



BOATS 4 PEOPLE

Transnational Newsletter No. 1 (April 2012)

**BOATS4PEOPLE STARTS CONCRETE MOBILISATION
JOIN THE PROJECT: ALL KINDS OF SUPPORT NEEDED!
ON TOUR FROM 1ST TO 19TH JULY BETWEEN ITALY AND TUNISIA**

Breaking news! Timetable and stations

The rough timetable is now fixed: Boats4People will start on 1st July in Cecina (Italy). Activities are in preparation for Sicily from July 5th to 7th. After that Boats4People will make several stops in Tunisian harbour cities, before arriving to the final destination of this first civil observation joint action, Lampedusa on 19th July. For more specific information, see the section 'Route of Boats4People' below.

This Euro-African cooperation project is planned as a kind of caravan with many activities and protests both

on sea and land. According to the number and type of boats that we have at our disposal today, space on the boats will be very limited. People are therefore invited to join the activities at the stops along the route and to use alternative transport, like the commercial ferry between Sicily and Tunisia on 7th July and public transport within Tunisia. We will move as a collective group of Boats4People activists, researchers, journalists and parliamentarians. Throughout the coming weeks and months of mobilisation and preparations we want to become a big transnational crowd.

Background of the project

The European border control system causes many deaths each year. In 2011 in the Mediterranean alone at least 1,500 boat migrants died during their journey (source UNHCR). Meanwhile the EU border management agency Frontex along with national navy and air forces and aided by fixed and mobile radars, controls everything that happens in the Mediterranean Sea. Boats4people aims to expose the situation at the EU borders and to point out how the EU and Frontex, the collaborating Libyan and Tunisian authorities and in cases together with NATO, are responsible for a criminal policy and the violation of human rights.

We demand:

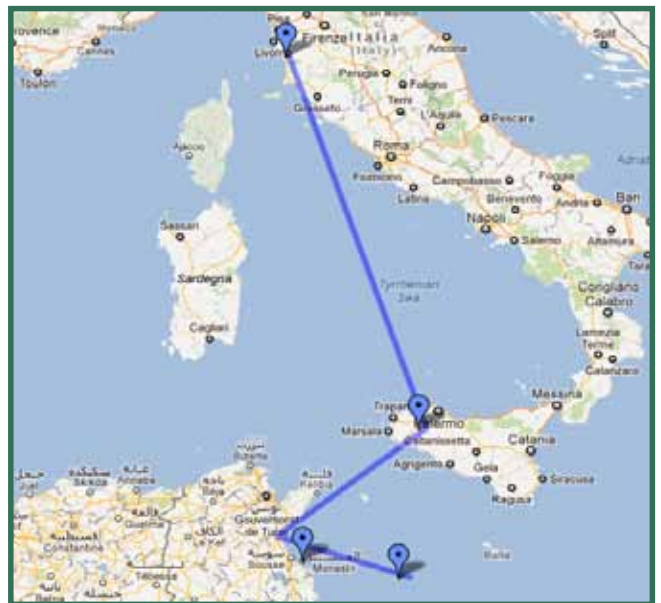
- the EU to end its violent control of maritime borders
- governments of Africa to break with the past and to refuse to sign readmission agreements which result in violations of migrants' human rights
- all countries to stop prosecuting those who rescue migrants in accordance with the law of the sea under which all sailors must "proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress" (art. 98 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).

Boats4People aims to observe the situation in the Mediterranean Sea, collect information on the situation of migrants, disseminate it in the media and denounce the role played by the EU. Boats4People also participates in the preparation of legal files on cases of non-assistance by European military or border control boats. Another objective is to build a network of sailors to alert us to violations of migrants' human rights at sea. The cooperation between European and African organizations, activists and researchers is meant as a step towards a strong long-term alliance. By mobilizing people in the Mediterranean, Africa and Europe we strive for a Mediterranean that will become a place of solidarity and cease to be a mass grave for migrants. We advocate freedom of movement for all.

Route of Boats4People

The project will start at the beginning of July at the international annual anti-racist conference organized by ARCI in Cecina. Here Boats4People was born as an idea last year. At least one boat will depart from a port in Tuscany towards the south.

Various protests against detention and monitoring, with boats and on land, will take place in Sicily from 5th to 7th July. After that we will move towards Tunisia. We will make stops in different harbours where activities such as film screenings, exhibitions, discussions and demonstrations will be organized. We plan to arrive in Monastir on July 13th to join the meeting of the International Committee of the World Social Forum. Our final stop will be Lampedusa, symbol of the EU's violent border policy. Here various actions will take place and we will be present at the film festival on migration on July 19th.



Support for the project – what can you do?!

