the morgue. When I get the authorization I take pictures, I call the relatives to make the identification.

CDK Can you tell us a little bit about how it was for you to live in Morocco as an undocumented sub-Saharan migrant?

S At first, when I was in Senegal and I heard from someone who wanted to go to Morocco, I advised against it. When I went there it was just to pass through. I thought I was going to pay for the passage, touch the water the first time and "boza!". The smuggler promised me that. But I did not even leave that time. And I lost my return ticket. That's how I stayed, forced.

Life is very hard in Morocco for sub-Saharan Africans. Before leaving people live in the forests where conditions are difficult, you have to walk for miles to find food and water. Tents are regularly destroyed by the police with bulldozers.

And then, when people get together, there are conflicts. Little by little, it was organized within the communities: Cameroonians, Ivorians, Senegalese, etc. Then, ECOWAS was created. It is a kind of brigade that manages the problems for the ones that cannot even think about calling the police. It is responsible for finding common ground. It created a strength.

Last year, there were raids, there had to be no more black people in Tangier or the surrounding area. We were hunted down, deported to southern Morocco. I've been deported four times in one year. The police beat you up all the time, they come to your home, they steal from you, humiliate you, lock you up in unbearable conditions.

From Morocco, I did not tell my family the truth. That I lived in bunkers, that I could not work, that the police was harassing me. Because they would have died from it. But when I came home, I told them. I wish someone had told me. If I had known how it was going, I would not have made the trip. In Morocco as a black person you can die every day. It has to be said.

Lately, I could not even go to the communities anymore, because I just could not get out of my house without being arrested. It tired me out, that is when I decided to go home.

CDK And so, you abandoned the idea of Europe?

S After a while in Morocco, I could have gone to sea and made a "boza". I had all the information; I knew exactly how to do it. But it was an experience in Morocco that kept me there: I had applied for a job. I was perfect for the job, but I was not taken because I did not have any papers. And I understood that the situation in Europe would be the same. It was not worth it.

I have a brother, he has been living in Europe for years, we are very close. One day, I was injured by the police, I asked my brother to send me

money. Do you know how much he sent me? 20 Euro! I know him, if he sends me 20 Euro, that is all he has. And he is not lazy! Years in Europe! 20 Euro! No, thank you.

Coming to see people here for a while, yes, but for me Europe is not essential. It is no longer a dream.

¹ The term "programme" is used by people who seek to cross over to Spain.

Intercepted at Sea and Returned to Libya: Voices from Detention

Conni

On 20 January 2019, the Alarm Phone was called from a boat with roughly 100 people. They had left Libya a day before and made it into international waters before being refouled back to Libya by a cargo vessel – a refoulement ordered by the Italian authorities, even by the Italian Prime Minister Conte himself, and carried out by their Libyan allies together with a private merchant vessel. A day later, on 21 January, a second group reached out to us – this time after they had already been rescued by the merchant vessel “Lady Sham”. From this vessel, they called us repeatedly and we could witness in real-time what occurred during such refoulement operations.

The crew of the Lady Sham deceived the rescued, telling them they would be brought to Europe. They were separated into groups of men and women and locked in. They were beaten when they refused to disembark and forced in small groups off the boat and into the harbor of Misrata, then transferred to a detention camp. From there, some of the women sent photos of unhygienic conditions, overcrowded cells and bodies marked by torture. In this case, the only positive outcome was the large media echo that ensued through our media work – only a very small consolation given the fact that these people remain detained in cruel centers in Libya or will be deported to their countries of origin. As one of those detained told us: “We don’t need to be in the media, we need to be rescued.”

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Calls to the Alarm Phone from the “Lady Sham”

21.1.2019

15:01 People call us from a merchant vessel, probably near the Libyan coast. A person asks where Misrata is. When we say Libya, he shouts and people in the back, too. We should help them! We explain that our possibility to help them is limited but that we will do what we can and that we should stay in contact.

15:30 A person says they will all commit suicide if brought back to Libya. He stayed there for 4 years and knows how Libya is. We try to calm him. It seems like they were told they would be brought to Italy. He can see the coast and a port.

15:59 The person who called first calls again, and says they want to refuse to leave the ship. They say they need a doctor: “We are all sick!”

17:07 Second number calls again, tells us that the name of the ship is Lady Sham.

18:10 Person says there are 150 migrants on board and many are sick.

20:12 Same person is now crying and very desperate. Says they were 160 people when they left Libya but some died on the way, they don’t know how many. On the cargo vessel women are separated from men, even

husbands cannot go there. No toilets and food.

21:18 Same person says: The women are locked in another area of the ship, where the men cannot see them, but they hear them crying. The man suspects that the military entered the ship. He told us his story: He did not get any money for his work in Libya. His boss shot at him and threatened that he would kill him if he came back. The guy starts shouting again that he will never go back to Libya. We try to calm him down and tell him that we will give all information to the media team and doctors who will be in the harbor when they arrive.

21:40 The people are still on the ship because there are problems between the crew and the port authority, anchor area not in the harbor.

22:40 / 23 All 3 numbers are not reachable at the moment.

Calls and pictures from women in Misrata Karareem Detention Center (DC):

Some days later, we tried to call the numbers we had from people on the “Lady Sham” – and reached several women who were now in the detention center in Misrata. We communicated first via phone, then via WhatsApp and they sent us pictures. They told us that the men tried to break out from the center, but the military came, beat them and forced them inside again.

Hiding their phones, some of the women stayed in contact with us for several days, although they were threatened by prison guards. We publish here a few exchanges between us and the women:

25.1.2019

13:28 **A.: They beat up one woman mercilessly, she is one of the women who had a miscarriage.**
15:54 C.: Alarm Phone published some photos and will send you articles about the woman and the DC!
23:47 **A.: Thanks a lot.**

26.1.2019

11:55 **A.: Please if there is anything you can do for us here let us know if you people can help us. Because all of us want to go to Europe, some of us try to escape again.**



11:57 C.: Not easy, but we try to put pressure on EU governments and local groups do a lot.

15:26 **A.: There is a lady who just left here. She says she is working for the UN and gave us a Facebook address and a phone number but we just want to be sure she is not an impostor. She did not get a chance to talk to any of us.**

17:30 C.: We got this message from MSF, maybe you know it already: A healthy baby just born. Mum referred to hospital from Karareem DC this morning by MSF. We are trying to find an alternative to detention for them.

17:33 **A.: She was taken from here this morning. She was the one we told you about that was taken away when we arrive here and was brought back yesterday but this morning she went into labor and was taken again to the hospital.**

28.1.2019

17:38 **A.: We are suffering here things are getting worse every day. We need to be transferred so we can be able to make a bail but they are saying they will deport us all.**

19:12 C.: Who told you that you will be deported and how do they want to do it?

15:26 **A.: Someone came to bail me but they refuse saying that they will send us to the deportation camp in Tripoli for us to be deported.**

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03 SOLIDARITY ON THE MOVE

30.1.2019

09:49 C.: Did you call this Lady from UN?
11:30 **A.: No I did not call her. I have called too many people already no one really can't help but publish stories.**

31.1.2019

20:03 C.: Hope you are ok?
21:35 **A.: We are not ok. We have not eaten since yesterday we are asking for transfer but they don't care.**

1.2.2019

12:09 **A.: One of us fainted last night and was rushed to the hospital by the guards.**
12:28 C.: Oh, what was the reason?
12:28 **A.: We don't know. Everyone is sick here.**
12:30 C.: MSF is informed but very busy.



