



CIVIL SEA RESCUE ANNUAL REPORT 2017 – 2018



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„ARE WE NAIVE TO BELIEVE IN HUMANITY?“



Michael Schwickart
Head of Fundraising

“We were naive when we founded Sea-Watch”, Harald Höppner, one of the founders of Sea-Watch, said recently. He was not talking about our work, but about our belief in a Europe that would close the gap in the central Mediterranean and engage actively in sea rescue.

We were naive for another reason, too: we believed in the rule of law and in the humanitarian commitment of the EU.

However, instead of assisting people in need, Europe prefers to support the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which continuously causes the deaths of many people with their brutal interference, including the illegal abduction of displaced and fleeing persons back to Libya. The situation we currently find ourselves in is perverse. It could not be further away from the humanitarian principles we believed the European community to be based upon.

Various search and rescue (SAR) ships have been detained and prevented from rescuing for months without legal grounds. When a captain of a SAR vessel refused to violate international law by taking people back to Libya, his ship's flag was withdrawn. The captain of another rescue ship is currently standing trial in Malta, with the allegation being that he and his crew saved 234 people from drowning. If he had let them down, he would be a free man today. We could have never imagined such a situation, and we will not accept it. We continue our fight for the right to life and the right to flee. We are grateful for your support, in particular throughout the last year. It shows us how powerful the support of our community and society is, whether through direct support or broader solidarity movements such as Seebrücke demonstrations.

With this report, we want to provide you an insight into our work and show you how our projects function financially.

Best regards,

Michael Schwickart

Head of Fundraising / Crewmember

MISSION & VISION OF SEA-WATCH

MISSION & VISION

Sea-Watch e.V. is a non-profit organization conducting civil sea rescue for people in maritime distress. In the face of the humanitarian crisis at Europe's external borders, Sea-Watch provides emergency relief where state actors fail or neglect to do so. At the same time, we demand and urge European institutions to take up their responsibility towards people in maritime distress in the Mediterranean Sea by establishing formal and organised state-run rescue capacity. We demand safe and legal escape routes and a systematic effort to tackle the root causes of flight. Despite the increased repression and criminalisation of rescue NGOs by different EU member states, we have been able to continuously develop new strategies

and projects. Sea-Watch is financed solely by donations and maintains independence from any religious or political affiliations.

SAVING LIVES

Since 2015, Sea-Watch activists have been involved in the rescue of more than 37,000 people. Our crews of volunteers act quickly, responsibly and professionally. Each individual life rescued is a victory and a sign of humanity.

RAISING AWARENESS

Every humanitarian crisis has hidden political agendas. We strive to make all facets of the situation in the Mediterranean Sea public. Firstly, we share information about the fate of people

on the move. Secondly, we campaign against the grave human rights violations committed by European authorities, including warships that deliberately ignore distress calls at sea, and by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which illegally brings rescued people back to war-torn Libya.

MAKING A SEA CHANGE

Sea-Watch embodies the principle of humanity. We support all those who, in times of increasing division and public racism in Germany and other EU states, stand up for a Europe of diversity and humanity and for a political solution in the spirit of our demand for #SafePassage.

The Sea-Watch 3, 55 meters in length, is one of the best-equipped rescue ships currently deployed in the central Mediterranean Sea. Photo: Chris Grodotzki

WHY OUR MISSIONS MUST CONTINUE

War, persecution, sexual and gender based violence, hunger and poverty continue to drive hundreds of thousands of people to flee their countries of origin. Manifold developments, such as the EU-financed blockade of escape routes, in cooperation with countries such as Libya and Niger, have led to decreasing numbers of people risking the dangerous crossing of the Central Mediterranean Sea. Though the absolute number of people crossing the Mediterranean declined in 2018, the death rate amongst those attempting the crossing has significantly risen.

By the the end of September 2018, more than 22,000 refugees reached Europe via the Central Mediterranean route. When looking at these numbers, it is crucial to remember that by far not all attempts to escape Libya by sea are accounted for. Therefore, comparing the number of arrivals is more reliable. According to the UNHCR, at the height of the refugee movement in 2016, there was one death for every 40 persons who arrived safely. In 2017, this rate was similar. However, in 2018, it was one death per 17 persons arriving safely. By September, 2018, only 5 people arrived safely for every one person who had died in the crossing.