We need boats

In order to lead missions at sea and to bring on board more observers and witnesses (journalists, parliamentarians, activists) we need more boats. If you have any ideas for a boat that might be available during this time and in this area please contact us. Our budget can provide for one big boat, hopefully two. Alongside this we also need smaller boats to join us along the route. At the moment we are examining a few big boats. We are very much open to offers. In the coming weeks we will see which available boats are affordable and fit within the project. Please inform us about possible participating boats at: contact@boats4people.org

We need local support groups

We will intensify the promotion and mobilization of Boats4People within the coming weeks and months, and everybody is invited to support us in our preparations and efforts to spread information on the campaign, raise funds and find more and better equipment. To create a local support committee in your region contact: support@boats4people.org

We need people to join us at sea and on land

We hope a lot of people from many countries will take part in Boats4People. The project is conceived as a combination of activities both at sea and on land. We ask interested people to join the preparations and to be part of the Boats4People activist, researcher and media groups. Let us know if you are interested in joining (part of) the trip at: contact@boats4people.org

We need translators

Boats4People is an international campaign and we try to spread the information in as many languages as possible. If you want to apply your translation skills to this project, please join the Boats4People international translation team by contacting: contact@boats4people.org. Languages most needed are: Arabic, Russian and Chinese.

We need financial support

Find creative ways to raise funds for Boats4People.

Contact us if you need any information for your benefit event at: support@boats4people.org

You can make a donation to the bank account of «Boats 4 People»:
IBAN: FR76 1027 8060 1100 0202 6600 255 BIC: CMCIFR2A Owner: Migreurop
Or through our website by using a credit card or Paypal account.

Testimonial

Listen to the revealing and appalling story of Abu Kurke.

Abu Kurke is one of 9 survivors from the boat carrying 72 migrants from Libya to Italy that drifted on the sea for two weeks in March and April last year. Up until now it is not clear why a military ship and helicopter, which both had contact with the boat in distress, didn't act. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe conducted an investigation into this case. The report was released on March 29th, and its conclusions condemn the Italian search and rescue authorities, NATO, the flag states of naval vessels in the area, the Libyan authorities and reckless smugglers. "Many opportunities to save the lives of the persons on board were lost," the committee concludes. NATO refuses to allow access to the log file in order to identify the officials responsible for the helicopter and military ship that were in contact with the boat in distress but ignored the call for help. To read the report see: The PACE Migration Committee report, "**Lives lost in the Mediterranean Sea: who is responsible?**".

Also in relation to this case, human rights groups sent letters on March 26th to NATO's Maritime Command and state members to request the provision of information to help clarify the chain of events that led to the deaths of the 63 boat migrants. Boats4People has joined this call. Find the letter **here**.

Groups involved

Boats 4 People is an international organisation, created with the aim of defending migrants' rights at sea. It brings together the following organisations:

International networks:

Afrique-Europe-Interact
Euro-African network Migreurop
FIDH (International Federation For Human Rights)

France:

CCFD-Terre Solidaire (Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement)
FASTI (Fédération des Associations de Travailleurs Immigrés)
Cimade
GISTI (Groupe d'Information et de Soutien des Immigrés)
RESF 13 (Réseau Éducation Sans Frontières Bouches du Rhône)

Germany:

Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg (Refugee Council Hamburg)
Welcome to Europe

Italy:

ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana)

Mali:

AME (Association Malienne des Expulsés)
ARACEM (Association des Refoulés d'Afrique Centrale au Mali)

Morocco:

ABCDS (Association Beni Znassen pour la Culture, le Développement et la Solidarité)
GADEM (Groupe antiraciste d'accompagnement et de défense des étrangers et migrants)

Netherlands:

All Included

Tunisia:

CETUMA (Centre de Tunis pour la Migration et l'Asile)
FTDES (Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Économiques et Sociaux)

Contacts by country

Germany: germany@boats4people.org
Netherlands: info@allincluded.nl
Italy: italia@boats4people.org
Others: contact@boats4people.org



The current situation in the Mediterranean

The political climate concerning migrants at sea, at borders, or in detention appears to be static, yet every week there are new cases of deaths and policy changes, rule-bending and creation of legislation. In March in one week alone, nearly 200 migrants tried to cross the Mediterranean either landing exhausted and dehydrated on Lampedusa, or found adrift off the coast of the European Union. This, of course, came with tragedy. In one of these cases alone 5 people lost their lives, and others were found close to death. Our eyes are fixed on the European response to this, but we are rarely surprised when these events are merely commented on.

March 2012 saw both the European Commissioner for Home Affairs **shaming** Europe's response to the asylum seekers of the 'Arab Spring', and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees **condemning** Europe's 'schizophrenic' reaction to the topic of migration in general. By the end of March the EU announced the development of a '**Resettlement Programme**' for refugees, yet there is still no consensus on a Common European Asylum System.

Greece, a country that the European Court of Human Rights deemed unsuitable for asylum seekers to be returned to, announced in March the creation of **30 new detention centres** for migrants, with the help of EU funding. Following this announcement Greece started a massive sweep-and-arrest campaign in the centre of Athens. This operation **Pogrom in Athens** has so far resulted in 2,000 people being placed in custody, of which 420 were arrested.

We call on all activists, migrants and supporters of migrants' solidarity networks to participate in our action and help transform the Mediterranean from a space of denial of rights to a space of solidarity and Freedom of Movement.

Website: www.boats4people.org
Twitter and Facebook: Boats 4 People
Contact committee: contact@boats4people.org

This newsletter provides the latest news on Boats4People and will be distributed frequently throughout the coming months. To receive the newsletters subscribe [here](#).