

Search and Rescue: Sea-Watch International [B2]

A fronte dell'incapacità dei governi di dare risposte alla crisi umanitaria nel Mediterraneo, diverse ONG realizzano operazioni di salvataggio. Parliamo con una di queste organizzazioni per conoscere da vicino il loro lavoro.



For over four decades, the Mediterranean Sea has been a major crossing route for migrants hoping for a better and safer life in Europe. In recent years, the majority of these people have come from Africa or the Middle East – mainly [Côte d'Ivoire](#), Guinea and Tunisia, but they also come from as far away as Bangladesh and Pakistan. Many are what are legally called 'refugees', people who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.

DANGEROUS WATERS

Migrants make the crossing from North Africa to Europe on [overcrowded](#) and [unseaworthy](#) boats, many of which [capsize](#) or [deflate](#). Besides the dangers of the journey, especially the risk of [drowning](#) or dehydration, migrants are [targeted](#) by unscrupulous traffickers who exploit their

desperate circumstances. The International Organization for Migration documented 441 deaths in the Mediterranean Sea between January and March of this year alone. Last year, it was estimated that from January to June, on average five people per day died trying to reach Europe. In 2021, the number of documented deaths was over two thousand, although the real figure may be much higher.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Maritime search and rescue operations are difficult and rarely supported politically. Since the 1970s, European governments have been trying to restrict immigration and [tighten](#) border controls. A majority of migrants transit through Libya, where trafficking networks are well-established. Some European Union member states are cooperating with the Libyan authorities to prevent migrants from leaving its shores. Italy and Malta are the destination of most migrants. However, both countries have repeatedly prevented those rescued at sea by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or other civilian search and rescue (SAR) [vessels](#) from disembarking at their ports. In April, the Italian government declared a six-month state of emergency in an attempt to process or repatriate the increasing number of migrants arriving on the country's coasts.

DIGNITY AND RESPECT

In response to the critical situation, a group of NGOs have [teamed up](#) with EU agencies with the [aim](#) of rescuing migrants who have been [stranded](#) or who find themselves [in distress](#). They work to [ensure](#) that all migrants are treated with dignity and respect. They provide medical assistance, food and [shelter](#) to those rescued, and [ensure](#) that their rights are protected. They also try to [ensure](#) that those who left unsafe situations in their countries of origin are given help to [settle](#) in a safe, secure place. Among these organisations are the French charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the Spanish NGO Open Arms, France's SOS Méditerranée and Germany's Sea-Watch International. All operate to save the lives of those who have risked everything in search of a better life.



Glossary

- **drowning** = annegare
- **targeted** = prendere di mira
- **tighten** = intensificare
- **shelter** = riparo, alloggio
- **deflate** = sgonfiarsi
- **overcrowded** = sovraffollato
- **aim** = obiettivo
- **stranded** = abbandonare
- **Côte d'Ivoire** = Costa d'Avorio
- **vessels** = imbarcazioni
- **settle** = stabilirsi
- **unseaworthy** = non adatte alla navigazione
- **teamed up** = fare squadra, unirsi
- **in distress** = in pericolo, in difficoltà
- **ensure** = assicurare
- **capsize** = ribaltarsi