3.2.2019

12:02 C.: Hello, how are you? Are you still in Libya?

No answer – we do not know if these brave women were deported, are still in detention or took another boat...

P.S. 03/07/2019 WhatsApp message from one of the woman: She was deported to Nigeria together with about 60 other migrants from the Lady Sham.

Migration: between law and crime

Text by Hichem A. With contributions from Giulia Bonacina and Hela Kanakane. Translated from Arabic by Jihed Brirmi

Before I met the Alarm Phone, I thought that migration was a crime and that no one was allowed to cross the border without a visa... After being deported from Italy and meeting the Alarm Phone group in the city of Redeyef, I became aware of some of my rights to mobility. I saw that borders have no meaning. One is born free and does not choose the place of his birth. After becoming aware of the consequences decisions that have made in his place on his life, one wishes to make the decision to leave, especially when born in a land of misery where he is separated from happiness. So, after realizing one's condition, one decides to face the risks, ignore all dangers and go to sea. These dreams are repressed by the border police and one is forced to continue his miserable daily life.

The first meeting with the Alarm Phone and the workshop we did together in the city of Zarzis, brought me back to life and heightened my awareness of an unrestricted right of movement. All human beings are equal regardless of their place of birth. However, there is one question which remains unanswered: "Why can other nationalities travel all over the world whilst I cannot even go a few kilometers at sea without being intercepted?". Today, after various meetings with the Alarm Phone group, I am looking for answers to this question, but I know that no one has any.

Today, I am looking for answers from all available sources: articles, books and others. I share my thoughts on immigration with many friends who have not yet had the opportunity to become aware of their natural right of movement. I also participated in the film "Deportato"¹ in which I spoke to people from different parts of the country and we shared our experiences. Today, I know how to claim my rights. And I am determined

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to claim my freedom of choice in terms of individual residency and mobility without any restrictions. I hope that all those who are subjected to this violence will mobilize and claim their natural and legitimate rights to move freely.

I wrote this text when I was drinking in a bar in Tozeur. I never thought that one day I would be active in civil society or tackle problems that I previously considered insignificant – such as environmental concerns in the mining basin – or that I would have a portfolio of contacts around the world. In my current situation in Tunisia, I know that all my rights are being destroyed, even in the most basic rights such as oxygen



or access to water.

How can I live in a country that has not given me the right to access the simplest of things, a country in which you feel that you depend on society, but where you can only rely on yourself? Imagine a life where you have to choose between going to the toilet or taking a shower! How can one live in such inhuman conditions? It is shocking that the state prevents us from reaching the northern shore and fleeing poverty. The fate of young people here is to live under misfortune and poverty, but the situation does not stop there. This miserable government receives payments for the return of young people under the pretext of integrating them into development projects. Personally, I consider this to be the job of a border



guard dog. There is a media hype and pressure from all sides to stay in Tunisia out of patriotism. For me, these remain empty words. True patriotism, in my opinion, is to support this dismal country by contributing to its economy through remittances earned from non-corrupted sources abroad.

This text, translated from Arabic, was written by Hichem, a young Tunisian who left Redeyef in Tunisia for Lampedusa in 2017. Redeyef is a mining town in southeastern Tunisia that suffers from high unemployment and the adverse effects of phosphate mining such as lack of access to water and high cancer rates.

In Italy, Hichem was locked up in a hotspot in Lampedusa, then taken to a detention center in Sicily and finally sent back to Tunisia. During his detention, he never saw a translator or a lawyer and was expelled without any consideration for his personal circumstances. His detention in the hotspot in Lampedusa was illegal because no Italian law justified the deprivation of liberty in this kind of structure at the time and because it was not validated by a judge. His case is similar to the fate of many other Tunisians. From the deportation center, Tunisians are transferred to Palermo airport and then deported to Tunisia, without being informed of their rights or the fact that they will be brought back to their country. Readmissions are facilitated by direct agreements between Italy and

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Pages 91–93:
Protest action in the port of Zarzis/
Tunisia by members of Alarm Phone
Marseille and Tunis together with
the local fishermen association
against the deadly border regime,
April 2018.
Photos: JBO / Alarm Phone

Tunisia (1998, 2009, 2011). The 2011 agreement outlines the provisions for one flight per week dedicated to deportations for 40 people from Italy to Enfidha airport near Sousse. In 2017 this quota was doubled. Several expulsions are also carried out by scheduled flights from various Italian airports and some testimonies also speak of deportations carried out by ferry.

¹ *Deportato (2018) is a documentary from the Tunisian film-maker Hammadi Lessoued*

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EU-Egypt cooperation in the field of migration control and border externalization*

Kashef

Similar to other north African countries, Egypt has turned into an externalised European frontier guard, supposed to deter migrants from embarking onto Mediterranean voyages. In November 2016, the Egyptian authorities adopted the “Anti-Smuggling Law”. Then, in October 2017, at a time when many were focusing on the developments of the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016, the EU proudly announced that it had reached an agreement with Egypt, in particular a program called “Responding to Migration Challenges in Egypt” through the European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). This announcement revealed quite clearly the intense EU-Egypt cooperation on migration issues, of which many were largely unaware of. While cooperation with Egypt was already established through the “Joint Action Plan for Migration and Mobility 2014–2017”, agreed between the EU and the African Union, as well as the 2015 Khartoum Process, the volume of this new cooperation with Cairo was unprecedented.

While many have begun to wonder whether this EU-Egyptian cooperation may be equivalent to the 2016 EU-Turkey deal, a closer look reveals divergent dynamics, mainly for two reasons:

1) Although Cairo uses migration management as a cornerstone of its

cooperation with its European partners – for example by occasionally warning of the risk of uncontrolled migration to the shores of the EU - Egypt is not statistically a major country of immigration.

- 2) Cairo has never displayed much desire for its European partners to support with issues related to border management and irregular migration until about five years ago.

Why has migration, nonetheless, and especially the fight against irregular migration, gained such importance in such a short time on the agenda of EU-Egypt cooperation? It is clear that relations between the EU and Egypt have developed significantly since late 2016 with the signing of a deal worth 60 million Euros, with cooperation focusing heavily on combating so-called “irregular migration”. Egypt uses the issue of migration to foster its own political goals, although progress benefiting both sides has been slow – there is no asylum system in Egypt and there is barely a plan to facilitate mobility for Egyptians to the EU.

The Egyptian government seeks to use its cooperation with the EU to strengthen its own institutional capacities, finance its counter-terrorism measures, and foster its international recognition and legitimacy as an increasingly authoritarian regime. The intensification of cooperation with some EU member states is also regarded as compensation for agreements that would allow Egyptians to be deported back to Egypt – Frontex began to operate deportation flights from Germany for the first time in 2017, shortly after the Security Cooperation Agreement between Egypt and Germany came into force.

