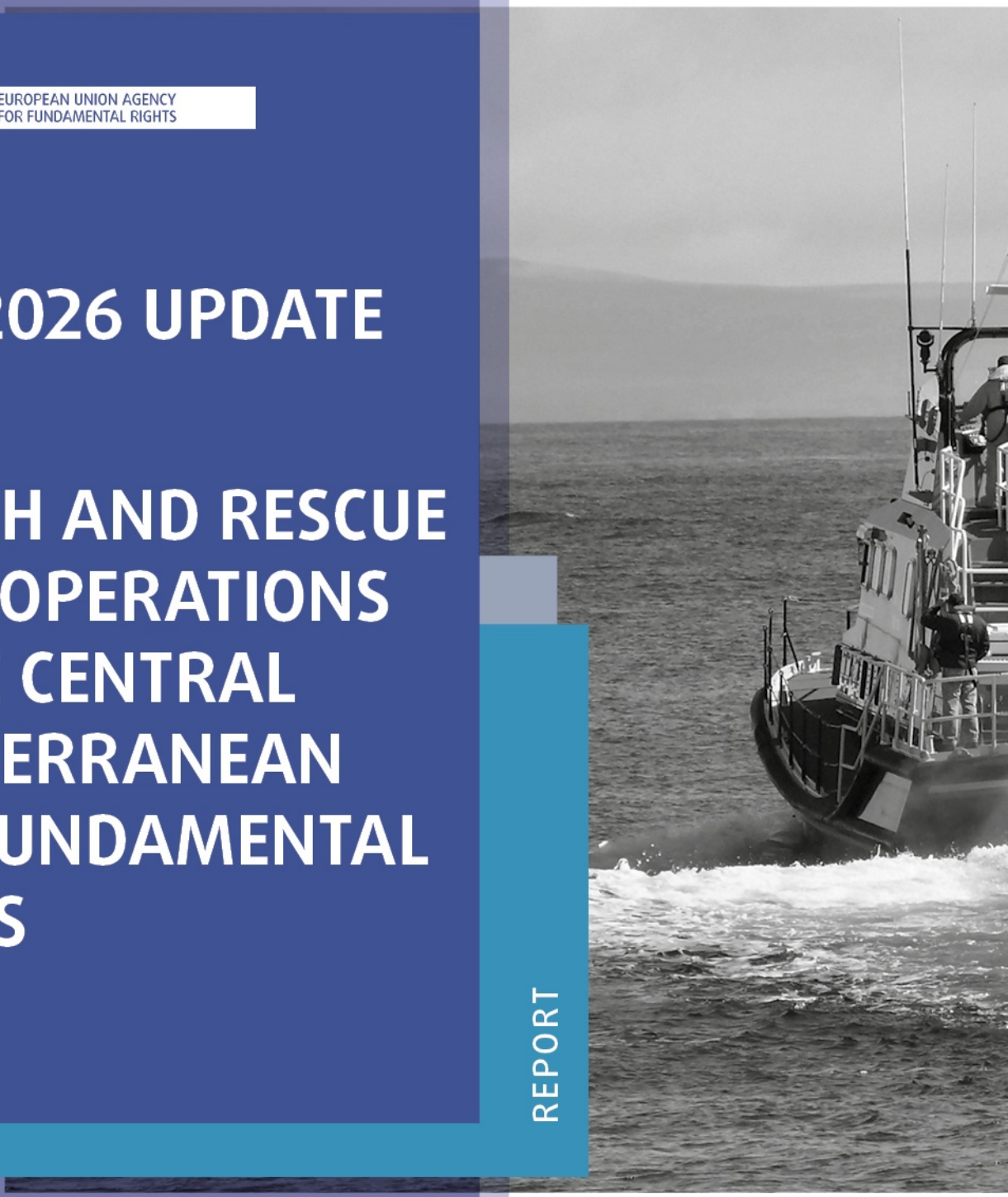
FRA EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

JUNE 2026 UPDATE

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) OPERATIONS IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

REPORT



Contents

Introduction 5

1. International and EU legal framework on search and rescue at sea 8

2. Non-governmental organisation assets involved in search and rescue operations 10

3. Measures against non-governmental organisations involved in search and rescue operations 12

Conclusion 15

Annex: Legal proceedings by EU Member States against civil society actors involved in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea (Update June 2026) 17

Italy 17

Ship 'Geo Barents', operated by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – not operational 17

Measures against the vessel 17

Ship 'Open Arms', operated by ProActiva Open Arms – operational 19

Measures against crew members or staff 19

Measures against the vessel 20

Reconnaissance aircraft 'Colibri 2', operated by Pilotes Volontaires - operational 21

Measures against the aircraft 21

Ship 'Trotamar III', operated by CompassCollective – operational 21

Measures against the vessel 21

Ship 'Dakini', operated by humanitarian actors – operational 22

Measures against the vessel 22

Ship 'Sea-Eye 5', operated by Sea-Eye - operational 22

Measures against the vessel 22

Ship 'Ocean Viking', operated by SOS Mediterranée – operational 23

Measures against the vessel 23

Ship 'Aita Mari', operated by Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario – operational 25

Measures against the vessel 25

Ship 'Astral', operated by ProActiva Open Arms – not operational 25

Measures against the vessel 26

Ship 'Louise Michel', operated by M.V. Louise Michel – operational 26

Measures against the vessel 26

Ship 'Mare Jonio', operated by Mediterranea Saving Humans – operational 26

Measures against crew members or staff 26

Measures against the vessel 28

Ship 'Mediterranea' – operated by Mediterranea Saving Humans – operational (formerly 'Sea-Eye 4', operated by Sea-Eye) 30

Measures against the vessel 30

Ship ‘NADIR’, operated by RESQSHIP – operational 31
Measures against the vessel 32
Ship ‘Aurora’, operated by Sea-Watch – operational 32
Measures against the vessel 32
Ship ‘Sea-Watch 5’, operated by Sea-Watch – operational 33
Measures against crew members or staff 33
Measures against the vessel 34
Reconnaissance aircrafts ‘Seabird 1’, operated by Sea-Watch – operational 35
Measures against the aircraft 35
Ship ‘Sea-Watch 4’, operated by Sea-Watch in collaboration with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – not operational 35
Measures against the vessel 35
Ship ‘Sea-Watch 3’, operated by Sea-Watch – not operational 36
Measures against crew members or staff 36
Measures against the vessel 37
Ship ‘Humanity 1’, operated by SOS Humanity – operational 38
Measures against the vessel 38
Ship ‘Iuventa’, operated by Jugend Rettet – not operational 39
Measures against crew members or staff 39
Measures against the vessel 40
Ship ‘Alan Kurdi’, operated by Sea-Eye – not operational 40
Measures against the vessel 40
Ship ‘Vos Hestia’, operated by Save the Children – not operational 41
Measures against crew members or staff 41
Ship ‘Vos Prudence’, operated by Médecins Sans Frontières – not operational 41
Measures against crew members or staff 42
Reconnaissance aircraft ‘Moonbird’, operated by Sea-Watch with Humanitarian Pilots Initiative – not operational 42
Measures against the aircraft 42
Ship ‘Alex Mediterranea’, operated by Mediterranea Saving Humans – not operational 43
Measures against crew members or staff 43
Measures against the vessel 43
Ship ‘Eleonore’, operated by Mission Lifeline – not operational 43
Measures against crew members or staff 43
Measures against the vessel 44
Ship ‘Aquarius’, operated by SOS Mediterranée with Médecins Sans Frontières – not operational 44
Measures against crew members or staff 44
Measures against the vessel 44
Ship ‘Golfo Azzurro’, operated by ProActiva Open Arms – not operational 44
Measures against crew members or staff 45

Spain 45
Ship 'Open Arms', operated by ProActiva Open Arms – operational 45
Measures against the vessel 45
Ship 'Aita Mari', operated by Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario – operational 45
Measures against the vessel 45
Ship 'Louise Michel', operated by M.V. Louise Michel – operational 46
Measures against the vessel 46
Germany 46
Ship 'Mare Liberum', operated by Mare Liberum – not operational 46
Measures against the vessel 46
The Netherlands 47
Ship 'Sea-Watch 3', operated by Sea-Watch – not operational 47
Measures against the vessel 47
Malta 47
Ship 'Lifeline', operated by Mission Lifeline – not operational 48
Measures against crew members or staff 48
Measures against the vessel 48
Ship 'The Sea-Eye', operated by Sea-Eye – not operational 48
Measures against the vessel 48
Ship 'Seefuchs', operated by Sea-Eye – not operational 49
Measures against the vessel 49
Ship 'Sea-Watch 3', operated by Sea-Watch – not operational 49
Measures against the vessel 49
Reconnaissance aircraft 'Moonbird', operated by Sea-Watch with Humanitarian Pilots Initiative – operational 49
Measures against the aircraft 49
About this publication 51

Introduction

Although arrivals of migrants and refugees to the European Union (EU) by sea are decreasing, the Mediterranean remains one of the world's deadliest migration routes.

At least 1,430 people died or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean during the first six months of 2026, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The first six weeks of 2026 marked the deadliest start of the year in the Mediterranean since IOM began collecting data in 2014 (see FRA, Migration and fundamental rights bulletin – 1/2026).

