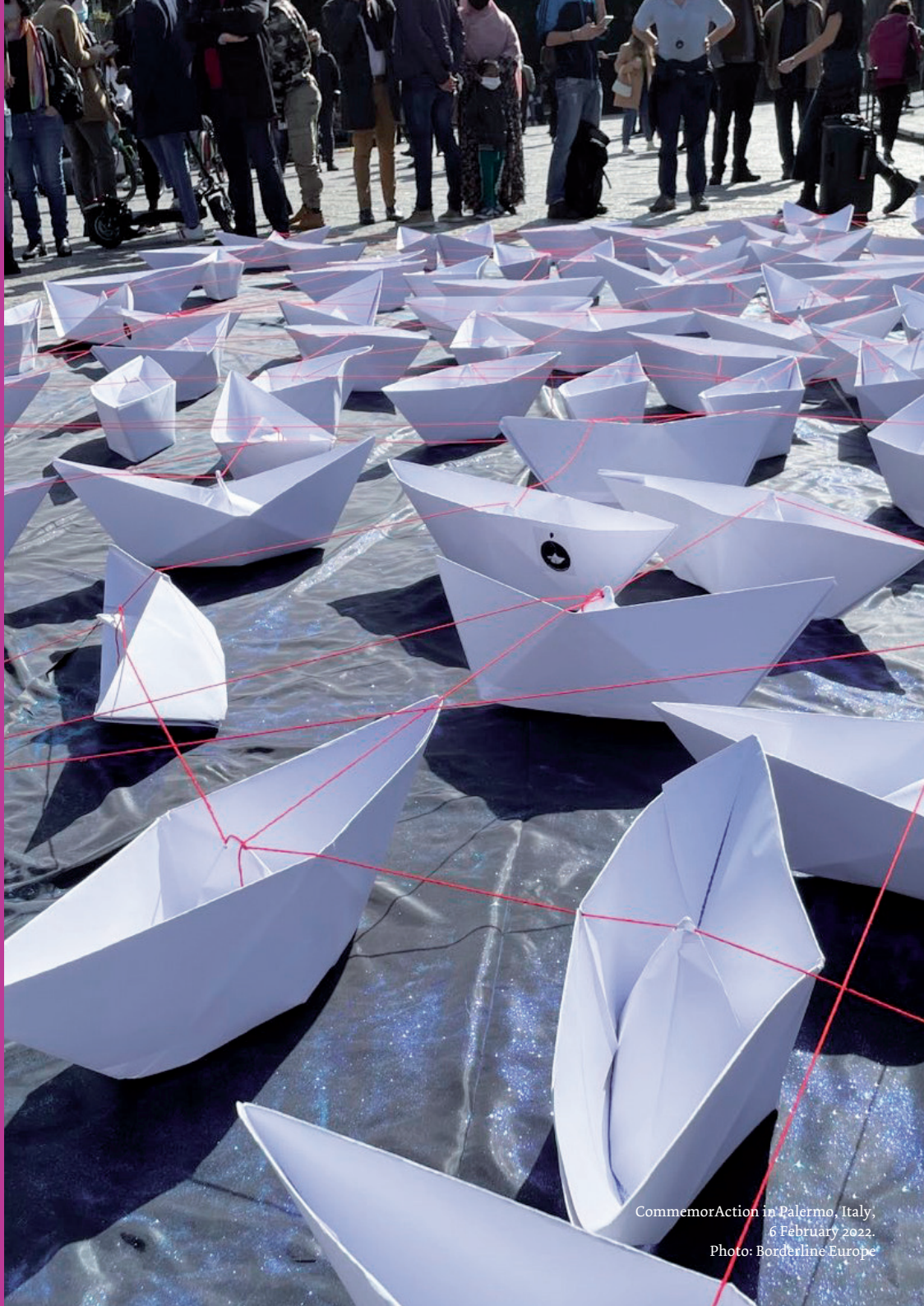




# **VOICES OF STRUGGLE**

8 Years Alarm Phone



CommemorAction in Palermo, Italy,  
6 February 2022.  
Photo: Borderline Europe



CommemorAction in the Gjadola Gardens on Malta, 6 February 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone



SOLIDARITE  
MIGRANTS  
ENSEMBLE  
LUTTONS  
CONTRE  
LA COVID-19

WATCH THE  
MED  
ALARM PHONE  
SECURITE  
ASSISTANCE  
MUTUELLE

CommemorAction in Tangier, Morocco,  
6 February 2021.  
Photo: Alarm Phone



CommemorAction in Berlin, Germany,  
February 2022.  
Photo: No Border Assembly Berlin



# VOICES OF STRUGGLE

8 Years Alarm Phone

“After the men, it’s the women and children who get lost on the new migration routes. Among others, they nourish the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.”

Painting by Artist Ndööndy AW.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>14</b>	<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>
16	Introduction: Eight Years Alarm Phone
20	Regions and Routes
<b>22</b>	<b>2 WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN</b>
24	The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route
28	The massacre of Melilla
31	Morocco – a growing network of solidarity
35	The migration situation in Senegal and Mauritania
40	Alarme Phone Sahara
44	A woman’s ordeals on the road from Cameroon to Morocco
48	“We have to help them”
<b>52</b>	<b>3 CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN</b>
54	The Central Mediterranean Route
58	Between Autonomous Arrivals, Pushbacks, and a civil MRCC
62	“Life is the most precious thing we have”
66	The Easter massacre of 2020: “What made us lose hope was seeing helicopters fly over us and not helping”
70	“I’m still traumatised by this experience”
73	Fishermen, the invisible solidarity workers at sea
77	“Now I’m safe in Europe, but this doesn’t mean I turn a blind eye to my friends who are still trapped there”
<b>82</b>	<b>4 THE AEGEAN</b>
84	The Aegean Sea and the Turkish-Greek land border
90	Voices from the ground
95	“No, you are not alone!”
100	“I will never forgive this world!”
<b>106</b>	<b>5 THE CHANNEL</b>
108	Introduction to the situation in the Channel

**118 6 CRIMINALISATION**

- 120 Criminalisation of people on the move
- 124 Criminalising facilitators
- 128 Free the El Hiblu 3
- 131 Criminalisation in Morocco and Western Sahara

**136 7 COMMEMORATION**

- 138 CommemorAction
- 142 “Why can’t our children have the same rights as the Europeans?”
- 145 “Searching for my missing brother”
- 148 Picture Collage of Different CommemorActions

**150 8 TIME TO LISTEN!**

- 152 Refugee Protests in Libya – it is Time to Listen!
- 155 Refugees in Tunisia
- 158 Chroniques àMER, monthly radio reports from the Alarm Phone

164 Urgent Call for Donations

170 Thanks

172 Glossary

176 Imprint



CommemorAction in Serrekunda,  
Gambia, February 2022.  
Photo: Alarm Phone





1

# Introduction

# Introduction

## Eight Years Alarm Phone

Eight years ago, on 11 October 2014, we launched the Alarm Phone, a hotline for people in distress at sea. Since then, our shift teams are available 24/7 and have assisted about 5.000 boats in distress along the different maritime routes to Europe – the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, and since 2022 also across the Channel, from France to the UK. Some of the 5.000 boats carried only five or ten people, most between 30 and 80 individuals, but also frequently more than 100, occasionally even over 500 people on the move.

On the phone, we have become witnesses of thousands of people going missing and drowning over the past eight years. We have listened to some of their relatives and friends in their desperate search for their loved ones, in their search for answers. We have also witnessed violent pushbacks and deadly abandonment, and how many of those who called us were captured at sea and forcibly returned to places they had sought to escape.

At the same time, we have experienced innumerable moments of joy, resistance, and solidarity, with people reaching Europe alive or being rescued just in time. We have witnessed how people on the move organised collectively to subvert EU borders, and how they built support structures along their journeys. And we have been part of growing networks of solidarity, including the civil fleet and civil aircraft roaming seas and skies, some merchant vessel crews, and activist grassroots movements that have come together to counteract border violence.

In the Western Mediterranean, between Morocco and Spain, we can still see some instances of proactive rescue operations carried out by the Spanish Salvamento Marítimo, often along the route to the Canaries. However, Spain and the EU as a whole continue to fund Morocco to play Europe's gatekeeper and as a consequence, we have seen horrible border

brutality in this region, as recently demonstrated near Melilla. On 24 June 2022, at least 40 people were killed in a racist massacre at the fence of the Spanish enclave – an unbearable scene of neo-colonial violence, carried out by Moroccan forces but underwritten by EU migration and border policies. They are among thousands who are estimated to lose their lives at Spain's borders every year, especially along the Atlantic route.

The war against people on the move is a daily reality also in the Aegean Sea and at the land border between Turkey and Greece. Both the Greek and Turkish governments use people on the move as pawns in their militaristic and nationalistic power plays. While Greek pushbacks have been going on for a long time, they became systematic from March 2020 on. Even people who have already stepped onto Greek islands are forced onto small life rafts and abandoned in Turkish waters. We have to call them what they are: instances of attempted murder. These border crimes are now routine in the Aegean Sea and in the Evros region. In March, 5-year-old Maria was among those who have lost their lives due to this pushback regime.

In the Central Mediterranean, a pull- and pushback regime has been installed, not least through the collaboration between Frontex drones and EU airplanes with the so-called Libyan coastguards. As assets of the civil fleet are often present in this borderzone, many cases of non-assistance and interceptions could be countered, people rescued, and border crimes documented and publicly denounced. Nonetheless, the Central Mediterranean route remains one of the deadliest in the world, not least as EU member states continue to consciously abandon boats in distress in the most dangerous areas off the Libyan and Tunisian coasts.

An increasing number of those who survived sea crossings to the EU have to once more use flimsy boats when they try to reach the UK. Arrivals across the Channel have increased significantly over the past years. In light of this, we decided in 2022 to integrate the Channel route into the work of the Alarm Phone. Our WatchTheChannel team has carried out research and prepared a distress manual together with other local networks in France and the UK.

All maritime routes are, and remain, politically contested spaces.

16

17

People on the move exercise their freedom of movement while we as the Alarm Phone network try to enact solidarity along the different routes. Migrant movements and the tenacity of people on the move remain the driving forces in the struggle against European and global apartheid regimes. Thousands of autonomous arrivals continue to challenge the sealing off and the externalising of EU borders. At the same time, self-organised struggles for the right to stay and against racist exploitation inside the EU continue. Relatives and friends of the missing and dead continue to organise CommemorActions to remember and search for their loved ones while protesting the border violence that disappeared or killed them.

“Voices of Struggle” is the title of our anniversary publication and we hope that the voices of the people on the move become amplified and widely listened to. We dedicate this booklet to friends and activists who lost loved ones at the borders, to those who survived the border regime, and to those who are still struggling to overcome and subvert the many borders in their way.

**WE HAVE FOUGHT FOR EIGHT YEARS.**

**WE WILL CONTINUE.**

**WE WILL NEVER GIVE UP.**

**ALARM PHONE,  
OCTOBER 2022**

**18**

**19**

# Regions and Routes

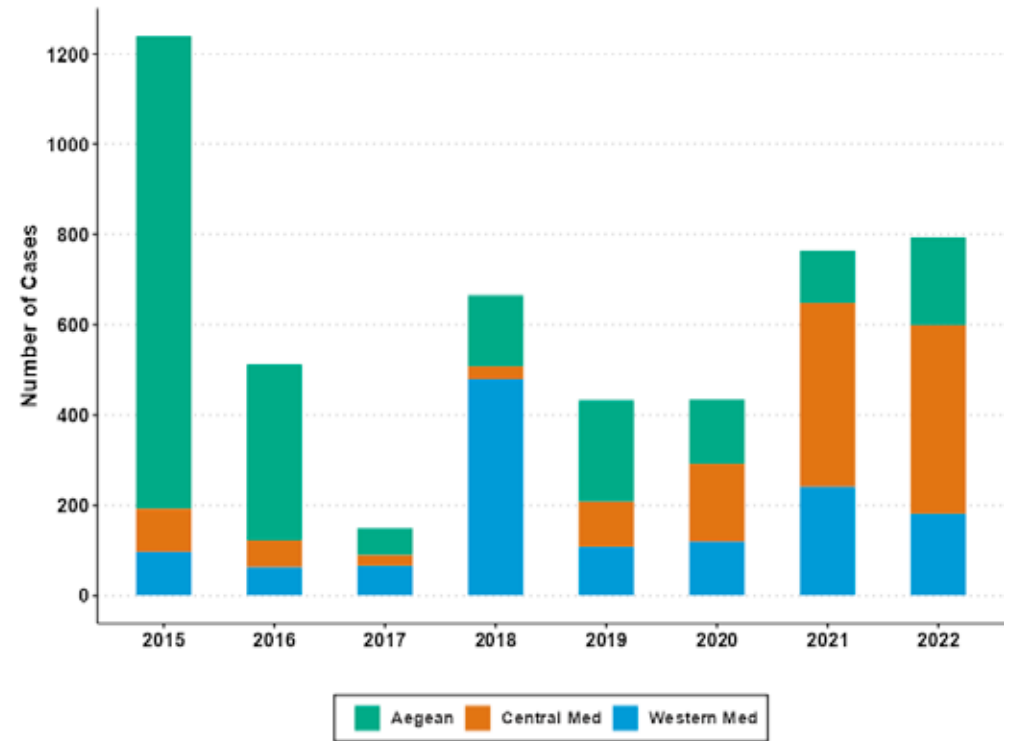
## CASES BY YEAR

\*Cases recorded until Mid September 2022  
\*\*Cases in the Balkans and Belarus are not included



## CASES BY REGION

\*Cases recorded until Mid September 2022  
\*\*Cases in the Balkans and Belarus are not included



z

# 2

## Western Mediterranean

Painting by Amaya, a 10-year-old girl from near Malaga, Spain, whose mother is an activist. Amaya painted the boat being welcomed into harbour when asked: "What is important to you?", January 2021.

Amaya Enero 2021

# The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic route

“What we face is an ongoing war against migrants”, this is what our teams along the Western migration route into the European Union report already for years. With the massacre around the fences of Melilla on 24 June 2022 this war escalated to a new level: 40 lives were lost, and many more people were wounded. The survivors will carry the memory of this racist massacre with them for years to come. And we will not forget those who perished.

The past years have seen departures shift massively from the North of Morocco to the south of the country and to the Western Sahara. This



Dakar Convergence,  
September 2021.  
Photo: BOZA FII

year alone saw a huge increase in crossings on the longer, dangerous, and deadly Atlantic route: by mid-August of 2022 11.000 out of 17.000 people having attempted the journey by boat, had arrived on the Spanish Canary Islands. Journeys to the Canary Islands currently constitute 3/4 of all arrivals to Spain. The Atlantic route remains the deadliest route to Europe, with estimates of more than 4404 dead and missing in 2021 according to the collective Caminando Fronteras.

While many boats still disappear and many people go missing without a trace, migrant communities have managed to disseminate knowledge to make sea crossings safer. Therefore, we are steadily getting more calls from satellite phones (Thuraya) from boats on their way to the Canary Islands. The use of satellite phones makes it possible to pass on a GPS location and be located on this long trip without mobile phone coverage.

Increasing the knowledge on the crossing, making people aware of the risks and raising awareness about safety at sea is one of the main activities of the many Alarm Phone activists from various migrant communities active in many cities all over Morocco, but also further south, in Laayoune, Nouakchott and Dakar. They are doing amazing work, under highly precarious conditions. The network is still growing and includes by now also groups in Mauretania and Senegal, this in addition to our sister project Alarme Phone Sahara which tries to cover the risky route through the desert already for a number of years. In three different texts in this chapter, they describe the work they are doing and under which circumstances. Day by day and throughout many sleepless nights, their work is increasing the chances of survival for many on the routes made dangerous by borders.

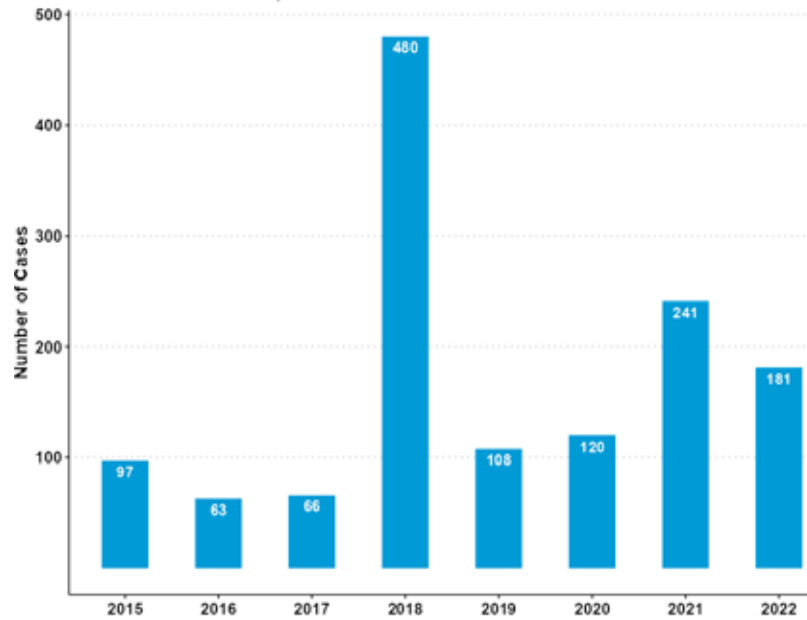
Morocco is not only a transit-country. In the last years we have been contacted also more and more by Northern Africans who were born in Morocco and who have taken boats from there to reach Europe as well as from many families of Algerian Harragas who reached Spain in high numbers. In an interview one of them describes how he decided to travel towards the Canaries — and became active with the Alarm Phone afterwards.

Finally, women on the move are becoming stronger too. Their

testimonies, including the one we are publishing in the following pages, show the violent experiences many of them have made on their journey. They also attest of women on the move's strength and bravery to speak out.

### CASES IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

\*Cases recorded until Mid September 2022



26



Empty boats after arrival in Arguineguin Harbour, Gran Canaria, January 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

# The massacre of Melilla

40 people were killed on 24 June 2022

On 24 June 2022 the level of violence used against migrants trying to cross the fences of the Spanish exclave Melilla escalated to a new dimension. Days after, we were still reeling in shock at the images of badly wounded and dying people piled up, being guarded, beaten and trampled on by police with no concern for their dignity and their lives. Today we know that at least 40 people lost their lives. May they rest in peace.

We are still trying to find a language to express our pain. What we know by now are the facts. Thanks to Caminando Fronteras who made an excellent report<sup>1</sup> which gave voice to the survivors they had supported and interviewed, we now not only know how many people died, but also how this escalation started. The days before the massacre, there were continuous raids in the forests around Melilla with violence increasing day by day. Trying to go against the border to escape, even without ladders, was a last resort for people. Most of the people were so exhausted that they would have anyway struggled to climb a 6-metres fence. A very high percentage of the survivors are teenagers and children between the ages of 11 and 17 years. Most of the victims comes from Sudan and South Sudan.

We also know that the injuries – which were deadly for so many – were from suffocation by gas, from falling to the ground and being crushed by the soldiers’ boots, from being beaten with traditional and electric batons, being struck by bullets, from being refused medical care and assistance, from being forcibly displaced whilst wounded, and being

28

29

<sup>1</sup> Report from Caminando Fronteras in Spanish:  
<https://caminandofronteras.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Caminando-Fronteras-MasacreMelilla24J.pdf>  
 In English:  
<https://migration-control.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/CF-SlaughterNador-MelillaEN.pdf>

removed from Melilla without receiving medical treatment.

We know that victims were apparently buried quickly, most if not all of them without an autopsy.

These people were killed by the murderous fence, by an increasingly brutal police force on both sides of the fence and by an increasingly militarised European migration policy. Shortly before, the Spanish government had urged NATO to classify irregular migration as a "hybrid threat" at an upcoming summit. And only a few weeks afterwards, Morocco was promised €500 million, the highest sum they have ever received, to "combat illegal migration". So far no one has been found guilty of the slaughter. Instead, the wounded survivors are being criminalised. 65 people have so far been charged with offences and 13 survivors have already been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison.

