

**Joint press release of the Palermo Charter Platform Process on the results of the EU Summit of Home Affairs Ministers on 23 September in Malta and the consequent negotiations on 8 October in Luxembourg**

10/09/2019

The Malta Agreement ("agreement on temporary reception and distribution mechanism") is not a hard-won solution, but nothing more than a partial emergency relief. We, European civil society initiatives and networks, mayors of European cities and search and rescue non-governmental organizations, demand a real solution that is adequate to the scale of the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean Sea.

Over 15.000 people have died in the Mediterranean Sea in the last five years. "Every single person is one too many," says Alessandra Sciorba from Mediterranea. "When we receive distress calls from people on boats, they fear both to drown and to be returned to Libya. The outsourcing of EU border control to Libyan forces and mass interceptions at sea have to stop," demands Maurice Stierl from WatchTheMed Alarm Phone. "The establishment of an operational and sustainable European rescue mission is absolutely necessary in order to prevent deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. Sadly, it is still missing in the Malta agreement", adds Sciorba.

The deal signed in Malta is disingenuous, as it ignores the fact that many civil rescue ships are either blocked or confiscated by state authorities. Additionally, it does not address the situation into which merchant ships are forced. "Future relocation mechanisms must take them into account in order to prevent further cases of non-assistance and illegal push backs to Libya. Who is going to be responsible for setting up a rescue mission that corresponds to the scope of the crisis? Frankly, the proposed measures fall short of our mildest expectations." admits Oliver Kulikowski from Sea-Watch.

The temporary disembarkation agreement does not in any sense address the main cause of flight - the Libyan detention camps. The EU refuses, time and again, to come up with any viable solution for the people caught in the crossfire of the Libyan civil war. "The collaboration between the EU and the criminal Libyan Coast Guard results in illegal push-backs banned by international law. This is not a solution: it makes the unbearable situation of the refugees trapped in Libya even worse," claims Alina Lyapina from the German movement Seebruecke. "We demand an immediate and direct evacuation of all refugees from the Libyan detention camps to Europe. Anything less than that is unacceptable to us," she continues.

We emphasize that the large reception capacities of European cities must be taken into account. In Germany alone, over 100 cities and municipalities are willing to take in refugees. "For us, saving lives at sea or, really, anywhere is not simply an act of goodwill. Providing aid to those in need is an integral part of the society we want to live in, that is based on transnational solidarity, universal human rights, acceptance and global openness," declares Stephan Neher, Mayor of the German city of Rottenburg on Neckar.

The awful tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea and in Moria can be avoided in a simple way: we call on the EU states to remove all restrictions on civil society and cities' initiatives on migration policy. We want to act responsibly, welcome the rescued and treat them with dignity and respect. "If they seek a new home, we are ready to offer them one - in our

communities. They can be Neapolitans, Palermitans, Berliners or Barcelonians if they want to.” concludes Luigi de Magistris, Mayor of Naples.

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### **What is Palermo Charter Platform Process?**

We are humanitarian and rescue NGOs, civil society organisations and activist groups, including Sea-Watch, Alarm Phone, Mediterranea, Seebrücke, Aita Mari, Jugend Rettet, Borderline Europe, Inura, Open Arms and Welcome to Europe, as well as the representatives of several European cities and municipalities, such as Naples, Barcelona and Palermo, all united under the slogan “From the Sea to the Cities!” Our network was born in Palermo in 2018 in the spirit of the Charter of Palermo, with its central demand for the right to mobility. We demand a de-confiscation of all civil rescue ships, an end to the criminalization of sea rescue and solidarity, an immediate stop to the EU collaboration with Libya and other “third countries” involved in severe human rights violations. Instead, we advocate for the “Corridors of Solidarity” - relocation and distribution of refugees and migrants to the countries of their desired destination - while drawing inspiration from the work of solidarity and sanctuary cities all over Europe.