The EU-Egypt cooperation negatively affects the human rights of both non-Egyptian and Egyptian travellers, for example through the increase in deportations of Egyptians over the past two years. This prevention of migration, in essence, violates an inalienable and universal human right to leave any country, including his or her own country (article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). The EU’s support continues despite Egypt’s further degeneration into an authoritarian regime and the gross human rights violations it perpetrates – crimes that have been well documented and denounced by various international forums. Through the training of Egyptian security forces on

border management and information gathering, as well as the funding of the Ministry of the Interior and its regional leaders via the National Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking In Persons., the EU directly strengthens this repressive and authoritarian regime and legitimises its perpetration of mass human rights violations.

* Parts of this article are derived from the Euromed rights report I co-authored:
<https://euromedrights.org/publication/eu-egypt-migration-cooperation-where-are-human-rights/>

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Fishing boats and two children
 in Baltim/Egypt.
 Photo: Shak

The Saga Continues

KASHEF

They said I am:

Arab. Muslim . African. Colored

and I live problems of the first world ..

they insist that:

This is not my place .. This is not my space,

yes true, I came from a third world, an ancient civilization!

Ay tell me, How many people were disappointed when they get old?
Is there any one fixed in a place? Isn't life so short for such pullshit?

The world is puzzling. All human beings change.
"Am I Steered or am I having a will of one's own?"

Conditions truly Crash us but I pretender that I am not affected
that why I explain everything that is happening in my life positively.

Although I live here as a minority, it makes me feel pining for my
mother and for my home,
for my family and friends. I miss those places which I will never see
again
and for those days that will never come back again!

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I find myself Surrounded by news, research, papers, notifications
and distressed..
soliloquize with a mental condition of a survivor .

In my mirror I am an immigrant, a refugee, a traveller, a resistor,
struggling not to forget myself and who I am.
Expert or expat, better when you see me just unhat!

I'm just a revealer, detector for every cover even I see massive border
security on every coast

They set up graves and walls in the sea for every passing person.

Every morning I ask myself to remain patient until I see a victory
coming,

when there is a world without borders and walls around.



Photo: Elsaghir

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Connecting beyond Borders

Alarme Phone Sahara (APS) – a practical response to the policy of externalising the European border regime

Hans-Georg Eberl

The situation for migrants crossing the desert has become increasingly public in recent years, with reports of many deaths. As a response to that, the Alarme Phone Sahara (APS) was founded in 2017 by activists from Morocco, Niger, Mali, Togo, Burkina Faso and Europe. APS has set itself the task of documenting incidents on the routes, providing migrants with reliable information, supporting people deported to the desert, alerting local authorities in an emergency and carrying out rescue operations in the desert.

As Niger has become a focal point of the European border regime since 2015, APS focuses in particular on the Agadez region, which includes the desert zone of northern Niger. As a result of the criminalisation of migration under Act 036-2015, drawn up in accordance with the provisions of the relevant migration control agreements with EU countries, the number of people travelling through Niger has fallen. Various investments have been made in the security forces of Niger, financed by

Germany, other EU countries and Japan. At the same time, the risks for travellers have increased. To avoid controls, drivers use remote desert tracks, making the passage more dangerous.

For the Agadez region, this development has had devastating consequences, as the entire economy there had concentrated heavily on services for and with migrants. At the same time, since the beginning of 2018, more and more people, mainly from sub-Saharan countries, have been brought from Algeria to the Algerian-Nigerian border during mass deportations. The deportees are then taken by the IOM to Arlit, Agadez or Niamey with the declared aim of convincing them of the so-called “voluntary” return to their home countries.

In addition, more and more people from Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia are in Niger who have been evacuated from Libya by the UNHCR. They are considered refugees – not “migrants” – and are housed in camps and shelters run by the UNHCR. Today, more and more of these people are seeking asylum in Niger through the UNHCR, even though an asylum system in Niger so far exists only in rudiments. Both UNHCR camps and IOM facilities for “migrants” are part of the EU states’ strategy to make Niger a “model country” for the outsourcing of “migration management” and asylum facilities. The blockade in camps in Niger and the fact that their asylum procedures are being delayed has led to growing dissatisfaction and frustration among the refugees, leading to several public protests:

On March 5, 2019, refugees took to the streets in Niamey, but were evicted by the police with tear gas. On 12 March, Sudanese refugees protested at the UNHCR camp outside the town of Agadez. On 20 June, UNHCR’s official World Refugee Day celebrations at Hamdallaye camp near Niamey faced angry protests from refugees. On 18 July, under-age refugees from Sudan left the UNHCR camp near Agadez, marched into the desert and announced that they would go to Libya if no solution were found to their pending asylum cases. They eventually returned, and the UNHCR authorities promised to begin the interviews.

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Practical support and intervention

In addition to its central office in Agadez, the APS has a regional network of contacts in the communes of Bilma, Arlit, Assamakah, Aderbissinat and Ingall on the migration routes to Libya and Algeria.

From Assamakka on the Nigerian-Algerian border, the APS contact person has reported the arrival of some 2,000 people deported from Algeria since March 2019. After days of travelling through the desert in buses or trucks, they often suffer from injuries and serious health and psychological problems. As a rule, the deportees are dropped off 15 km from the border crossing to Niger in the desert and are then forced to leave without any real landmarks. The APS has provided small-scale support here by distributing water and small amounts of food, accompanying people in difficult situations to the health centre and sometimes helping to find people who had lost their way in the desert. In some cases, IOM picks up people at “Point Zero” where they were abandoned, but this is not done reliably. On June 18, active members of the Alarme Phone Sahara accompanied the search for four unknown deceased people, about 50 km from Assamakka.

Two rescue operations of the APS took place in the Tenéré Desert on the route from Niger to Libya: On 14 March 2019, the contact person from Bilma and his team took part in the rescue of a group of 25 Nigeriens who had got stuck on their way to Libya for seasonal migration after a breakdown of their vehicle. They also helped a second group that had a breakdown and had come from Libya.

On 3 May 2019, a member of the APS team from Latai in Kaouar Valley helped rescue 28 Niger migrants who had got stuck on their way to Libya after a breakdown. In both cases, the driver continued the journey with his passengers after the vehicle had been repaired.

A major activity of the APS in several African countries is the distribution of an illustrated flyer with useful advice and addresses for people crossing the desert. In Bamako/Mali it is planned to rent a small kiosk at the international bus station Sogoniko, which is supposed to become a meeting place for migrants and candidates of migration. In Sokodé/Togo, the Togolese Association of Deportees (ATE) is setting up a centre for activities with (future) migrants and people who have been expelled from Algeria and Libya or who have returned.



PHONE IN CASE OF DISTRESS IN THE DESERT:

+227 80 29 68 26 OR +227 85 75 26 76

WWW.ALARMEPHONESAHARA.INFO

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ALARMEPHONESAHARA

“CommemorAction”

Marion Bayer and Maurice Stierl

Many of us are confronted with death at Europe’s external borders and elsewhere. We cannot forget those who have been killed or forcibly disappeared. To end this continuous dying is also one of the Alarm Phone’s main motivations. During the Transborder Summer Camp in Nantes this year, individuals and groups with different backgrounds and experiences came together to turn our grief into collective action. In this short article, we document some of the contributions made during the workshop. Among the participants were relatives of the missing from Tunisia, those active in different Moroccan borderzones who try to identify the deceased, activists who maintain the platform “Missing at Borders”¹, and several others who try to commemorate the victims of the European border in the Mediterranean Sea, the Evros region, Calais, and elsewhere. For us, commemorating the dead is a part of our daily struggles.

