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Our Alarm Phone requires donations urgently! Small or large amounts, cash-based, via your bank, or through PayPal – they are all tax deductible. We need the funding to maintain and expand our project:

- To cover the costs of the self-organised call centre
- To charge satellite phones with credit
- For information and campaign materials
- For research trips
- For network meetings

→ STANDING ORDER

With 5€, 20€ or 50€, you can support our continuous work with important regular donations. Arrange a standing order to the bank account listed below.

→ SINGLE DONATION

Whether privately, as a group or through solidarity projects, single donations to the bank account below will help us a lot.

→ VIA PAYPAL

www.alarmphone.org/en/donations

ACCOUNT HOLDER:

Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht & Migration

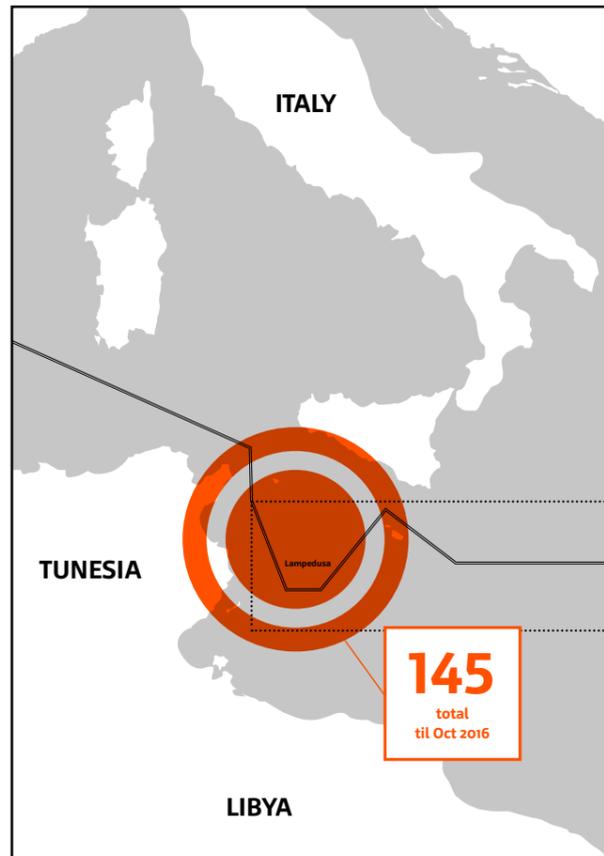
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Central Mediterranean Consistent Movements from Libya to Sicily

THE NUMBERS OF SEA-CROSSINGS in the Central Mediterranean are consistently high, similar to the numbers of 2015. There have been several ›record days‹, most recently in early October 2016, when in two nights over 10,000 people entered boats on Libya's shores. This is the most dangerous sea-route to Europe which, due to a lack of alternatives, mostly people from West- and East-Africa take to find protection from persecution and a better life for them

and their families. Moreover, Libya is an incredibly harsh place for migrants to live in. Most have experienced being detained in inhumane conditions for several months, and militias and ›smugglers‹ often use means of blackmail and torture to profit from their vulnerability. In light of this, it is all the worse that the EU has recently begun to train Libyan coastguards, in order to more effectively intercept boats and send people back into this ›hell‹. For more than a year now, the military operation EUNAVFOR MED/Sophia seeks to monitor the Central Mediterranean between Libya and Italy. Its central mission is the fight against the so-called smuggling networks. These ›smuggler hunters‹ are equipped with high military technology, so that the area off the coast of Libya is one of the best monitored sea-regions in the world. And yet, it is the deadliest! UNTIL THE END OF OCTOBER 2016, the UNHCR has officially counted 4.233 deaths in the Mediterranean, the vast majority losing their lives in the waters between North Africa and Italy. This makes it the deadliest border on our planet. ›Failure to render assistance resulting in the loss of thousands of lives‹ would be a cautiously formulated accusation directed toward the EU. In late May, the Alarm Phone became an (ear) witness of a mass tragedy, when a boat with about 500 people sank. Only a few could be rescued, despite the fact that the SOS call had been passed on four hours earlier. Back then, ›the calculated and monitored dying‹ was the title of the Alarm Phone's press release. Nothing would be easier than sending a small surveillance aircraft hourly along this well-known migration route in order to locate and immediately rescue refugee boats, or, at least, to do everything possible to make that happen. Instead, there is a growing number of civil society initiatives and NGOs, such as Doctors without Borders and Sea-Watch who are there with their rescue boats to prevent anything worse from happening. They are also the ones who ensure that this ›shame of Europe‹ does not fully disappear from media headlines.

Solidarity on Transit Routes – Create everyday support structures!

The stubbornness of flight and migration movements enabled the historic resistance against the EU border regime in the Aegean and on the Balkan Route in 2015. It is crucial to keep this truth within the collective memory of migration struggles, also in order to resist the racist repercussions that we now see unfolding throughout Europe.