The IOM recorded over 35,000 dead or missing migrants in the Mediterranean between 2014 and mid-2026. These figures are likely an underestimation, due to underreporting and limited official data. The data denote that search and rescue (SAR) capacity at sea is not sufficient to respond effectively to the great number of migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe on unseaworthy boats.

Respect for fundamental rights in the context of SAR operations also requires adherence to the principle of *non-refoulement*. It bans Member States from returning rescued migrants to a risk of persecution, torture or other serious harm.

Such risk is particularly high in Libya. A February 2026 report on human rights violations against migrants and refugees in Libya by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya called for a moratorium on interceptions at sea and returns to Libya until adequate human rights safeguards are put in place. Still, the number of migrants intercepted by Libya at sea and brought back to Libyan ports increased from 21,800 in 2024 to 27,000 in 2025, according to IOM's 11-17 January 2026 weekly update.

EU Member States on the other side of the Mediterranean have supported Libya in strengthening its SAR capacity for the past several years. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants recommended in August 2025 that cooperation agreements should strengthen the SAR regime. He noted that they must also include safe disembarkation of rescued people in accordance with international human rights and refugee law.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), in S.S. and Others v. Italy (No. 21660/18, 20 May 2025), examined the financial and logistical support provided by Italy to Libya in managing immigration. It found that this support did not trigger its responsibility for the alleged ill-treatment of migrants whom the Libyan coastguards rescued in international waters. It also concluded that the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Rome – which allowed a Libyan ship to carry out the rescue operation – did not have control over the Libyan crew's conduct. Though it was noted that refugees and migrants in Libya were at risk of torture, slavery and discrimination, in this specific case, Italy, lacked effective control over the persons concerned. The ECtHR found the case inadmissible.

The nature of the law relating to cooperation with third countries in border management is continuously evolving. As a result, FRA published practical guidance in 2016 for Member States on how to mitigate the risk of being held accountable for violations of the principle of *non-refoulement*. The guidance focuses on border management situations where the responsibility for possible violations of fundamental rights is unclear. This particularly includes activities that are carried out with the assistance of third countries.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) operates small airplanes and drones for maritime surveillance over the high sea of the Central Mediterranean. When it spots a boat with migrants in distress, it informs the relevant maritime rescue coordination centres in both the EU and the responsible third countries. Depending on the incident location, this may trigger a rescue by the Libyan coast guard and disembarkation in Libya.

To mitigate the risk of Frontex being found in violation of the *non-refoulement* principle, the Frontex fundamental rights officer proposed, among other things, that information on sightings also be transferred to non-governmental organisation (NGO) SAR vessels in the vicinity (see Frontex, 2023 Annual report of the fundamental rights officer, at 1.7). In his 2025 annual report, the fundamental rights officer informed that Frontex's sharing of sightings with third countries accused of committing serious human rights violations against migrants continued to be an issue of serious concern.

NGOs deploying SAR vessels informed FRA that they increasingly receive alerts from Frontex. The fundamental rights officer deploys fundamental rights monitors to the Frontex operation room in charge of maritime surveillance. The monitors advise Frontex on how to act in compliance with fundamental rights.

SAR vessels deployed by NGOs in the Central Mediterranean continue to play a life-saving role. They rescue migrants and refugees in emergency situations at sea and bring them to a safe port, in most cases in Italy. At sea, NGOs are increasingly exposed to use of force by Libyan authorities for not following their orders to stop the rescue as soon as Libyan vessels arrive or to bring the rescued migrants to Libya. Examples of such incidents involved the vessels *Ocean Viking* in August 2025, *Sea-Watch 5* in September 2025 and May 2026 as well as the *Louise Michel* in December 2025. An alliance of 13 NGOs, the Justice Fleet, declared in November 2025 not to follow orders by the Libyan coast guard, which they deemed contrary to international law.

NGO SAR vessels continue to face administrative and criminal proceedings in the EU. In July 2025, a coalition of 32 NGOs denounced the systematic obstruction of their SAR operations which has resulted in fines and the administrative detention of their vessels in Italian ports.

This FRA update provides an overview of the administrative and criminal proceedings against NGOs engaged in SAR activities in the Central Mediterranean.

FRA has been issuing such annual overviews since 2018. The report series reflects broader concerns about shrinking civic space, as highlighted in FRA's 2026 civic space update and specifically concerning SAR actors in FRA's 2023 civic space report.

This update is compiled based on desk research and information FRA received from NGOs deploying SAR vessels and reconnaissance aircraft. Public sources are hyperlinked. All links were checked on 20 July 2026.

The report covers only the Central Mediterranean. The other example in Europe, where civil society rescues migrants and refugees in distress at sea, is the English Channel. There, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) —a 200-year-old British charity established to save lives at sea— carries out rescue operations to assist people possibly in danger at sea when tasked by the British Coastguard. The RNLI is not facing any legal proceedings for their rescue work, unlike NGOs deploying SAR vessels in the Mediterranean. This shows that a different approach and attitude is possible.

1. International and EU legal framework on search and rescue at sea

Assisting people in distress at sea is a duty of all states and shipmasters under international law. Core provisions of search and rescue (SAR) at sea are set out in the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention) and the 1982 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In general, the shipmaster of any vessel (both private and governmental) has an obligation to render assistance to those in distress at sea without regard for their nationality, status or the circumstances in which they are found. A rescue operation terminates only when survivors are delivered to a 'place of safety'. This should be determined by taking into account the particular circumstances of the case, as specified by the 2004 amendments to the SAR Convention, adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Malta was the only Mediterranean EU Member State not to accede to the convention.

The IMO Guidelines on the treatment of persons rescued at sea further specify that a 'place of safety' is 'a place where the survivors' safety is no longer threatened and where their basic human needs (such as food, shelter and medical needs) can be met'. The appendix to the guidelines recalls the prohibition of *refoulement*. Disembarkation must, thus, be avoided in places where refugees and asylum seekers are at risk persecution, torture or other serious harm.

In May 2026, the IMO, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Chamber of Shipping issued a revised guidance on rescue at sea in the context of refugees and migrants. It complements the 2022 Joint Statement on Place of Safety by UN entities and the 2018 UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Objective 8).

Under Article 3 of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation, SAR at sea is one of the components of European integrated border management. For maritime border surveillance operations coordinated by Frontex, the EU Sea Borders Regulation (Regulation (EU) No. 656/2014) incorporates the obligation to render assistance at sea and to rapidly identify a place of safety where rescued people can be disembarked. This must be done in compliance with fundamental rights and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

These two EU law instruments prohibit disembarkation of rescued persons in a country where there is a risk of torture or ill-treatment, irrespective of any request for asylum by the rescued individuals. Under Article 5 of the Screening Regulation (EU) 2024/1356, people disembarked after a SAR operation must be channelled into screening at the external border to verify their identity, assess if they pose a security risk and examine medical or other vulnerabilities.

The duty to fully respect the right to life set out in Article 2 of both the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (the Charter) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) as well as to save

lives at sea rests primarily with EU Member States. These core obligations cannot be circumvented under any circumstance, including for external border control.

In Safi v. Greece (7 July 2022, No. 5418/15), the ECtHR clarified that Article 2 of the ECHR requires that states take preventive operational measures to protect individuals in distress at sea whose lives are at risk. The UN Human Rights Committee echoed the same duty in its General Comment No. 36 on the right to life (2019).

The European Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1365 on cooperation among Member States concerning SAR operations carried out by private vessels encourages Member States to ensure rapid disembarkation of rescued people in a place of safety. Such place of safety should guarantee their fundamental rights, in conformity with the Charter and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Directive 2009/16/EC (last amended in 2024), which intends to address substandard shipping, also regulates port controls of ships. In August 2022, in the Sea Watch case (Joined Cases C-14/21 and C-15/21) the Court of Justice of the EU clarified that the port state may inspect SAR ships operated by humanitarian organisations. They may also seize such vessels, but only in the event of a clear risk to safety, health or the environment.