We promise not to forget. We are documenting here below the first messages that came from the friends of migrant communities in Morocco, which expressed shock, grief and anger:

## From Nador:

*"I am here and it is so terrible. Since Friday until now, there is no more security for us. I have to hide like so many others. There are so many who have lost their lives, so many... We still don't know how many there are and we don't know their names yet. The Moroccan police seemed to be prepared to beat back this storm on the fence with massive force. Very prepared and in the end so many were killed. There have also been arrests of, as of yet, unknown numbers and apparently there are to be quick convictions."*

## From Berkane:

*"It is so terrible. Wounded survivors arrived, but they are still in shock. They say they have seen more than 30 dead. We are trying to understand what happened. All I can tell you is that it is so unbelievably terrible."*

## From Dakar:

*"My heart is truly broken and I am depressed by these images. I thank*



# Morocco – a growing network of solidarity

*all of you who feel the terrible pain of the loss of our brothers with the families of the victims. In Senegal, no TV station was interested in this news. Two different registrations for a sit-in in front of the Moroccan embassy in Dakar were banned by the Senegalese authorities. Just silence.”*

## From Laayoune:

*“Since the day before yesterday, we have been experiencing very difficult moments that hurt us when we think of our brothers and see them in front of us, going off hoping to find peace and happiness on the other side of the fence, and unfortunately it is the opposite... Our tears will not dry until we have identified all those who have lost their lives and can bury them with dignity.”*

## From Casablanca:

*“It is only the friendship that relieves us a little in this pain and gives us hope. We hold this hope deep within us, in the name of this common struggle that challenges us all. But also in the name of all the inalienable rights of human beings, whether they are black, yellow or white. We are fortunate to be able to continue to dream and fight for a better world, a world without borders between people and with much warmth and brotherhood. Long live freedom of movement and inalienable rights. This is shared with many of our friends who have been grieving for decades for their relatives who were brutalised and died at these terrible borders that are so visibly deadly and therefore so frightening. And yet: we are alive!”*

Whilst it is clear that an autopsy should be carried out before people are buried, especially if they die in such a violent way, Moroccan and Spanish authorities have failed to take any responsibility for this massacre. We will never forget those who lost their lives. We will keep them in our memory in all the struggles to come. We will not be silent.

30

31

The Alarm Phone groups in Morocco report again and again of an ongoing war against migrants, led by the Moroccan authorities and initialised and financed by the European Union. Overall, there are constant raids against migrant communities, either in the forests or in private rented flats. Racist controls, arbitrary arrests and deportations to the desert are a daily reality.

Despite these constant attacks, the work of Alarm Phone activists in Morocco has grown and consolidated in the past years. Information exchange has increased on many levels with an impressive concrete network of solidarity emerging across the region. In the following, the groups on the ground report on the situation in the different regions and towns where they are active.

In the south, some places such as Laayoune, Tan Tan, Bojdour and Dakhla are migrant destinations because of their geographic situation, which is a departure point for the Spanish Canary Islands. At the beginning of the pandemic, the northern borders were basically closed and so more migrants went to the south with the hope of making the crossing there. The Atlantic route is the deadliest route. The Alarm Phone activists’ work in the south has therefore increased, in order to raise awareness about the dangers at sea, help migrants who need to access health services or who have been arrested and to help with the identification of bodies.

## Tangier:

*“In Tangier, criminalisation, repression, violations, and arrests are ongoing. Moreover, we note that the Mediterranean has become an open grave for migrants. We have seen the Moroccan navy overturn convoys of migrants’ boats at sea and rejoice in it. Migrants have never had freedom of movement in Tangier. They have*

no security and live in fear, stress, and lack of confidence as there are arbitrary and aggressive arrests in the streets and in their own homes. There is a lot of racial discrimination. This influences the desire of migrants to flee. Since 2018, with the increase of the security policy that prevents migrants from making the crossing to Europe, one no longer hears about Boza from Tangier like one did in previous years. Today, in Tangier, most migrants see their dreams slowly being shattered. Especially the situation of women in the city is difficult. They are struck by fears and insecurities and do not dare to talk to anyone. They too are suffering and dying slowly.”

#### Casablanca:

“In Casablanca, we are in contact with almost all communities and their spokespersons. Our main works constitutes of distributing Alarm Phone cards and doing sensibilisation work. We are also supporting migrants who are arbitrarily arrested to be released again from prison.”

#### Berkane:

“Our group in Berkane is especially active in the region up to Magnia and we work in cooperation with the group in Nador. We are in contact and work with local communities and their spokespersons. Thanks to them, we have information about departures or missing people. If there is a distress case at sea, we inform the Alarm Phone team on shift. We also distribute information, cards, and bracelets/wristbands with the Alarm Phone number to new migrants.”

#### Oujda:

“In Oujda, we are dealing with the complicated situation at the border between Morocco and Algeria. Sometimes, there are even migrants who cross the border the other way to Algeria where the crossing is cheaper. They also get caught up with the mafia who uses some of them to transport drugs etc. Most migrants in Oujda are francophone but we are also dealing with the influx of new refugees from Sudan. These are all men who are very often injured after crossing the dangerous land border

which has a deep ditch. 13% of them are minors. They have no communities or contacts in Morocco who can help them to get accommodation. Finally, one of the things we struggle with the most is the identification of dead people.”

#### Tiznit:

“Tiznit has become a transit town, here the activists mostly distribute the number of the Alarm Phone to migrants.”

#### Nador:

“In Nador, the activist work is shared amongst several people. The work comprises of giving advice on safety at sea, being available for migrants during the crossing as well as giving advice to Alarm Phone shift teams in case they have questions on the region. We also raise awareness amongst different migrant communities about the risks at sea.”

#### Rabat:

“Rabat is not a place of departure. It used to be a rather “safe” place for migrants. But this has changed since a new agreement was signed with Spain. This has led to migrants being arrested in specific neighbourhoods for example in Takadoum. Migrants come to Rabat to look for jobs to earn some money. So, we help them to get an orientation in Rabat. We also distribute cards of the Alarm Phone and give out legal information. Finally, we are also involved in supporting migrants to get therapy.”

#### Fez:

“In Fez, there are many migrants who are pushed back at the Algerian border near Oujda. Our group here has a cooperation with other social services supporting migrants on the move.”

#### Laayoune:

“In general, over the past years more and more migrants have started to come to the Western Sahara and the south of Morocco. Amongst them

*there are different nationalities including people from Syria. Our work consists of raising awareness amongst migrants in various neighbourhoods, also for example about how to use a satellite phone.*

*The repression is strong as migrants are hunted down by the military and the police not only at sea, but also in their homes. Especially young migrants are at risk of being accused of being boat drivers. We have witnessed them being brought to court without a lawyer and translator.”*



Alarm Phone Morocco Meeting  
in Larache, Morocco, July 2021.  
Photo: Alarm Phone Morocco

# The migration situation in Senegal and Mauritania

**Saliou Diouf & Amadou Mbow**

Since 2019, Senegal and Mauritania have witnessed a renewal of migrant departures to the Canary Islands via the Atlantic Ocean. These departures have caused many deaths and disappearances. To face this situation, the political authorities of Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, and Spain only have as a response the hardening of their policies leading to more violations and violence against migrants. This is why we shout out: BOZA!

**BOZA FII (Benn kàddu - Benn yoon)**

**BOZA:** the cry of the fighters

**BOZA:** the cry of the vulnerable population

**BOZA:** the cry that brings you out of distress

**BOZA:** the cry that echoes across the borders

**BOZA:** the cry that breaks down walls

We don't suffer life, we make it ... **BOZA FREE...**

35

**BOZA FII** is a group of activists who work in the field of flight and migration. We support migrants who have returned voluntarily as well as migrants who have been deported to their country of origin and who are facing a total lack of assistance. We also support the friends and families of those who have gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea and at the borders, in their painful search for answers. We promote the right to identity and dignity for all victims of our borders, and the right of their families to know. We want to work for a better respect of the rights of these people, who are not only weakened by the tragedies of migration but also often

stigmatized in their own communities. We also want to encourage the production of knowledge and promote objectivity in the debate on migration and international exchanges in order to face global realities together.

The members of BOZA FII are also part of the Alarm Phone Dakar group, which is itself part of the wider Alarm Phone network. AP Dakar's main objectives is to assist people who find themselves in distress while crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Europe and document disappearances.

### Evolution of the migration situation in Senegal

Today, Senegal is one of the countries most affected by the youth exile movement. In this country, our leaders have not put in place any measures to enable young people to settle. Between 2006 and 2010, massive departures were recorded in Senegal, a phenomenon that was called “Barça or Barsakh” (in the Wolof language this means ‘Barcelona or Death’). Since November 2020, a similar scenario has resumed, causing many deaths. The worsening situation is largely due to certain bilateral contracts signed by the government with Western countries, such as the renewal of fisheries contracts granted to the EU in November 2019, but also the tightening of visa procedures for third countries.

Senegalese social movements denounce that these fishing agreements force young fishermen to emigrate, risking their lives in flimsy boats.

After having been heavily criticised for denying the figures of victims given by NGOs, Senegalese authorities have only kept promising to reinforce controls and surveillance on the coast. Faced with the resurgence of this phenomenon of youth migration, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs has also recently made a visit to Senegal to discuss with her counterpart and the Head of State the deportation of Senegalese who have arrived on the Canary Islands.

In addition to this, there is the criminalisation of migration. Recently for example, a father was arrested after having paid for his young son to travel to Europe in a pirogue. The child, nicknamed “Doudou”, aged 14, died at sea in mid-October.



Dakar Convergence,  
September 2021.  
Photo: BOZA FII



Dakar Convergence,  
September 2021.  
Photo: BOZA FII

The Atlantic remains one of the deadliest of the migration routes. That is why we want to see humanitarian boats and planes sailing in this area one day to provide assistance to people trying to reach the Canary Islands by sea.

Today criminalisation is increasing in our countries and the local networks of struggle don't have enough influence to face the system. Moreover, apart from local activist networks, most of the general population does not understand much about migration policies. They don't know that everything happens in total secrecy and that our leaders sign agreements that don't support the population.

### Activism in Senegal

Boza Fii and AP Dakar carry out denunciation and advocacy activities in Senegal fighting for the rights and dignity of people on the move such as

- The 6 February TARAJAL CommemorAction, which is celebrated in different places around the world.
- The Dakar Convergence which has enabled us to create spaces for exchanges between actors from different networks of their transnational practices and visions of freedom of movement and equal rights.
- The Patriot Act Caravan, which aims to promote the right to identity and dignity for all victims of our borders, and the right of their families to know, as well as raise awareness about migration policies in Senegal.

### Mauritania: Sirens of freedom

Alarm Phone Mauritania is inspired by the philosophy and founding principles of AP. The newly created group in Mauritania plans to document the missing at sea by linking up with stakeholders like the fishermen's federation in the country. The group has already organized, together with other AP groups, the Commemor'ation of the 6th February in the presence of many actors, such as migrant communities, the media, the

fishermen's federation and others and also participated in the Convergence organized in Dakar.

This space enabled us to share our vision and the values we believe in. It was a space for exchange between actors from different networks who share and agree on the right to freedom of movement, fight against impunity and value the right to life above all else.

### Denouncing the Frontex Monster that intends to settle in our country

In the wake of the murderous blindness that characterises the militarised management of borders, our governments (Senegal and Mauritania) have just signed an agreement to allow the European Border Agency (Frontex) to operate in our countries. The Mauritanian press has started to talk about this; Taqadomy News reported last July that Frontex was planning to set up new operations to fight illegal immigration in Mauritania and Senegal. The news agency quoted Statewatch, an organisation that works in the field of civil liberties monitoring in Europe. According to Statewatch, Frontex intends to carry out operational missions in Mauritania and Senegal by deploying vessels and surveillance equipment. Frontex is also expected to open a risk analysis unit in Nouakchott at the end of 2022.

# Alarme Phone Sahara

Moctar Dan Yaye

Due to the EU's desire to strengthen its fortress against nationals from Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, Niger has become a focal point of the European border regime since 2015. Measures have therefore been developed in this country in accordance with migration control agreements concluded with EU countries, which considerably infringe on the right to freedom of movement that was once enjoyed by all nationals of the ECOWAS<sup>1</sup> space, due to the existing regional protocol on free movement. Investments have been made to strengthen the security forces and controls at the borders and on various travel routes. This has drastically increased the hardship for travellers, making them more vulnerable and has greatly affected the economy of the whole region. In the Niger desert, to avoid checkpoints and to escape the enforcement of Law 036-2015<sup>2</sup>, transporters are now taking new remote and isolated desert tracks, which increases the number of disappearances.

In this context and faced with the lack of information and visibility on what happens on the routes before the Mediterranean in terms of abuse and violation of migrants' rights, civil society organisations and activists from different countries (Germany, Burkina, Cameroon, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Togo...) close to the Alarm Phone saw the need to set up a sister project in this area.

In 2017 'Alarme Phone Sahara' (APS) was founded in Niger. It is a transnational project between Africa and Europe which operates through the Africa Europe Interact (AEI). The aim is to denounce repressive migration control policies, to promote the rights and freedom of movement of migrants and refugees on the Sahel-Saharan routes and to rescue people

<sup>1</sup> Economic community of West African States

<sup>2</sup> Law 036-2015 is a law that prohibits any trade related to the 'Illicit Trafficking of Migrants' in Niger.



CommemorAction in Agadez, Niger, 6 February 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone Sahara



General Assembly, Agadez, Niger, February 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone Sahara

in distress in the desert.

The APS project in Niger is structured on four levels to carry out its actions: weekly meetings, a coordination team, the whistle-blower network and general assemblies. A weekly online meeting provides a framework for follow-up and a space to evaluate decisions as well as continuous monitoring of planned activities. It brings together members of the coordination in Niger and other AEI comrades to discuss and decide on ongoing issues so as not to delay the work on the ground.

The coordination team is based in Agadez, Niger, and its role is to collect information and coordinate the actions of the project. The information is used to monitor the migration situation in the region and to feed the database for possible programming of activities. It raises awareness and collects testimonies at its headquarters, a favourable setting for migrants seeking orientation or information on the desert crossing to Algeria, Libya or when they have returned.

As for the whistle-blowers (*lanceurs d'alerte*), they are volunteers who live in different localities on the migration routes crossing Niger, on one side to Assamaka on the Algerian border and on the other side to Bilma on the Libyan border. They often carry out patrols and/or rescue missions and inform the coordination team in case of any observations (migrants in distress, discovery of graves or bodies etc.).

The General Assembly brings together representatives from different member countries and is convened to review the life of the network. It analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the network and initiates strategies to develop it further. Since its inception, field and public relations activities at the international level to raise awareness and fight against violations of migrants' rights have made the situation of migration governance beyond the Mediterranean and in the Sahara and the work of APS more visible. At the national level, several rescue missions are carried out to help migrants in distress, depending on the means available. For some time now, various forms of humanitarian assistance have been put in place in view of the development of the situation in Agadez, such as the collective kitchen offered to migrants every Saturday, food kits for migrants in the ghettos and in prison detention, and the re-establishment of

family links for returnees.

APS has carried out missions to observe the treatment of travellers during cross-border travel in the ECOWAS region. It has also carried out information, advocacy, and lobbying tours in Europe on the consequences of the externalisation of its borders through its agency Frontex. In addition to its local actions, APS is involved in several transnational and transcontinental meetings and actions such as the CommemorAction days, the Transborder Summer Camp and others.

APS faces many challenges, as the migration issue in Niger is complex. The country is characterised by mixed migration, being itself a country of origin and destination in addition to being a country of transit, as it is usually described by the Western perspective on migration. This perspective tends to make migration invisible at the national, sub-regional and continental levels. Moreover, there has been a meteoric rise of armed crises in the region, that has forced several populations to move. Additionally, since 2016 Algeria, in agreement with the Nigerien state, has been illegally dumping thousands of people—women, children and men—at the border, precisely at Point Zero, about 15km from Assamaka. This is a humanitarian scandal that concerns nationals of Niger who are migrating to Algeria, but also people from various countries of sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

The EU 's renewed interest in strengthening its influence on Niger in terms of border control is a cranked-up version of anti-migration cooperation camouflaged as a fight against human trafficking.

# A woman's ordeals on the road from Cameroon to Morocco

**The following is the testimony of a woman, close to the Alarm Phone network, who travelled from Cameroon to Morocco by land. This is a detailed story that includes descriptions of violence Women face extreme hardships on their migratory journeys. We thank this person for her courage and for sharing her story with us.**

I still remember 11 September 2016 as if it were yesterday. This is the day that I decided to leave my country for a better future.

There were three of us: me and two friends. The youngest amongst us was a minor. The day after our departure we arrived at the Nigerian border where we were asked to show our identity documents. I had my ID papers, but we were still refused entry at the border post. A local resident approached us and told us that he could get us across by another route. We walked all night through the bush, and he finally got us into Nigeria. Since we had enough money, we were able then able to travel on to Benin.

We travelled for two days in traumatic conditions but finally arrived in Benin. Then, the driver took us to a travel agency and handed us over to the person in charge. That person said that he could take us to Niger, on the condition that we pay for our own tickets and that we be aware that there would be police checks on the road. We were determined and agreed, not knowing that there would be more than 30 police checks on

the way and that each checkpoint would cost no less than 20 euros. After three days of travel, we arrived in Niger in the town of Dosso. We spent seven days there.

This is when the real ordeal started for me. The two girls with whom I had left Cameroon had no more money. I was afraid I would get stuck with them, so I left them in Dosso, gave them some money and continued on my own. I drove all night from Dosso to Agadez. From there I bought a ticket and waited for my departure to the town of Alit, still in Niger. This is where the border is to cross the dessert. Once I arrived in Alit, I asked a gentleman where I could spend the night. At the hostel I met more than 40 travellers. It was a shock for me because the conditions were catastrophic; women with children and many couples that had formed under duress. I started to cry and to regret having taken this road. I had no news from the two girls I had left in Dosso. They had told me that they would meet me in a week's time in Alit and had asked me to wait for them. I waited for them for two weeks, but they never arrived.

A smuggler came to take a group of 30 of us to Algeria. We left Alit one night at about 3am and we drove all day in the dessert, each with a bottle of water. It was awful. In Inguissam, the first town after the dessert, we hid in an old house for about 17 hours. Then drivers picked us up to take us to the town of Tamanrasset in Algeria. They took us in pick-up trucks and drove all night until, at one point, they stopped the car and took out long sticks. They started hitting the men in the back of the car. Then they searched everyone, starting with the men. They searched everywhere, including our private parts, and took all the money we had on us. After driving for another two hours, they stopped again. They pointed at me and another girl and asked us to follow them. They had knives and long sticks on them. I was raped by two men that night. I will never forget it. I was disgusted and humiliated and I only wanted one thing: to die. I somehow found the strength to hold on. Once they had finished, they left us behind and told us that we were not far from Tamanrasset.

We still had to cross part of the dessert. We walked all day without water towards the rising sun until we saw a car. It took us to Tamanrasset to the home of some Cameroonians in one of the ghettos of the town.

44

45



I then called my family to inform them where I was. At that moment, I learned that the two girls I had left in Dosso had arrived in Agadez where they had taken a car to end up in Libya. They had been sold to some powerful women. These women are the kind who usually have clients who want to sleep with you. You are forced to do it because you are like their slave. Afterwards, the two girls were imprisoned in Libya. When they were released, one preferred to return to Cameroon and the youngest, who was a minor, managed to get to Italy.

After a month spent in the town of Magnia in Algeria at the border to Oujda, I realised that I was pregnant from my desert rapists. I had no money left on me, but I found a way to get an abortion. I was determined. It was either my life or the abortion. I had an abortion because I saw the suffering of the women on that road who were raped and gave birth to children who would never know a father. I have seen women become sexual objects to have a place to sleep or food to eat, because in Algeria there is no work for women.

When I arrived in Morocco, I thought that my suffering was over, and that I would go straight to Europe. But my cousin who was supposed to help me had run off with my money and so I started doing odd jobs. Because of my experiences on the road with different communities, women started confiding in me, so I began to volunteer with a small association of Nigerian women. Nigerian women are often sold from their countries and are made to work sexually to pay back the money to their buyers even here in Morocco. Through the association, we often meet women who are living with HIV-AIDS and who do not know where they contracted the disease. They are often forced to sleep with migrants all over Morocco and in the forest. The forests are where the women who have managed to find the money to pay for the crossing, go to wait for the Boza.

47



Women's action in Tangier,  
Morocco, 8 March 2022.  
Photo: Alarm Phone

# “We have to help them”

An interview with Husein\*, a traveler,  
by Reto, an Alarm Phone activist

**Husein took a boat to the Canaries in the last days of 2020. Reto received confirmation that the boat Husein was travelling with was rescued to the Canaries during his Alarm Phone shift. After his arrival, Husein and Reto kept in regular contact. Husein, who is living in Spain in the meantime, joined the Alarm Phone. He speaks to the people on the boats when an Arabic speaking person is needed to communicate.**

**R Husein, tell me how you came in touch with the Alarm Phone.**

**H** I was in Dakhla and my plan was to go to the Canaries, so I searched the internet for organisations that could help while I am at sea. I found the Alarm Phone number and I told my brother: “If you don’t hear anything from me, call the Alarm Phone and ask them to help us.”