Processes of identification in Morocco

S.: In Tangier, a lot of migrants and people lose their lives at sea. We who are there have no choice – we have to accompany these people. When the people die along the Moroccan coast, they are brought to Tangier. We have access to the morgue now, so I can help to identify people. The process of identification feels cynical – we can say we manage to move out bodies and make space for new bodies to come. We take pictures to see if someone can identify them. I go back to the migrant communities and ask around: what clothes were people wearing when they left, do they have particular marks like tattoos, do they have long hair like rasta? If someone thinks that they might know them, I ask them if they want to see the pictures. This is hard. When people are at sea for a long time, they are deformed, they have marks, injuries. So sometimes it is very difficult to tell if they were our friends. Speaking to the relatives is the hardest. Sometimes when we call the parents and we speak with them, they hang

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up and stop speaking to you. It is hard for them to accept. When there is silence, you just have to wait and maybe call them back. They need their time. Then the question is what to do with the body. If the relatives don’t have money we can speak to the embassy or other friends – it is 3000–3500 Euros to send the body, so this is a lot of money. Sometimes we bury them in Morocco with the community if the relatives accept and sometimes they come and join. Sometimes relatives who can’t come ask whether they can have something from the person, a tooth or the clothes, so that they can bury what belonged to the person at home.

Families of the disappeared

S.: I came here from Tunisia to represent more than 500 mothers of missing children. Since April 2011 we are uncertain about what happened to our children. We have asked Tunisian authorities, but whenever we make demonstrations, the police meet us with brutality. They tell us that an investigation is going on, but there is no investigation. They told us that our children are dead, but they are not, they are missing. If they are dead, we want a proof and something to bury. They say that they will give us a death certificate, but we need a proof that they are dead. The European authorities have the power to force the Tunisian government into silence, and that is why they don’t react. If something like this happened to a European child, the whole world would stand behind the parents. But this is not the case for African parents. This is racism. I am asking everyone here to stand with us, to find the truth and find our kids. Why can Europeans travel just with ID-cards, when Africans with all their documents together can’t travel?

Missing at Borders/Milano without Borders

E.: In Milan, every first Thursday of the month we organise demonstrations, like the mothers of the disappeared in Argentina. People are forced by the state to disappear. People are forced into detention camps, where they are not able to speak to family and friends. The French invented disappearances at sea, when they killed Algerians, so there is a colonial dimension here too.

In Chile and Argentina, the mothers have a slogan: “our children were alive” – alive they left, alive we want them back. It is a political message. The families met between the movements in South America and Africa recently in Mexico and this has politicised them. It is important that families of the disappeared get the chance to get to know each other. It is also important for the families to see that there are people who care about their children, and try to make sure they are not forgotten. Whenever we talk about one person who has disappeared, there are also more victims behind; the families and friends. The platform “Missing at the border” publishes videos with testimonies from the families. We also propose to make a monument that these families can go to, to have a place to visit. Other Muslim families have a grave they can visit every Eid, but these families don’t have anything like that.

Commemorating the dead of the 6 February 2014 atrocities in Ceuta

H.: On 6 February 2016, we celebrated in Rabat in front of the embassy of Spain. We were over 600 activists. In 2018 we did a little action in Niger that connected to the launch of Alarme Phone Sahara. We connected to groups in Spain and in Ceuta and tried to work together with Moroccan associations for human rights and with the migrant council, migrant voices on the move and trade unions and we want to use the 6 February 2020 for a common action on commemoration. There will be a commemoration in Cameroon where many of the victims came from. There will also be an event in Ceuta as well as one in Rabat.

Memorials of Welcome to Europe in Greece

M.: In 2010, we did a tour from Germany to the Evros region in northern Greece where many try to cross the river. An Afghan woman had told us that she had seen her husband for the last time in the river and she asked us to search for him. We took his picture and went to all the small prisons but unfortunately we could not find him. The day she lost him, 14 people had lost their lives in this region. So we went to the biggest hospital to the area and spoke to the coroner who collects the DNA and clothes and files them. We were sent to police stations and there we found the ring

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Cemetery of the Unknown
in Zarzis/Tunisia.
Photo: JBO / Alarm Phone

that the Afghan man had worn on the day he went missing. In the area there was a cemetery that followed Muslim traditions and we were told the 14 people were buried there. What we found was not a cemetery but a mass grave where refugees had been thrown into for 10 years. The next year we went back to the area, with other relatives who were missing their relatives, because it was so important for them to see the place where their loved ones disappeared. We had a small ceremony and created a memorial there, a fountain with signs of the names of the missing. The next years we started on Lesvos with memorials. We always work together with relatives of the missing. There is one in the north of Lesvos and another one near Mytilene. Last year fascists destroyed it, threw it in the sea, but this year we will again do a ceremony.

Deaths in Calais

In the borderzone around Calais, sometimes we hear about deaths via relatives, friends or the media. We try to return the bodies if possible. There are also some associations that tried to visibilise death at the border the day after someone died and gathered in the centre of Calais. Some of these activists were arrested and there is also a strong police presence whenever we meet. We have a working group to coordinate for the legal and administrative procedures, as well as the psychological needs. We want to counter the invisibilisation of migrant death – 226 people died to cross from France to the UK. Now the border is extended into Belgium and increasingly militarised. So people are trying risky ways that are much longer, for example. they get onto trucks already in Brussels or elsewhere.

Deaths at sea:

L.: Over the last years, we faced with Sea-Watch a situation where there are fewer rescue ships out there. Sometimes bodies are in the sea for days or weeks. Before, we could hand them over to larger boats, like MSF, to take the bodies to Europe so that the bodies could be identified. Now these larger boats are gone, and European authorities don't want to take the bodies. So we have to bury them at sea – we can't take them onto our boat, also in light of the lengthy stand offs when they don't allow us to disembark

people. So we go to the bodies and try to find special marks, like tattoos, and take pictures so that others might be able to identify them. Then we try to find a way to have a ceremony on the boat.

CommemorAction

During our workshop in Nantes, we began to develop ways of commemorating that are more collective and that connect to practices of protest. We created the term “CommemorAction” as it contains a promise: we will not forget those who have lost their lives and we will fight against the borders that killed them. We will collectively build something from our grief. We

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Cemetery in Lampedusa.
Photo: Maurice Stierl



CommemorAction in
Oujda/Morocco, October 2018.
Photo: Amélie Janda

will not be alone and we will not give up. We will carry on to struggle for the freedom of movement for all in our daily lives.

In this brochure, there is a separate article on the Transborder Summer camp, a transnational gathering of antiracist movements in summer 2019 in France. You will find this article on page 123.