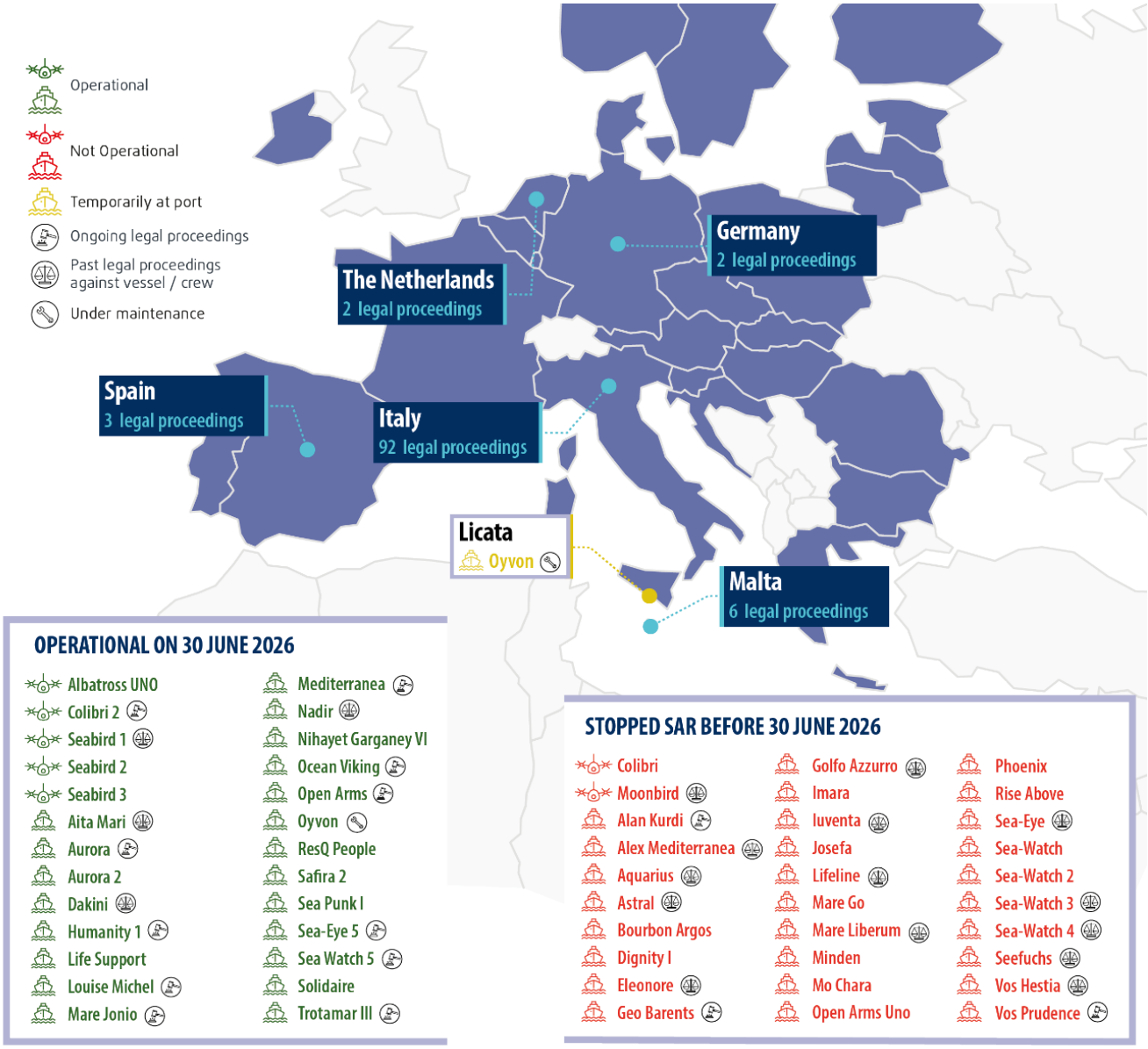
2. Non-governmental organisation assets involved in search and rescue operations

Italy's Mare Nostrum rescue programme in the Central Mediterranean ended in 2014. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have since been deploying search and rescue (SAR) vessels and reconnaissance aircraft to assist and rescue migrants and asylum seekers in distress at sea.

The Migrant Offshore Aid Stationdeployed the first vessel, *Phoenix*, in August 2014. Since then, NGOs have deployed 49 rescue vessels and seven reconnaissance aircraft — both active and retired — primarily in the Central Mediterranean.

Figure 1 provides an overview of vessels and aircraft deployed by NGOs between August 2014 and 30 June 2026. The below figure also indicates if assets are operational or stopped working and whether they were or are subject to legal proceedings.

Figure 1 – Non-governmental organisation assets involved in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, August 2014 – 30 June 2026



Alternative text: The figure lists the names of the 21 vessels and five aircraft which were operational on 30 June 2026 (one of the 21 vessels was under maintenance). It also lists the 28 SAR vessels and two aircraft active in the past but not operational anymore in June 2026. For each of them, it shows whether they had legal proceedings (past or ongoing).

Source: FRA (2026), based on public sources and civil society input.

By the end of June 2026, there were 21 operational NGO vessels and five operational reconnaissance aircraft. One of the vessels, the *Oyvon,* was under maintenance. This is a small increase compared to 2025. In last year's update, FRA reported that 17 vessels and three reconnaissance aircraft were operational. In addition, three NGOs announced the deployment of new vessels: Humanity 2, Lifeline SAR and Thetis II.

Reconnaissance aircraft conduct maritime monitoring activities, which support the early detection of distress cases and alerts competent authorities. They do not themselves engage in SAR.

3. Measures against non-governmental organisations involved in search and rescue operations

Since 2017, Germany, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands and Spain have initiated 105 administrative or criminal proceedings affecting search and rescue (SAR) operations by civil society actors. 19 of these have occurred since 1 June 2025, when FRA issued its last update. Annex 1 lists the ongoing and closed administrative and criminal proceedings against non-governmental organisation (NGO) rescue vessels, aircraft and/or their crew members. FRA reviewed and updated the list based on publicly available sources and communication with civil society actors.

Such criminal proceedings and administrative measures against deployed vessels—like blocking ships in ports for contravening national law—hinder SAR missions. They also have a chilling effect on SAR operations as they divert NGOs away from their objective. This forces them to waste time and resources, as emphasized in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2025 report Saving the lives of migrants at sea and protecting their human rights (point 3.6).

Table 1 shows that almost two out of three vessels deployed since 2017 have faced legal proceedings (30 out of 49).

Table 1 – Assets deployed by civil society: legal proceedings in EU Member States, 2017 – 30 June 2026

	Vessels which faced legal proceedings	Vessels which faced no legal proceedings	Aircraft which faced legal proceedings	Aircraft which faced no legal proceedings	Total
Operational assets*	13	8	2	3	**26**
Non-operational assets	17	11	1	1	**30**
Total assets	**30**	**19**	**3**	**4**	**56**

*Note: includes the vessel *Oyvon* under maintenance in Sicily. FRA (2026), based on public sources and civil society input.

The legal proceedings listed in Table 1 were mainly initiated in Italy. In the past, some procedures occurred also in Germany, Malta, the Netherlands and Spain.

Since June 2025, 19 new legal cases were opened, all in Italy. Most procedures concern measures against SAR vessels. They usually involve fines of 2,000 to 10,000 EUR and the temporary blocking of vessels in ports for periods of 20 or 60 days. None of the operational NGO vessels were detained or blocked in a port on 30 June 2026.

Since 2023, most measures against SAR vessels are based on Italy's Decree-Law No. 1/2023,

converted into Law No. 15/2023. This legislation imposes the obligation for SAR vessels to proceed to designated ports, often distant from rescue areas. It requires that SAR vessels proceed immediately to the assigned port after each rescue. This, thereby, limits their ability to rescue other groups of people in distress over the course of several days.

The legislation was amended in December 2024, with Decree-Law No. 145/2024, converted into Law No. 187/2024. These amendments impose new reporting obligations on the Italian maritime rescue coordination centre for SAR aircraft. If not respected, a fine of between 2,000 and 10,000 EUR could be imposed on the operating entity and the aircraft could be detained. The new rules also reduce the deadline to appeal the administrative detention of vessels and aircraft from 60 to 10 days.

Fewer than one in five measures concern criminal proceedings against the staff working for NGOs deploying the vessels or against the crew. However, this trend may be changing. In May 2026, Italy opened a criminal investigation against the captain of the *Sea-Watch 5* for aiding and abetting unauthorised immigration. According to information available at FRA, this is the first criminal procedure opened against staff working for NGO-deployed SAR vessels since the case against crew members of the *Mare Jonio* in 2021.

In May 2024, the Italian Civil Aviation Authority issued five decisions banning civil society deployed reconnaissance aircraft from taking off for search operations at sea from five airports in Sicily: Lampedusa, Palermo Bocca di Falco, Palermo Punta Raisi, Pantelleria, and Trapani. In August 2025, Italian authorities detained *Seabird 1*. In September 2025, the Italian Civil Aviation Authority imposed a fine of 100,000 EUR and a detention order of 20 days on the aircraft *Colibri 2*. The penalty was for not having immediately alerted the Libyan and Tunisian coast guards when spotting boats in distress in their respective search and rescue zone.

Most closed cases ended with an acquittal, the release of the confiscated or detained vessel, or were discontinued due to lack of evidence. In some cases, NGOs agreed to pay a fine and waited until the authorities allowed their vessel to leave the port. While many of these proceedings do not result in convictions, such legal actions may have a deterrent effect on humanitarian activities.

In Ten years of rescue in the Central Mediterranean (2026), SOS Méditerranée describes a continued deterioration of the operational environment for civil society SAR. This includes administrative restrictions, distant port assignments, and vessel detentions.

The NGO Sea Watch counted that from 2023 to June 2026, the Italian authorities issued over 40 detention orders against NGO rescue vessels. This amounted to 1,075 days of detention. According to a report issued by the NGO EMERGENCY, its *Life Support* vessel had to sail more than 10,000 additional kilometres to reach assigned ports, including in Central and Northern Italy.

The first national court rulings against the blocking of ships in ports based on Law No. 15/2023 was handed down in June 2024. Since then, as described in Annex 1, the following Italian courts found the blocking of NGO rescue ships at port to be unlawful and annulled the related fines: in Agrigento, Ancona, Catania, Catanzaro, Chieti, Crotone, Genoa, Reggio Calabria, Rome, Trapani, and Vibo Valentia. Several courts issued interim measures suspending the administrative

detention of SAR vessels.