When I was at sea, finally, with 33 other people, my brother called the Alarm Phone and provided the number of the phone, which I had on the boat.

*(Note: During that time, different shift teams tried to reach Husein via phone call and via WhatsApp. Only after four days, were the Alarm Phone shift teams informed that Husein had arrived in Las Palmas on the Canaries.)*

At sea, when we had network coverage, I called 112. They asked me how many people we are, if there were children and women with me - there were none. The Guardia Civil came to us. We had already been at sea

48

49

for five days. They brought us to Las Palmas.

There, we were in a camp for three days and were tested for Covid. Then we were brought to the detention centre – a prison to deport the people. They took all the phones, but later, they offered to give me back my phone, but only if I break the camera. I agreed.

I turned on the phone and also opened WhatsApp - a lot of numbers popped up, from people trying to reach my phone during the trip. So, I sent a text message to every number - and you replied. That gave me a lot of motivation.

From the 34 people who arrived together, only me and four others were not deported to Morocco.

**R Why did you write text messages to all numbers showing up on your phone?**

**H** I contacted all the numbers, because I thought perhaps one of them can help me – and in the end I was right!

**R Did you try more than once to go by boat from Morocco to the Canaries?**

**H** Yes, three times. I already had paid for the trip, but I never got to the boat. I waited for the appointment, but never really started. Fortunately, I got my money back. Then I succeeded with my fourth try.

**R Why did you not take the route via Tangier to Spain?**

**H** First, I planned to go via Tangier. But you cannot go through there. There are a lot of ministries and security there and it’s not easy to pass through. Also, the smugglers defraud immigrants of their money. It’s less difficult to pass through Dakhla and not expensive.

**R But you knew that the Atlantic Route is very dangerous?**

H Yes, I knew that. But travelling via Tangier or even through Turkey (which I was also thinking about) is not possible and very hard to do. Through Turkey, I would need to cross a lot of countries and there are a lot of risks on the way. People spend three months or more to arrive to Italy. And to cross via Tangier, I heard from people that I would have to pay between 6000 and 14000 Euros without any guarantee to arrive safely. I do not know if these numbers are correct, but I decided to try the way via Dakhla.

R **You joined Alarm Phone as a translator later. Why?**

H Because I know the situation of the people in the boats. I made this experience myself. We have to help them, but it is difficult to help them without having made this experience. And not all of them can speak English, so I speak to them in Arabic. I can speak to the people on the boat in a different way. And I still remember how it was when I was at sea, so I want to help them. I do not have bad dreams afterwards.

R **Do you have any advice, how Alarm Phone could improve their activities?**

H Yes, I have an idea, but I think it is not possible: convince the governments to give migrant people papers to stay in Europe, and allow them to work!

\*name changed

50



Around 450 women and children gathered in Mytilene, Lesvos, to protest the horrific living conditions in Moria camp and the dramatic increase of violence, January 2020. Photo: Alarm Phone

# 3

## Central Mediterranean

An overcrowded boat with around 170 people on board being pulled in by the merchant vessel Vos Triton with a rope, August 2021.  
Photo: Sea Watch Mediateam (Sea-Watch e.V.)

# The Central Mediterranean Route

Over the summer of 2022, rarely a night passed by without boat departures from Libya or Tunisia, trying to reach Europe. This is reflected in increased arrivals in Europe – until the end of August 2022, more than 50,000 people arrived. Numbers of arrivals have increased already for several years in the Central Mediterranean – from the low figures of arrivals in 2019, when only about 15,000 people reached Italy or Malta, to more than 68,000 in 2021.

The Alarm Phone has directly experienced this rise in movements. While we assisted 27 boats in 2018 in the central Mediterranean, the figure rose significantly to 101 in 2019, 173 in 2020, and even 407 in 2021. With 419 assisted boats just until mid-September, 2022 is already the year of a record number of cases. This clearly shows that Europe and its northern African allies have failed to shut down this migration route.

During the prolonged periods of good weather over the summer months of 2022, thousands have made their way to Lampedusa, Sicily, and, in a few exceptional cases, also Malta. They succeeded in crossing the sea despite the technically advanced and well-equipped pull- and push-back machinery that the EU and its Libyan allies have installed. The vast majority managed to reach the territorial waters or even the shores of Italy directly in so-called autonomous arrivals.

While the official Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) in Rome, and especially Valletta, have turned increasingly dysfunctional over the past years, members of sea rescue organisations developed a “civil MRCC”. People in distress experience regularly non-assistance and even pushbacks, a direct consequence of racist migration policies. Actors of the civil fleet have joined forces to fill the deadly rescue gap created by EU authorities, in both the regions off Libya as well as in Malta’s Search and Rescue (SAR) zone. In light of that, Alarm Phone has found itself

increasingly in the role of the coordinator of rescues.

“Between Autonomous Arrivals, Pushbacks, and a civil MRCC” is the title of the first contribution to this part dedicated to the central Med. It provides an overview of key developments and is followed by several contributions and interviews, in which mainly those on the move share their experiences of crossing the sea.

The second contribution shows how Alarm Phone has evolved through its uncountable encounters with people on the move and on the phone, usually on a satellite phone in the Central Mediterranean region, while our members would be on their shift phones far away, somewhere at home, or in an office. Sometimes, these encounters could take place in person, after the boat was rescued to Europe. This happened when Younis, from Libya, and Meret, from Switzerland – whose voices had met on the phone in 2017 – came together, face-to-face.

We then recount a case that occurred in March 2020 – the so-called Easter massacre, when Malta not only failed to rescue 63 people, but

54



Boats in the harbour of Lampedusa: two big boats from Libya and one from Tunisia (in the middle), 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

organised a lethal pushback operation which led to twelve deaths and survivors forced into inhumane detention camps in Libya. It was due to the testimonies of several brave women, who sent us information via a hidden phone from detention, that this case could be reconstructed.

In another contribution, we listen to the experiences from a refugee from the Ivory Coast, who got stuck between Tunisia and Libya and, like thousands of others, could not find support from the UNHCR.

We then turn to the fishermen who have become invisible solidarity workers at sea, often supporting people at risk of drowning - we collected fragments and experiences from Libya, Italy and Tunisia.

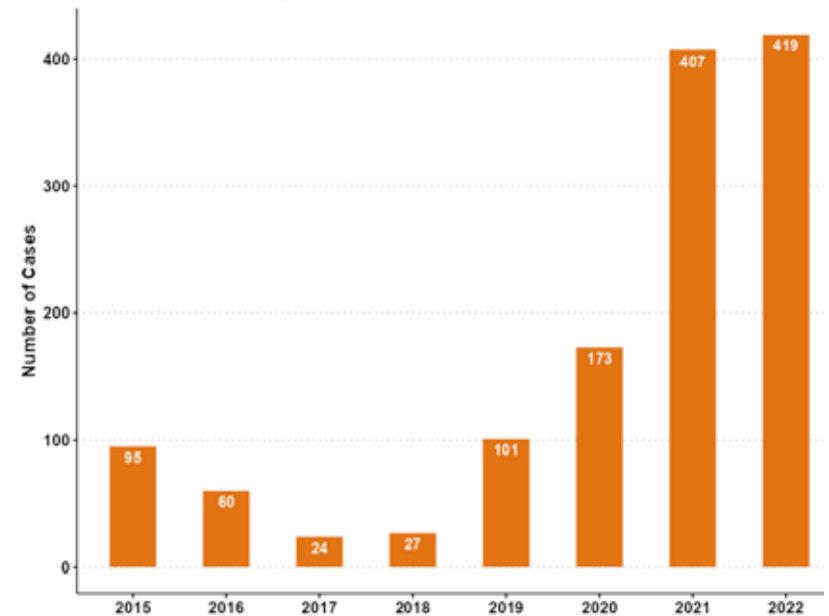
Finally, we present an interview with a friend, who contacted us from Libya after he experienced his first pushback. The contact between him and us remained. He tried to cross again and finally made it to Italy. Later, he crossed the sea once more, the Channel from France to the UK. When he finally arrived at his destination, he joined the Alarm Phone and started to do shifts only weeks later. His amazing story concludes the part

focused on the central Mediterranean.

All of these contributions are mere fragments of experiences we have made in the central Mediterranean. While they cannot do justice to the many incredible experiences our network and our many shift teams have made every day and night over eight years, we hope they reflect different dimensions of our struggle - loss and death at sea, people on the move tenaciously subverting borders, and solidarity in its many shapes and forms.

### CASES IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN

\*Cases recorded until Mid September 2022



56

57



Track of Frontex flight on 24 October 2021.  
Photo: Alarm Phone

# Between Autonomous Arrivals, Pushbacks, and a civil MRCC

Hagen Kopp

In the early morning of 26 July 2022, Alarm Phone received a call from a group that informed us that they had reached Lampedusa. Many hours earlier, during the night, this group had still been in distress at sea and had provided us with their GPS coordinates, which we had passed on to the Italian authorities. Without any support from the Italian coastguard or civil rescue ships, they made it to the island – and this case was far from the only instance. These ‘autonomous arrivals’ have drastically increased, also due to the production of a rescue gap, with EU authorities withdrawing from the most dangerous parts of the central Mediterranean.

Groups who arrive autonomously often need about 20 hours to cross when departing from Tunisia, 30-40 hours when leaving from Libya. Often, they desperately call for rescue for a long time, directly to the coastguards or via the Alarm Phone. But their SOS calls are frequently ignored. Non-assistance has long been the norm in the central Mediterranean Sea.

Besides autonomous landings, we have seen many cases in which the Italian coastguard would intercept or accompany boats to the harbour from merely a few nautical miles off the coast. In official statistics, these cases might be counted as rescue operations carried out by coastguards, but in fact they appear to represent operations of control as these boats would have landed independently anyhow. As these boats have succeeded in crossing (most of) the vast sea, autonomous arrivals should in our view include all boats that have made it near or into the territorial waters of

58

Italy or Malta, thus about 12 to 15 nautical miles off shore.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that the vast majority of sea crossings are done autonomously by the people on the move. On peak days, dozens of boats land in Lampedusa. For example, 31 boats reached Lampedusa on 30 July 2022, 18 on 6 August, and even 42 boat arrivals on 27 August 2022. The majority of these boats departed from Tunisia, but several also from Libya. On these days, only a few boats were rescued by the NGO rescuers or European authorities.

Over the last months, we have also observed how several larger boats with 300 to 500 people on board made it to the coasts of Sicily or Calabria. Of course, such big landings receive a lot of public attention but few know how many small boats, the so-called ‘ghost boats’, arrive during the night without being detected.

We should never forget that of all sea crossings, the majority is not being rescued. We thus need to emphasise the tenacity of the people on the move in often independently overcoming Europe’s deadly borders.

**“Civil Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (CMRCC): this is not a future idea or a long-term vision. No, it is already a daily practice!”**

59

After the end of Mare Nostrum, the Maltese and Italian MRCCs and Coastguards became increasingly dysfunctional and unavailable for people in distress after departing from Libya or Tunisia. The people on the move regularly experience non-assistance or even pushbacks as direct consequences of Europe’s racist migration policies. Civil fleet actors had to try and fill the rescue gap left by authorities in the international areas of Libyan and Maltese search and rescue zones. Since 2019, the Alarm Phone has found itself increasingly in the role of a communication center for rescue coordination.

In 2020, individual members of various sea rescue organisations intensified their efforts to build a coordination and documentation platform for people in distress in the Central Mediterranean. They eventually called it “civil MRCC”, which functions as a catalyst for improved

communication between the various actors involved in civil sea rescue. In the meanwhile, the collaboration between Alarm Phone, the assets in the air – operated by Sea Watch and Pilote Volontaire – and the civil fleet at sea has been routinised. During the summer 2022, the civil SAR community organised their own rescues nearly every day and night. This occurs independently from the official MRCCs or even in a sort of ‘race’ against them and Frontex, who try to organize interceptions and pullbacks by the so-called Libyan coastguard.

A new publication of the civil MRCC, called ‘Echoes from the Central Med’, documents this cooperation between civil actors and creates a diary of cooperation. Clearly, this collective work makes a significant difference. Our daily work in the distress areas also constitutes a form of counter-monitoring, highlighting severe human rights violations carried out by the EU and its Libyan allies, and drawing public attention to them. The civil MRCC builds an active pole of solidarity for people on the move in a heavily contested space. It might become even more important in the future, if an extreme right-wing government comes to power in Italy in autumn 2022.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, VISIT THE WEBSITE OF THE CIVIL MRCC, WHERE YOU CAN ALSO FIND THE ECHOES NEWSLETTER:  
[WWW.CIVILMRCC.EU](http://WWW.CIVILMRCC.EU)**

60



People safe on  
the Louise Michel, 2020.  
Photo: Louise Michel



# “Life is the most precious thing we have”

A conversation between Younis\* and Meret\*, two Alarm Phone activists from different backgrounds.

**August 2017. Alarm Phone was alerted by a boat from the Central Mediterranean with three men, a pregnant woman, and a three-year-old child on board. The five people were finally rescued by Italian coastguards and brought to Italy. Younis\* and his family arrived in a northern European country and met Meret\* there, one of the Alarm Phone activists who was involved in their case. A friendship was formed and Younis started to work as an Alarm Phone activist. His nautical knowledge and his personal experience of having to survive at sea are invaluable for the Alarm Phone shift work.**

**Younis** Our engine was excellent, and we had enough fuel. The weather was nice. Not too hot. A pleasant wind. But my pregnant wife and my little daughter kept vomiting, constantly, which worried me because their bodies were going to dry out. It was clear that they wouldn't last much longer. I was exhausted and I could see that we were going to get caught in a storm on our way north.

So, I called a friend and asked him to find out if there are any civilian groups that take care of people in distress. He called back and gave me the number of the Alarm Phone.

So, I called you.

62

You wanted to know our position. But after the second announcement of the position, you were irritated: You're driving too fast. That's not possible. Something is wrong.

**Meret** We never had a case with such a well-equipped boat before. It was new. That's a problem: If you are missing a specific experience, you can hardly imagine a corresponding incident and therefore, you can't assess it properly and you tend to misunderstand the situation. I was at home with my phone. You were on a boat in the middle of the sea. We were so far apart from each other, especially in the imagination. That's why it's so crucial for us to have an exchange with travellers, to analyse different cases in order to expand our knowledge.

What did you expect from the Alarm Phone?

**Y** Simply that you would send a ship to help us.

*They both laugh.*

**Y** My friend called me again and told me that the Alarm Phone doesn't have enough resources to manage their own ships. But he informed me that it's a superbly organization with a large network that stands up for the rights of the migrants.

**M** We informed MRCC Rome about your case and got the order that you should drive back south. It was a difficult decision for us, because we couldn't be sure that the Italian coastguards wouldn't hand you over to the Libyan coastguards.

**Y** Yeah. That was totally crazy. And that's how you and I ended up fighting. It was not easy to trust you. But then I asked myself: what should she gain if she would deliver us to the Libyans? It would not give her any advantage.

So, we drove south and after four hours we saw the Italian coastguards from far away. And after the rescue operation, we had a discussion with the captain, and he promised us that he would not make a deal with the Libyans.

During the days we spent on the Italian ship crossing along the north African coast, I was interrogated every morning by the officials. They tried to convict me of human trafficking. That

63

caused dark moments for me. Wouldn't it have been safer to continue towards Malta independently? But then I saw my wife and my daughter, and I knew that it was better to ask for help. It's so hard to realize: Making the wrong decision, would harm them badly.

After arrival in Italy, they sent my wife and my daughter to the hospital. Finally, reunited with my family, we left for the North. We wanted to go to Norway, but we got on the wrong train in Milan and ended up in your country by chance...

**M** ... Yes. So, we met. And you started working as an Alarm Phone activist...

**Y** ... My first engagement was a hard nightshift. We were still living in the asylum centre.

It was not a choice for me to do that. It was something I just had to do. When calling the travellers, I can feel them more than anything else. When I talk to them, I understand their situation just through their voices, from the way they speak. Are they in a life-threatening distress or are they just in panic and exhausted? I can feel that immediately.

**M** How do you steer a boat through high waves? What does an exhausted person need? How much fuel and which engine do they have and how far can they go with that? Your knowledge, your experience and your certainty of assessment is so valuable for being able to support the people better.

**Y** The most important thing for me is to encourage the people to do everything to stay alive. No one can help them inside the boat but themselves. They have to figure out their position, scoop the water out, find the reason why the engine is not working anymore and why the boat is losing air. But the most essential thing for survival is to stay calm that the boat does not capsize. People are afraid and lose their mind. So, we have to support them to regain concentration so that they are able to master their situation. One wrong reaction may mean death.

**M** Sometimes it's difficult to gain people's trust, to make them understand that we are going to help and that we fight for their

rights, even if we cannot guarantee anything - complicated discussions, which are made harder by stressful situations and bad phone connections.

**Y** I try to take enough time to talk about Alarm Phone. To explain that we don't have the power neither to manage our own ships nor to force the coastguards to do what we want. To support, to help, to exert pressure on authorities and to monitor the situation is what we can do.

To save people's lives is happiness and a highlight for me: if you help one person to stay alive, you help the whole world. Life is the most precious thing we can save. But when people are going to die or we lose them because the contact breaks off, that's incredibly hard. Then I try to convince myself: I gave it my all.

\*The names have been changed



# The Easter massacre of 2020: “What made us lose hope was seeing helicopters fly over us and not helping”

Through a hidden phone in a Libyan detention camp, eight women reached out to Alarm Phone, and told us:

*“We are eight women in this place. We are all trembling. We were at sea for about seven days. We were picked up on the seventh day and we were hopeful. However, we were deported back to Libya without being told anything. We returned to Libya and we’re back locked up in Sikka again. We have returned to the place where we found no hope in the first place. Our throats were so dry that we had no choice but to drink sea water. What made us lose hope further was seeing helicopters fly over us and not helping when we were left stranded at sea because the boat was out of fuel.”*

The women were survivors of a deadly pushback operations that had occurred on the Easter days of 2020. In the night between 9 and 10 April 2020, sixty-three people, including eight women and three children, had tried to escape from Libya. Despite having applied for asylum in Libya through the UNHCR, many of them had been abandoned in camps for up to three years, during which they experienced torture and abuse. Their only means of escape was an overcrowded dinghy that they hoped would bring them to the EU.

66

67

Less than twenty-four hours after leaving the Libyan shore, they found themselves in distress in international waters and called the Alarm Phone, reporting that their rubber dinghy was embarking water and that they needed help urgently. We immediately alerted the coastguards of Malta and Italy, as well as the so-called Libyan coastguards but nobody confirmed that they would go out to rescue the distressed.

Hours later, the Libyan authorities stated in a phone conversation with the Alarm Phone that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there would be no rescue operation: “The Libyan Coastguard now only does coordination work because of Covid-19. We can’t do any rescue action, but we are in contact with Italy and Malta”. Whilst the situation on board turned increasingly critical, the dinghy slowly continued north and reached the Maltese SAR zone around midday of Sunday 12 April. After a final desperate phone call that afternoon, the Alarm Phone lost contact.

Days later, the eight women who had been on board the rubber boat, reached out to Alarm Phone once more. This time not from a boat at risk of capsizing but a Libyan detention centre. By secretly using a hidden phone in the Tarik Al Sikka detention centre, the women sent several voice messages to the Alarm Phone and other human rights activists. In these clandestine messages, the women carefully reconstructed their maritime journey. Only through these testimonies of survivors could the whole dimension of the tragedy be grasped: twelve people had drowned or died of thirst while fifty-one survivors had been illegally returned to Libya by a private vessel deployed in secret by the Maltese government

According to their testimonies, three people had drowned when a merchant vessel passed their boat but failed to rescue them. Desperately trying to attract attention, three men swam toward it but quickly disappeared in the high waves and the vessel left, without providing assistance. According to survivors, four others died in the following hours either due to the lack of water and food, or when they jumped into the sea out of despair.