The EU is closing itself off more aggressively than ever, especially since the election of the populist right-wing government in Italy. The blockage of civil sea rescuers has become a common practice, for example by banning them from ports and seizing their ships. The unlawful blockades reached a climax

when three rescue ships, including our Sea-Watch 3, as well as our aircraft Moonbird were detained by Malta in June 2018. The thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea are accepted by powerful European politicians and are, in fact, a direct consequence of their flawed policies. Those who flee do not only face the risk of drowning, but also of being intercepted by the EU-financed so-called Libyan Coast Guard and dragged back to torture camps in Libya, which the German Federal Foreign Office has described as 'concentration-camp like'.

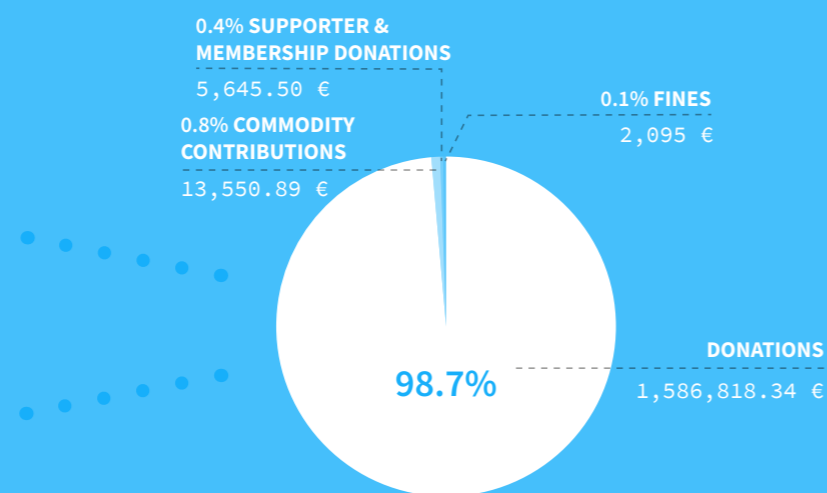
As long as the EU does not establish a supranational sea rescue programme, Sea-Watch and the other civil sea rescuers remain urgently needed in the Mediterranean Sea. Our aim is not only to save lives, but also to document legal violations and make it possible to hold those who are responsible accountable. An example of such a legal violation is an incident with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard that occurred on November 6th, 2017, which we wrote about in our previous annual report. Based on our documentation, 17 survivors of the incident are suing the state of Italy before the European Court of Human Rights. Their allegation is the violation of human rights in the Mediterranean Sea through close cooperation with the Libyan Coast Guard, and thus a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The lawsuit was submitted in May, 2018. The state of Italy was convicted in a similar case in 2012.