In February 2025, the Italian Supreme Court of Cassation (order 17687/2024) clarified that SAR responsibility includes organising disembarkation 'within the shortest reasonably possible time' at a place of safety. Considerations related to migration management cannot override these obligations.

The Italian Constitutional Court (judgement 101/2025) upheld the constitutionality of the legislative provisions regulating civil society SAR operations in July 2025. However, they clarified that their implementation must comply with international maritime law and fundamental rights. This includes the duty to render assistance to persons in distress at sea.

In 2025, developments occurred also in relation to Malta. A March 2025 case in Malta involved 32 people stranded near the Miskar gas platform on the border of the Tunisian and Maltese SAR zones. The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) responded by issuing interim measures evoking Malta's duties under international law to conduct SAR operations. The individuals were ultimately rescued that same day by the rescue vessel *Aurora*, operated by Sea-Watch. The HRC reaffirmed Malta's duty under Articles 6 and 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to protect the right to life and prevent inhuman treatment. They requested Malta to promptly coordinate rescue and ensure disembarkation in a place of safety.

In March 2026, the HRC issued further interim measures. They asked Malta to coordinate a SAR operation for more than 100 people stranded on the same Miskar gas platform. The individuals were subsequently rescued on 19 March by the NGO ship *Ocean Viking*. This marked the third set of interim measures concerning Malta in 12 months. Prior, in September 2025, the HRC issued an order requiring Malta and Italy to coordinate the rescue of 41 survivors stranded aboard a gas platform supply vessel.

No NGO is deploying SAR vessels in Greece. Pursuant to Article 40 of Law 4825/2021, deploying SAR vessels in the area of responsibility of the Hellenic Coast Guard requires their prior authorisation. Organisations that act without authorisation may be fined up to 6,000 EUR. Each person involved in the mission may also be fined up to 1,000 EUR. In addition, they may be sanctioned with imprisonment of one year (or of a minimum of three years if their actions cause an accident), without prejudice to stricter penalties based on other applicable provisions (Article 40). The new legal migration law 5275/2026 adopted in February 2026 further restricts civil society's activities.

Conclusion

In Preventing and responding to deaths at sea: What the European Union can do (2023), FRA identified six action areas to prevent deaths at sea. These included strengthening search and rescue (SAR) capacities, ensuring effective investigations into shipwrecks, improving protection for survivors and more legal pathways to the EU.

To fill the SAR gap, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 2612 (2025) on 26 June 2025. It called on states to re-establish large-scale European SAR operations and suggested European SAR corps be dedicated to preserving lives at sea, while respecting human rights. A policy report issued in June 2026, Saving lives at sea: Towards a common European approach to search and rescue in the Mediterranean, outlines options for a coordinated European framework for SAR in the Mediterranean.

For many years FRA has been drawing attention to the need for a clear legal distinction between humanitarian assistance and migrant smuggling, as regards measures against non-governmental organisations supporting migrants and refugees (see FRA, Criminalisation of migrants in an irregular situation and of persons engaging with them).

EU Member States should ensure that measures to combat migrant smuggling do not lead to the criminalisation of those enforcing the human rights imperative of saving lives at sea, acting out of humanitarian considerations or following international legal obligations on rescue at sea. The ongoing revision of Directive 2002/90/EC on the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence provides an opportunity to clarify that humanitarian assistance should not be criminalised.

The Pact on the Mediterranean (the Pact), issued by the European Commission in October 2025, embeds migration into a broader framework for cooperation in the Mediterranean region. It promotes a whole-of-route as well as a rights-based approach to migration management. This includes providing solutions to ensure the protection of migrants and refugees along the routes. The Pact does not cover search and rescue at sea. However, the EU and its Member States could use it to trigger actions to improve the protection space in the region, reducing the dangerous sea crossings.

The 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention in 2026 is not only a reminder that one of the biggest fundamental rights issues in Europe remains unresolved. It should also encourage the EU and its Member States to take action to reduce fatalities at sea.

For more information, see the following FRA publications:

- FRA (2013), Fundamental rights at Europe's southern sea borders, 27 March 2013
- FRA (2023), Preventing and responding to deaths at sea: what the European Union can do, 6 July 2023

- FRA (2024), Guidance on investigating alleged ill-treatment at borders, 30 July 2024
- FRA (2026), Migration and Fundamental Rights Bulletin - 1/2026, 21 April 2026
- FRA (2026), Migration and Fundamental Rights Bulletin - 2/2026, 21 July 2026
- For FRA's previous regular updates on SAR in the Mediterranean, see Products | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (europa.eu)

Annex: Legal proceedings by EU Member States against civil society actors involved in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea (Update June 2026)

This Annex provides an overview of administrative and criminal proceedings initiated by EU Member States against search and rescue (SAR) assets – vessels or reconnaissance aircraft – and/or their crew. It starts with procedures initiated in Italy, followed by Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, and Spain. It lists both ongoing and closed proceedings known to FRA.

The Annex reflects information from 2017 until 30 June 2026. The legal proceedings are listed in reverse chronological order, based on the date when each proceeding was initiated. The information and sources compiled in this Annex are based on desk research, as well as information received from NGOs deploying SAR vessels and aircraft. Open proceedings on which FRA could not obtain updates are marked as pending, although some of them may meanwhile have been closed.

Italy

Ship 'Geo Barents', operated by *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: September 2024
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- September 2024:Together with the administrative detention as per Decree-Law No. 1/2023, the MSF vessel was blocked in the port of Genova, due to deficiencies found during an inspection by the port authorities.
- October 2024: The vessel was released after 59 days of detention.

Start date: September 2024
Status: Detention order annulled
Key steps:

- September 2024: After disembarking 206 people, the port authorities of Genova (Liguria) issued an administrative detention order of 60 days for the vessel for failing to comply with the instructions of the Libyan Coast Guard, as per Decree-Law No. 1/2023.
- October 2024: Upholding the urgent appeal by MSF to the Civil Court of Genova for the suspension of the administrative detention of the vessel, the court suspended the detention after 19 days. The examination of the case is now pending.
- February 2026: The Civil Court of Genova declared the detention unlawful. In its judgment on the merits, the Court annulled the penalties imposed. The decision is final.

Start date: August 2024
Status: Procedure pending, detention suspended
Key steps:

- August 2024: After disembarking 191 migrants rescued in the Libyan SAR zone, the authorities ordered the detention of the vessel in the port of Salerno for 60 days and imposed a 3,300 EUR fine on the NGO for not respecting the duty to communicate relevant information related to the rescue operation.
- August 2024: MSF lodged an appeal at the Civil Court of Salerno against the detention of the vessel.
    - September 2024: Upholding the urgent appeal by MSF to the Civil Court of Salerno for the suspension of the administrative detention of the vessel, the court suspended the detention.
- March 2025: The court confirmed the previous decisions to suspend the administrative detention. The in-merit examination of the case is now pending.
- March 2026: The Court of Salerno declared the detention unlawful and annulled the fine imposed on Geo Barents.
- May 2026: The authorities appealed the ruling before the Salerno Court of Appeal. Appeal proceedings are ongoing.

Start date: March 2024
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- March 2024: After disembarking 249 people, the port authorities detained the vessel in the port of Marina di Carrara (Tuscany) for 20 days and imposed a fine for conducting three consecutive rescue operations instead of disembarking after the first one, as required by Law No. 15/2023.
- March 2024: MSF lodged an appeal at the Civil Court of Massa against the detention of the vessel.
- April 2024: The Court of Massa rejected the request to suspend the detention. The case is still pending for a decision on the merits.

Start date: February 2023
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- February 2023: After her last mission, in which 48 people were rescued from distress at sea, the vessel was blocked at port for 20 days. MSF was ordered to pay a fine of 5,000 EUR.
- March 2023: MSF appealed against the detention of the vessel and the fine imposed.
- June 2024: The Civil Court of Ancona rejected the appeal.
- January 2025: A further appeal was lodged before the Civil Court of Appeal of Ancona, acting as second instance court, requesting a review of the rejection decision.
- April 2025: The court overturned the first instance ruling and annulled the detention order and the fine issued against Geo Barents.
- June 2025: The authorities appealed the ruling by the Civil Court of Appeal of Ancona. The proceedings are ongoing before the Court of Cassation.

Start date: July 2021
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2021: The vessel was detained at the port of Augusta (Sicily) after an inspection of 14 hours on grounds of identified deficiencies.
- July 2021: The vessel was released after 24 days of detention.

Ship 'Open Arms', operated by *ProActiva Open Arms* – operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: March 2018
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- March 2018: The Catania District Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation against the captain, the mission head and the Open Arms director on accounts of "criminal association" and "facilitation of irregular migration" (Catania) and on accounts of disobedience of Interior Ministry orders (Ragusa).
- May 2019: The Catania District Prosecutor's Office (Sicily) closed investigations against the captain and the mission head, while accusations of disobedience of the Ministry of the Interior orders remained pending.
- November 2020: The Tribunal of Ragusa (Sicily) dismissed the case.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: January 2024
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- January 2024: After disembarking 57 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days in the port of Crotone (Calabria) and imposed a fine on the NGO for obstructing the Libyan Coast Guard.
- January 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal before the Court of Crotone.