FROM TURKEY VIA THE BALKANS up until Germany or Scandinavia, but also from South-Italy via France, or from Morocco via Spain to Calais or Malmo: everywhere new support structures have emerged or been reinforced. Aren't, in the end, these growing everyday support structures, for and with those affected and resisting, the most sustainable answer to a racist mainstream which continues to rapidly spread toxic discourses in Europe?

WE UNDERSTAND THE ALARM PHONE as a concrete enactment of solidarity with those in transit, as part of what has come to be called the ›underground railroad‹ of flight-movements. We see ourselves as a transnational and multilingual node with varied connections to a growing network amongst those struggling for the freedom of movement.

›If only there were legal and safe migration routes, nobody would have to die at sea. The dying at sea is not a natural catastrophe and also no accident. It is, in fact, the calculated outcome of the EU border and visa regime. The dying at sea is human-made and already tomorrow, through the opening of borders and free access to ferries, it could fade into history as a dark chapter. The long summer of migration in the Balkans has demonstrated that once borders are open, there are no ›smugglers‹ anymore. One pays high sums and takes dangerous paths only when one is forced to do so by Frontex and co. A world without borders is possible and both Frontex and the ›smugglers‹ would then have disappeared« (quote from our statement following the mass tragedy of late May 2016).

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WWW.ALARMPHONE.ORG

24/7

INTERVENTION, DOCUMENTATION, NETWORKING



ALARMPHONE

Distress-Hotline

Since October 2014 we are running a 24/7 hotline for people in distress at sea. A short review of our project.

• 1750 DISTRESS CALLS

Up until October 2016, we received distress calls and calls for support from more than 1750 boats in the three regions of the Mediterranean Sea. Thereof, 1450 calls came from the Aegean (from boats between Turkey and the Greek islands), about 150 from the Central Mediterranean (predominantly from boats that had left from Libya), and about 150 from the Western Mediterranean (from boats that had embarked from Morocco, seeking to reach Spain).

• 30 TEAMS AROUND-THE-CLOCK

Our 30 teams are on alert every day around-the-clock, organised into three shifts. Our work follows collectively developed emergency protocols: our alarm plans for the different regions describe in detail who is to be contacted and what needs to be asked when speaking to boat-people. When dealing with emergency cases, we also make use of vessel-tracking websites and weather services.

• 150 ACTIVISTS

From Tangier, Tunis, or Izmir, from Barcelona, Marseille, or Palermo, from Zurich, Amsterdam, or Berlin: By now, our network consists of close to 150 activists who are situated in many cities throughout Europe, Turkey and North Africa. Some amongst us had to themselves experience what it means to cross the Mediterranean on a small boat. Most of the Alarm Phone activists are part of shift-teams, and many also contribute by doing background research, by distributing and circulating the Alarm Phone number, and by doing translations.

• INDEPENDENT OBSERVATION

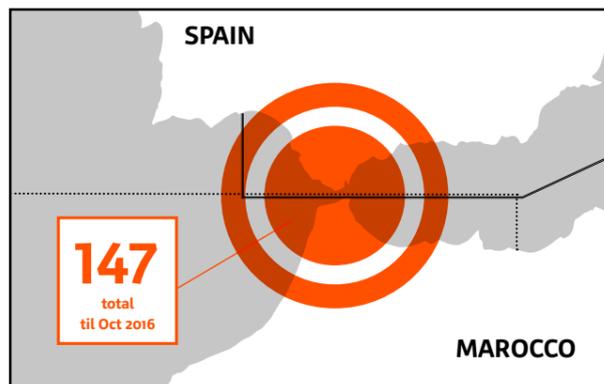
In general, we alert the European coastguards as well as civil society actors involved in Search and Rescue operations at sea, pass on current GPS positions, and 'accompany' and support the 'boat-people' until arrival or rescue. Monitoring whether coastguards respond to distress calls, and potentially denouncing their inaction, is one of our central tasks. An important part of our work also consists of charging the satellite phones of the boat-people with credit, as well as calming them down and encouraging them in desperate situations.

• POLITICAL INTERVENTION

The central desire of our project is to directly and immediately support people in distress at sea. At the same time, we connect our interventions in real-time with critical forms of documentation and public engagements in order to struggle against migration control and the deadly EU border regime. We demand ferries instead of Frontex to finally end the calculated mass dying in the Mediterranean. For us, the right to the freedom of movement is intimately tied to broader struggles for global social justice.

• LOCAL COOPERATION

To this effect, we engage in collaborations with local grassroots projects on both sides of the Mediterranean and support self-organisations of refugees and migrants in transit on the respective routes.