The Armed Forces of Malta, after failing to act for days, spotted the boat via an aerial asset in the night between 13 and 14 April. As the survivors reported:

*[An] airplane came to us and go to [inaudible]. We know that is an airplane of Malta, we know it. So when it came to take a photo and then it went back very soon [...] to call a boat to come to rescue us. And then when a boat was rescuing [...] the airplane was [inaudible] up. Even it opened the light and looking for us.*

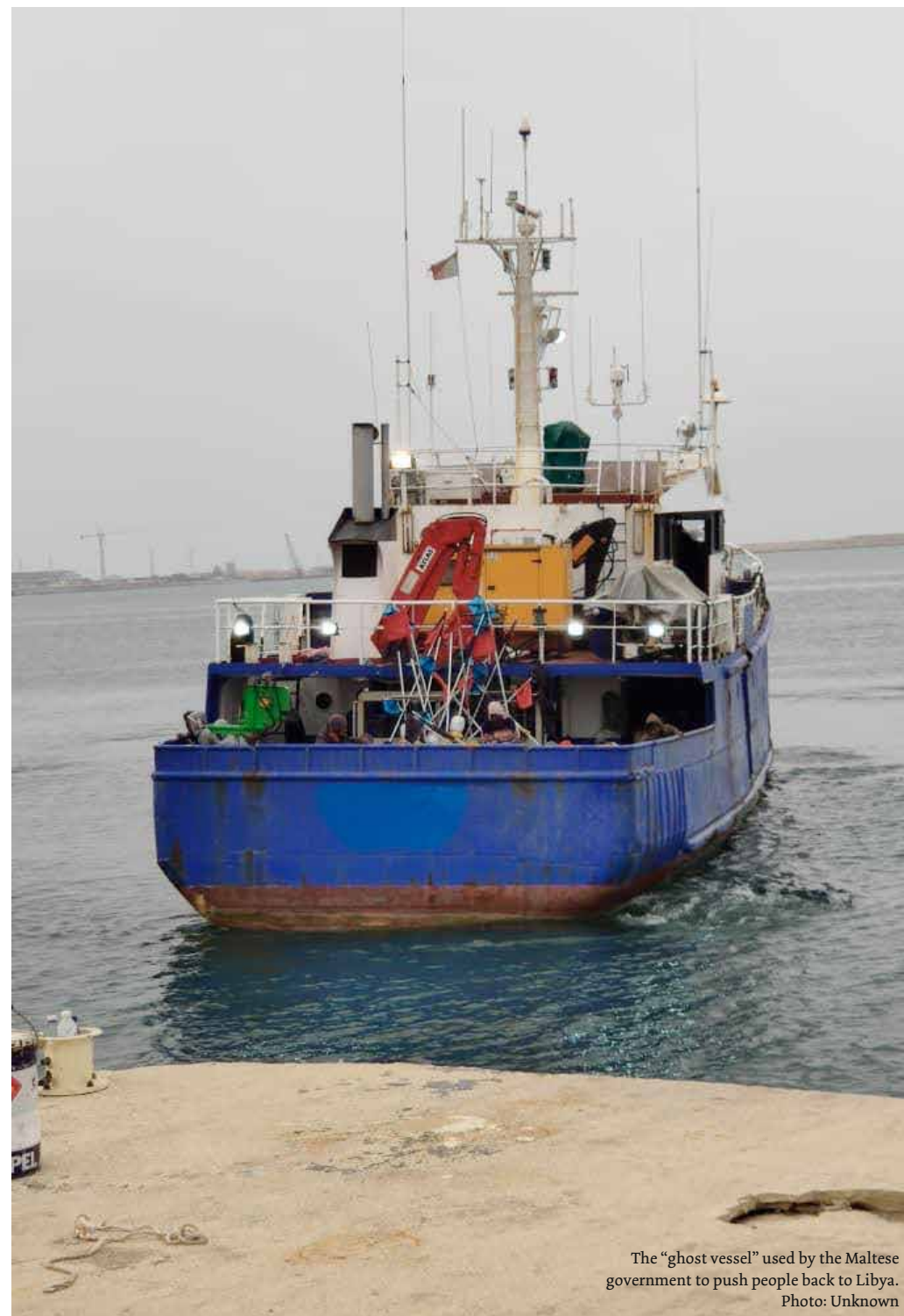
During that night, the Libyan-flagged fishing vessel Dar Al Salaam left Valletta harbour, approached the rubber boat in distress, and took the fifty-six survivors on board. Even though the Maltese authorities had instructed the fishing vessel to intervene, it did not belong to the Armed Forces of Malta. “They told us that they were not the real rescuers”, one of the survivors said, “that they only rescued us because they real rescuers did not want to rescue us”. Although the distressed migrants could have been disembarked at the closest port of Lampedusa within an hour, they were returned to Libya, 150 nautical miles south.

This forced return implicated not only Maltese but also Italian authorities as they had been alerted to the situation as well and could have provided assistance, despite the boat’s location in Malta SAR. Indeed, given the proximity to Lampedusa, the Italian authorities could have guaranteed the quickest disembarkation at a place of safety. Facing allegations of failure to render assistance, the Italian authorities declared the incident a “state secret” and refused to release documentation, as such disclosure of information could compromise Italy’s diplomatic relations with Malta and Libya.

During the long journey to Libya on the Dar Al Salaam, five migrants died as no water and food were provided. On 15 April, fifty-one survivors and five corpses arrived at Tripoli harbour and the survivors were detained in the Tarik Al Sikka detention centre, infamous for its inhuman conditions.

Despite their ordeal and imprisonment, the eight women found ways to tell their story. And the case of the Easter massacre 2020 has not ended yet – the Maltese government continues to face investigations into its orchestration of the deadly pushback to Libya.

68



The “ghost vessel” used by the Maltese government to push people back to Libya.  
Photo: Unknown

# “I’m still traumatised by this experience”

## Interview with Jordan, an asylum seeker in Tunisia, who speaks about his struggles with the UNHCR and the Tunisian Coastguards.

I arrived 5 years ago to Tunisia from the Ivory Coast. Accused of preparing a Coup d’Etat, violently attacked and threatened with death, I had to flee the Ivory Coast. As Ivorian nationals do not need a visa to travel to Tunisia, the country was therefore a good opportunity for me.

I arrived in 2017, and one person advised me to take the boat from Tunisia and apply for asylum in Europe. I was afterwards taken to the south east coasts of Tunisia thinking I would cross from there, after crossing different small lakes I noticed that we were crossing the borders towards Libya. At the beginning I resisted as I knew the country was at war and I never wanted to go there but in the end I had no other choice than to accept.

As soon as we crossed the fences, the army in Libya arrested us and took us to prison. I spent four months in prison but then I finally managed to escape. I also had to work in Zuwara to collect the 250 Euros that would allow me to go cross again to Tunisia.

For security reasons I also wanted to apply for asylum in Libya, but to be able to do this I had to go to Tripoli which was a nightmare since migrants have to pay the different militias in different cities to be able to go from one city to another.

Working in Libya was very difficult and harsh. After few months I managed to collect enough money and crossed back to Tunisia. I directly went to Tunis to apply for asylum, at that time it was the Red Crescent who was taking care of asylum procedures. I was given some money then yelled at

by the person working in the TRC and asked me to leave as soon as possible. They didn’t treat me as a human being but as rubbish.

The next day I was referred to the UNHCR, where they gave an “asylum seeker” card. It was helpful to walk around freely without fearing detention in Tunisia. My first interview with the UNHCR was in December 2018.

I also had to look for a job and some friends told me in Zarzis you get well paid and so I moved to Zarzis in which I stayed for eight months for work. From my past life, I still have bruises everywhere and constant chest pain which was a barrier for me to be able to do any job that requires a lot of physical effort. The UNHCR have never provided medical support but was each time referring me to Medecins Du Monde which refers me to the public hospital in which the doctors do not take me seriously.

I afterwards decided to go to work in Sfax. I was tired from waiting for my asylum procedure and I was receiving no support from the UNHCR. I was then proposed again to cross from Sfax to Italy in which I

70



Tunisian coastguard  
in Zarzis port.  
Photo: Alarm Phone

might at least have a decent life and where my asylum procedure would be taken seriously.

In June 2021, I took a boat from Sfax. Few hours later the Tunisian Coastguards showed up. In a maneuver to intercept the boat, they hit our wooden boat and everyone was in the water. I managed to reach the boat again but many didn't, including my closest friend who disappeared in the night in the middle of the sea. We afterwards were taken back to the port and left alone.

I'm still traumatised by this experience and I didn't want to stay in Sfax so I have decided to go back to Tunis. Although I still have no refugee status, not receiving any support from the UNHCR and unable to work a lot due to my health conditions, I don't think I will cross the sea again. The first experience is still traumatising me and I would never ever want to go through such a journey again.

I had my second interview with the UNHCR in November 2021, three years after the first one and 4 years after the first time I came to Tunisia, they told me they will call me 6 months later, yet up to this day I have no news from them.

72

73

**“They can fine me as many times as they want, I would do it again a thousand more times.”**

### **Fishermen – the invisible Solidarity Workers at sea**

Again and again, many fishermen in Libya, Tunisia and Italy become part of a chain of rescue at sea. When they spot boats in distress, they alert coastguards or civil rescuers via VHF-radio, and in some cases, they assist the boats or carry out rescues themselves. We have also encountered fishermen who help families in the search for the disappeared bodies in cases of shipwrecks. Many do so as they follow a tradition of solidarity among seafarers, passed on for generations. They see rescues as the human thing to do and as a moral obligation, regardless of who is in danger. The rescue efforts of fishermen is often not acknowledged by states or the public, at times they even risk being criminalised for their life-saving work. We want to highlight three of many cases from the Central Mediterranean, to document and honour the invisible solidarity workers at sea.

#### **February 2020 – Fishermen in Libya**

The Alarm Phone received a testimony from Emma, a young woman from Côte d'Ivoire. She and about 64 other people had left the Libyan coast from Garabuli in a blue wooden boat. “We travelled for what seemed like a long

time”, she told us. “We had a phone with us, but when we encountered difficulties at sea because of our boat’s motor failing, we were very scared of using it. We feared the Libyans. Early in the morning, after having spent the whole night at sea with our unseaworthy boat, a fisherman saw us. He saw that we were in a very difficult situation, so he took five women and their children on his boat. Then, he attached his boat to ours, and towed us back to land. Thanks to his help, we were able to escape the militias when we arrived because he disembarked us in a place out of their sight. He saved our lives.”

The Alarm Phone is regularly in contact with fishermen in Libya, who inform about boats they have encountered on their days out fishing. When they spot migrant boats, they are often uncertain about how to proceed. They fear both the militias involved in the smuggling business and the so-called Libyan Coastguard that has also engaged in this business. They do not have the ability to carry out rescues of fragile boats containing many dozens of people. They call us to bear witness, and to ask for support. They carry the burden of witnessing the terrible plight of people trying to escape. They are often invisible solidarity workers.

### June 2021 – Fishermen in Italy

After he rescued eight migrants from drowning at sea, a fisherman from Lampedusa said: “It was 4.45 a.m., I was waiting for dawn with the lights on to start fishing, when I heard a bump and then there were eight people on the bow. (...) Some ended up in the sea, so together with the guy working with me we started throwing life jackets. We recovered two of them from the sea. Then all the others. (...) They had their clothes soaked with water and in their wide-open eyes the terror of what they had experienced. They must have thought they were going to die. (...) Already in the past I have helped fishermen, yachtsmen. Migrants? They are human beings. There is no difference, and anyone who says otherwise is just an idiot. (...) I would do it again a thousand times. I couldn’t just turn around and leave them at sea. A person who has a heart cannot do that. I wouldn’t have been able to sleep at night.”

74

Instead of being publicly praised for his brave act, the fisherman received a fine from the authorities, supposedly as he did not have the authorisation to be 39 miles off the coast, where the rescue happened. But his response is clear: “They can fine me as many times as they want, I would do it again a thousand more times” (Source: Adnkronos, news agency of Italy).

Later on, other fishermen in Lampedusa were able to collect all the money their colleague needed to cover the fine. In this way, they too took a stand of solidarity against this injustice.

### December 2021 – Fishermen in Tunisia

After getting contacted by families of people who went missing in a shipwreck that occurred near Djerba, fishermen from Zarzis went out at sea with their boat from 6am to 8pm. Together with divers, they searched for the missing people. One of the fishermen gave an interview to Zarzis TV and stated: “This is a duty for us, and each time there’s a shipwreck, it doesn’t matter from where people are, we cancel our planned work and go out to the sea to search for missing people when families contact us. Today, tomorrow and always we’ll search for people and we’ll rescue the people. Doesn’t matter the challenges we’re facing, doesn’t matter how much the authorities support or block us. We were never scared of the Italian authorities or of the Libyans and we will never be scared of any authority.”

75

The Alarm Phone’s work is often only possible because of people such as the fishermen who pass our emergency number on to others in need, those who inform us of distress situations in places where we cannot physically be. Our thanks to the many fishermen who have to fear retaliation for helping others at sea, who are criminalised and intimidated when they carry out rescues, and who bear witness to the horrors induced by the lack of safe migration routes.

“Now I’m safe in Europe, but this doesn’t mean I turn a blind eye to my friends who are still trapped there.”

**Interview with Adam\*, who escaped a country of war and made it from Libya to the UK. Since the summer of 2021, he is an active member of Alarm Phone.**

**Adam, when did you get in touch with Alarm Phone for the first time?**

77

**Adam** The first time I had direct contact with Alarm Phone was on 26 June 2020, when our boat was sabotaged and intercepted near the Maltese Search and Rescue zone by the so-called Libyan Coastguard and we were pushed back to Libya. The next day, some of us could escape from the buses on the way to the detention centre.

**How did you learn about the hotline-number in Libya?**

**A** The way I learned about Alarm Phone is interesting. In March 2020, I was on an overcrowded boat in the Maltese SAR, the engine had fallen into the water and we all thought we were going to die that evening.



CommemorAction in Zarzis,  
Tunisia, September 2022.  
Photo: Alarm Phone



However, we could reach Alarm Phone via a Thuraya phone and we asked for immediate rescue as the weather deteriorated. We were in contact with Alarm Phone for about four hours until we were eventually pulled back to Libya. After I was free again, I read all Alarm Phone tweets about our boat and it was Alarm Phone's pressure on authorities that saved our lives that day.

**How often had you tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat?**

**How often did you experience pull- or pushbacks? How could you finally escape?**

**A** I've made five failed attempts to cross the Med on the way to Europe, including three push backs, and one successful attempt. I succeeded on the sixth attempt, we were in continuous contact with Alarm Phone, until our boat was finally rescued to Lampedusa by the Italian Coastguard.

**How much time did you spend 'on the move' in total? Did you already have a clear destination in mind, a city or country, when you crossed the sea or even before, when you left your home?**

**A** I've been on the move since the beginning of 2019 and I arrived in Europe early 2021. So it took me two years to get to Europe and three months to reach the UK. I had no specific country in mind, when I left my country. I was looking for safety, however Europe was the destination. I made up my mind to go to the UK during and after the quarantine in Italy.

**What was your traveling route? How did you finally reach the UK?**

**A** Of course, travelling across Europe for a new person in Europe isn't easy. I started the journey from Sicily to Rome and then to Ventimiglia near the border to France. From Ventimiglia I tried to enter France twice and was caught once by the French army and once by the French police, who detained me and then pushed me back to Italy. But I made it into the heart of France on the third attempt. From Marseille I went to Paris and

78

79

from Paris to Calais, a city near the border to the UK. I stayed in Calais for a while, with two failed attempts to cross by boat as the French police was there before us on the beach and stopped us from crossing. However, we managed to cross on the third attempt. During the crossing through Europe, there were always people who crossed before us and there are routes to follow. I owe my crossing to friends who supported me along the way. Alarm Phone supports refugees and migrants at the sea and there are charity and community organizations providing food, drinks, clothes and basic needs to the people on the move and without them we might not survive.

**Did you join Alarm Phone already shortly after your arrival? Can you tell us why you decided to do so?**

**A** I always followed the Alarm Phone work, so I took the first training shift on 26 June 2021. I decided to join Alarm Phone because deeply I know what Alarm Phone means to people on the move, how it gives them hope, assists them and saves their lives. Besides I've been in Libya and witnessed atrocities committed against migrants and refugees, people who escape conflicts and per-secution or people who look for better lives. And I feel I have a moral obligation towards them. Now I'm safe in Europe, but this doesn't mean that I turn a blind eye to my friends who are still trapped there.

**Is your own experience in Libya and of the sea crossing useful for your work in the Alarm Phone?**

**A** Of course, it is useful, especially when I'm on the phone with people on crossing boats as I know what they are talking about. Or even when I'm in touch with survivors of shipwrecks or talking to families of the missing people.

**What do you think or feel when you experience, now as an Alarm Phone member, situations of non-assistance or even pull- and**

### push backs to Libya?

A The feeling is unimaginable because non-assistance means loss of life and makes families always worry about their missing ones and push pack to Libya means detention centers and prisons. And detention centers and prisons mean diseases, rape, death, exploitation and huge ransom in exchange for freedom.

### Do you have any thoughts on the directions in which solidarity networks in general, and Alarm Phone specifically, should develop their activities?

A Alarm Phone works in many regions but can extend its work to help people who cross the eastern desert towards Libya as so many people died of thirst or get lost at borders. This also applies to Alarm Phone Sahara in Niger. And solidarity networks should include more refugees and present them not only as victims but active participants.

### Thank you very much, Adam!

\* In order to avoid revealing his identity, he decided to use the name Adam.

80



Drawing of boat that called the Alarm Phone and was rescued by MSF, July 2022.  
Illustration by Lucas Vallerie

A photograph of a rocky coastline. In the background, a white memorial sign with two wooden wings stands on a rocky outcrop. The sea is visible in the distance. The foreground shows a dirt path with long shadows cast across it. The number '4' is overlaid in large white font on the left side of the image.

# 4

## The Aegean

# The Aegean Sea and the Turkish-Greek land border

## Ongoing escalation of violence and border crimes

Since March 2020, a process of brutalization is taking place in the Aegean region and along the Turkish-Greek land border. Rights for people on the move are deteriorating on both sides of the border. In Turkey, they face harshening conditions and increased deportations. When heading towards Europe via Greece, they are confronted with a brutal and large-scale pushback regime, put into place by the Greek authorities, legitimised and supported by the EU.

From March 2020 to March 2022, the Alarm Phone was alerted to 141 distress situations that were linked to direct attacks, incarceration or deaths in the Aegean region. We have documented them on the Aegean Border Crimes platform [WWW.AEG.BORDERCRIMES.NET](http://WWW.AEG.BORDERCRIMES.NET) and have continued to document such border crimes every week since then. When reporting on such developments, one tends to forget that each and every one of these attacks and human rights violations is a horrible experience for those affected. These 141 border crimes concern thousands of people who individually and collectively went through attacks by masked men, who were forced onto life-rafts in the middle of the sea, who were imprisoned after they survived a shipwreck or were chased by Greek border guards in the Evros region. Hundreds of people spoke to the Alarm Phone whilst going through these traumatic experiences, shared their stories and thoughts.

Together with them and with all those on the ground who continue to work in solidarity with the people on the move, we continue to unveil and counteract border crimes in the Aegean region. We join forces to say

loud and clear: No matter how much violence you use and how high your fences are, we will continue to cooperate and organise along the principles of solidarity and struggle for freedom of movement collectively. Countless investigations and witness statements have shed light on the structural dimension of these violent practices. To us it is clear: migration is a reality. The attempt to violently suppress and control it forces people to become invisible and travel on ever more dangerous routes.

## Pushbacks at sea and land borders

Since March 2020, we are witnessing massive pushback operations in the Aegean Sea. Nearly all distress calls from boats between Turkey and the Aegean islands involve a pushback. To alert the Hellenic Coast Guard today means to put people's lives at risk. It often leads to attacks and boats being towed back into Turkish waters, or to people rescued onto boats of the Hellenic Coast Guard, but then driven into Turkish waters and forced

84



Hellenic coastguard vessel during an illegal pushback north of Lesbos, 14 April 2021. Photo taken by passengers on the boat.

onto life-rafts or back onto their own, now immobilised, boats. On the following pages we highlight some testimonies that people shared with us after they were attacked and pushed back by Greek units.

Similar developments can be seen at the Turkish-Greek land border. Pushbacks in this region along the 200km long Evros/Meriç river have long been a well-known phenomenon. However, the violence has reached a new level. Affected people report violent attacks, the theft of all their belongings, having dogs set on them, and many different forms of physical abuse. Numerous people have also reported being stripped of their clothes before being pushed back. Several of these pushbacks ended in deaths. One of them was Alaa Muhammad Al-Bakri. He lost his life after being pushed back by Greek officers in August/September 2020.

In recent months, several pushbacks were prevented in the Evros/Meriç region by a successful application to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for interim measures according to Rule 39. But at the same time, in August 2022, a horrible situation unfolded in this area: over several weeks, a group was repeatedly attacked and put on small islets by Greek and Turkish units. In the course of these attacks, reportedly 4 people died, among them a 5-year-old girl called Maria. This happened despite the situation being widely reported on by big news outlets and despite many local and international organizations intervening and asking for an intervention. The public knew about it, but just let it happen. In our experience, this marked a new peak in the normalization of the deadly border between Greece and Turkey. However, it also mobilized forces within Greece. Especially local organizations such as the *Greek Council of Refugees and Human Rights* 350, once again tried to make the impossible possible over several weeks. They continue tirelessly, despite facing much pressure.