Start date: October 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- October 2023: After disembarking 176 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days in the port of Marina di Carrara (Tuscany) and imposed a fine on the NGO for conducting three consecutive rescue operations and not disembarking after the first one, as required by Law No. 15/2023.
- October 2023: The NGO lodged an appeal before the Court of Massa Carrara.

Start date: August 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- August 2023: After disembarking 196 people, the port authorities blocked the vessel in the port of Marina di Carrara (Tuscany) for 20 days and imposed a fine on the NGO for conducting three consecutive rescue operations instead of disembarking after the first one, as Law No. 15/2023 requires.
- September 2023: The NGO lodged an appeal before the Court of Massa Carrara.

Start date: April 2021
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- April 2021: The vessel was seized after a port state control due to technical irregularities related to maritime security.
- June 2021: The vessel was released after more than eight weeks in detention at the port.

Start date: August 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- August 2019: The vessel was seized in Licata by the Prosecutor of Agrigento (Sicily).

- August 2019: The ship was released.

Start date: March 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- March 2018: The ship was seized pre-trial in Pozzallo (Sicily) for violating the Code of Conduct for Rescue NGOs and for endangering the lives of migrants.
- April 2018: The Tribunal of Ragusa (Sicily) ordered the release of the ship.
- May 2018: The Criminal Court of Ragusa confirmed the release of the ship.

Reconnaissance aircraft 'Colibri 2', operated by *Pilotes Volontaires* - operational

Measures against the aircraft

Start date: September 2025
Status: Procedure ongoing
Key steps:

- September 2025: The Italian Civil Aviation Authority imposed a fine of 100,000 EUR and a detention order of 20 days for not alerting the Libyan and Tunisian coast guards when spotting boats in distress in their respective search and rescue zone.

Ship 'Trotamar III', operated by *CompassCollective* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: April 2026
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- April 2026: After disembarking 18 people in Lampedusa, the port authorities issued a detention order of 15 days and imposed a fine of 7,500 EUR for failing to communicate with the Tunisian Coast Guard.
- May 2026: An appeal was lodged against the fine.

Start date: August 2025

Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- August 2025: After disembarking 22 people, the port authorities in Lampedusa issued a detention order of 15 days and imposed a fine of 7,500 EUR for failing to communicate with the Libyan Coast Guard.
- August 2025: An appeal was lodged against the detention order and the fine.
- September 2025: The Civil Court of Agrigento (Sicily) suspends the detention order and the fine.
- December 2025: The Civil Court of Agrigento annuls the detention order and the fine.

Ship 'Dakini', operated by humanitarian actors – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2025
Status: Detention order annulled
Key steps:

- July 2025: After disembarking 73 people, the port authorities issued a detention order of 20 days for failing to immediately communicate with the Maltese authorities.
- July 2025: The Civil Court of Agrigento (Sicily) suspends the administrative detention'
- October 2025: The Civil Court of Agrigento (Sicily) found the detention order unlawful.

Ship 'Sea-Eye 5', operated by *Sea-Eye* - operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: June 2025
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- June 2025: After disembarking 65 people in Pozzallo, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days for allegedly failing to promptly inform the competent authorities, not complying with MRCC Rome's instructions during the rescue operation, and not proceeding without delay to the assigned port of safety in Taranto.
- June 2025: An appeal was lodged against the detention order.

Ship 'Ocean Viking', operated by *SOS Mediterranée* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: February 2024
Status: Procedure ongoing
Key steps:

- February 2024: After disembarking 261 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days in the port of Brindisi (Apulia) and imposed a fine of 3,333 EUR on the NGO for not following the instructions of the Libyan Coast Guard.
- February 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal before the Civil Court of Brindisi against the detention.
- February 2024: The Civil Court of Brindisi suspended the detention.
- September 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal before the Civil Court of Brindisi against the fine.
- April 2024: The Civil Court of Brindisi suspended the enforcement of the fine.
- October 2024: During the detention proceedings, the court referred the case to the Constitutional Court identifying five possible violations of the Constitution by Law No. 15/2023.
- April 2025: The Civil Court of Brindisi suspended the enforceability of the fine pending the outcome of the appeal.
- May 2025: A hearing took place before the Constitutional Court.
- July 2025: The Italian Constitutional Court dismissed the legal challenge to Law 15/2023 but reaffirmed that national measures must comply with international maritime law. The Court clarified that orders conflicting with the fundamental duty to save lives are not legally binding and cannot be punished, and that Italian courts must respect that duty.
- October 2025: The Civil Court of Brindisi joined the fine and detention proceedings. The next hearing is scheduled for September 2026.

Start date: December 2023
Status: Procedure ongoing
Key steps:

- December 2023: After disembarking 244 people, the port authorities detained the vessel in the port of Bari (Apulia) for 20 days and imposed a fine of 3,300 EUR on the NGO for not following the instructions of the Italian authorities.
- January 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal against the detention before the Civil Court of Bari.

The procedure is ongoing. The next hearing is scheduled for February 2027.

- October 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal against the fine before the Civil Court of Bari.
- March 2025: The Civil Court of Bari declined jurisdiction, holding that the Justice of the Peace was the competent forum.
- April 2025: The NGO lodged an appeal before the Supreme Court for denial of jurisdiction.
- December 2025: The Supreme Court overruled the Civil Court of Bari's decision, confirming that the Civil Court is the competent court.
- June 2026: The Civil Court of Bari suspended the enforceability of the fine pending a ruling on the merits. The hearing on the merits is scheduled for September 2026.

Start date: November 2023
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- November 2023: After disembarking 34 people, the port authorities detained the vessel in the port of Ortona (Abruzzo) for 20 days and imposed a fine of 3,300 EUR on the NGO for conducting multiple consecutive rescue operations and not disembarking after the first one, as required by Law No. 15/2023.
- November 2023: The NGO lodged an appeal against the detention and the fine.
- April 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal against the fine before the Civil Court of Chieti (Abruzzo).
- January 2026: The Civil Court of Chieti joined the fine and detention proceedings.
- May 2026: The Civil Court of Chieti annulled the fine and the detention.

Start date: July 2023
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2023: After a seven-hour control in the port of Civitavecchia, the port authorities detained the vessel after having found technical and administrative deficiencies.
- July 2023: The detention was revoked after ten days because the port authorities recognised that the ship complied with the applicable regulations.

Start date: January 2022
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- January 2022: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure after an 11-hour state port control at the port of Trapani.
- January 2022: The vessel was released after 17 days of detention in the port of Trapani, following the correction of the deficiencies previously identified by the authorities.

Start date: July 2020

Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2020: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure at the port of Porto Empedocle (Sicily) after a state port control found technical irregularities related to maritime security. In November 2020, the vessel was granted a single voyage authorisation to proceed to shipyard in Augusta (Sicily).
- December 2020: The vessel was released after the irregularities were fixed, and no appeal of seizure was made.

Ship 'Aita Mari', operated by *Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: January 2023
Status: Outcome unknown
Key steps:

- January 2023: Following an inspection in Palermo in 2020, the NGO faces the risk of a fine being imposed by the Italian government.

Start date: January 2022
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- January 2022: After disembarking 176 rescued migrants, the vessel was blocked in the port of Lampedusa (Italy) under a ten-day mandatory quarantine, despite all crew testing negative for Covid-19 and being fully vaccinated.
- February 2022: The vessel was released.

Start date: May 2020
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- May 2020: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure in Palermo (Sicily) due to technical irregularities related to maritime security.
- June 2020: The vessel was released.

Ship 'Astral', operated by *ProActiva Open Arms* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: June 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- June 2018: The vessel was prohibited from docking.

Ship 'Louise Michel', operated by *M.V. Louise Michel* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2024
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2024: After having contributed to the rescue of 36 migrants, the ship was detained for 20 days at the port of Lampedusa for not having respected the orders of the maritime rescue coordination centre to disembark the people in Lampedusa instead of the designated port of Pozzallo.
- July 2024: The vessel was released.

Start date: March 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- March 2023: The vessel was blocked for 20 days in the port of Lampedusa for violating Italy's Decree-Law No. 1/2023.
- May 2023: The vessel returned to the Mediterranean Sea.
- June 2023: The NGO operating the ship filed a complaint against the 20-day detention imposed on the asset in March 2023.

Ship 'Mare Jonio', operated by *Mediterranea Saving Humans* – operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: March 2021

Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- March 2021: The Ragusa's Public Prosecutor's Office (Sicily) opened a case for "aiding and abetting illegal immigration" against four crew members. They were accused of receiving money in exchange for the transhipment of a group of migrants.
- December 2022: The Tribunal of Ragusa ordered the seizure of 125,000 EUR worth of assets belonging to the Idra Social Shipping company, the owner of the ship.
- March 2023: The prosecutor brought charges against seven crew members and the Idra Social Shipping company for aiding and abetting irregular immigration for profit. Four crew members were also charged with irregularities related to rules established in the navigation code.
- June 2023: The Public Prosecutor's Office in Ragusa requested an indictment and awaited the setting of the preliminary hearing.
- February 2024: Preliminary court hearings against seven members of the crew started.
- May 2025: The Public Prosecutor's Office in Ragusa indicted six members of the NGO on charges of "aggravated aiding and abetting illegal immigration."
- May 2026: The Tribunal of Ragusa holds a hearing on the case.