Western Mediterranean Unnoticed but continuous – self-organised journeys from Morocco to Spain

A PHONE CALL reached the Alarm Phone on the 22nd of September 2016 from Morocco: Extremely worried relatives enquired about the whereabouts of a boat with 20 people on board, amongst them a pregnant woman. They had been at sea for more than 6 hours already. The relatives passed on information about the time and place of the boat's departure to our shift team, as well as a phone number of one of the travellers. After several attempts to reach the boat directly failed, we informed the Spanish search and rescue organisation Salvamento Marítima. Our team remained continuously in contact with the relatives and Salvamento, whose search was impeded by the dense fog at sea. Salvamento confirmed the use of a rescue helicopter and, eventually, the boat was found. The boat-people were brought to Almeria/Spain and the pregnant woman was flown to a hospital in the helicopter.

JOURNEYS ACROSS THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN from Morocco to Spain – via the Strait of Gibraltar from Tangier to Tarifa, from Nador toward Almeria, or from the Western Sahara to the Canary Islands – receive hardly any recognition in the European media. Nonetheless, these routes are persistently chosen by many West African migrants as well as by those who fled the extreme violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. For the most part, these crossings are self-organised, and with little means. The travellers save money in order to obtain a rubber dinghy – often their budget does not suffice to afford life jackets.

IN LIGHT OF THIS, more than 80 Alarm Phone activists, self-organised transit migrants from Morocco, as well as activists from groups located in Morocco and West Africa came together in Tangier in late September in order to exchange experiences and to develop collective strategies to make sea-crossings safer. During this gathering, the first-hand accounts offered by migrants were immensely important. They explained to our shift teams the conditions of precarious crossings and pointed to ways to improve our emergency responses in situations of distress. In turn, in one of our workshops, Alarm Phone activists with nautical skills were able to explain to the migrants how meteorological websites designed for sailors could be used to obtain information concerning weather conditions and wave heights. This knowledge can prove vital to avoid capsizing in the treacherous Strait of Gibraltar.

CLOSE COOPERATION with networks and grassroots groups in countries of origin, along migratory routes, and in Morocco is an essential part of the Alarm Phone project in the Western Mediterranean. After the gathering, a protest campaign took place on a ferry from Tangier to Tarifa. Equipped with banners, we denounced the injustices occurring along the ›Frontera Sur‹, as Spanish activists refer to the Southern border. ›Ferries not Frontex‹ was, once again, the apt motto of this campaign.



Aegean Following the EU-Turkey Deal and the closure of the Balkan Route

ON THE 7TH OF AUGUST 2016, at 7.10am, our Alarm Phone team covering the morning shift received a message from a Syrian friend. We were notified that a group of 40 people were about to embark on a journey from Cesme/Turkey toward Chios/Greece, on a rubber dinghy. Over several hours we stayed in contact, ready in a situation of emergency to alert the coastguards. Fortunately, the boat reached the Greek island safely and independently.

ABOUT TWO MONTHS EARLIER, on the 11th of June and at the same place, 53 clandestine passengers had a completely different experience (<http://watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/521>). Already within Greek waters, they were consensually transferred onto the Greek coastguard vessel just to, moments later, be forced at gunpoint to board a Turkish coastguard vessel in order to be pushed back. Also present at the scene: a Frontex vessel! One of the travellers was able to document this illegal ›push-back‹ operation with his mobile phone and sent us photographic evidence. Brutal attacks on refugee boats by Greek forces have a long history in the Aegean Sea, even if there were only

sporadic incidents between 2015 and spring 2016. However, currently we seem to witness systematic push-back cooperations between Greek, Turkish and Frontex forces, as demonstrated on the 11th of June. Are these illegal practices unofficial elements of the EU-Turkey deal? This deal has led, since the 20th of March 2016, to increased controls and interceptions of boats on the Turkish side of the border. Moreover, those who are still able to make it to the Greek islands are prevented from moving on to mainland Greece. Following 25 days in detention and fast-track procedures in the so-called ›hotspot‹ camps, people are supposed to be deported to Turkey, a ›safe third country‹. This, at least, is the deterrence plan. However, in reality, and already before the attempted coup in Turkey, deportation figures were limited to a couple of hundred, while more than 11,000 remain stuck on the islands, forced to await the results of asylum claims there.

IN COMPARISON TO AUTUMN AND WINTER 2015, the number of arrivals in Greece has decreased massively since March 2016. Even if daily arrivals of individual boats have continued since the summer, the figures remain low in comparison to the previous year. This seems only partially the result of the aforementioned EU-Turkey deal. What seems to carry greater weight is the military near-closure of the Balkan Route since the 9th of March 2016.

Currently, as was the case in the years prior to 2015, those who can overcome this inner-European deterrence regime erected between Athens, Northern Greece and North-Western Europe, are only those who can generate the resources and survive the, at times, extreme physical and psychological strains experienced on clandestine journeys. For large families with children, older people and the ill, this is hardly an option. This is why many hesitate to attempt the sea crossing from Turkey. They want to avoid waiting for an undeterminable period of time in the miserable camps of Greece – just as about 50,000 people have had to do, since March 2016.