1 <https://missingattheborders.org/en/>

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Channel crossings to the UK

Andy Smith

Over the last five years the English Channel has played out like a Mediterranean in miniature at one of Europe's internal borders. Migration across the Channel, on the far side of Europe from the southern and eastern borders where most people enter the continent, is at a much smaller scale than in the Mediterranean.

The UK and Ireland are home to relatively few displaced people: 0.26% of the UK population, far less than in countries near conflict zones or other European states. Some 1,800 people crossed the Channel in 2017–18, a fraction of the number crossing the Mediterranean, and clandestine entrants are a minority of the UK's undocumented.

Yet British politicians and media act as if the island is being invaded by this small flow of people. Many are trying to reach the UK to join their families or because they speak English, often the result of British imperialism. Legal ways to enter have been blocked and the border is heavily policed.

The Channel's narrowest point, the 33km-wide Dover Strait, is crossed millions of times each year by people with papers, on ferries and Channel Tunnel trains. On the French side at Calais those denied this right gather in the hope of crossing. Over the years living conditions and methods of crossing have shifted as the patterns of oppression change.

Dire conditions have been created by the destruction of living spaces in Calais. Facilities have been closed and squatting criminalised, and self-organised 'jungle' camps home to thousands were cleared in 2015–16. Two years on almost 1,000 displaced people including 150 unaccompanied minors were living in Calais or Dunkirk, in even worse conditions and with over 90% experiencing police violence, all adding to the desperation

that drives people to risk their lives in the Channel.

As on the southern side of the Mediterranean, this repression is partly instigated and funded by the northern neighbour. The UK, France and Belgium have cooperated in border management since before the Channel Tunnel opened, with the Sangatte and Le Touquet treaties establishing juxtaposed controls: British border checks take place in France and Belgium, and French officials stationed in England police entry into the Schengen area. The UK has poured money into collaboration on policing and surveillance: over €160m since 2016, most recently with €3.6m new funding announced in January 2019, to stop boat crossings.

Small boats have been a rare way to cross the Channel; lorries are still used far more. A few boats have crossed at least as far back as 2014, increasing after the jungle clearances. Since the autumn of 2018 there has been a sustained rise in the number of boat crossings, although numbers are still tiny by Mediterranean standards, around 100 people per month detected. Recent crossings have often been professionally organised, costing up to €5000 per person, although around a quarter are still thought to be self-organised.

These crossings are very dangerous. Strong currents and high tides, cold water and busy shipping mean crossing in a small boat is a great risk. Aameena, a teenager who crossed the Aegean and later the Channel compared them in an interview with *The Observer*: 'From Turkey the police were escorting us, making sure it was as safe as possible. Crossing to the UK was very, very dangerous by comparison. It was dark and cold and we were alone, I was scared.'

Safety and organised crime have been cited by both governments to justify a crackdown on boat crossings, continuing years of attempts to block cross-Channel routes, each time forcing people into riskier alternatives. The UK Border Force has transferred two ships from a Frontex mission in the Mediterranean to the Channel along with Royal Navy and French vessels. Interceptions are common, often soon after departure; in the busiest day so far eight boats carrying 74 people in total were intercepted in UK waters on 1 June 2019.

The Channel has long been a deadly border. In the worst incident 58 people

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Fencing on a road leading to the port of Calais, built in 2015 with British government funding as part of the UK's externalised borders.
Photo: UK Home Office (CC BY 2.0)
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ukhomeoffice/20374830655/>

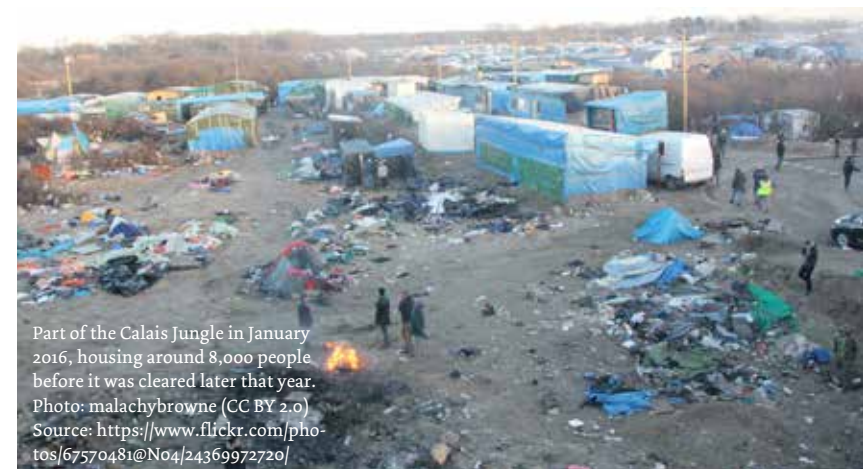
suffocated in a lorry on a ferry from Zeebrugge in 2000. Calais Migrant Solidarity has documented 84 deaths since 2014 and more people have surely died. People have died trying to swim across; no mass drownings of boat people have been reported but cannot be ruled out. Particularly if policing of the Dover Strait pushes people into longer routes with no phone coverage, the danger will grow. Coastguards have responded promptly to boats in distress, and so far boats intercepted or rescued in UK waters have been brought to the UK. But politicians have pledged to refoul all those who cross by boat and the situation may worsen, particularly in international waters on longer routes.

The Alarm Phone has prepared for possible calls from the Channel, and members have prepared leaflets with sea safety and search and rescue information which have been distributed by activists and NGOs in Calais. If boat crossings continue there will be more need to prepare for calls and to monitor the UK and French authorities.

Even after reaching apparent safety in Europe, border regimes in the Channel and across the continent force people into risky crossings. Intensifying border defences will not stop these journeys, they will just drive people into greater danger.

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Both Sides of the Border

Jacob Berkson

I made face-to-face contact with the Alarm Phone this time last year. We had been on a mad mission across the whole of the Iberian Peninsula in a beat-up old van to see for ourselves what was happening at Europe's south-west border and, if possible, to meet up with people crossing it. I was aware of the Alarm Phone through seeing their reports on an activist email list. I had been impressed by their seriousness and commitment. What I lacked was any sense of who they were or what they were about. To me they were one more worthy, important NGO providing support to 'desperate migrants', but not fundamentally challenging the European border regime. This, of course, had more to do with my own arrogance and ignorance than anything to do with the operation of the Alarm Phone.

It was an ignorance which was dispelled as soon as we met with Alarm Phone members active in Tangier and Algeciras. What became apparent within minutes was that this was a network of people working in opposition to the border. There was a commitment to support people, not migrants, as they exercised their right to determine their own futures. I also realised that the Alarm Phone was a network that is part of a larger activist ecosystem. That it straddled both sides of the European border and that it embodied a different kind of politics of migration and thereby was a piece of direct action against the racism of Fortress Europe. I wanted to be part of it.

Those sketchy immediate impressions have been fleshed out over the last year. It now seems to me that the Alarm Phone is of a piece with struggles against all unjust walls. The fight against the mass incarceration of African-Americans is animated by the idea of bringing the inside out and the outside in. It's a slogan and a tactic that has been taken on by

activists in the struggle against the administrative detention of those who crossed the European border without official authorisation to do so. The Alarm Phone proceeds in the same manner and for the same reasons.