Start date: September 2020
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- September 2020: Rescue staff from the NGO's Rescue and Medical Team were denied boarding by the Italian Coast Guard at port of Pozzallo (Sicily) and port of Augusta (Sicily) respectively.

Start date: June 2020
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- June 2020: The Office of Public Prosecutor in Ragusa (Sicily) opened investigations against the captain and ship-owner following the rescue operations' disembarkation in Pozzallo (Sicily). This was due to their refusal to obey orders from maritime authorities.

Start date: May 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- May 2019: An investigation was opened against the captain, the coordinator, and the shipowner for "aiding and abetting illegal migration".
- October 2021: The Public Prosecutor's Office in Agrigento (Sicily) requested the dismissal of the charges against the shipowner and shipmaster.

- January 2022: The judge for preliminary investigations of the Tribunal of Agrigento (Sicily) dismissed the charges against the shipmaster and the head of mission.

Start date: March 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- March 2019: An investigation was launched by the Prosecutor of Agrigento (Sicily) against the captain and the mission head for “aiding illegal immigration” and for refusing to obey a warship.
- December 2020: The Tribunal of Agrigento (Sicily) closed the investigation and dismissed the case.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: October 2024
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- October 2024: After disembarking 58 migrants in Porto Empedocle, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days and imposed a fine of 4,000 EUR on the NGO. The vessel was detained on the ground that it carried out a rescue operation even though it was not suitable, according to the authorities, for carrying out such activity.
- November 2024: An appeal was lodged at the Civil Court of Agrigento (Sicily) against the detention order and the fine.

Start date: April 2024
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- April 2024: After disembarking 56 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days in the port of Pozzallo (Sicily) and imposed a fine on the NGO for instigating the escape of migrants from the Libyan Coast Guard.
- April 2024: An appeal was lodged at the Tribunal of Ragusa against the detention and the fine.
- April 2024: The court rejected the request to suspend the detention at the port.

Start date: October 2023
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- October 2023: After disembarking 69 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days in the port of Trapani and imposed a fine on the NGO for failing to inform the Libyan

Coordination Centre and for not requesting the assignment of a port of disembarkation in Libya.

- November 2023: An appeal was lodged at the Court of Trapani against the detention and the fine.
- April 2026: The Court of Trapani declared the detention and the fine unlawful.

Start date: December 2021
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- December 2021: The High Court of Italy confirmed the seizure of the ship.
- January 2022: The vessel released.

Start date: November 2020
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- November 2020: The vessel was blocked in the port of Venice for mandatory maintenance work as provided for by the Italian Naval Register.

Start date: September 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- September 2019: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure in Lampedusa (Sicily) for violating the Security Decree Bis. The Court of Agrigento orders 300,000 EUR fine on the NGO.
- February 2020: The ship was released by the Palermo Court (Sicily).

Start date: May 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- May 2019: The vessel was seized in Lampedusa due to accusations against the captain and the mission head.
- May 2019: The Prosecutors of Agrigento (Sicily) did not uphold the seizure but ordered another type of impoundment to collect more evidence.

Start date: March 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- March 2019: The vessel was seized in Lampedusa due to accusations against the captain and the mission head, according to which they were involved in facilitating irregular migration.

- March 2019: The ship was released after a week.

Ship 'Mediterranea' – operated by *Mediterranea Saving Humans* – operational (formerly 'Sea-Eye 4', operated by *Sea-Eye*)

Measures against the vessel

Start date: November 2025
Status: Detention order annulled
Key steps:

- November 2025: After disembarking 92 people in Porto Empedocle, the port authorities issued a detention order of 60 days and imposed a fine of 10,000 EUR for not complying with instructions regarding the assigned port of safety.
- November 2025: An appeal was lodged against the detention and the fine.
- December 2025: The Civil Court of Agrigento suspended the administrative detention of the ship.
- January 2026: The Civil Court of Agrigento upheld its previous ruling, thereby annulling the detention.

Start date: August 2025
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- August 2025: After disembarking 10 people in Trapani, the port authorities issued a detention order of 60 days and imposed a fine of 10,000 EUR for not complying with instructions regarding the assigned port of safety in Genoa.
- August 2025: An appeal was lodged.
- October 2025: The Civil Court of Trapani (Sicily) suspended the administrative detention of the ship.

Start date: March 2024
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- March 2024: After disembarking 145 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 60 days at the port of Reggio Calabria (Calabria) and imposed a fine of 3,333 EUR on the NGO for not following the instructions of the Libyan Coast Guard.
- March 2024: The NGO lodged an appeal against the detention.
- June 2024: The Civil Court of Reggio Calabria decided that the detention and the fine were

unlawful and released the vessel.

Start date: October 2023
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- October 2023: After disembarking 48 people, the port authorities detained the vessel at the port of Vibo Marina (Calabria) for 20 days and imposed a fine of 3,333 EUR on the NGO for not following the instructions of the Libyan Coast Guard.
- November 2023: The NGO filed a lawsuit against the detention before the Civil Court of Vibo Valentia (Calabria).
- December 2024: The Civil Court of Vibo Valentia declared the detention unlawful and annulled the fine imposed by the port authorities.

Start date: August 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- August 2023: The port authorities detained the vessels at port of Salerno (Campania) for 20 days and imposed a fine of 3,333 EUR on the NGO for conducting three consecutive rescue operations and not disembarking after the first one, as required by Law No. 15/2023.
- October 2023: The NGO lodged an appeal against the detention and the fine.

Start date: June 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- June 2023: After disembarking 49 people, the port authorities detained the vessel in the port of Ortona (Abruzzo) for 20 days and imposed a fine of 3,333 EUR on the NGO.
- June 2023: The NGO filed a lawsuit at the Civil Court of Chieti against the 20-day detention in Ortona and the associated fine.

Start date: June 2021
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- June 2021: The vessel was seized after a port state control due to technical irregularities related to maritime security, including the (transportation of too many passengers.
- August 2021: The vessel was released with the support of Ship Safety Department of BG Verkehr (German insurance company).

Ship 'NADIR', operated by *RESQSHIP* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2025
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2025: After disembarking 59 people in Lampedusa, the port authorities imposed a detention order of 20 days and a fine of 3,333 EUR, for refusing to inform the Maltese Coast Guard during a rescue operation in international waters.
- August 2025: The vessel was released.

Start date: June 2025
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- June 2025: After disembarking 112 people in Lampedusa, the port authorities imposed a detention order of 20 days for allegedly not immediately informing the Tunisian and Libyan authorities of the rescue operation and for not complying with instructions regarding the assigned port of safety.
- June 2025: The vessel was released.

Ship 'Aurora', operated by *Sea-Watch* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: April 2026
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- April 2026: After disembarking 44 people in Lampedusa, the port authorities issued a detention order for 45 days and imposed a fine of 7,500 EUR for not following the instructions of the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre.

Start date: September 2025
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- September 2025: After disembarking 75 people in Pozzallo, the port authorities of the port authorities of Agrigento detained the vessel, claiming it could have safely reached the assigned port of Reggio Calabria.

Start date: July 2025
Status: Detention order annulled
Key steps:

- July 2025: After disembarking 70 people in Lampedusa (Sicily), the port authorities issued a detention order of 20 days for failing to comply with instructions from the maritime rescue coordination centre to use the designated port of Pozzallo (Ragusa) instead.
- July 2025: An appeal was lodged against the detention order.
- August 2025: After 18 days blocked in the port of Lampedusa, the Civil Court of Agrigento suspended the detention order.
- October 2025: The Civil Court of Agrigento confirmed its judgment.

Start date: August 2023
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- August 2023: The vessel disembarked 72 rescued people in Lampedusa (Sicily) instead of heading towards the allocated place of safety in Trapani, due to the lack of fuel to reach Trapani. Following an inspection by the Italian Coast Guard, the prefecture of Agrigento imposed a fine (3,333 EUR) and blocked the vessel.
- September 2023: The NGO appealed against the detention and the fine before the Civil Court of Agrigento.
- January 2026: The Civil Court of Agrigento declared the detention and the fine unlawful.

Start date: June 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- June 2023: The vessel was blocked in port of Lampedusa (Sicily) for 20 days and fined 3,333 EUR for refusing to head to the assigned port after its rescue operation and instead proceeding to the nearest one.
- June 2023: Sea-Watch appealed the detention and the fine and sought interim measures to request the release of the vessel.

Ship 'Sea-Watch 5', operated by *Sea-Watch* – operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: May 2026
Status: Procedure ongoing

Key steps:

- May 2026: After disembarking 166 people, the Brindisi court opened a criminal investigation against the vessel's captain on charges of "aiding and abetting unauthorised immigration."