### More boats sail towards Italy

An increasing number of boats is taking the long route (at least 7 days) from Turkey or Lebanon towards Italy. In 2021, more than 200 boats landed on the Ionian coast of Italy, which includes the eastern coast of Calabria and Sicily and the west coast of Puglia. The main departure points for

86



Passengers of a boat that was sailing in the direction of Italy, May 2022. After days in distress at sea, they were brought to Kalamata, Greece. Photo taken by a passenger on the boat.

87

boats reaching the Ionian coast of Italy are in Turkey. Between June 2021 and April 2022, the Alarm Phone was alerted to over 30 boats in distress on this route. In the days leading up to Christmas 2021, dozens lost their lives in four shipwrecks – all of them on their way to Italy. Such tragedies are the direct result of the violent pushback regime put into practice by the Greek government on the shorter routes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the land border between Turkey and Greece. What is striking is that while the Hellenic Coast Guard is always quick to arrive at the scene to violently push people back, they are much slower in case of distress. Survivors said their experience with pushbacks in previous attempts to reach Europe was a factor in their choice to board a boat to Italy.

### The struggle continues

This development also comes with a brutalisation of the discourse in Greece itself. Many courageous local individuals and organisations

witness the increase of pressure on them. They are legally but also socially put into the spotlight, often facing threats and other forms of attacks. Contrary to that, the ones responsible for these border crimes are still able to act with impunity, while people on the move and the ones in solidarity with them face the consequences of racist narratives and a deadly and violent border regime. Our answer lies in strengthening our networks. We can only repeat: We will never be silent. We will never stop having friends on both sides of the Mediterranean and in different communities.

### Reports

Over the last years, we wrote several reports, press releases and statements about the developments in the Aegean region. You can find them on our website: [WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG](http://WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG). Here a selection:

- “We asked for help, but they only shouted: Go back, go back!”  
- Alarm Phone Report: One year of pushbacks and systematic violence in the Aegean region.
- The Real Crimes are Pushbacks and Human Rights Violations by the Greek Government
- Four shipwrecks with dozens feared dead in the Aegean while pushbacks continue to happen
- Syrian refugee with residence permit in Germany held in Amygdaleza’s prison in Greece
- NON-assistance for 34 people stuck on a Greek islet in the border river between Turkey and Greece
- Trial in Kalamata

### Searching for the missing

In August 2022, we produced a small guide ‘Searching for the people who went missing in Greece’ for relatives and friends who are searching for loved ones, who went missing during their journey to Europe. You can also find it on our website [WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG](http://WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG).

88

89

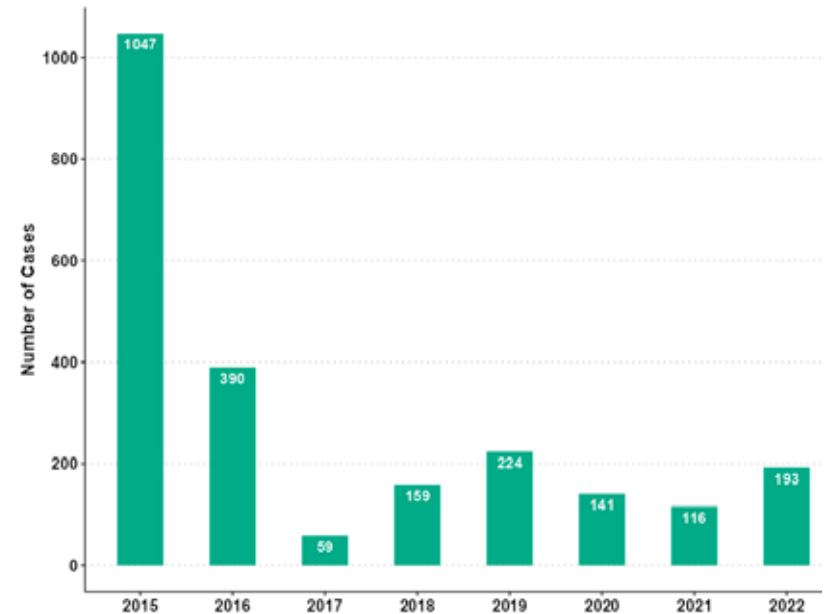
Please check out our Aegean Border Crimes platform

[WWW.AEG.BORDERCRIMES.NET](http://WWW.AEG.BORDERCRIMES.NET)



### CASES IN THE AEGEAN SEA

\*cases recorded until Mid September 2022



# Voices from the ground

## Aegean border crimes

Over the past years, many people have shared their stories with us during follow-ups. Based on what they reported to us and on the distress-calls that the Alarm Phone received, we created the Aegean Border Crimes platform. The goal was to shed light on the escalation of violence happening in the Aegean and give space to the stories of the ones affected by this brutalization. These are excerpts of stories that people shared with us as a testament to what had happened to them.

**20 July 2022**

### pushed back and left to die in the burning sun

*“I will tell you the story. We went from Bodrum to the Greek island of Rhodes to go to Europe. I am 17 years old and I have two friends, M. and G.. We arrived in Rhodes to a city called Soroni. There, the police arrested us. I recognized a badge written “Hellas” on their uniforms. I spoke with one of them in English and told him that I want to apply for asylum and that I am underage. They took us to a church near the sea. I don’t know where the place is, because the phones were confiscated. Then they tricked us. They told us to stay calm. “We will take you to the camp”. Then we waited until the evening and they handed us over to the coast guard, and then they threw us into the sea and we stayed there for two days more. We had no phones, no food, no water, nothing. On the third day in the sea, my friends swam in an unknown direction. There was an island a long distance away, and then a Mexican ship helped us and called the Greek coast guard to take us back to Greece. Instead of helping us they only pushed us further towards Turkey. Finally, the Turkish coastguard rescued us. They were trying to kill us. I told them I am*

90

91

*underage and I want asylum here, but they were very bad and violent.”*

**28 October 2021**

### 24 people robbed, beaten and then pushed back north of Rhodes

*“We were on a rubber boat together with 24 people and 3 children, and 3 km in front of the Greek coast our motor stopped working. We called the Greek coastguard, and they came. But the Greek coastguard came and beat us up heavily, took our phones and our private belongings and insulted us. They screamed at us and insulted us: “We don’t want you here, we get money from the EU to let you drown, why are you coming here?” Then the Greek coastguard destroyed our boat and we were drifting and were in big danger. Then the Turkish coastguard came and if the Turkish coastguard would have been there 30 minutes later, we would have drowned and would have died already. The Turkish coastguard took us on a vessel, gave us food, water, juice and clothes and took us back to Turkey.”*

**29 September 2020**

### 159 people brutalised and pushed back through the Evros/Meriç river

*“We started walking, but after 15 Minutes we found the Greek army. They spoke to us in Greek and English. There were three masked men among them who were responsible for searching us. They beat us. Then they transported us in narrow closed cars and took us to the river. The masked men were Syrian, as far as I understood from the Arabic that they spoke with us. The masked men ordered us to prepare the inflatable boats so that we could return to the Turkish side. One of them was crossing with us to the island in the river, but he was staying on the boat. A person from our group tried to forcefully take the young man from the boat towards land with us, but his masked colleagues started shooting in the air and in the water. We were subjected to a lot of physical violence at the hands of these masked men. They transported the entire group to a small island in the middle of the river and left us there.*

Shortly after the sounds of bullets, the Turkish army appeared on the Turkish side of the river. They told us that we would die of starvation on this island and refused to transfer us to the Turkish side. We were stuck on the island from 7am to 7pm. [...] In the evening, the Turkish army sent milk to the island, but only for the children. Finally, they said that they would allow us to cross and sent a rubber boat to our island. They took the children and women on board and told us [the men] to swim to the Turkish side. After we arrived there, they took us by bus to the police station and offered food and drinks to the women and children. They did not allow us to change out of our wet clothes and started taking our personal data. Then they took us to a UN camp, but it was under the control of the Turkish army. They did not allow us to sleep. They took our fingerprints in the morning. We spent two days in the camp until we received 'deportation papers' from Istanbul towards the East of Turkey."

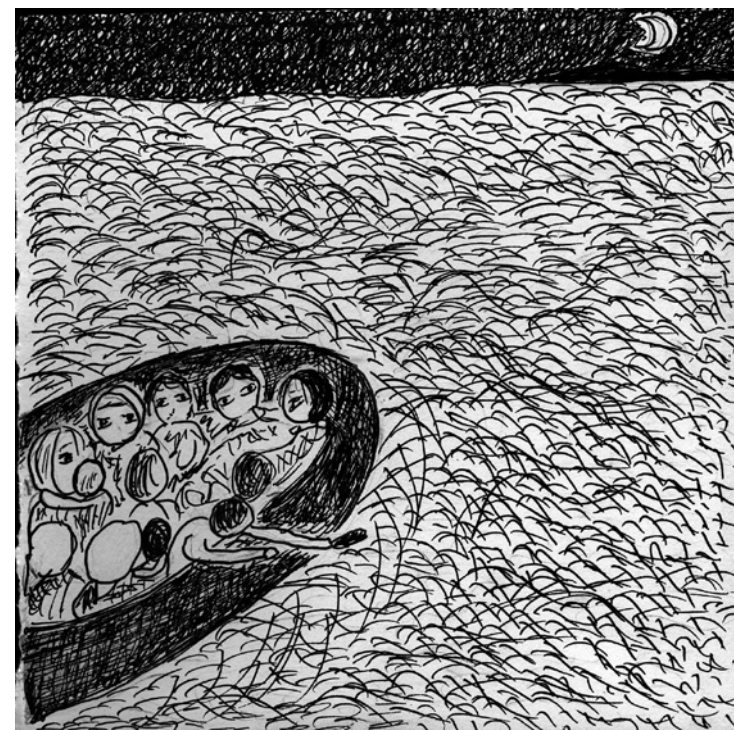
**31 August 2020**

**39 people attacked and pushed back  
between Simi and Rhodes**

"It was the night from Sunday to Monday 30 to 31 August 2020. We tried to reach the island of Simi. On our boat we were 41 people, all from Africa. I cannot say exactly the number of women and men, but two of the women were pregnant. There were also 3 kids with us. We had been driving between 1 and 2 hours and when we reached the borderline there was a huge ship of the coastguard. They were armed and they told us to stop. Our engine stopped then and could not be restarted. We asked them for help but they only shouted "go back, go back!". And they started to create big waves to make our boat return backwards by itself. The engine anyway stopped and so they left us there and watched from a distance. We could then manage to restart the engine and went first backwards. Then we made a second try to reach Greece, we then went towards Rhodos. Not far from Rhodos we were intercepted again. This time there was a bigger boat. I think it was again a boat belonging to the Greek coastguard. It stopped in a distance, so I could not see it

92

93



Illustrations of Parwana Amir's story, who arrived in Lesvos in 2019. Drawings by Marilyn Stroux



clearly. It was still dark. They sent a smaller boat towards us. On this boat there were men with masks and arms. They looked like ninjas, all black. They attacked us. Shouting all the time at us. They had a stick and with this stick they sabotaged the engine. They held a light on us all the time, that's why on the videos I made, it is difficult to see some thing. Another friend also made a video, but they saw that he made it and they slapped him and took the phone and broke it and threw it in the sea. They don't want us to prove their violence and to show it to the world. But another friend noted down the number they had on their boat: ΑΣ070. The masked men attacked us also with violence. They shouted at us all the time in English: "Fuck your babies", "Fuck your mothers", "Shut up", "Fuck you". One of the pregnant women stood up, she wanted to show them that she is pregnant. She hoped for mercy. She was shouting louder than all the men to be seen and because she was in panic. But they just pushed her hard and she fell down. We were all afraid she will lose the baby. Fortunately, when she went to the hospital later in Turkey, we found out that the baby in her belly is still alive. In this attack our boat also got pierced. They again made waves and everyone was crying and panicking. They left us in the open sea for several hours. Finally, I managed to call 112 and we reached the Turkish side. They gave us a WhatsApp-number to send them our location. This was at 6:40 am local time. After this it did not take too long and they rescued us back to Turkey. It was a bit later then 7:00 am when they came and rescued us. Life in Turkey is not easy. We cannot survive here and we also face discrimination. But the Turkish coastguard treated us in a humane way. Before they brought us to the police they checked first who needs a doctor and they treated the pregnant women with care."

94

## "No, you are not alone!"

**Malek Ossi is an Alarm Phone activist from Zurich. He fled Syria in 2014, travelled through the so-called Balkanroute and today lives in Switzerland. In an interview with another Alarm Phone activist, he explains why a common language makes a crucial difference in many situations, and why he regards cities as essential players in migration struggles.**

**You are heavily involved in follow-ups with the Alarm Phone. What does that mean exactly?**

**Malek** In my work, it mostly means reaching out to people after they have been pushed back illegally – mostly from Greece to Turkey. However, our possibilities to support them in this moment practically or materially are often limited. If they want to, we can write down their story and publish it – this is one way of letting the world know what they have experienced. The Aegean Border Crimes platform was born out of these exchanges. Another thing I used to do – or had to do – was to inform relatives about shipwrecks or deaths. That was intense. It left me speechless.

95

**How did you handle such conversations?**

**M** I tried to be prepared – I prepared sentences, but that never worked. It never worked that I had an introductory conversation. Most of the time it just came out quickly and honestly: "Your son, daughter, nephew, niece died on the way to Europe". Not all, but many relatives beside being very sad, were also grateful – grateful that they finally heard and especially

that someone was calling. That someone cared. That was important and tangible.

### **And how do the follow-ups work? Are they one-time conversations?**

**M** No – it often goes on. Sometimes I make three or four calls. The other way around, too, it happens regularly that people contact me again. People are looking for answers. They want to know why all this happened, who is responsible, why they are experiencing this violence. Moreover, many people feel left alone in this moment and with these situations. Through our follow-up work we try to lift that a bit and send a clear message: No, you are not alone, we are there with you. But of course, this does not cancel out the reality that the violence is insane and human rights are vanishing along all migration routes.

### **Which regions do you have a lot to do with?**

**M** When I became active with Alarm Phone, I was first in contact with people in Libya – people who had been intercepted and were in horrible situations. At some point it changed and I had more conversations related to the Aegean, the region between Greece and Turkey. On this route, people often speak dialects or languages that I am familiar with - many people travelling in this region come from Palestine, Syria or Egypt. I myself speak Arabic and Kurdish. In the central Mediterranean, there were often other dialects and languages, which made communication more challenging for me. In addition, my impression from afar is that in Libya, people's fear of immediate repression is huge – also when they contact us.

### **Looking at the Aegean, how has the situation developed in recent years?**

**M** We have really felt the brutalisation. It has become much more brutal and much more violent. We experience that first hand. People being



Welcome to Europe Festival near Moria, Lesvos, Greece September 2019.  
Photo: wzeu

96

97

abandoned on floating tents did not exist in the past. It was not a common phenomenon either that people were beaten up and then abandoned on islands. Of course, border violence has always existed. I have experienced it myself. But in this dimension and this publicly - that is new and has become the norm in recent years. And that has consequences. How people are spoken to, how people are treated, what it does to them, is horrible. Today, almost everyone experiences traumatising stories: Pointing guns at people is common, people being brutally beaten up as well. «Dogs are treated better», people kept telling me. And they are probably right.

### **You do the follow-ups in Arabic and Kurdish - what does it mean to share the same language in such moments?**

**M** The same language gives confidence. One feels heard and perceived. My counterparts know that they are dealing with a person who has had a similar experience. And then, of course, there are cultural codes that can

bridge gaps and create a level of trust. When I communicate a message to someone in German, I would use different words than when I speak Arabic or Kurdish. I use different codes, a different language, and I have a different voice when I speak Arabic or Kurdish. I think language can be transformative: a person is more likely to understand and perhaps accept things, if they are communicated in a familiar language. This also became apparent during follow-ups. I sometimes get different information than others. When we were looking for a person and had to contact his father, we would hardly have succeeded, if I hadn't spoken the same language.

**What connects 2015, when you yourself came via the Balkan route, with today?**

**M** The first thing that comes to mind is the resistance of migrants along the borders – and then, the numerous activists who support them. But there is also frustration, because when I think of 2015 and now, many things should have improved. But the opposite happened. The situation has worsened along most of the routes. Border violence increased and there are constantly new deterrence agreements and fences. But of course there are also positive developments: I did not notice networks like the Alarm Phone or other groups and organisations along the migration routes to the same extent during my own journey in 2015. A lot has developed and consolidated there. In 2015, many supporters were travelling without a political mission - many simply wanted to help. Today, I have the feeling that many have become politicised since then.

**You were active with the NoFrontex initiative in Switzerland and did a lot of public work. Why do we need pressure from the cities? How did you experience it yourself?**

**M** Earlier I spoke about hope. What gave us hope in 2015 were the cities and the support from civil society. There were people who took to the streets, who were loud, who stood up for us. Thanks to and with them, we were able to start the March of Hope back then. That's why I'm convinced:

we need to show the people on the move again and again that we stand with them for open borders. That gave me a lot of strength back then.

**Where do you see your task in this today, while living in Switzerland?**

**M** It is also about holding up a mirror to society. Many people simply look the other way and tell themselves that they have nothing to do with all the violence – especially in Switzerland. We have to counteract this and that can only be done through interventions in the local arena. This is the only way we can demonstrate what Swiss taxpayer money has to do with the situation in Libya. In my opinion, it is crucial to promote migrant voices in this awareness raising. That seems very important to me, especially in view of today's homogenised discourse. Because people always talk or report about Sans-Papiers, refugees, migrants. But we need faces and stories to go with these terms. I want to contribute to that.

# “I will never forgive this world!”

**Maria was only five years old. She died as a consequence of the brutalization along the Turkish-Greek land border.**

On 9 August 2022, Maria died on an islet in the Evros river. She was 5 years old. Over the last 3 weeks of her life, she was exposed to an ongoing war against migrants along the Turkish-Greek land border.

The group Maria was part of had fled to Turkey from the war in Syria. They tried to find a safe place somewhere in Europe after Turkey started threatening Syrians with deportation. Already on 14 July, they were for the first time confronted with the deadly consequences of this ongoing war against migrants at Europe’s borders. When the group was pushed back by Greek border guards, they experienced extreme violence. One Syrian refugee died on the Greek bank of the Evros River after a violent seizure by the Greek police. Two others died tragically by drowning when they fell off the boat into the river during their pushback by the Greek authorities.

The people were in shock. They publicly announced the death of their fellow travellers. The group first contacted the Alarm Phone in the afternoon of 5 August. They sent us dozens of pictures showing signs of beatings on the bodies of all young men in their group. Baida A., 28 years old from Syria reported constantly to the world, desperately crying out for help:

*“These are the effects of the beating that the boys were subjected to at the hands of the Greek army a few days ago. The Greek army beat us twice, and these are pictures of the last time we were beaten. A young man’s back, a young man’s hand, and a young man’s foot were broken, and the beating was harsh against us, the weak, without shelter.”*

They reported that they had contacted the European Court of Human

100



The group of travellers close to the Greek-Turkish border by the Evros River, August 2022. Photo taken by one of the travellers

Rights (ECtHR) with the help of a lawyer of the Greek Refugee Council who did their best to support them. After assessing the case, the court granted interim measures. The decision stated that the Greek state must carry out a search and rescue operation, as well as provide medical assistance, access to Greek territory and food and water. The decision of the ECtHR was already from 20 July, so that, when the Alarm Phone was contacted, it was obvious that the Greek authorities had ignored it.

A day after the first contact, on 6 August, the group reached out again:

*“My grandmother is crying and saying let me just die here. The pregnant woman here in the 8th month suffers from contractions and we don’t know what to do. We are hungry and sick and insects have eaten our bodies. I don’t really know what to do. I’m sad. Why does no one want us? What is our fault, my friend, only because we are Syrians, we are rejected by everyone. Turkey deports us, and Greece beats us, deports us and is throwing us onto the islands. Our situation is miserable here. The situation here is tragic.”*

They had become direct witnesses of a crime carried out by Greek authorities who then tried to get rid of the witnesses by all means. It felt like a nightmare without an end.

