



Bruxelles, 27.07.2020

Dear Commissioner Johansson,

We are writing to you to express our great concern about the situation we are witnessing in Mediterranean Sea and that would most probably get worse in the coming weeks.

As you are well aware, thousands of people have lost their lives in recent years when attempting to cross the Mediterranean. The summer season is a strong incentive for departures often resulting in shipwrecks and tragedies. In the absence of a search and rescue mechanism in the central Mediterranean, these tragedies can be avoided only by the presence and intervention of other ships, either NGOs, merchant or other civil vessels that in an emergency situation act in accordance with European and international law of the sea and the sense of humanity.

However, rescue operations are not followed by a rapid disembarkation in a place of safety. Beyond that fact and in compliance also with Article 19 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, we cannot consider as a place of safety a country where there is a serious risk to “be subjected to the death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”, which is the case in Libya today.

We often witness to discharges of duties and responsibilities between Member States and, as a result, to a further and long stay in the sea in extreme and unsustainable conditions for the crews and the people on board.

We deeply regret that the mechanism of voluntary relocation is still ineffective and slow. In almost all cases this lack of efficiency becomes the reason for refusing disembarkation.

We believe that sea rescue and rapid disembarkation in a safe place are duties that cannot be derogated. At the same time, we consider it necessary to strengthen the mechanisms of solidarity and sharing of responsibility between the Member States.



We know that you are aware of this situation and that the European Commission is working on structural proposals. However, while we are looking for a better regulatory framework, we should do everything possible in the current context.

That is why we urge you, in the short term, to do everything in your power to ensure an effective solidarity and to make the current voluntary relocation mechanism fast and functioning during the summer time, the “high season”. In the medium term we need a European coordination mechanism of SAR operations and a mandatory relocation mechanism of people arriving to the European Union. This particular moment, in which assist to an increase in departures coinciding with the Covid crisis, requires a particular attention and a stronger commitment.

We are aware of the operational difficulties that this entails, but we believe that a change of perspective and greater determination is essential and urgent.

Sincerely,

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