

The EU's track record on saving lives in the Mediterranean speaks for itself. Saving lives is our top priority and we have been working relentlessly to this end. When the Juncker Commission took office, we said very clearly that ending the Italian naval operation Mare Nostrum was a mistake and sought to correct this by immediately tripling the EU's rescue capacity in the Mediterranean.

Since then four EU operations in the Mediterranean have helped rescue nearly 730,000 people at sea since 2015 with the number of people dying declining significantly when compared to the previous four years. It is not the EU's policy that is causing these tragedies – it is the cruel and dangerous business model used by traffickers and smugglers exploiting human misery and putting people's lives at risk. Rather than passing the blame, we all have to work together to put an end to this.

This is also the objective of training the Libyan coast guard to carry out search and rescue in its own SAR zone, where most deaths at sea occur. The trainings we provide focus not only on search and rescue, but also on countering the trafficking of human beings on land and at sea and to do so in respect of human rights.

At the same time, the EU continues to do its utmost to improve the dire situation of migrants in Libya. The European Union dialogue with Libyan authorities focuses on the respect for human rights of migrants and refugees, on promoting the work of UNHCR and IOM on the ground, and on pushing for the development of alternatives to detention, such as the setting up of safe spaces, to end the systematic and arbitrary detention system of migrants and refugees in Libya. In parallel, our work to evacuate people from Libya and to open up legal resettlement paths continues unabated.

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