On Monday during the late evening, the 5-year-old Maria and her 9-year-old sister were stung by scorpions after remaining without assistance for more than two weeks, following the ECtHR decision. Maria died. The sister remained in a very critical condition for days. Baida reported:

*“The two sisters were stung by a scorpion last night while they slept in the open, and the little Maria suffered a lot before she died from the effect of poison. The other sister is still trying to hold on to life and trying to survive, but how do you help a girl to survive who leaks poison to her body, and there is no doctor here? There is nothing I can help her with, no party has helped us so far and we have 4 dead and death is still chasing us in this hell. Please help us for the sake of humanity. I will never forgive this world. I can’t bear to lose another person, another small person. She is struggling with death without me being able to do anything.*

102



A protest action in front of the Greek embassy in Berlin in response to Maria’s death at the Turkish-Greek land border, August 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

103

*“The girl’s family was shocked and I am afraid of the complications of this trauma that they have. Do you know the feeling of a father and mother when they lose a child, their feeling as their other child is fighting death in front of them?”*

Until Thursday night, the police claimed that they could not locate the group, even though they had been informed of their geographical location again and again. And while the position of the refugees did not change, on Thursday night, the Hellenic Police suddenly announced that they had located the group. But they claimed that the group was not on Greek territory, without mentioning exactly where they were. After several days, we lost contact to the group, but we finally learned on Monday, 15 August, that they succeeded in crossing the river to Greece. After that and probably also due to the huge public attention the situation received, the Greek authorities confirmed that they had “found” them. There were many people and networks involved, some much longer than we were. The Greek Refugee Council and HumanRights360 had appealed

for the interim measures. Journalists were reporting on the case non-stop. Especially remarkable is the documentation of Eph.Syn, a Greek newspaper that reported on the situation constantly. Greek doctors called on the government to allow them to treat the injured and sick. There were petitions made and members of parliament intervened. It was only through this solidarity that the Greek authorities finally gave in. But, first and foremost, it was the people themselves who in a last desperate move managed to take a dinghy to cross the river. The dinghy had been used by other travellers.

Once they arrived, they immediately informed the world and called for rescue, once more. It was too late to save Marias life. Baida wrote: “I will never forgive this world!”

Death along the European borders is nothing new for us. Over the last 8 years, the Alarm Phone has always closely witnessed how people drowned or disappeared. Again and again, we face the same left-to-die-policy. We started the Alarm Phone saying: “We don’t want to count the dead along the borders. We want to intervene to prevent them.”

The methods used by Greek and Turkish border guards in this war on migration have become even crueller. In March 2020 when the situation started to reach this new level of escalation, Ursula van der Leyen, the president of the European Commission thanked Greece for being Europe’s shield. Maria died as a consequence of this logic.

**WE WILL NEVER FORGET  
AND NEVER FORGIVE!**

104

105



**Be Prepared!**

... someone you know and trust  
... you are leaving and let them know  
... the location where you left from  
... and the time you left.  
... If they do not hear from you  
... can help the coastguard to find you.

You may lose phone signal  
... water making it difficult  
... or call other numbers  
... should still work  
... phone will  
... signal.

Keep a dry bag and  
... it to save your phone.

How to seek  
... with

**BE SAFE!**

- ALWAYS WEAR A LIFE-VEST
- STAY SEATED AND CALM
- WATCH OUT



Traveling by boat from France to the UK is very dangerous!  
Although the UK looks close, it takes many hours on the water. People rescued were close to death because of the extreme cold on the water at night.

The Channel is the busiest shipping lane in the world, ships will not see you. Stay alert, look lights and far away from big ships to avoid collisions. Try if possible to get a log.

The channel has a strong current and there can be big waves.

**INFORMATION**

... to claim asylum in the UK  
... and immigration officers: "I  
... claim asylum." They may try to  
... your best if you say "asylum" is

... to help  
... and into  
... possible at  
... advice.justice.gov.uk

... of the new you  
... basis  
... lawyer.

... While your  
... centre for help  
... issues.  
... er union centre  
... legal advice  
... erenation cent

The UK may try to remove adults to another European country if they find fingerprints in the EURODAC database. You might be able to challenge this and should speak with a lawyer as soon as possible.

**FOR RESCUE**  
999 (UK)  
112 (FRANCE)  
When you call 999 ask for the COASTGUARD

Give your GPS location to the coastguard when you call (page 2). This will help rescuers find you as soon as possible. Make sure the rescue is successful.

5

The Channel

# Introduction to the situation in the Channel

As we write this, the news is filled with sensationalist headlines of a “new record” number of migrants crossing the English Channel from France to the UK since the beginning of the so-called phenomenon of small boat crossings - 1,295 to be precise. Indeed, the number of people making this journey is constantly rising, tripling each year since 2018 when just 300 people made the trip. More than 25,000 people crossed between 1 January and 31 August; UK Border Force has publicly predicted as many as 60,000 crossings by the end of the year.

The current situation in this region might remind people of the Aegean in 2015, or the Mare Nostrum period in the Central Mediterranean. In the Channel, there is a mostly well-resourced and functioning state-coordinated search and rescue which does not discriminate in providing assistance to people on the move. State efforts are mostly directed at saving lives at sea rather than pushing/pulling travellers back, a policy which was threatened but then officially abandoned by the UK government earlier this year. Often French boats will accompany travellers to the English waters.

*“From Libya to Italy is very long journey and you don’t have enough food, sometimes you don’t have safety jacket, sometimes you lose engine, a lot of things not good in this long journey, yeah we are suffering so much, maybe you can stay in the water maybe three days, five days.*

*From France it is easy because you know the French ship is follow us until we reach to the UK sea and there is no danger because if face any problem they will help you and they will rescue you but if you need to go to UK they will just follow you and ask you are you ok, and you say you are ok and then you can go.”*

**Words from T. who crossed from Libya in July 2021 and made the journey from France to the UK in April 2022**

108

## Deaths and Calculated Non-Assistance

However, this testimony is not reflective of everyone’s experience. Calais Migrant Solidarity counts at least 62 people who have been killed or gone missing whilst trying to cross to the UK by sea since 2018, without forgetting the innumerable who have been left traumatised after having to risk their lives in overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels. These deaths are most certainly the result of border security policies which inhibit free movement of people while facilitating that of goods and capital, but some have also directly been caused by the (in)actions of the French and British coastguards. There have been reports of authorities on both sides ‘passing the buck’ when boats are in distress close to the line which divides search and rescue responsibility between France and the UK.

*“First of all we did not agree to call the French. We were trying to paddle but it was very difficult because of the waves. Then we decided to call the French. When we called they asked us to send our live location, then they told us ‘You are in UK waters’.*

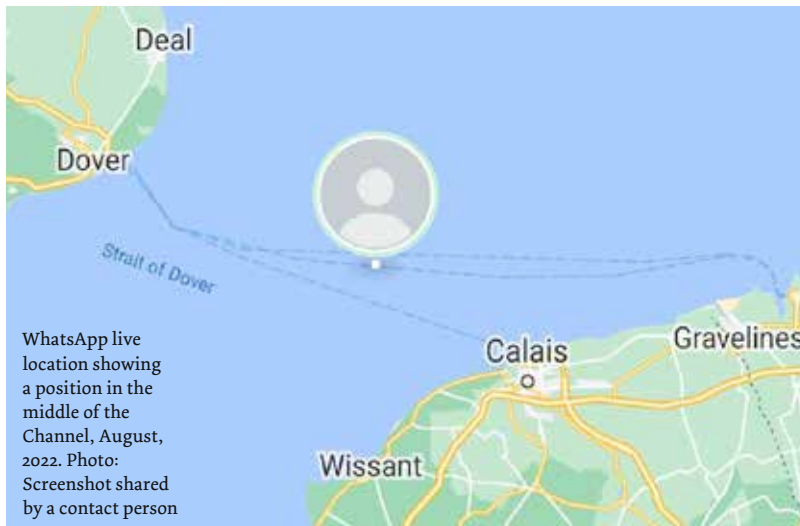


French warship P676 Cormoran in the Port of Calais, April, 2021. Photo: Calais Migrant Solidarity



*Then we called the British again many times but they kept repeating that we were in French waters and then they ended the call. The UK guys answered us in a very rude way and it seemed like he was laughing at us. I told him two times that there were people dying in here but he really didn't give a s\*\*\*. We sent our live location a second time to the French coastguard. We also called them again, we were trying to reach them by two phones but they kept telling us we were in the UK waters.”*

**Ahmed from Kurdistan recounts his experience trying to call for rescue during an attempted Channel crossing 20 November 2021**



Specifically, on 24 November 2021, 30 people lost their lives when their boat broke apart and no SAR operation was launched until it was much too late. The people on board, along with their family members, called both the responsible authorities, Dover MRCC (UK) and CROSS Gris-Nez (France). The two sides initially denied receiving these calls for help, though now admit having been in contact with those on board, and there are ongoing court cases and public inquiries seeking to determine (criminal) liability for the deaths. The only reason we know this story, and that questions are being asked of the Coastguards, is thanks to the friends and

110

family members on the other end of the telephone that night, who did what they could to raise the alarm and now continue to seek justice after the authorities failed to fulfil their duty.

### Border Violence on the beaches

Focus on the high number of successful crossings means experiences of state repression on the French beaches often go unreported, and the struggles of people who make multiple attempts before finally making it go unacknowledged.

*“I come to Calais, I stay there 5 months, I come in September 2021 and I try two, three times by boat and by truck I try many times, I can't say how much but it was very many.”*

**M. reached the UK in May 2021.**

*“Yeah, I try more than 12-15 times, more than 3 months, several times, I forget the number, more than 11, 12 times.*

*The first problem is the police, the police is catching us and we back to Calais.*

*Sometimes the police is catching us with the boat, the French police take the boat, maybe 6 or 7 times. Without the boat also a lot of times.*

*Most of the time they have knife. Two or three times in front of the water they cut the boat by knife. Three or four times also they cutting the boat, and they say go back to the city. One time we told them no but they have eye spray. We try to fight with them but we can't so finally we back to Calais. They use one time because we say we don't want to go back so they spray.”*

**A. from East Africa arrived in Calais in March 2022 after leaving Ukraine where he had lived 5 years as an asylum seeker. He reached the UK in June 2022.**

*“We tried 6 times, all because of the police, three times this boat broke down, the police broke down the boat with knife, twice from the Mediterranean Sea we drove for three hours and then the engine broke*

111

down, we called France and the boat came. Go back to Boulogne.”

**S. from East Africa arrived in Europe on the 1st of January 2018 after crossing in a boat from Libya. He claimed asylum in Germany before coming to Calais in September 2021.**

When asked to reflect on his journeys he said:

*“When I arrived in Sicilia I was once happy and I thought that my ordeals were finished and I wasn’t afraid.*

*Then yes in Calais that was stressful for me because I was good in Germany for three years. I have everything in Germany, for example, without paper. I was in school, I start work, only because of paper I left Germany.”*

**S. reached the UK in March 2022**

Not everyone who the police stop on the beaches or who is brought back to the ports of Calais, Boulogne or Dunkirk after rescue is allowed to go freely back to their camp and try another time. Often this is done completely

arbitrarily and feeds into the wider border violence of detention and deportation.

*“We were sitting outside on the port. I remember I was angry because we were one and half days without food and it was the night and it was cold and the clothes were wet, they told us just sit on the floor by the wall outside in the port.*

*I was the first person [in the row] and someone beside me, they just said you, me, and the guy next to me they said we are going to the police station and then we will let you go, this is exactly how he told me, and the other 6 persons they just tell them they can go. They were just free. And nobody explained who they are, where we go, what time. The only thing is “you and you we are going to the police station”, and the other 6 they are free.”*

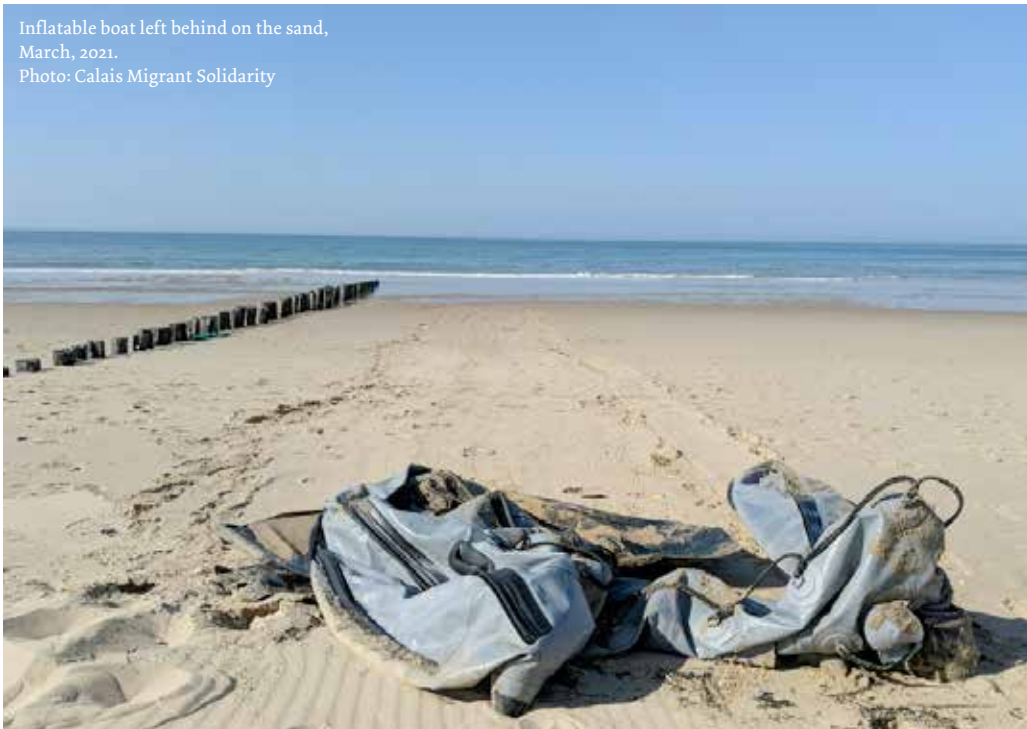
**H. spent 28 days in detention after his unsuccessful Channel crossing in July 2022. He was deported from France in August 2022.**

### Building solidarity networks

Discussing the risks of setting off to sea and how to mitigate them, handling calls, alerting, and pressuring authorities to act, caring for those and arrive as well as those who don’t; these are all ways in which people fight against border violence every day, often invisibly and without the support of activist structures. Such “Alarm Phone work” has been taking place in the Channel now for many years, with the vast majority being done by the friends and families of people who are making the journeys. Since 2018, however a small group of people involved in the existing No Borders group in Calais, and who were familiar with the work of the Alarm Phone network, began more consciously organising to support those making Channel crossings. Materials were made to share knowledge with travellers about the risks of the journey, emphasising how to contact the coastguard as well as how to find and share a GPS position with them to ensure rescues happen as quickly as possible. ‘Maraudes’ [a sort of solidarity patrol] were also organised to go out and talk with people who might be preparing for the journey and share this information with them.

113

Inflatable boat left behind on the sand,  
March, 2021.  
Photo: Calais Migrant Solidarity



*“I think it is very important, internet. If you have internet with sim card 3G its working UK and French. Me now I know how to take your location without internet but many people they don’t know that. You know when I go first time I don’t see you I didn’t know about location. When I get my papers I will come back to Calais to help you do this work.”*

**M. speaks about when he first tried to cross the Channel in October 2021. His group called to the Coastguard but did not know how to find and share their coordinates; eventually a helicopter located them. In total they spent 12 hours at sea.**

There is also a lot of work done to share information with the volunteers of NGOs in and around Calais so that they better inform the people preparing to make journeys. Many of the groups and individuals around Calais were initially wary to openly discuss the topic of boat crossings, fearing criminalisation. The ex-main funder of humanitarian projects in Calais, Choose Love, barred all organisations receiving its money from discussing Channel crossings with people on the move or even sharing safety at sea information. However, this reticence has all but disappeared since last summer as these associations confronted the reality that irregular voyages by dinghy are the main way people will have to seek protection in the UK for the foreseeable future.

Since the Channel became the 4th official region of the Alarm Phone network in September 2021, we have been very busy, not only handling cases together with other associations in France but in creating resources which can be used to share information within communities of people on the move. These include our WatchtheChannel.net website that provides region specific sea safety and asylum information as well as a series of Sea Safety podcasts in Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Sorani, Kurmanji, English, French and German to communicate that same information in an accessible and easily shared format.

To conclude we wanted to share this testimony from D. who worked on a search and rescue vessel in the Channel in 2022.

*“I’m often thinking to myself when we head out what an absurd situation this is. Sometimes everyday for weeks when the weather is nice life-boats and search and rescue operations are being launched at all hours*



View of a cargo ship from an inflatable dinghy, August, 2022.  
Photo: Shared via WhatsApp by a person on board



Travellers after being returned to France, Winter, 2021.  
Photo: Utopia 56

*of the day and night for people in distress in the most heavily transited shipping lane in the world. It's easy to normalise when it happens everyday, but it's actually absurd being out there all the time saving people who shouldn't be there in the first place. Some days you are out for 8, maybe 12 or more hours, picking up 40, 50, sometimes up to 60 people from tiny dinghies one after the other. Mostly we get everyone on board and into port just fine, but it can sometimes be touch and go during embarkation, and the margins for error are so small. Those boats can be within hours of deflating or breaking, when everyone will just be in the sea and the real race against time starts. Meanwhile all sorts of ships - ferries, cargo, cruises - are just passing you by, sometimes having to dodge you while you do a search and rescue mission, full of people having a great time and completely oblivious to what's going in sometimes just a few hundred meters away."*

### Note on Criminalisation

*"I do not have 2000 [euros], what I make, I have some people they come to Dunkirk and they tell me if you are a captain you can cross by free, if you have a friend who is a captain you can cross for free, or maybe you can tell four or five people you can tell them about someone can help them and you can cross with them."*

### The Nationality and Borders Act 2022

#### 41 Assisting unlawful immigration or asylum seeker

- (1) The Immigration Act 1971 is amended as follows.
- (2) In section 25(6)(a) (assisting unlawful immigration to member State or the United Kingdom: penalties) for "imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years" substitute "imprisonment for life".

In June 2022 new legislation came into force in the UK increasing the maximum sentence for assisting unlawful migration to imprisonment for life and removing the provision which only criminalises people who

facilitate crossings 'for gain'. For many people on the move, piloting a dinghy across the Channel is a last resort; after months of futile attempts to cross the border in the back of a lorry, some of those who have less access to resources take up the offer to steer a small boat despite the potentially high price to be paid on the other side.

"Breaking these evil criminals' business model" is high on the political agenda of the current UK government. The UK Border Force surveillance system enables easy identification of potential targets for criminalisation; one man, on his arrival in Dover, was shown drone footage showing him with his hand on the motor. Inspired by the work of comrades in other regions, a network of lawyers, activists and migrant rights organisations in the UK and France are preparing to defend all those who may be criminalised for exercising freedom of movement.

6

Criminalisation



# Criminalisation of people on the move

**On the Eastern route from Turkey to Greece thousands of people are condemned for boat-driving, sometimes resulting in hundreds of years imprisonment.**

Attempts to criminalise people on the move continue to increase. This comes with a discourse, which portrays migration and migrants as a threat to state security. We witness it along all of the different migration routes. In response to people moving, there has been an ever-increasing militarisation of the border, alongside further criminalisation of migration. This goes hand-in-hand with attempts to silence those who speak out against the manifold human rights violations which are a consequence of this militarisation. The ongoing criminalisation of people on the move is extreme – and varies along the different routes.

In Greece - and also in Italy - we witness systematic incarceration of people arriving by boats. Those who allegedly steer the boats are accused of being smugglers. In Greece, draconian sentences of several hundred years in prison are handed out just for steering a boat. Similarly in Italy, sentences range from 2 to 20 years or more. Unfortunately, though, this is not a new phenomenon; people on the move who have been criminalised under the rubric of the facilitation of illegal migration are the second largest group within the Greek prison population. This development and the discourse that comes with it create the ground to accuse people for terrorism. This is, for example, the case in Malta, where three teenagers supported by the campaign “Free the El Hiblu 3” since years mobilize together with their supporters against such accusations.

Against this development, however, people joined forces to publicly condemn and counteract these practices. In recent months, people

have spoken out about those imprisoned simply because they had to flee or wished to exercise their freedom of movement. Through public campaigning, some people have been acquitted and had their charges dropped.

## Greece: repressive climate

In Greece, these efforts come with an ever-increasing climate of repression and an authoritarian turn. In parallel to the criminalisation of people on the move, there are several publicly announced investigations against NGOs, journalists and people who acted in solidarity. Alongside this, we see how people are portrayed as enemies of the state or are suspected of espionage and revelation of state secrets: for example, when they document the involvement of the Hellenic Coast Guard in pushbacks.