DONATIONS 2017 - 2018

2017 **TOTAL DONATION INCOME**
1,608,109.23 €

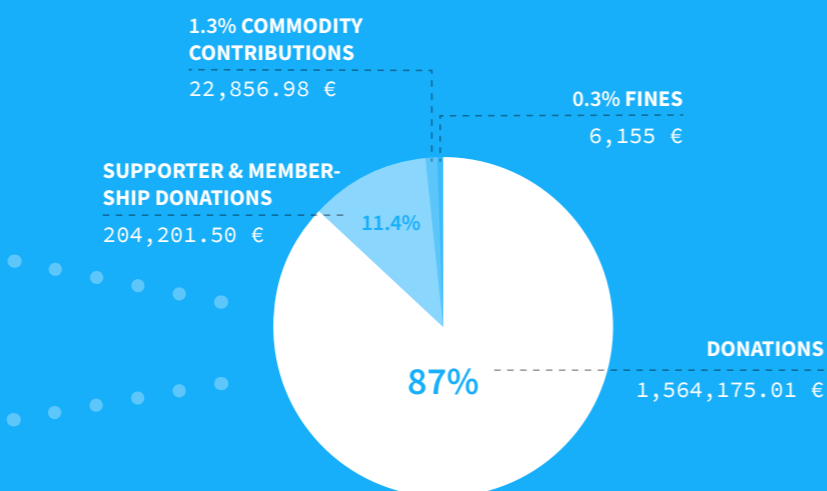
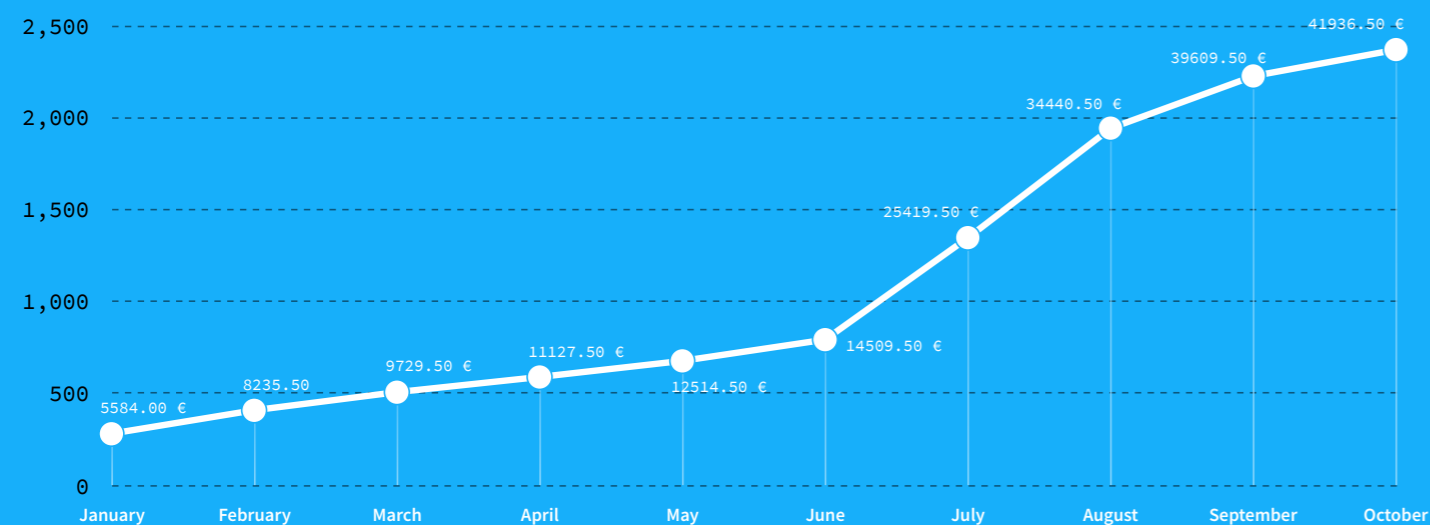
2017 **DISTRIBUTION OF DONATIONS**

FROM - TO IN EURO	AMOUNT IN EURO	QUANTITY
1.00 - 250.00	472,990.20	8,479
250.01 - 999.99	247,678.96	554
1,000.00 - 10,000.00	460,113.96	210
10,000.01 - 75,000.00	406,035.22	12



