# Sea-Watch International: Saving Lives at Sea [B2]

Sea-Watch International è un'organizzazione no-profit che si occupa di interventi umanitari e di difesa dei diritti umani. Intervistiamo un membro dell'ufficio stampa per conoscere le dinamiche delle operazioni di salvataggio e il contributo di Sea-Watch alla tutela dei migranti.



Sea-Watch International is a German charity founded by a group of volunteers in 2015. Financed exclusively through donations, its primary mission is to conduct sea rescues and **advocate** for the rights of all migrants. The NGO operates in the Central Mediterranean, the most common and most dangerous migration route between Libya and Italy. Sea-Watch has been involved in the rescue of over 45,000 people. The NGO is also involved in campaign work **to raise awareness** and **to push for policy changes** that prioritise migrants' safety and rights. The organisation works closely with other NGOs, civil society groups, and humanitarian groups to promote a more coordinated and effective response to the **migration flow** from Africa to Europe. To find out more, Speak Up met with Giulia Messmer from Sea-Watch International's press department. Messmer began by talking about the two main **branches** of the organisation. **Giulia Messmer (German

accent): **Sea-Watch was established or created in 2015 when the **so-called** refugee crisis was brought up. A lot of people were **fleeing** to the European Union, and Sea-Watch since then had six different ships, so sea operations, and we actively try to rescue people and support people **fleeing** to the European Union and we also have three different airplanes. So we also try to monitor the Central Mediterranean from above. Next to our operations we also have **advocacy** work, so... meaning that we are actively trying to **leverage** on a political level, to work on a political level **to enhance** sea rescue by states.

## A DIFFICULT TASK

Last year, Sea-Watch International **carried out** eight operations and rescued 2,117 people in distress at sea. Each operation is extremely high risk, as Messmer explained. **Giulia Messmer:** Just a few days ago we **spotted** a boat in distress, and you can imagine those boats are overcrowded and those boats are per se already in distress at sea because they are at huge risk of capsizing. So what we try to do is to communicate with the ships in the area and also with the responsible search and rescue coordination centre in Malta. And a cargo vessel, the Marco Polo, was actually quite near the distress case and we communicated, and the Marco Polo made also its way towards this distress case. And was on their way to rescuing those people but the Maltese search and rescue coordination centre, so the Maltese authority, actually communicated with the Marco Polo as well and actively **prevented** the boat to [from ] rescuing those people, and said the boat is not in distress. So the Marco Polo left the distress case and the people behind — did not rescue — and they were only rescued after another night on the Central Mediterranean Sea by a civil sea rescue ship called the Geo Barents operated by Doctors Without Borders. So you can imagine how many people had to live through another night in the Central Mediterranean and were all the time at risk of capsizing and drowning.

## FUTURE MISSION

And Sea-Watch International are expanding their operations with a new rescue ship. **Giulia Messmer:** Our very current future mission is preparing our new ship, the Sea-Watch 5, for its first mission, and we will go out with the ship to the Central Mediterranean. And this ship is firstly bigger and also more efficient in rescuing people, so we increased our capacities to actually conduct several search and rescue [operations] in the Central Mediterranean Sea.

## HOW TO HELP

As a non-profit organisation, Sea-Watch International **relies on** volunteers and supporters. Currently, 150 people are employed by the group and many more activists volunteer their time and expertise. We asked Messmer how **ordinary people** can help.  **Giulia Messmer:** We are donation-based, so supporting financially is always a very good choice. Then of course also spreading information about Sea-Watch, but also about civil search and rescue in general, is always a measure anyone of us can take. So we can talk to friends, we can talk to family, we can spread information on social media, for example. Then of course we are always also searching for people that can volunteer their time and their skills, so you might want to have a look at our website where we are always searching for different people in very different areas, **volunteering-wise** but also job-wise.

# Glossary

- **advocacy** = sostegno
- **leverage** = fare leva, influire
- **to push for policy changes** = sollecitare cambiamenti
- **fleeing** = fuggire
- **prevented** = impedire
- **relies on** = dipendere da
- **migration flow** = flusso migratorio
- **so-called** = cosiddetta
- **branches** = rami
- **carried out** = compiere, eseguire
- **spotted** = avvistare
- **advocate** = sostenere, propugnare
- **to raise awareness** = sensibilizzare
- **volunteering-wise** = in termini di volontariato
- **to enhance** = aumentare
- **ordinary people** = gente comune