## Imprisonment after arrival

Not those accused of boat-driving but often whole groups of people on the move are incarcerated upon arrival. This happened, for example, on 23 September 2021. The Alarm Phone was informed about 154 people on a boat in distress in the Ionian Sea. When the boat was rescued, the survivors of the incident first had to stay 14 days in quarantine in Chania and were afterwards moved to mainland Greece where they were imprisoned in the notorious Amygdaleza center near Athens. There were other cases in which people were brought to Amygdaleza after traumatising journeys and incidents, including the death of fellow passengers. This happened to a group of 70 people in November 2021. Again, the survivors did not receive any appropriate support and were instead transferred to the Amygdaleza prison. In the days leading up to Christmas 2021, four shipwrecks took the lives of dozens at sea. We stayed in contact with many survivors who were, again, imprisoned in Amygdaleza. Instead of getting help to deal with their traumatic experience, most of the people were detained. Among them many had lost their loved ones, often children.

120

121

### Criminalisation of boat drivers

In the last years, thousands of people were put into prison for boat-driving and robbed of their freedom by the Greek state. This means continuing traumatisation that goes far beyond the prison sentence. In addition, the severity of the sentences are unbelievable: in May 2022 three passengers from a boat Alarm Phone was in contact with were sentenced, in their absence, to over 361 years imprisonment each. This is nothing new. Greek authorities systematically criminalise people on the move. For most boats that arrive in Greece, several people are arrested and afterwards prosecuted for steering the boat or for helping in other ways during the journey. Without sufficient evidence, they are kept in pre-trial detention for months. The trials usually end very quickly, with decisions reached in a short time, yet resulting in extremely harsh sentences. When their case finally comes to court, their trials average only 38 minutes in length and lead to an average sentence time of 44 years and fines of over 370.000 Euro. In the past years, Alarm Phone in cooperation with many others supported people directly in their struggle against criminalisation. In the case of the Samos 2 for instance, a broad coalition of local and international actors joined forces together with two people accused of facilitation of illegal entry and other charges. N., a young Afghan father, was accused of child endangerment, as his son died in their attempt to reach the Greek shores. In the end, he was acquitted of all charges and their trial received a lot of public attention and support. But also in other situations, we tried to quickly organize legal support when people were arrested.

### Shedding light on the real crimes

There are local and transregional efforts to increase the collective capacity to counteract the criminalization of boat drivers along different routes. To us it is clear: boat-driving and crossing borders can never be a crime. It is a fundamental right, and it is one we will continue to uphold and support.

The real crime is the border regime put in place by the EU and its partners along the different migration routes. People get deprived from

their right to exercise their freedom of movement, their right on living in safety, their right to apply for asylum. They get insulted, beaten, robbed, shot. They are denied medical assistance. They are left to die. They are beaten to death or drowned. Their human dignity is not respected.

Who will be held accountable for these crimes against humanity?

122



El Hiblu 3 Case, March 2020.  
Illustration by Adrian Pourviseh

# Criminalising facilitators: the case of boat drivers in Italy

There are about 20 people on a wooden boat, rejoicing: the Island of Lampedusa is in sight and a boat is driving towards them. Everyone is cheering on a smiling man in dreadlocks: “Rastaman, you’re the captain! We made it, God bless!”. The man, who we will call John, disappeared soon after disembarkation. His worried family and friends searched for him for months, with this video of the last time he had been seen as a lead, before they received a phone call from prison. He had been arrested and accused of facilitating illegal immigration.

On land and at sea, facilitating border crossings to Europe is criminalised. Legislation against ‘aiding and abetting illegal immigration’ was set up by the EU and implemented by member states in the early 2000s; it wants to deter freedom of movement and acts of solidarity, and punish individuals and networks for helping themselves and others cross a border.

The criminalization of European NGO ships’ crews and activists has become well-known in civil society; however, there are many more people on the move who have been systematically criminalised under the same pretext. These same people have been crowding the prisons of coastal states but have received much less attention.

Italy has spent decades arresting thousands of people who have done nothing other than drive a boat towards its shores, utilizing criminal law, undercover police operations, emergency anti-Mafia powers to enforce Europe’s border regime.

## What Happens?

The criminalisation of boat drivers in Italy is examined in detail in the report ‘From the Sea to the Prison’ published by Arci Porco Rosso, border-line-europe and Borderline Sicilia with the support of Alarm Phone<sup>1</sup>.

### Let’s go through some key points:

Boat drivers, who generally refer to themselves as captains, are often arrested soon after disembarking in Italy. Authorities start investigating at ports, identifying witnesses that could testify against an alleged boat driver. We have several accounts of witnesses being pressured or inappropriately incentivised to testify. Captains are taken directly to prison after arrest, where they are often held in pre-trial detention, a form of imprisonment that does not require a sentence, for up to 2 years.

When found guilty, sentences range from 2 to 7 years in prison on average. However, if there have been deaths on board, or a shipwreck, boat drivers are also automatically accused of manslaughter or of causing the shipwreck. When this happens, sentences have reached up to 30 years, more than a life sentence.

124

125

Captains’ right to a fair trial is disregarded. The court decision is based on flimsy evidence, often consisting almost exclusively on witnesses’ preliminary testimonies; the accused are regularly denied interpretation during hearings or in prison. They are assigned state-appointed lawyers who often do not have the required skills or resources to guarantee a good defense.

It is more difficult for captains to reach out to their families and to networks outside prison and make their stories visible, as they are detained in a foreign country and often without a shared language or contacts in Italy. There have been families who, for years, thought that their loved ones had died in the Mediterranean

<sup>1</sup> Available in English and Italian at: [www.fromseatoprison.info](http://www.fromseatoprison.info)



Sea before finding out that they were being detained and simply denied the right to make a phone call.

When released, captains face administrative detention and deportation, greater obstacles in their asylum requests, greater obstacles in finding employment, and sometimes severe stress and health-related challenges.

Captains are scapegoated in the attempt to shift responsibility for the deaths and violence that take place in the Mediterranean away from Italy and Europe, by pushing it on to the people who find themselves exposed to their policies in trying to reach this side of the sea.

### What are we doing? What can we do?

The criminalisation of Captains is gaining more and more attention within our movements. In Italy, a working group set up by Arci Porco Rosso, borderline-europe and Borderline Sicilia offers socio-legal support to people criminalised captains, during detention and after release, providing spaces that could bring together and amplify captains' stories, as well as raising awareness about their criminalisation. In countries like Greece, the UK and Spain, activists are raising awareness and increasing efforts to stand in solidarity with captains or other criminalised border crossers. Several groups, including the Alarm Phone, joined transnationally to set up the Captain Support Platform, to create awareness amongst migrant communities on how to face risks of criminalization, as well as offering a platform where friends or relatives of criminalised captains can reach out to be connected with local social and legal support.

It is crucial that we continue this work as a movement in solidarity with criminalised people on the move, bringing awareness to captains' struggles and stories, as well as challenging the unjust laws that criminalise them. It is also important to pay more attention to similar stories, where people are criminalised as facilitators at land border crossings to Europe, or get accused as facilitators for acts of solidarity. Examples of

this have been the undefined number of car drivers who are stopped and arrested regularly on Italy's northern borders (often after being reported by locals) or the four Eritreans who had to face seven years of trial and prison time for having bought travelers food and having hosted them in their homes on their way to other cities in Italy. They were finally acquitted this May, but this was part of a bigger undercover investigation of some of the social centers and squats that struggle for freedom of movement in Rome. This shows that there are many forms of solidarity that can be targeted under the pretext of facilitation, and this is currently happening in several countries in Europe.

Let's also remember that spaces of detention, such as prisons and deportation centers, are ultimate spaces of marginalisation and invisibilisation. It's fundamental for our antiracist movements to gain more awareness of the carceral aspects of the racist state, and find ways to challenge it while at the same time developing practices to get closer to all the people who are being removed through prisons.

### TO SUM UP: BREAK BORDERS, BURN PRISONS, FREEDOM FOR ALL!

For more information:

[www.fromseatoprison.info](http://www.fromseatoprison.info)

From Sea to Prison working group:

[www.borderline-europe.de/Quartalsbericht?l=en](http://www.borderline-europe.de/Quartalsbericht?l=en)  
[www.borderlinesicilia.it/en/uncategorised/a-rising-tide-lifts-all-boats-from-sea-to-prison-quarterly-report/](http://www.borderlinesicilia.it/en/uncategorised/a-rising-tide-lifts-all-boats-from-sea-to-prison-quarterly-report/)

Captain Support:

[www.facebook.com/CaptainSupportLegalAid/](https://www.facebook.com/CaptainSupportLegalAid/)  
[www.instagram.com/captain.support/](https://www.instagram.com/captain.support/)

# Free the ElHiblu 3!

**Maurice Stierl**

The Alarm Phone was not directly involved when 108 people were rescued by the tanker, the ElHiblu1, in March 2019. Still, members of the Alarm Phone's Central Mediterranean regional team followed the unfolding situation in the media and soon learned about the incredible injustice that the ElHiblu3 experienced when reaching Malta. Abdalla, Amara and Kader were deprived of their freedom and imprisoned.

On 7 November 2019, we met the three for the first time in person, in a courtroom in Valletta. We were only able to speak briefly during a break, whispering to each other. Abdalla confirmed that he had received a postcard in his prison cell that we had sent a few weeks earlier in order to express our solidarity and to tell him and the other two that they were not alone. It was difficult to see the three handcuffed and returned to prison after the hearing. While the impending charges were severe, there was hope that they would soon be released on bail – which finally happened at the end of November 2019.

We returned to Malta in January 2020 to get to know each other. In our first real encounter, we promised that we would not leave anything undone to secure their freedom and to have the outrageous accusations against them dropped. Over the next months, mutual trust developed into friendship. Together with a group of solidarity activists and ElHiblu survivors who worried about the fate of their three friends, we drafted the outlines of a solidarity campaign that would have the voices of survivors at its heart.

During this visit to Malta, the Alarm Phone received many calls from distressed people at sea. Walking to the harbour in Valletta, we witnessed how some of them were disembarked, visibly relieved to have reached land. On 28 March 2020, on the first anniversary of the arrival of

the El Hiblu 1 in Malta, we started the campaign to free the El Hiblu 3 together with individual human rights defenders and other human rights organisations.

The Alarm Phone supported and promoted the launch of the campaign while, at the same time, facing disastrous developments at sea. During Easter 2020, shortly after the Covid pandemic had reached Europe, the Maltese government and armed forces not only failed to engage in rescue operations of boats that were in contact with Alarm Phone, but they actively orchestrated a deadly pushback operation. Between 10 and 15 April 2020, twelve individuals from Eritrea and Ethiopia died when Malta organised a 'secret fleet' to violently push a group of people from the Maltese search and rescue zone back to Libya – an incident that has been referred to as the 'Easter massacre'.

Today, three-and-a-half years after the three landed in Malta, they still face serious preliminary charges. But the campaign and solidarity around their case have grown over the years: The "ElHiblu3 Freedom

128



El Hiblu 3 Conference,  
March 2020.  
Photo: Alarm Phone

Commission” was established, composed of well-known individuals from various societal sectors. The campaign organised a large solidarity conference in Malta, with about 100 participants from Malta and outside. The “Free the ElHiblu3” booklet was published and ties to the Church allowed the three accused to hand the brochure to the Pope.

The case of the El Hiblu 3 is a powerful example of how three young people fought, and continue to fight for their freedom and the freedom of others. It is a powerful example of self-defence when facing a pushback to Libya. As part of the ‘Free the El Hiblu 3’ campaign, we will keep to its initial promise: to leave nothing undone to achieve justice and freedom for Abdalla, Amara and Kader!

130

131

# Criminalisation in Morocco and the Western Sahara

On both sides of the Atlantic, those on the move are treated as heinous criminals, through laws prohibiting “irregular” exit or entry and the criminalisation of those who organise unauthorised journeys. Moroccan authorities are currently actively trying to prevent interceptions and arrest people on the move at the site of departure. Alarm Phone activists explain:

*“When this happens, certain migrants are accused of being responsible for the journey and being captains [...]. They are taken to a police station, and the matter is investigated without the aid of a lawyer and without translators to explain their rights [...]. They are then taken to the judge and accused of being a smuggler or part of a trafficking network. They are given hefty sentences of 10 to 15 years in prison.”*

Alarm Phone activists document human rights violations and try to facilitate legal and medical support for those in prison:

*“In the southern provinces, there are now roughly 50 people in prison charged with having driven a boat or organised illegalised migration. As Alarm Phone, we have tried to support three migrants who were arrested only because they were wearing a wristband with the Alarm Phone number. [...] There are also seven sub-Saharan people who received hefty prison sentences: four Senegalese were condemned to 10 years, an Ivorian to 15 years, one Guinean got 20 years because they are a smuggler who had been investigated for years, and another Guinean got 10 years. [...] They are living a very difficult situation! We are calling on African governments to have their own citizens extradited. They are all sick and receive low-quality food in prison.”*

The Spanish policy U-turn on the issue of Western Sahara also seems to

the ‘offence’ and lengthen the sentence. In case of death(s), people may be charged with homicide. This is a complete reversal of who is to blame for the numerous deaths at sea.

It is often the case that passengers who do not have enough money to buy a journey are asked to drive the boat, especially when it is within range of the Spanish authorities. If they carry money with them, this may also be used as “proof” that they were involved in organising the journey. Furthermore, other passengers may be told by the Spanish police that snitching on the captain will increase their chances of remaining in Spain. This is no more than a blatant and dirty strategy by the authorities to manipulate people into criminalising their comrades.

Apart from sentencing boat drivers, Spain has a general tendency to treat people on the move as criminals; a habit they share with many other European countries. Some are taken to the deportation prisons (like CATE, *Centro de Atención Temporal de Extranjeros*, in Barranco Seco, Gran Canaria) right upon arrival, without any proper legal assistance, translators or access to the necessary procedures to ask for international protection. It is much harder to ask for asylum once in prison. In early May 2022, a hunger strike was organised by CIE (*Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros*) inmates in Gran Canaria, because of the physical and psychological mistreatment they suffer there. This strike was accompanied by several escape attempts in early and mid-May.

There has also been lots of interference by the authorities when people tried to self-organise, plan demonstrations and show acts of solidarity. As early as 2021, in an internal communiqué, comrades from Tenerife reported police harassment during demonstrations in the city of La Laguna, not far from the Las Raíces and Las Canteras camps. They also reported stop and search measures and racial profiling targeting those presumed to be migrants. Additionally, the repressive, right-abnegating “ley mordaza” (gag law) was used repeatedly to impose fines on activists working in solidarity with those on the move or on human rights journalists: Most recently a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist was imposed a 800 Euro fine for taking photos in the Arguineguín harbour in December 2020.



Moroccan police officers undergoing a so-called “sanitisation” operation in Laayoune, as witnessed by a deportee sitting in a bus, Spring 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

have given the green light to the Moroccan judiciary to apply harsher sentences:

*“Before, you were able to get your sentence from the first instance reduced on appeal. Unfortunately, now the condemned do not even bring a lawyer to the appeal anymore, because they know the judge won’t listen to them. Since the start of the pandemic, the verdicts have also been delivered via video-conference.”*

### Criminalisation in the Canary Islands

The often arbitrary criminalisation of boat drivers is also a major issue after arrival on the Canary Islands. If a drone captures somebody touching or handling the engine, that person will be accused of being the captain and thus responsible for the smuggling operation. According to Spanish law, prison sentences vary depending on the circumstances of the journey. This means that any injuries, bodily harm or deaths are used to aggravate

132

133

This article is an excerpt of the Western Med Regional Report “Criminalisation of people on the move” from September 2022, which can be found on our website: [WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG](http://WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG)



“We will go all the way”, Athens, Greece, 2021. Photo: Alarm Phone

7



# Commemor- Action

# CommemorAction

*“With the term “CommemorAction”, we make a double promise: not to forget those who lost their lives and to fight against the borders that killed them. It is a space for building a collective memory from our pain. We are not alone and we will not give up. We will continue to fight daily for the freedom of movement of all, demanding truth, justice and reparation for the victims of migration and their families.*

*We are relatives and friends of the deceased, the missing and the victims of enforced disappearance along land or sea borders, in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and around the world. We are people who survived crossing borders in search of a better future. Citizens in solidarity who assist and rescue migrant people who are in difficult situations. We are fishermen, activists, migrants, academics. We are one big family.”*  
(Call for decentralised CommemorActions on 6 February 2022)

CommemorAction – a combination of mourning and anger – was developed by relatives, survivors and supporters as an outcry against the ongoing racist murders at borders. CommemorAction is about remembering, with actions that combine political messages and artistic performances. But above all, it is about connecting the grieving relatives with as many people as possible, to create collective initiatives, to make their stories and claims known. Days of CommemorAction are moments of remembrance for these victims and of building collective pathways to support families in their demands for truth and justice for their loved ones.

Tens of thousands of victims of the border regime mean hundreds of thousands or even millions of relatives and friends, parents and children in the Global South who still miss or search for their loved ones. Of course, the ways in which forms of mourning are practiced, differ a lot. The majority of those affected are likely to deal with their respective ‘tragedies’ in their own domestic networks.

For a long time, also activists and civil society actors engaging in solidarity with people on the move have been confronted with the deaths and disappearances of human beings at Europe’s external borders. Through this, they have developed not only networks of solidarity in trying to counteract the deadly violence, but also ways of commemorating those who have been killed, disappeared or made victims of forced disappearances. For several years now, these CommemorActions, both smaller and larger ones, have become regular transborder events and fostered a community of mourners who will not give up in their struggle against the violence that killed or disappeared people on the move.

6 February was chosen as a common day to commemorate in a decentralised way and at many places at once. On 6 February 2014, the Spanish border police had killed at least 15 people who were trying to cross the border at Tarajal into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. After years of legal procedures, Spanish courts acquitted the Guardia Civil officers, ruling that no crime had been committed. No justice has yet been achieved for the victims and their families! On 6 February 2020, groups of families of the deceased, missing and/or victims of enforced disappearance met in Oujda for the first CommemorAction to denounce border violence. Families came together from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Cameroon. The Tarajal massacre is a symbol of what has been happening every day for over 20 years now: victims without justice, graves without names, borders without rights. This is why we decided in Oujda to continue the journey of CommemorActions every year on 6 February, to transform our pain into collective action. On 6 February 2022, CommemorActions took place in over 50 cities around the world.

A centralised CommemorAction took place in autumn 2022 in Zarzis, Tunisia, again organised by the families of the disappeared and supporters. On 6 September 2012, a boat carrying about 130 people from the region of Sfax sank in the vicinity of the Lampione islet, 19km from Lampedusa. Only 56 people were rescued. Ten years later, families are still without any news from their loved ones. But they continue to loudly demand the truth about the forced disappearances at Europe’s borders. Zarzis is often portrayed as a “main departure point” for Haragas while

138

139

the solidarity structures that exist in the city are often invisibilised. This is a city where fishermen have been rescuing people at sea for 20 years and who have been criminalised by Italian authorities, their fishing vessels detained by the so-called Libyan coastguard. Still, no border regime has managed to stop them from rescuing, something that authorities have failed to do. This is a city where engaged individuals have used all of their energies to give a name and a story to the people who wash up ashore. In September 2022, families from different African countries, fishermen and activists met to commemorate those who have been forced to disappear due the murderous EU border regime. Many discussions and workshops took place to reinforce our network to fight the current border regime, to denounce the racist policies of the EU and hold it accountable for the violence that they have caused over the last 30 years.

The platform [WWW.MISSINGATTHEBORDERS.ORG](http://WWW.MISSINGATTHEBORDERS.ORG) collects the voices of the families, giving them a voice, dignity, and the opportunity to express their sorrow to their families and the world, under the slogan “people not numbers”.

It is clear that the families who are engaged and organized on a transnational level in CommemorActions represent a much wider political and social issue which affects hundreds of thousands. The families are a remarkable force from the Global South who denounce the Global North for its lethal border violence. We understand the fight against borders as a central struggle for equal social rights and so we need to see the families engaged in CommemorActions as crucial actors struggling for global justice.



CommemorAction in Thermi, Lesvos  
September 2019. Photo: Marily Stroux



# “Why can’t our children have the same rights as the Europeans?”

**The following is a testimony of Jalila Taamallah, the mother of two young men, Hedi and Mehdi Khenissi, who lost their lives in 2019. Hedi and Mehdi died because of the violent border regime of the European Union.**

“After I went back to Tunisia and repatriated the bodies of Hedi and Mehdi, my two sons, who have lost their lives on their way from Tunisia to Italy, I promised myself that my fight will continue in supporting the other families who are until today couldn’t find an answer.

My two sons had applied for visas, but they received a negative answer. Just like all other young people of their age, they wanted to see the world, to have a job, to have a decent life. One of the worst things I had to go through after they left, was the silence of the Tunisian authorities and their unwillingness to support me with a visa. All they asked me was “where will you find the money to repatriate the bodies?”. For six months, they kept on denying having come across any traces of my sons and didn’t want to provide me any information about the procedure. I was only able to identify my sons with the support of two Italian and German women who kept on looking at different pictures. Together, we then found pictures of a guy with the same tattoo as the one my son.