2018 **DONATION PROCEEDS**
 01.01. - 31.10.
1,797,388.49 €

2018 **DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTING MEMBERS**

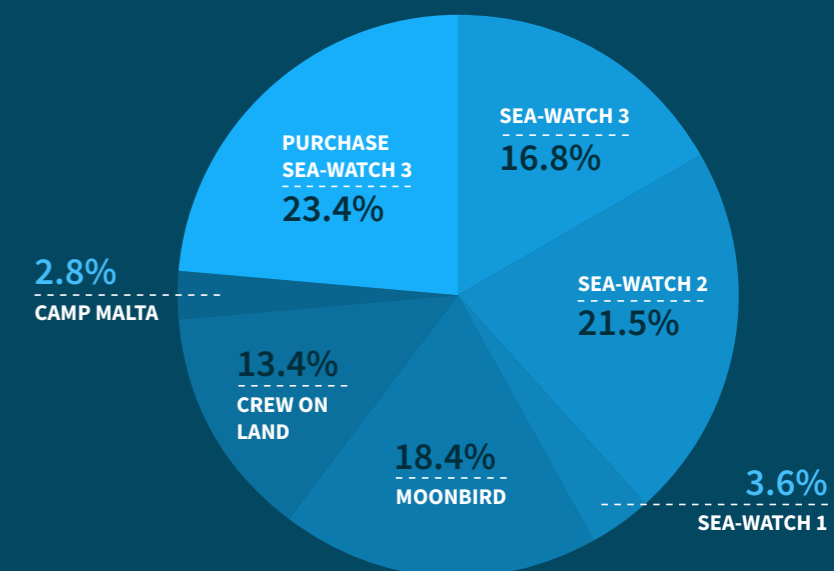


EXPENSES 2017 - 2018

2017 **TOTAL EXPENSES**
-1,954,316.42 €

2017 **DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES**

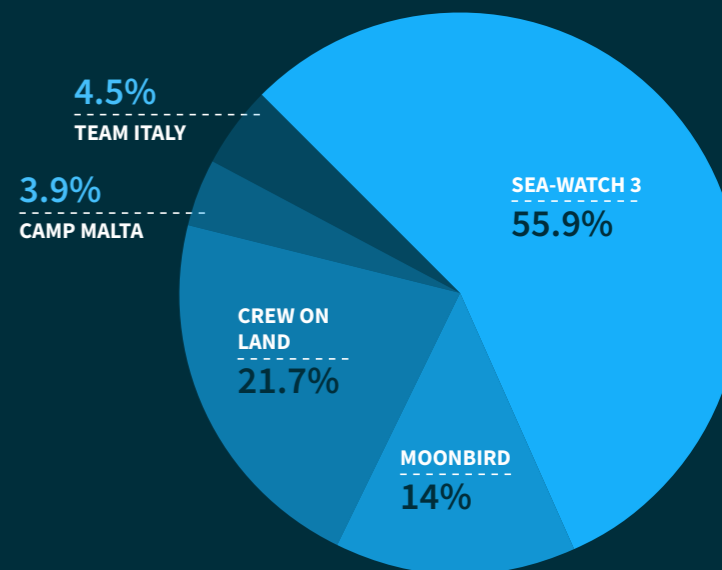
PROJECT	AMOUNT IN EURO
SEA-WATCH 3	-328,680.92
PURCHASE SEA-WATCH 3	-456,858.56
SEA-WATCH 2	-421,040.06
SEA-WATCH 1	-70,902.87
MOONBIRD	-359,941.04
CREW ON LAND	-262,473.97
CAMP MALTA	-54,419.00



2018 **EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW**
 01.01. - 31.10.
-1,403,409.26 €

2018 **DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES**

PROJECT	AMOUNT IN EURO
SEA-WATCH 3	-784,210.41
MOONBIRD	-196,826.25
CREW ON LAND	-304,069.65
CAMP MALTA	-55,487.78
TEAM ITALIEN	-62,815.17



The figures given for 2018 represent the expenses up to the end of the third quarter. A detailed breakdown of the costs can be found on the respective project pages. Further information can be found in the corresponding project descriptions. The expenses for our land crew include the rents of our office spaces as well as personnel costs for administration, finance, fundraising, IT, press/PR and advocacy.

“THE POINT IS THAT PEOPLE ARE DROWNING, AND WHOEVER IS DROWNING MUST BE RESCUED.”

Norbert Blüm (CDU)

© Photo: Tibor Bozi



“I support Sea-Watch because I do not want to idly watch the dying in the Mediterranean. **Saving lives is not a crime.**”

Anton Hofreiter (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen)



“I support Sea-Watch because the Mediterranean Sea contains the deadliest waters in the world. The EU is comparatively indifferent to deaths at its borders. There is not even an official rescue mission. **Where the states fail, the civilian rescue fleet steps in.**”

Gregor Gysi (Die Linke)

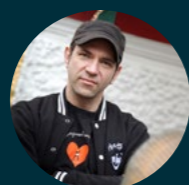
© Photo: Deutscher Bundestag

© Photo: Jessica Wahl



“I support Sea-Watch because they will do their utmost to combat indifference and continue to save people when the public debate is xenophobic, racist and unfathomable. **Maischberger should broadcast from the deck of Sea-Watch 3.**”