Measures against the vessel

Start date: March 2026
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- March 2026: After disembarking 93 people in Trapani, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days and imposed a fine of 10,000 EUR, for refusing to inform the Libyan Coast Guard during a rescue operation in international waters and for not respecting the authorities' designation of a distant port of disembarkation.
- March 2026: An appeal was lodged against the detention order.

Start date: January 2026
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- January 2026: After disembarking 18 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 15 days and imposed a fine of 7,500 EUR, alleging refusal to inform the Libyan Coast Guard on its rescue operation.
- January 2026: An appeal was lodged against the detention order.
- February 2026: The Civil Court of Catania found the detention unlawful and annulled the fine.

Start date: September 2024
Status: Detention order annulled
Key steps:

- September 2024: After disembarking 288 people, the port authorities issued a detention order of 20 days and imposed a fine of 10,000 EUR for conducting a rescue operation without authorisation from the Libyan Coast Guard.
- February 2025: The Civil Court of Rome declared the detention unlawful.

Start date: March 2024
Status: Procedure pending, vessel released
Key steps:

- March 2024: After disembarking 56 people, the port authorities of Pozzallo (Sicily) detained the vessel for 20 days for not following the instructions of the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and imposed a fine.

- March 2024: The Court of Ragusa (Sicily) issued a suspensive order because it did not find any unlawful behaviour.
- April 2024: The NGO sent a notice to the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre to not subordinate the activities of SAR vessels to the instructions of the Libyan Coast Guard.
- October 2024: The Court of Ragusa declared the fine unlawful stating that the vessel did not contribute to creating any danger. The judgement is not final, as the authorities appealed.

Reconnaissance aircrafts 'Seabird 1', operated by *Sea-Watch* – operational

Measures against the aircraft

Start date: August 2025
Status: Aircraft released
Key steps:

- August 2025: The Italian Civil Aviation Authority imposed a detention order with immediate effect on the aircraft 'Seabird 1', claiming that it did not inform them immediately during a previous aerial operation conducted in June 2025.

Start date: May 2024
Status: Fine annulled
Key steps:

- May 2024: The Italian Civil Aviation Authority imposed a fine of 2,000 EUR on the aircraft 'Seabird 1' for disregarding the requirement to depart for search operation from specific airports in Sicily.
- May 2024: The Court of Agrigento annulled the fine.

Ship 'Sea-Watch 4', operated by *Sea-Watch* in collaboration with *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: September 2020
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- September 2020: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure at the Port of

Palermo (Sicily) for technical irregularities related to maritime security.

- October 2020: The vessel appealed against the blockade.
- December 2020: The Regional Administrative Court of Palermo stayed the proceedings and referred the case to the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU).
- March 2021: The vessel was released pending outcome of the preliminary ruling.
- May 2021: The vessel was detained again after appeal of the Italian Coast Guard.
- September 2021: The vessel was released and headed for the port of Burriana (Spain) to prepare for further operations.
- August 2022: The CJEU delivered its preliminary ruling, declaring that rescue at sea is a duty and port state controls must not be used arbitrarily against NGOs in the future. The CJEU also emphasised that Italy cannot demand a certification that does not exist under the German flag. Additionally, the number of rescued persons is not a valid reason for detention. While port state controls may continue to take place, they must be carried out on schedule or with a valid reason.

Ship 'Sea-Watch 3', operated by *Sea-Watch* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: June 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- June 2019: The captain was investigated by the Prosecutor of Agrigento (Sicily) for resisting or engaging in violence against warships and for "aiding illegal immigration". The captain was placed under house arrest in Lampedusa.
- July 2019: The Court of Agrigento (Sicily) did not validate the arrest, resulting in the captain's release.
- January 2020: The Court of Cassation (Rome) rejected the appeal of the Public Prosecutor of Agrigento (Sicily) regarding the validation of the arrest.
- May 2021: The Prosecutor of Agrigento (Sicily) dismissed the charges against the captain, Carola Rackete.

Start date: January 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- January 2019: The Prosecutor of Catania (Sicily) initiated an investigation against crew members for violating environmental laws, navigation safety, and for "facilitating illegal

immigration".

- February 2019: The case was discontinued, no further investigations were initiated; and the crew members were cleared of all accusations.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: September 2022
Status: Vessel demolished and recycled
Key steps:

- September 2022: After having disembarked 428 rescued persons, Sea-Watch 3 was detained following an inspection by the Reggio Calabria Port Authority.
- November 2022: An appeal against the detention of Sea-Watch 3, including a request for interim measures, was filed with the Administrative Regional Tribunal of Reggio Calabria.
- January 2023: The court rejected the request for interim measures.
- April 2023: The ship, granted with a Single Voyage Permission, left the port of Reggio Calabria to reach a scrapyard in Belgium, where it was demolished and recycled.

Start date: March 2021
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- March 2021: The vessel was seized in port of Augusta (Sicily) and was allowed to proceed to shipyard in the port of Burriana (Spain) in May 2021.
- July 2021: The ship became operational again.

Start date: July 2020
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2020: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure due to technical irregularities related to maritime security. In September 2020, it was granted a single voyage authorisation to proceed to Burriana (Spain).
- February 2021: The ship was released.

Start date: May 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- May 2019: The vessel was seized in Lampedusa (Sicily).
- June 2019: The ship was released.

Start date: June 2019

Status: Detention order annulled
Key steps:

- June 2019: The vessel was seized in Lampedusa (Sicily) due to accusations against the captain and the mission head.
- December 2019: The ship was released.
- February 2026: The Civil Court of Palermo (Sicily) declared the detention unlawful, ordered the Italian State to pay 76,000 EUR in compensation, and dismissed the charges against the captain.

Ship 'Humanity 1', operated by *SOS Humanity* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: February 2026
Status:
Key steps:

- February 2026: After disembarking 33 people, the port authorities have issued a detention order of 60 days and imposed a fine of 10,000 EUR for failing to inform the Libyan Coordination Centre.

Start date: December 2025
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- December 2025: After disembarking 85 people in Ortona (Abruzzo), the port authority issued a detention order of 20 days and imposed a fine of 10,000 EUR for failing to communicate with Libyan Coast Guard.
- March 2026: The court of Chieti suspends the enforceability of the administrative detention of the ship and of the fine

Start date: March 2024
Status: Detention order and fine annulled
Key steps:

- March 2024: After disembarking 77 people, the port authorities detained the vessel for 20 days in the port of Crotone (Calabria) and imposed a fine on the NGO for not following the instructions of the Libyan authorities.
- March 2024: An appeal was lodged against the detention.
- April 2024: The Civil Court of Crotone released the vessel.

- June 2024: The Civil Court of Crotone declared the detention and the fine unlawful.
- June 2025: The Court of Appeal of Catanzaro upheld the lower court's ruling by rejecting the Italian government's appeal against the judgment and declared the detention unlawful.

Start date: December 2023
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- December 2023: After disembarking 46 people, the port authorities detained the vessel in the port of Crotone (Calabria) and imposed a fine of 3,333 EUR on the NGO for not following the instructions of the Libyan Coast Guard and the Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre to leave the area.
- December 2023: The NGO filed a lawsuit against the detention and the fine.

Ship 'Iuventa', operated by *Jugend Rettet* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: July 2018
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- July 2018: The Prosecutor of Trapani (Sicily) opened investigations into individual (former) crew members.
- March 2021: The prosecutor brought charges against individual (former) crew members for "aiding and abetting illegal immigration", along with staff member from MSF and Save the Children (see Vos Prudence and Vos Hestia).
- May 2022: Preliminary court hearings of the 21 former crew members started.
- June 2022: The proceedings were suspended due to procedural errors by the prosecution.
- February 2023: The court rejected the request of the Prime Minister's Office to join the trial as plaintiffs. The Ministry of the Interior was formally admitted as a third party.
- March 2023: The judge upheld Italy's jurisdiction and referred the question of territorial competence to the Court of Cassation (Rome).
- May 2023: The judge rejected previous claims of inadequate evidence sharing. Iuventa's lawyers submit a constitutional complaint challenging the legal basis of the crew's criminalisation for facilitating irregular entry.
- June 2023: The judge rejected Iuventa's constitutional complaint.
- February 2024: The Trapani prosecutor requested the dismissal of the case and the return of

the vessel, which had been irreparably damaged.

- April 2024: The preliminary hearing judge decided to dismiss the case due to insufficient evidence.
- May 2024: The Tribunal of Trapani published the reasoning behind the acquittal.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: August 2017
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- August 2017: The prosecutor initiated a preventive seizure of the ship.
- August 2017: The ship was ordered to the port of Lampedusa.
- April 2018: The Supreme Court of Cassation (Rome) confirmed the seizure of the ship.
- December 2022: After being held in the port of Trapani for five years and abandoned by the harbour master's office, Iuventa became unseaworthy and was in danger of sinking. The court ordered that extensive maintenance work must be carried out on the ship to restore it to the condition it was in before it was seized in August 2017.
- February 2023: The Iuventa crew filed a criminal complaint with the Trapani Prosecutor's Office, requesting an investigation into the abandonment and destruction of the ship.

