



Search and rescue operations in the central Mediterranean

FACTS AND FIGURES

September 2014

Deaths at sea

Between 1988 and 15 September 2014, 21,344 people are estimated to have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to reach Europe. In 2011 the number of deaths was around 1,500; in 2012, around 500; in 2013, more than 600.

More than 2,500 people died at sea in 2014 up to 15 September, including in excess 2,200 since the start of June. Nearly two per cent of the people who had attempted the journey in 2014 drowned.

Rescue operations

Between 18 October 2013 (the start of Operation Mare Nostrum) and 18 September 2014, the Italian Navy has rescued 138,866 people.

The area patrolled by Operation Mare Nostrum, about 43,000 km², extends 400 nautical miles south of Lampedusa and 150 nautical miles to the east and overlaps with the Maltese and Libyan search and rescue zones.

Italy is reportedly spending over 9 million euros per month on the operation. As it rescued 138,866 people during its first 11 months, saving each life costs around 712 euros.

As of the end of August 2014, 565 individuals were rescued and brought to Malta by the Armed Forces of Malta since the start of the year.

Sea crossings

Between 1998 and 2013, 623,118 refugees and migrants are estimated to have reached the shores of the EU irregularly: An average of almost 40,000 people a year.

As of 15 September 2014, their number was more than 118,000 out of the 130,000 who crossed Europe's southern border.

Reasons for the increased influx by sea

Conflicts and persecution in the Middle East and Africa, economic deprivation and the sealing of land borders.

In 2013, the number of the detained irregular migrants on the borders of Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus fell from 37,224 to 24,799, or by 33 per cent. Along this route, the decrease in the detection of irregular crossings on the land border was 61% from 32,854 to 12,986, whereas the detection of irregular sea crossings along the same route increased by 171% from 4,370 to 11,831.

Nationality of people crossing

In 2013, 48% of all irregular entrants and 63% of all those arriving irregularly by sea to the EU came from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia: Countries torn by conflict and widespread human rights abuses.

In the first eight months of 2014 about 40% of people reaching Europe irregularly through the Central Mediterranean route were Eritreans (23%) and Syrians (17%).