

## ONE YEAR OF MARE NOSTRUM

### **Maintain Mare Nostrum - Stop Deaths in the Mediterranean**

**NGOs warn that ending Italy's rescue operation without replacing it by a well-resourced European search and rescue initiative would mean more deaths at sea.**

**Brussels, 17 October 2014.** One year ago, just a few days after more than 300 people drowned off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy launched the Mare Nostrum operation to ensure search and rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean. Since then, Mare Nostrum has saved over 140,000 people.

"Everyone was horrified at the loss of lives off Lampedusa one year ago. Italy did something about it. Now this life-saving Mare Nostrum operation is at stake. Refugees, many fleeing war in Syria and oppression in Eritrea, cannot stay in lawless Libya and it is not possible for them to reach a safe place legally and safely. If Mare Nostrum ends without being replaced by a well-resourced operation whose priority is to save lives, more people will die in their attempt to reach our shores. A European effort is urgently needed, if the EU is really serious about putting an end to the deaths in the Mediterranean," said ECRE's Secretary General Michael Diedring.

While Mare Nostrum operates in international waters, the joint Frontex operation Triton, scheduled to begin on 1 November and still [underresourced](#), will only be active within 30 miles off the Italian coast. Triton operation will have a budget of 2.9 million euro per month, only a third of the Mare Nostrum operation.

"Ending Mare Nostrum without a European search and rescue operation to replace it would place more people at risk. We need to maintain a strong capacity to rescue refugees and migrants who are trying to find safety in Europe. We also need to increase legal alternatives to these dangerous voyages, which puts people's lives at risk in the hands of smugglers", said Vincent Cochetel, Director of the UNHCR Bureau for Europe.

Some 3,000 people have drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean this year - the vast majority of them in Libyan waters, outside the area where Mare Nostrum was operated. The figure would be higher if not for the Italian navy's search-and-rescue operation.

Over 7,000 people have joined a campaign [asking the European Parliament](#) to allocate the required financial resources to establish a European sea rescue service.

Over 100 representatives of refugee assisting NGOs and UNHCR across Europe came together this week in Brussels to discuss the obstacles refugees face in accessing protection in Europe.

#### **Contact**

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