Ship 'Alan Kurdi', operated by *Sea-Eye* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: October 2020
Status: Procedure pending, vessel released
Key steps:

- October 2020: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure in Olbia (Sardinia) due to technical irregularities related to maritime security, including the transportation of too many passengers.
- January 2021: Sea-Eye filed lawsuit against Italian Ministry of Transport and the Olbia Port Authority for the blockage.
- April 2021: The vessel was released pending decision on the legality of the detention.
- July 2021: The vessel was sold to the NGO ResQPeople for financial reasons.

Start date: May 2020

Status: Procedure pending, vessel released
Key steps:

- May 2020: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure in Palermo (Sicily) due to technical irregularities related to maritime security.
- June 2020: The Italian Coast Guard granted a single voyage authorisation to proceed to Spain to fix the issues.
- August 2020: Sea-Eye filed a lawsuit against the Italian Ministry of Transport and the Palermo Port Authority for the blockage.

Ship 'Vos Hestia', operated by *Save the Children* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: August 2017
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- August 2017: The Prosecutor of Trapani (Sicily) initiated investigations against MSF staff, along with staff from Save the Children and Jugend Rettet staff, for allegedly aiding irregular migration.
- March 2021: The Prosecutor's Office in Trapani charged the Vos Hestia crew with accusations of "aiding and abetting illegal migration".
- May 2024: The Tribunal of Trapani published the reasoning behind the acquittal (see 'Iuventa' for more details).

Start date: October 2017
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- October 2017: The police conducted a search on board after an undercover agent had worked on the ship.
- October 2017: The captain was interviewed by the Deputy Prosecutor of Trapani and the investigation was discontinued.

Ship 'Vos Prudence', operated by *Médecins Sans Frontières* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: November 2018
Status: Procedure pending
Key steps:

- November 2018: The Italian magistrates accused the crew of the ship, along with the crew of the Aquarius vessel, of alleged illegal management of waste before the Criminal Court of Catania.
- September 2023: The trial opened before the Criminal Court of Catania.

Start date: August 2017
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- August 2017: The Prosecutor of Trapani (Sicily) initiated investigations against MSF staff, along with staff of Save the Children and Jugend Rettet staff, for aiding irregular migration.
- March 2021: The Prosecutor of Trapani concluded its investigations concerning allegations of facilitating irregular migration.
- May 2021: The MSF staff was summoned to a preliminary hearing before the Criminal Court of Trapani.
- May 2024: The Trapani tribunal published the reasoning of the acquittal (see 'Iuventa' for more details).

Reconnaissance aircraft 'Moonbird', operated by *Sea-Watch* with *Humanitarian Pilots Initiative* – not operational

Measures against the aircraft

Start date: September 2020
Status: Aircraft released
Key steps:

- September 2020: The aircraft was grounded by the Italian Civil Aviation Authority for spending too many hours at sea and posing a risk of endangering ongoing SAR operations carried out by state actors and navigation safety in the area.
- October 2020: The aircraft was released.

Ship 'Alex Mediterranea', operated by *Mediterranea Saving Humans* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: July 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- July 2019: The Prosecutor of Agrigento (Sicily) initiated an investigation against the captain and the mission head for "aiding illegal immigration" and for refusing to obey a warship. The prosecutor imposed a fine of 65,000 EUR on them for violating the Security Decree Bis.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- July 2019: The vessel was seized in Lampedusa for violating the Security Degree Bis.
- February 2020: The ship was released.
- The vessel has not been operational since March 2020 due to COVID-19 protocols.

Ship 'Eleonore', operated by *Mission Lifeline* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: September 2019
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- September 2019: The Prosecutor of Ragusa (Sicily) initiated an investigation against the captain and the mission head for "aiding of illegal immigration". The prosecutor imposed a fine of 300.000 EUR on them for violating the Security Decree Bis.
- June 2021: The Court of Ragusa (Sicily) lifted the fine of 300,000 EUR imposed on the captain, Claus-Peter Reisch.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: September 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- September 2019: The vessel was subjected to an administrative seizure in Pozzallo (Sicily) for violating the Security Decree Bis.

Ship 'Aquarius', operated by *SOS Mediterranée* with *Médecins Sans Frontières* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: November 2018
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- November 2018: The Prosecutor of Catania (Sicily) initiated an investigation against staff members of the Aquarius (operating from January 2017 to May 2018) for alleged "illegal management of waste".
- September 2023: The trial opened before the Criminal Court of Catania (Sicily).
- July 2026: The Criminal Court of Catania dismissed the allegations related to the management of onboard waste.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: November 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- November 2018: The Prosecutor of Catania (Sicily) ordered the seizure of the vessel *in absentia* (while docked in Marseille) and the seizure of 200.000 EUR from MSF.
- January 2019: The Court of Catania (Sicily) annulled the decision on the seizure of 200.000 EUR.

Ship 'Golfo Azzurro', operated by *ProActiva Open Arms* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: May 2017
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- May 2017: The Prosecutor's Office in Palermo initiated investigations against the crew, who were accused of criminal association with the aim of "facilitating illegal immigration" and of an alleged connivance with traffickers from Libya.
- June 2018: The Tribunal of Palermo discontinued the investigation.

Spain

Ship 'Open Arms', operated by *ProActiva Open Arms* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: January 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- January 2019: Spanish maritime authorities denied permission for the ship to sail due to "violations of maritime regulations", resulting in the ship being blocked in Spain.
- April 2019: Spanish authorities allowed the vessel to deliver humanitarian aid to refugee camps in Lesvos and Samos but prohibited it from conducting SAR operations.

Ship 'Aita Mari', operated by *Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: January 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- January 2019: Spanish maritime authorities denied the ship permission to sail due to "violations of maritime regulations", resulting in the ship being blocked in Spain.
- April 2019: Spanish authorities allowed the vessel to deliver humanitarian aid to refugee camps in Lesvos and Samos but prohibited it from conducting SAR operations.

Ship 'Louise Michel', operated by *M.V. Louise Michel* – operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: October 2020
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- October 2020: The vessel was blocked at the port of Burriana (Spain) due to registration issues.
- January 2022: The vessel returned to operation.

Germany

Ship 'Mare Liberum', operated by *Mare Liberum* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: September 2020
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- April 2020: The ship was seized for not respecting safety requirements stipulated by the German Professional Association for Transport and Traffic.
- September 2020: The Administrative Court of Hamburg granted the ship permission to set sail.

Start date: April 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- April 2019: The ship was seized for not respecting safety requirements stipulated by the German Professional Association for Transport and Traffic.
- May 2019: The Administrative Court of Hamburg granted the ship permission to set sail.
- September 2019: The Higher Administrative Court of Hamburg upheld the decision of the Administrative Court.

The Netherlands

Ship 'Sea-Watch 3', operated by *Sea-Watch* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: April 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- April 2019: The Dutch government imposed more stringent technical safety requirements for the ship without a transition period and blocked the ship.
- May 2019: The court in The Hague ruled that the new requirements were legal but the transitional period was too short. The judges lifted the blockade and suspended the new requirements until 15 August 2019.
- August 2019: The court in The Hague ruled on the appeal lodged by Sea- Watch and extended the transitional period until December 2019.

Start date: January 2019
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- January 2019: Extensive inspections were mandated by the Dutch authorities, resulting in the ship being blocked in Italy.
- February 2019: The flag state granted the ship permission to set sail again to its planned shipyard for maintenance.

Malta

Ship 'Lifeline', operated by *Mission Lifeline* – not operational

Measures against crew members or staff

Start date: July 2018
Status: Acquittal
Key steps:

- July 2018: The Public Prosecutor's Service accused the captain for not following orders of the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and illegally entering Maltese territorial waters.
- May 2019: The Court of Valletta fined the captain 10.000 EUR for operating a ship that was not properly registered for rescue operations.
- January 2020: The Court of Appeal of Malta overturned the decision and cleared the captain of all charges.

Measures against the vessel

Start date: June 2018
Status: Vessel confiscated
Key steps:

- June 2018: Maltese authorities launched investigations due to potential issues with the registration of the ship under the Dutch flag.
- June 2018: The vessel 'Lifeline' was impounded.

Ship 'The Sea-Eye', operated by *Sea-Eye* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2018: Maltese authorities launched investigations due to potential issues with the registration of the ship under the Dutch flag.

- December 2018: The ship was released.
- June 2019: Sea-Eye was transferred to Hamburg, where it has since served as a documentation ship for SAR.

Ship 'Seefuchs', operated by *Sea-Eye* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2018: Maltese authorities launched investigations due to potential issues with the registration of the ship under the Dutch flag.
- December 2018: The ship was released.

Ship 'Sea-Watch 3', operated by *Sea-Watch* – not operational

Measures against the vessel

Start date: July 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2018: Maltese authorities launched investigations due to potential issues with the registration of the ship under the Dutch flag.
- August 2018: The Dutch government provided a report to the Maltese authorities confirming the correct registration of the Sea-Watch 3.
- October 2018: Sea-Watch 3 was cleared to leave Malta after three months of detention.

Reconnaissance aircraft 'Moonbird', operated by *Sea-Watch* with *Humanitarian Pilots Initiative* – operational

Measures against the aircraft

Start date: July 2018
Status: Vessel released
Key steps:

- July 2018: Maltese authorities blocked the aircraft due to a lack of permits for SAR operations.
- October 2018: The aircraft resumed operations.

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