



HOW MANY MORE TRAGIC DEATHS AT SEA?

The NGO Committee on Migration, deeply concerned about the recent tragedies of migrants and refugees dying in the Mediterranean, calls upon the European Member States to take immediate action to put into place effective search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and to adopt a comprehensive plan of action to find long-term solutions to the global migration crisis.

So far this year, more than 1750 migrants and refugees--- fleeing from violent persecution, civil war, armed conflict, and economic destitution---have drowned in the Mediterranean, their deaths the inevitable consequence of inadequate search and rescue operations. In the wake of failure by the European Member States to fund Operation *Mare Nostrum* last year, it was patently obvious that many more migrants and refugees were going to die at sea. Now the patently obvious has become a reality. The “high season” for crossing the Mediterranean is upon us. **How many more tragic deaths at sea will there be?**

It is imperative to put into place an effective search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean to save the lives of men, women and children at sea. No one nation should have to bear the burden of such an operation. The European Member States must find a way to share the cost and do so immediately---before more lives are lost. After an effective search and rescue operation is put into place, the European Member States and the international community must seek long-term solutions to this crisis of global migration. A **comprehensive plan of action** is needed.

To respond to the present emergency, both immediately and in the long term, the NGO Committee on Migration, in solidarity with Civil Society globally, renews its calls upon governments in the EU and beyond to:

- Set up **safe humanitarian channels** for regular migration, so that smugglers and traffickers do not have a means to operate.
- Respond **“needs-first”** to all migrants and refugees in distress at sea or on the move anywhere, followed by careful differentiation that enables each to further access the specific rights they have as refugees or asylum-seekers, children, victims of torture or human trafficking, etc.
- Invest in rights-based, protection-sensitive **operational models** that monitor departures, itineraries and arrivals.
- Significantly widen grants of temporary **humanitarian visas** to people in need of protection.
- Clearly define **annual mandatory quotas for resettlement** and other **humanitarian admissions**. It is time to adopt a straightforward formula that more fairly shares responsibility for these solutions among states, for example based on a clear percentage of a country’s population and/or gross national income.
- Increase **legal channels** for asylum processing, including abroad, and for reality-based labor migration and family re-unification.
- Actively promote the **reception and integration of migrants and refugees**, facilitating their orientation and inclusion, offering social guidance, training, employment counselling and access to the labor market.
- Achieve **political solutions** that effectively protect populations in and from war or conflict-torn countries, and address other root causes of these dangerous journeys.

In all of these actions states should more deeply engage with civil society organizations, including NGOs, churches, migrant associations, diaspora groups, and local authorities, who are key to achieving long-lasting solutions.*

*This Statement was written in collaboration with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), one of our valued partners and member NGOs.

About the NGO Committee on Migration

The NGO Committee on Migration is a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO) in consultative relationship with the United Nations. The mission of the NGO Committee on Migration is to encourage the protection of migrants and the promotion of their human rights, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.