One of the effects of walls is to isolate, and thereby to hide, those of us who are one side of the wall from those of us who are on the other. To the un-incarcerated, those imprisoned are invisible. But, as the European border shows, that invisibility is not merely a function of the cement. It is a more profound failing. The person on the 'wrong' side of any wall has been removed from the community. She is, quite literally, no longer one of us.

'We', of course, is said in many ways, but underpinning any use of 'us' is a sense of full belonging, of those who really count. The prison wall hides the prisoner from our sight not because of the lack of windows, but because the act of removal turns her from someone whom I see into something that does not need to be looked at. The European border creates the same effect. It does not block the light. It works by isolation. The person who is kept out is no longer one of us. To the privileged on the inside, although there are no physical impediments to visibility, the damned are invisible.

That invisibility is both a function of the removal from the community and a mechanism which reinforces that removal – what the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve. As a European, I can inhabit a world in which I only see about 1/5 of the world's population. These are the 'European', the white. The other 4/5 of humanity do not belong. They are not one of us. But if you are not included in the 'we', your beliefs, your wishes, needs, your desires and your hopes don't count. They don't count because you don't matter. In fact, it's unthinkable that you could have human thoughts at all. Reasoning is a public matter. To reason is to articulate yourself. You need to be seen and heard to be touched by reason. The European border doesn't just make you invisible, it excludes you from agency. It excludes you from humanity.

Inherent in the Alarm Phone is a rejection of the racist illogic of the European border. As a European in the network, my first task is to look and see those with whom I share a world. The task of documentation is

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not, as I thought, an important exercise carried out so that when the border finally falls no one can say, “we did not know”. It is that, but much more urgently, it is a statement of how the world looks when you see all of the world’s population as part of your community. It is what happens when you realise that this is what is being done to us.

Once I have seen you, I will have seen you as an agent. I will recognise that you too, long before me, rejected the racism at the heart of European politics. You have already dismantled all of the manifestations of the European border, bar the physical ones and you are prepared to challenge even those by risking your life to make the journey into Europe. At that point, I can do nothing but learn from you and support you. When I answer the phone, I am not merely trying to help you stay alive, I am, I hope, taking my lead from you and standing with you in your struggle as part of our shared community.

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For corridors of solidarity!

Successful exchanges and empowering atmospheres at the Transborder Summer Camp in France

Hagen Kopp

More than 500 activists from across Europe, North, West, and Central Africa gathered in July 2019 at the Transborder Summer Camp near Nantes in France. The network Welcome to Europe had initiated the five-day long meeting and invited all working groups and projects along the different routes of flight and migration. The Alarm Phone alone sent delegates from over 20 cities.

The camp started with a “Noborder-Fair”, where the different groups and networks came into exchange on various information tables: Activists from the Balkan route met members of Afrique Europe Interact, Top Manta friends from Barcelona shared their experiences with activists from Izmir or Helsinki, “border crossers” from southern France exchanged experiences with We’ll Come United. Already on this first day a great atmosphere of mutual empowerment developed, which shaped the spirit for the three following days in the workshops, assemblies and in the evenings, accompanied by music, theatre and dance.

Many discussions focused on practical experiences and questions concerning the establishment and expansion of the infrastructure supporting freedom of movement and equal rights for all. It was no coincidence that “Corridors of Solidarity” ranked high in the program. The well-attended workshop on this topic divided into three subgroups: one for the production of multilingual and cross-border information material

as well as printed guides and online guides in transit and destination countries; a second on shelters and support spaces such as rest houses, (occupied) social centers or counselling cafes; and a third on various hotline and alarm phone projects along flight- and migration-routes.

The following is a brief summary of the third workshop, in which, in addition to the Alarm Phone, four other hotline projects participated: the Alarme Phone Sahara, a hotline against push backs in Slovenia, a phone project on the Alpine border between Italy and France and an emergency telephone against deportations in Frankfurt. Although the contextual frameworks and requirements are very different for all five projects, there were also interesting similarities when discussing the different problems they face.

How do the respective situations change and how can we remain flexible? With whom on the state or institutional side can or must we cooperate? How do we disseminate our phone number? How do we organize our shifts? How do we deal with language barriers and translations? And last but not least: what can we do against increasing criminalisation?

We all know that state repression follows political and media hypes and, if necessary, they construct completely arbitrary so-called criminal offences. It is theoretically possible for every project that supports refugees or migrants in transit to face accusations of aiding and abetting “illegal entry or residence”. Hence, we are all potential “solidarity criminals”. Accordingly, the question arises everywhere as to how publicly and offensively we present our networks and what should remain invisible particularly for the benefit of those affected.

The Alarm Phone had the most continuous history in the discussion group and is active with many groups and teams in many cities. The transnational and deliberately decentralised structure should make it harder for persecuting authorities to paralyse this hotline project overnight. The Alarm Phone chooses the “Hydra” as an organisational model as a preventive anti-criminalisation strategy: if one head is cut off, two others should grow back. In any case, efforts are being made to create a network structure in which groups can replace each other in their functions, if one or another becomes weakened.

In the middle of the final plenary session in the big tent of the Transborder Summer Camp, a fearless mole emerged from the ground and created a little hill right next to the presenter. Some of the amused participants viewed the animal as a potential secret service infiltrator. But also an alternative analogy was drawn– nicer and somewhat obvious after the many successful discussions of the previous days: the mole as a symbol and inspiration to continue to work on the daily construction and extension of the “Underground Railroad”^{*} for and with flight and migration movements. The transnational meeting in Nantes was thrilling for so many participants because of the strong mutual inspiration and empowerment experienced, mainly on a practical level. It will definitively live on as a highlight in the history of more than 20 years of Noborder-Camps.

^{*} *The Underground Railroad was an informal network of opponents to slavery that provided support to slaves fleeing the southern states of the US to the safer north. Through secret routes, houses, flight helpers and secret communications it was possible to free about 100,000 slaves between 1810 and 1850.*

A network's self-portrait

Drum roll: From Morocco to Germany, England to Tunisia, Niger to France, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day for 5 years, dozens of eyes, fingers, skins, heads, tongues, bodies... people... make the Alarm Phone work.

collective text

They are:

The one who goes home early when she is on duty the next day and those who jumped into the Baltic Sea at 5.00am in February to get ready for a morning shift,
 those who look at the weather with anguish, wish for no wind, or wish for no calls when the weather is bad,
 those who forget to eat in front of their computer and those who would rather smoke a cigarette,
 those who fill the bellies of those on shift and the others who snack anxiously throughout,
 those who bake chocolate cakes
 those who talk on the phone to calm others down,
 those who talk on the phone to calm themselves down,
 those who call every 30 minutes to make pressure,
 those who feel strange because they see an irritation in the eyes of their non-AP friends when they cannot stop talking about the situation in Mediterranean,

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The real underground railroad.
 Corridors of Solidarity at the
 Transborder Summer Camp in
 Nantes, July 2019
 Photo: Hagen Kopp

and those who feel strange because some friends see them as weird kinds of heroes...