I, Jalila, a mother who has lost her sons, Hedi and Mehdi, I will never give up and will keep on fighting for a world without borders, for a

world without people having to risk their lives for a better future.

I’m always following the self-organized movement of mothers of the missing in South America, and it amazes me and inspires me, and I hope that one day we might be able to achieve what they did in Tunisia and in Africa.

Each time I remember what I have been through, it gives me strength to continue the fight alongside the other families to find their loved ones. But I also always ask myself who created these borders? Who decided that some people could move freely and others not? Why can’t our children have the same rights as the Europeans?”

142

143

## “Searching for my missing brother: A lifetime struggle”

Laila writes about the long journey that the families of the 4<sup>th</sup> of March shipwreck 2022 had to go through in their search for their loved ones. Struggling between criminalisation by Italian coastguards and silence of the authorities about the disappearance of the boat, Laila and the other families have self-organised and are united more than ever in searching for their relatives.

“The trip started on March 4, when a boat departed from the coasts of Tunisia with people from several separate towns near Sfax on Friday at 8 pm. There were between 57 and 68 people onboard who were heading towards the island of Lampedusa in Italy. This trip usually takes around 18 hours to reach by sea. The day after, news spread that the boat had arrived on the island of Pantelleria - Italy, and that the travellers were being kept in quarantine for 14 days.

145

14 days after, some bodies of the people who were onboard began to appear on scattered beaches in Tunisia, in the areas of El Haouaria - Kelibia - Nabeul. Most of the bodies, around 30 to 35 people, were of women, children and elderly people. They were taken to a Hospital in Nabeul but a large number of people remain missing until this now. Accordingly, we went to search for them in Italy through the Italian Red Cross, who refused to help except with an official letter directed by the Syrian Red Cross, which was unable to provide a helping hand, under the pretext of sanctions on Syria. Afterwards, we tried to contact the Italian coastguard who offered no help at all, and they even tried to extract and elicit



CommemorAction in Zarzis, Tunisia, September 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

information from us. Then one of the families of the missing travelled to Italy and tried to search there, but to no avail.

Then we tried to search in Malta through the Maltese coastguard, who confirmed that there were no missing persons with them or in their records. Later on, some news spread that 6 Tunisians from the same trip had communicated with their families and had told them that they were in a Maltese prison. We thought we should go back to research and verify what we had been told.

We also contacted several ships that carried out rescue operations during that period and we came back full of disappointment after the ships' unclear responses, such as not giving the names of those who were with them for security reasons and then denying the presence of any Palestinian, Syrian or Tunisian with them.

We contacted Tunisian authorities again, who had not yet announced any clear news regarding the passengers of the mentioned boat, and the official of the Syrian community in Tunisia did not make any statement. When we contacted him personally, his response was that all the passengers of the trip had drowned. The Tunisian Ministry of Interior reported that 205 illegal immigration operations had been thwarted from January 1 to April 20 and that 3,160 people had been arrested, including 2,249 foreigners and 911 Tunisians and we couldn't get to check if they were 'our' missing.

According to our understanding of the news, most of the people on boats departing from Tunisia are rescued, and a few remain counted as missing, or all the bodies appear on the beach.

We later contacted the hospitals in Nabeul, that requested we provide them with a DNA analysis to match them with the DNA analyses of the bodies, and we faced countless financial, legal and procedural difficulties, whether in Syria or Lebanon. After a long effort we were able to conduct the analysis but the hospital did not give us a way to send the analysis, and we were treated with infinite disdain and we were asked to travel to Tunisia. Also, the family of the missing Cosette, when they contacted the hospital for a photograph of her to identify her and know her clothes, the hospital never answered. We know that a photo of her body

146

147

was sent during the process of recovering it from the sea, and the hospital did not provide information about the number of bodies or their photos. And for the record, we tried calling my brother's number on March 13 at 6 pm and we repeated the attempt 5 times, and the phone was ringing, but there was no answer.

Here, the following questions come to our mind:

Was the phone confiscated by smugglers? Were the missing persons alive until that date and not rescued? Were they forcefully 'disappeared' in Tunisia?

We also tried to contact the numbers of all the missing people in the month of May, and there were many phones ringing, and the line was on for seconds and then it would switch off again.

We also searched in Libya in separate areas, whether inside or outside the government-controlled areas through our acquaintances, and rumours spreading about their presence in a Libyan prison. But in the end, there was nothing that could confirm or deny their presence there.

We, the families of the missing, have moved around and tried our best but have only been subjected to exploitation and fraud. Still, we have a glimmer of hope in finding news that would heal our wounded hearts, and we demand and appeal to everyone who can help us or at least contribute to delivering our voice to anyone that could help us to reach our children.”



- 1 CommemorAction in **Zarzis, Tunisia**, September 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone
- 2 The mothers and sisters of the missing and dead migrants in the Mediterranean gathered in front of the Municipal Theatre of **Tunis, Tunisia**, February 2022. Photo: Anonymous
- 3 CommemorAction in **Milano, Italy**, 6 February 2022. Photo: Abolish Frontex
- 4 CommemorAction in **Palermo, Italy**, 6 February 2022. Photo: Borderline Europe
- 5 CommemorAction in **Oujda, Morocco**, February 2020. Photo: Alarm Phone
- 6 Laying flowers at the Beach in **Tangier, Morocco** as part of the CommemorAction, 6 February 2021. Photo: Alarm Phone
- 7 CommemorAction on Île de Gorée, **Dakar, Senegal**, 6 February 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

8

Time to  
listen!

# Refugee Protests in Libya – it is Time to Listen!

**From October 2021 on, thousands of refugees organised a large-scale protest campaign in Tripoli, responding to violent raids carried out by Libyan security forces in refugee communities in a neighbourhood of Tripoli.**

In their impressive manifesto, the group ‘Refugees in Libya’ voiced clear demands:

Here we are now to claim our rights and seek protection to countries of safety. Therefore we demand now with our voices:

1. Evacuations to lands of safety where our rights will be protected and respected.
2. Justice and equality among refugees and asylum seekers who are registered with the UNHCR in Libya.
3. The abolishment of funding the Libyan coast guards who have constantly and forcibly intercepted refugees fleeing the Libyan hell and brought them to Libya where all atrocities befalls them.
4. The closure of all detention centers across Libya, which are fully funded by the Italian and European union authorities.
5. The authorities should bring the perpetrators to justice who have shot and killed our brothers and sisters both in and out of the detention centers.
6. The Libyan authorities to stop arbitrarily detaining persons of concern to the office of UNHCR.
7. To call on Libya to sign and ratify the constitution of the 1951 Genève Refugee convention.

152

153

By organising demonstrations and protest camps outside UNHCR offices, the refugees tried to build collective shelters at an international organisation that proclaims to serve their interests and needs. The UNHCR, however, was dismayed at the protest camp outside its doors. On 7 October, it announced the suspension of services at their Community Day Centre “due to the security situation” and later closed the place entirely. In response, the protestors moved outside the main UNHCR office in the neighbourhood of Sarraj, which quickly put its activities on hold as well.

The refugee protestors felt abandoned by the UNHCR and feared that the suspension of its services would render them even more vulnerable to the Libyan authorities. They were particularly dismayed that the UNHCR repeatedly drew distinctions between protestors, on the one hand, and vulnerable individuals on the other.

Undeterred, the protestors remained on site and rejected the UNHCR’s attempt to divide them. They held large assemblies where discussions were translated into several languages. Multilingual committees were established around particular tasks, including political campaigning and negotiations, media work, cleaning of the camp site, mediating between protestors, and organising medical care.

After the protest camp was evicted by the Libyan security forces in January 2022, with many protestors being arrested and forcibly detained for months, many of the refugee protestors had to go into hiding. Still, hunger strikes in detention camps and other protest forms as well as attempts to ‘self-evacuate’ from Libya by taking to the sea have continued. International networks of solidarity have also emerged, in support of members of the protest group. While the protest camp is no more, the struggle of the Refugees in Libya has not ended.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
CHECK THE WEBSITE OF REFUGEES IN LIBYA:  
[WWW.REFUGEESINLIBYA.ORG](http://WWW.REFUGEESINLIBYA.ORG)**

# Refugees in Tunisia

Saad Eddin Ismail Hamed

There are 6350 refugees in Tunisia: In this text I will share our struggles against the UNHCR and discrimination.

I would first like to start in naming some of those who have lost their lives due to the conditions that the UNHCR have put us in.

- Youssef, a 4-year-old child who jumped from the fences of the reception centre of the UNHCR in Medenine.
- Saber Adam, from Sudan, who died in a plastic factory in Tunis. A job that was provided by the UNHCR without any insurance or protection.
- Ayoub, a Sudanese refugee
- Ayoub from Sudan, who was sick and didn't get any medical assistance from the UNHCR.

I am Saad Eddin Ismail Hamed from Darfur. I am a refugee in Tunisia. In this text I will share the daily suffering of refugees in Tunisia who are supposed to be under the protection of the UNHCR.

We lived 4 years in Tunisia, no protection was provided, no health care, no access to education, no access to any of our basic rights as humans.

We face racism on a daily basis, our lives threatened by police and citizens because we are black.

We escaped wars, repression, and violence from our countries but also from Libya; most of the refugees in Tunisia have at one point been to Libya. Some of us came through the land borders to seek safety, others were forcibly intercepted by the Tunisian Coastguard and others are shipwreck survivors.

In February 2022, we, refugees and asylum seekers, held a protest in Zarzis, in the south of Tunisia, demanding evacuation from Tunisia to



Protest in front of UNHCR Tripoli.  
Photo: Refugees in Libya



Protest in front of UNHCR Tripoli.  
Photo: Refugees in Libya

a country in which we could have decent lives.

The decision of protesting came after the UNHCR's office in Zarzis and Medenine changed their policies suddenly and closed many dorms sheltering refugees and asylum seekers but also reduced the number of residents in others. They threw us in the street without offering any alternatives or financial support. The Tunisian Refugee Council threatened us and said that if we did not leave the dorms in 15 days they would sue us. At the beginning we were around 350 people but with time passing more than 100 of us preferred to go back to Libya.

We started the sit-in and lived in the streets for two months, with no solution or even the slightest consideration from the UNHCR. One day we woke up to armed men coming to kick us out from the UNHCR office in Zarzis. They were screaming at us and telling us "You are criminals". I don't know what crime we have committed in wanting to live a decent life. After this clash, we decided to go to Tunis, where we were stopped from taking the buses, detained, and criminalised for the simple fact of wanting to move from one city to another.

With the support of lawyers, we finally managed to reach Tunis and started a long journey of protesting in front of the UNHCR headquarter. Afterwards, we self-organised and started a Committee of Negotiations with the UNHCR. We stayed in the streets for two more months, where solutions were suggested by the UNHCR but the mistrust the refugees had in them made it impossible to find solutions.

We did not give up and kept on protesting in front of the UNHCR headquarters until 6 June 2022. We faced many difficulties in the streets and lost a friend, Muhammad Abdullah Amoun, an asylum seeker, as he was hit by a car. The UNHCR then offered us an accommodation in the suburbs of Tunis, health care and decent financial support.

We agreed and moved there, but none of their promises were fulfilled. Up to this day, we haven't achieved any of our demands, but we won't stop fighting for our rights.

Today, as I'm writing, 4 refugees lost their lives in a racist attack by citizens near the shelter in Tunis.

We are still and we will always demand evacuation to a safe country!



Protest in front of UNHCR  
Zarzis, Tunisia, February 2022.  
Photo: Refugees in Tunis



Protest in front of UNHCR  
Zarzis, Tunisia, February 2022.  
Photo: Refugees in Tunis



# Chroniques àMER, monthly radio chronicles from the Alarm Phone

Since February 2021, Chroniques àMER has been listening to, meeting and broadcasting the voices of people who cross the borders of Europe. Voices of men, women and children. Voices of relatives and activists. These are voices to fight against the silence organised by European states and their border policies.

Because thousands of people cross the Mediterranean,  
Because the Mediterranean Sea is a border,  
Because borders perpetuate racism and colonialism,  
Because racism and colonialism kill.

Because in 2021, 1,977 people died crossing, 165 people a month,  
41 people a week, almost 6 people a day -  
and many more we know nothing about.

Because there are stories behind the numbers,  
Because these stories must be told,

Because we don't want to forget, because we want to keep fighting,  
Because we don't want to get used to it,  
Because we knew...

*“My name is Khady Cis, I am twenty-seven years old, soon to be twenty-eight. I left Senegal in 2015, I went overland. I have been part of the Alarm Phone since 2015. (...) My work consists of meeting migrants, trying to see their problems and also distributing the Alarm Phone number, and explaining to them how the work is done, that it is a number to*

158

159

08

TIME TO LISTEN!

*assist you during your rescue and to call the coastguard. I am a woman who fights against the injustice that is happening. And that's why I got involved, because I hate injustice.”*

**Khady, Rabat – Episode 02 | Women on the move**

*“The pandemic has really done too much damage, especially economically. Because people who were working in the informal sector can no longer work, they are technically unemployed. That's what caused the boats to go to the Canary Islands. The situation was already critical before the pandemic, but when the pandemic arrived, things really changed.”*

**Babacar, Laayoune – Episode 03 | Covid and borders**

*“Our job here is to be the intermediary between the people who leave and the Alarm Phone shift operators. And the search for people who die at sea, the families need to know or repatriate their bodies and bury their relatives. We also try to raise awareness and distribute information brochures on the risks at sea. We have also opened a listening and orientation centre for migrants to facilitate their access to medical care in hospitals. We thank you for your listening and your understanding because no one is free until we are all free.”*

**Abdou, Laayoune – Episode 04 | From Western Sahara**

*“On one of the boats there are 80 people, mainly minors from Eritrea and Somalia. They are afraid of sinking. We try to reach the MRCC in Malta without success. We send many emails. A cargo ship was spotted near the boat in distress. The head of operations of the company that manages the cargo ship calls us back. He is confused and doubts our information. Malta continues to say that it was never made aware of the situation. How can we explain to him that their company has unknowingly entered the political game of borders and that states will do everything possible to prevent these people from reaching Europe?”*

**Ali and Leila, Marseille – Episode 07 | Merchant ships, ambivalent actors in the political game of borders**

“Whether we are minors or adults, they consider everyone as adults. For them, we come here, we are like liars. [...] When the children arrive, they are told ‘well this town won’t accept you, go to this town. The children keep walking...” “Fighting is good, you have to keep fighting. I fought against my own father, my own family, I never stopped fighting. Because in the end, it’s the people involved who have to make the real, good decisions... so that they don’t get screwed in the end.”

**Aboubacar Diaby – Episode 09 | Children arriving (2/2)**

“A tourist calls and says she is witnessing the arrival of a boat on a Greek island. She sends me a photo: there’s a boat with about a hundred people on board, arriving on a beach, very touristy, with a bar. The cops are warned and they arrive very quickly. And she explains to me that they prevent her from approaching, from accessing the people, and that they ask the whole beach to leave. So she made an internet search, found our number and called us.”

**Perrine, Toulouse – Episode 10 | Stories that make us feel good (1/2)**

“It was 3am. We put the boat in the sea. There were twenty-three of us. At 7am I see we’re at the British border, the fuel is running out. So we decided to call 999. They told us we were in French water, without asking our position. He told us to call 196. At first we didn’t agree to call the French. We tried to keep rowing, but it was very difficult because of the waves. Then we contacted the French. They asked us our position on the spot and then they told us we were in British water. So we had to call 999. We tried to call the UK several times, but they kept saying we were in French waters and then hung up on us. The British guy answered us in a very rude way. And it was like he was laughing at us. I told him twice that people were dying here, but he didn’t care.”

**Ahmed, Traveller – Episode 11 | “You see there? That’s England...”**

“They are able to send planes to us. More than four planes that are filming over us. But they are not able to send us a boat to rescue us. People are dying, we have been on the Mediterranean for more than four days.

There is no food or water.”

**Chamseddine, Traveller – Episode 12 | Malta, caught in the act of non-assistance**

“We wanted to end this edition of chronicles in MER with thoughts of solidarity. (...) Thoughts of solidarity with those who struggle to leave, those who struggle throughout their journeys, those who struggle for others to leave, those who struggle when they arrive, those who struggle for others to arrive.”

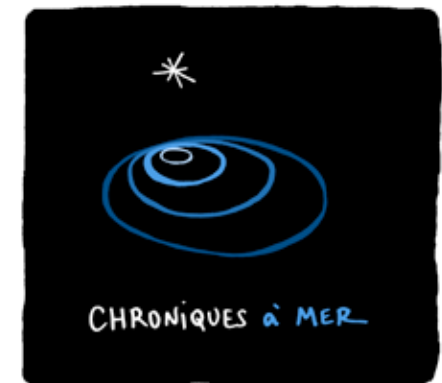
**Chronicles at Sea – Episode 02 | Women on the move**

You can find all the episodes of Chroniques àMER live on the second Friday of the month and as a podcast on the Jet FM website –

[WWW.JETFM.FR/SITE/-CHRONIQUES-A-MER-.HTML](http://WWW.JETFM.FR/SITE/-CHRONIQUES-A-MER-.HTML)

160

161



Chronique à Mer logo.  
Design by @motillustrations



La inmigración no es un crimen →  
Si por La Libertad

Sin comida hasta que  
encontremos una solución

¿A dónde fueron LOS  
derechos humanos

We arrived as immigrants, you  
Received us as refugees  
And we became prisoners

Hunger strike by Moroccan travellers at Las Raices camp, Tenerife, demanding transfer to the mainland, April 2021. Photo: Asamblea de Apoyo a migrantes de Tenerife.

# URGENT CALL FOR DONATIONS

It is now 8 years that our hotline for people in distress at sea is working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As this anniversary booklet can attest, over the years our network has grown, our activities have increased, and our emergency number is more widely spread amongst migrant communities than ever.

The Alarm Phone is run by volunteers. However, our network still needs financial support. We need money for the operational costs of the hotline and to recharge the satellite phones of people in distress with credit. There are costs for printed materials, such as the multilingual cards featuring our number and advice, and for the creation of safety at sea videos. Transnational meetings, trainings and workshops mean further expenses.

Our many activities have a cost, and we are in need of funds to keep doing the solidarity work we do!

## PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING.

Donations for the Alarm Phone network can be made through the following two accounts. The donations are tax-deductible (at least for Germany and Switzerland).

164

165

### FORSCHUNGSGESELLSCHAFT FLUCHT & MIGRATION E.V., BERLIN, GERMANY

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#### Donation Reference

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For donation receipts, please contact:

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### VEREIN WATCH THE MED ALARMPHONE SCHWEIZ, 8000 ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

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BIC POFICHBEXXX

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BIC POFICHBEXXX

Bank PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern

Donations by credit card or Paypal:

Donation notifications are sent on a quarterly basis. Tax receipts for donations from Switzerland are sent annually in January. For further information and questions, please contact:

[finances@alarmphone.ch](mailto:finances@alarmphone.ch)

Thank  
you!





Setting up the Info-Point at the Transborder Summer Camp, close to Nantes, France, July 2022.  
Photo: Alarm Phone



I LIVE IN A

SOMETIMES SEARCH AND  
RESCUE

ALWAYS SOLIDARITY AND

RESISTANCE !!!

# 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 CIVIL FLEET IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA**

which is still active out there at sea, the crews of the civil rescue ships and of the civilian airplanes, with whom we

have 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 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 transshipments to bring 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 people 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 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 solidarity and resistance, from the sea to the cities and towards a different, still unwritten, future.

# 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.

**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.

**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 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

**IOM** 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.

**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. [www.watchthemed.net](http://www.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.





Hamburg, 2022.  
Photo: Alarm Phone Hamburg



Artwork of "Porta d'Europa"  
and Lampedusa Cemetery, 2022.  
Photo: Alarm Phone

# IMPRINT

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## STAY UPDATED WITH OUR WORK AND NEWS HERE:

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Eight years ago, on 11 October 2014, we launched the Alarm Phone, a hotline for people in distress at sea. Since then, our shift teams are available 24/7 and have assisted about 5.000 boats in distress along the different maritime routes to Europe – the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, and since 2022 also across the Channel, from France to the UK.

“Voices of Struggle” is the title of this anniversary publication and we hope that the voices of the people on the move become amplified and widely listened to. We dedicate this booklet to those who lost loved ones at the borders, to those who survived the border regime, and to those who are still struggling to overcome and subvert the many borders in their way.

We have fought for eight years.

We will continue.

We will never give up.



**watch**

THE MED  
ALARM PHONE