They are...

the one who just understood that speaking English to the Moroccan coastguard put just about as much pressure on them as on her,
the one who discovered that Facebook is a channel of communication and advocacy and not just a strange sphere of virtual friendships,
those who finally adopted a smartphone, just for AP,
and the one with a sore back, after a shift in front of her computer.

Those who feel stupid for not speaking the right language and those you can call when translation is needed,

those who ask for support if they don't know what to do
and those who jump in last minute to cover a shift,

those who exchange shift-phones over burning barricades, slaloming in a city in the middle of a social movement,

those who cannot sleep after a heavy shift and are happy when they hear in the morning that people were rescued,

the one who can't sleep the night before her shift and the one who, when she finally falls asleep, dreams of a broken phone...

the one that can't stand a specific ringtone,

the one who answers messages even during the night,

those who are reminded of injustice, suffering and the dead when a phone rings,

those who hold their breath for 8 hours because otherwise they'd scream.

Those who tried to participate but gave up because they could not take the stress.

The one who is always on alert and those who need a break.

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The one who doesn't know the names of all the people who died in the xx/xx/xxxx shipwreck and blames herself for it.

The one who doesn't want to leave his city because it would mean leaving the AP Team and those who understand exactly what he means,
those who feel schizophrenic because wherever they are, they always have one eye on the Mediterranean Sea,
those who will never forget what they have experienced together with friends beyond borders,

those who are happy to meet in person after having virtually worked together several times,

those who share something so strong and unconditional without ever having seen each other,

those on whose names, one day, a face and a smile can be put,

those who say "us" even if they never had a chance to meet in real life...

The Alarm Phone is made up of

...emoji team and others...

who bring in their own experiences of taking a boat to Europe and transform it into collective knowledge,

who do not fear prison because nobody is free until we are all free,

who, are exposed to harsh repression whilst working for the network,

And also

those who are afraid to make mistakes, but do their best,

those who train new people with so much passion and so much patience,

those who receive all the hard and bad news and make it into a story so that it doesn't fall into oblivion,

those who remain in contact and by doing so, make the injustice of all pushbacks and landings in Libya known to the world

those who try to give hope in desperate situations, when they themselves have no solution, but still try to show solidarity,

those who are operative on shifts and cry afterwards...

Those who take each other's sweaty hands and hold on,

Those who wish they could stay awake and those who wish they could fall asleep,

And there is

the one who smells fear at night

those who feel bad about having a day off, knowing that others work on heavy cases,

the one who tries to manage the night shift between her body in a comfortable room and her head in the anguish of the sea,

those who feel hypocritical when passing a border control because they have the right passport,

those who take a plane to spend 5 days on the other side of the bordered Mediterranean when they certainly wouldn't have done it for any other reasons than to meet some AP members,

those who sometimes swim in the Mediterranean, who have aperitifs on its beaches, who have left childhood memories in its waves, and look at it and find it beautiful, too

and

those who see the desert as a sea...

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Those who are angry against politicians talking about human rights and democracy while they let people die and support deportations and push-backs,

those who ask in which world we want to live,

those who would simply like to live in a world where everyone believes as deeply in such basic values as the right to live, and to dance

All those who are convinced that every human being should be free to move and have the right to choose where to live

those who write poems that give goose bumps and find the

strength to make struggle shine in such a discouraging context,
those who dance, sing, drink, laugh...

Those who, with each shift, remove a brick from a wall and add it to a bridge.

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Still Loving Freedom Of Movement

Protest action in the port of Zarzis/
Tunisia by members of Alarm Phone
Marseille and Tunis together with the
local fishermen association against
the deadly border regime, April 2018.
Photo: JBO / Alarm Phone





Build Bridges Not Walls. Seebrücke
Action in Lesbos, September 2018.
Photo: Maria Klenner



From the Sea to the Cities...
towards Corridors of Solidarity

Barcelona, March 2019





Solidarity will win! We'll come
United demonstration in Hamburg,
September 2018.
Photo: Alarm Phone



THANKS

THE ALARM PHONE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ...

... ALL THE MANY THOUSANDS OF MIGRANT TRAVELLERS

who called us when they faced situations of distress: your confidence and courage were gifts to us. It is your determination that animates us and enables us to struggle on together for a different, welcoming, Europe.

... ALL THE ACTIVE PERSONS IN COMMUNITY NETWORKS

who shared and forwarded the Alarm Phone number and contacted us when they heard of cases of distress. You inspired us with your knowledge and commitment under harshening circumstances of criminalisation.

... ALL THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS, BROTHERS, SISTERS AND FRIENDS

of those who went missing in the sea, besides whom we stood during commemoration ceremonies, and who supported our work for the living with their search for the truth about their missing beloved.

... THE HUMANITARIAN FLEET IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA

which is still active out there at sea, the crews of the ships Mare Jonio, Sea Watch 3, Alan Kurdi, Open Arms and Ocean Viking and of the two civilian airplanes Moonbird and Colibri, with whom we

cooperated in countless SOS cases and whose tenacious engagement and defiance in the face of criminalisation prevented that thousands more lost their lives when crossing the sea.

... ALL THE BRAVE FISHERMEN

who rescued hundreds of people in distress in the different areas of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

... ALL THOSE WHO HELP BUILD CORRIDORS OF SOLIDARITY

and who engage in municipalities or as mayors, in church groups, migrant communities, activist networks like Seebrücke and other human rights initiatives. They all build and spread novel structures of disobedience and solidarity.

... THE CREWS

of cargo vessels who did not collaborate in the illegal return of those fleeing to Libya but helped in rescue operations and brought those rescued to a port of safety in Europe.

... THE DISOBEDIENT COASTGUARD MEMBERS

who work in rescue operation centres or who went out to sea and gave their best to rescue migrants in distress and who, unlike some of their colleagues, were not involved in violent and inhumane practices, including non-rescue, push-backs, attacks and interceptions – and acted

against the racist decisions of those governing them.

... ALL OUR FRIENDS

who shared their own experiences of crossing the sea on boats with us: exchanging with you gave us a much better understanding of the whole situation. Your – often painful – experiences laid the ground for the work we are able to do together.

... ALL OF OUR UNCOUNTABLE FRIENDS

who spread the message of all these ongoing struggles – and also all those who just listened to our shift-team members when they needed someone to speak to.

... ALL OF YOU WHO STRUGGLE

every day for the freedom of movement and equal rights for all. To you, who is building daily infrastructures of support and resistance, from the sea to the cities and towards another, still unwritten, future.

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GLOSSARY

AIS Automatic Identification System. Automatic vessel tracking system. Vessels are localised by satellite or base stations on land.

BOZA (Bambara language) Victory. Celebratory call of West African migrants when they reach Europe.

DECRETO SICUREZZA I & BIS Legal decrees introduced and approved by the Italian government in early autumn 2018 and summer 2019. The first decree reduces humanitarian and support structures for asylum seekers and migrants in Italy. The second decree is more specifically aimed at criminalising NGOs involved in →SAR activities.

EU DIRECTIVE 2001/51/EC Directive of the European Union from June 2001 that obliges carriers to pay for the return journey of an asylum applicant in case asylum has been denied. As a consequence, transport companies generally do not accept migrants without valid papers.

EU-TURKEY-DEAL On March 20, 2016, this agreement came into effect. Its aim to return all “irregular migrants” after reaching Greece to Turkey from that point on did not work out. Nevertheless, deportations to Turkey occur regularly and interceptions have increased.

EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia. European Union Naval Force Mediterranean. EU military operation launched in June 2015 to fight ‘traffickers’ in the Mediterranean Sea. In March 2019, it was prolonged to September 2019. However its mandate was reduced to aerial surveillance, largely to provide positions of boats to the Libyan militias to intercept them.

FRONTEX European Border and Coast Guard Agency founded in 2004 and based in Warsaw. Main tasks are the coordination of national border polices and the ‘protection’ of EU borders against ‘irregular’ migration. Symbol and main actor of Fortress Europe.

HARRAGA (Arabic) those who burn [the border]. Self-description of North African migrants who cross the Mediterranean by boat without visa.

HOTSPOT Registration centers deployed by mobile →Frontex teams at particular sites of the EU border to assist screening and speed up deportation. The first Hotspot was opened on the 17th of September 2015 in Lampedusa, another one in October 2015 in Moria on Lesbos.

IMO NUMBER International Maritime Organization number. Seven-digit number to uniquely identify a ship or a ship owner’s company.

INTERCEPTION Stopping of migrants at sea within the territory of the state from which they left. Migrants are then forced to turn back to the state of departure by the corresponding border police. This must not be confused with a rescue or →SAR operation.

IOI International Organization for Migration. Intergovernmental organization for migration management founded in 1951. Cooperates closely with (especially Western) governments, for example in the ‘voluntary’ return of migrants to home countries.

MARE NOSTRUM Air and naval operation of the Italian navy to conduct large-scale →SAR operations in the central Mediterranean, carried out for one year in 2013/14, able to rescue about 150.000 migrants.

MOONBIRD and **COLIBRI**. Civil aerial reconnaissance missions in the central Mediterranean Sea, initiated by Sea Watch, Humanitarian Pilots Initiative and Pilotes Volontaires to spot boats in a wider area.

MRCC (also sometimes referred to as RCC or JRCC) Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. Primary search and rescue agency of states, coordinating and controlling →SAR operations.

PULL-BACK Same illegal removal of migrants at sea from the destination state’s territory as described for →Push-back, but carried out by forces of the state of departure – usually with knowledge and consent of the destination state’s authorities.

PUSH-BACK Illegal removal of migrants at sea from the destination state’s territory to international waters or the territory of the state of departure or transit by forces of the destination state. The migrants are deprived of their right to apply for asylum. See also →Pull-back.

SCHENGEN AREA Area of European countries with a common visa policy and no general controls at their common borders. Still, spot checks are carried out and lately, wider border controls were reintroduced.

SAR ZONE/OPERATION Search and Rescue zone/operation. The Mediterranean is divided into national SAR zones. In case of a boat in distress, the corresponding →MRCC is obliged to launch a SAR operation in order to rescue that boat.

SO-CALLED LIBYAN COAST GUARD Expression used to describe the European supported Libyan coastguard, which performs pull-backs to Libya and has been accused of repeatedly violating the law of the sea and international law.

THURAYA Satellite phone provider from the United Arab Emirates and shorthand for the satellite phone itself. The coverage extends throughout the entire Mediterranean Sea.

THEMIS Joint border security operation by →Frontex and the Italian Ministry of Interior. Started in February 2018 and followed the previous operation Triton. Its principal task is border control, rescue remains secondary.

WATCH THE MED Online documentation and mapping platform to monitor the deaths and violations of migrants’ rights at the maritime borders of the EU. Initiated 5 December 2013 as part of the Boats4people campaign (<http://watchthemed.net>).

ZODIAC Common term for an inflatable rubber boat. The French company Zodiac is the main producer of that type of boat that is often used to cross the Mediterranean. Equivalent expressions are rubber dinghy or just dinghy.

NETWORK

AFRIQUE EUROPE INTERACT

Afrique-Europe-Interact is a small, transnationally organised network that was founded in early 2010.

<http://afrique-europe-interact.net>

BOATS 4 PEOPLE

Boats 4 People is a coalition of 14 organisations in 7 countries created to defend the rights of migrants at sea.

www.facebook.com/boats4people

BORDERLINE EUROPE

borderline-europe is a non-profit association, independent from political parties or governments.

www.borderline-europe.de

FORSCHUNGSGESELLSCHAFT FLUCHT UND MIGRATION

FFM has been in existence since 1994 and is a non-profit association of research and documentation.

<http://ffm-online.org>

MISSING AT BORDERS

Missing at borders is a project giving a voice to the families of migrants who have died, disappeared or been victims of forced disappearances while trying to reach Europe.

<https://missingattheborders.org/>

VOIX DES MIGRANTS

Voix des Migrants is an initiative organised by and for migrants to highlight the situation of migrants and refugees and to sensibilise and mobilise them to fight for their rights.

<https://www.voixdesmigrants.org/>

WATCHTHEMED

WatchTheMed is an online mapping platform to monitor the deaths and violations of migrants' rights at the maritime borders of the EU. It was initiated in December 2013 as a part of the Boats4People campaign.

www.watchthemed.net

WELCOME 2 EUROPE

Welcome 2 Europe provides information that might be useful to refugees and migrants on their journeys to and through Europe.

www.w2eu.info

DONATIONS

Last but not least, we are always happy to receive donations for our project. In order to continue with our work, the Alarm Phone project requires further support to:

- Run the **HOTLINE**, to reach out to the satellite phones of boat-people and to **CHARGE THESE PHONES** online with credit
- **SPREAD THE EMERGENCY NUMBER** via visiting cards in various languages in migrant communities
- Distribute **LEAFLETS** with information about risks at sea
- Create **MATERIALS FOR CAMPAIGNS** against the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex and the EU border regime
- Undertake **NETWORKING AND RESEARCH TRIPS** to the different transit regions

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+334 86 51 71 61 or contact us at:

sos@alarmphone.org

If you want to contact us for an inter-
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media@alarmphone.org

If you want to support our work or have
a general request:

wtm-alarm-phone@antira.info.

STAY UPDATED WITH OUR WORK AND NEWS HERE:

www.alarmphone.org

www.watchthemed.net

www.facebook.com/watchthemed.alarmphone

https://twitter.com/alarm_phone

In the world that we want, our Alarm Phone would not exist. Human beings should not have to risk their lives at sea, simply to cross a border and reach a place of safety. They should not have to call an emergency hotline run by activists to make their distress heard, and to be rescued. They should be allowed to move safely and freely. In our current world, however, only the privileged few can move between countries with hardly any restraint, while so many others embark on journeys where it is unclear if they will reach the other side alive.

The Alarm Phone still exists – five years after we launched it in 2014. It still exists because the dying in the Mediterranean has not stopped and because thousands continue to ‘burn’ borders when they exercise their right to cross the sea. In this anniversary brochure, we reflect on our activities and some of the experiences we have made over the past years in our support of migrant travellers on about 2,800 boats in the Mediterranean Sea.

Ferries not Frontex!
Rescue is not a Crime!
Freedom of Movement for All!