Philipp Ruch (Center for Political Beauty)



“It is bad enough that the EU refuses to prevent deaths in the Mediterranean. **But sabotaging the work of civilian sea rescue workers borders on murder!**”

Ole Plogstedt (Rote Gourmet Fraktion)

© Photo: Andreas Scheffer

© Photo: Mirjam Krickem



“I support Sea-Watch because **when human rights activists are threatened**, when their work is not only not appreciated but also condemned, **that is an alarming sign for the state of democratic societies.**”

Katja Riemann



“I support Sea-Watch because **sea rescue is not a grace but an international legal duty.**”

Barbara Lochbihler (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen)

© Photo: Olaf Kester

© Photo: Benedikt Schenemann



“Only the work of civil sea rescue ensures that people in distress are not silently and secretly sent back to misery or death. **Saving lives is not a crime!**”

Revolverheld



“**My Christian belief is that there is a duty to save people in distress at sea.** The fact that this was prevented for months without comprehensible reasons is a humanitarian scandal. This arbitrary action against human rights organisations has no place in the European Union’s judicial area.”

Manfred Rekowski (Präses EKD)

© Photo: Sea-Watch e.V.

THANK YOU

WITHOUT YOU, WE ARE NOTHING!

It is not just a phrase. Without our volunteers, donors and supporting members, Sea-Watch could not exist in its current form. The work of hundreds of volunteers, the donations of thousands of supporters and the monthly contributions of over 2,500 supporting members ensure that our activists can save lives at Europe’s most dangerous border - more than 37,000 lives since 2015. Thank you for helping us make that possible!

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your commitment and empathy, for your strength, for your time and for your money.

We value every contribution, whichever form it takes. However, supporting memberships in particular provide us with security and make it possible for us to plan our operations. More than 2,500 people donate 10€ or more per month. Despite this generous sup-

port, we are still not able to cover our monthly expenses completely. We would like to be able to continue our work in the long term without the inherent difficulties being compounded by financial uncertainty.

Therefore, our invitation to you is: Come on board, become a Sea-Watch supporting member and stand with us for a different, human Europe. The Sea-Watch family welcomes you warmly!

© Photo: Sea-Watch

Become a supporting member:

sea-watch.org/supporting-member/



© Photo: Paul Ripke

“ON BEHALF OF ALL OF US, THE GOVERNMENTS OF EU COUNTRIES ARE ACCEPTING THE FACT THAT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE KILLED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AS THEY FLEE TO EUROPE...”

... It is insufferable that private initiatives are now being massively obstructed and criminalised when they save people from drowning.”

Die Toten Hosen
unterstützen
Sea-Watch



April 2018: The so-called Libyan Coast Guard breaks international law by trying to bring rescued persons back to war-torn Libya. Photo: Tim Lüddemann



During the illegal pull-back, people fall into the water and fight for their lives. Photo: Tim Lüddemann



January 2018: For the first time in a long while, people on board of our ship are able to relax. Photo: Marcus Wiechmann



April 2018: Using our rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs), we approach boats in distress. Photo: Ruben Neugebauer



July 2018: The Sea-Watch 3 in the central Mediterranean Sea. Photo: Fabian Melber

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SEA-WATCH IS ALL THIS – AND MORE

To refuse to stand by idly and watch people die in the Mediterranean is and remains the core motivation of all Sea-Watch activists. What began as an initiative of a few volunteers at the end of 2014, who began sailing for the first time in 2015 with the Sea-Watch 1, is today a professional sea rescue organisation with the appropriate equipment and various projects on land, at sea, and in the air. In addition to the active projects over the past 4 years, Sea-Watch also has projects which are completed or on hold.

The focus of our work is our rescue ship, the Sea-Watch 3. A separate section in this annual report is dedicated to her story. We sold her predecessor, the Sea-Watch 2, to the sea rescue organisation Mission Lifeline in summer of 2017. Until its seizure in Malta in June 2018, the ship, now operating under the name Lifeline, has been involved in the rescue of hundreds of people in the Central Mediterranean. Our original sea rescue ship, Sea-Watch 1, is now more than a hundred years old. In 2017, we deployed it in the Aegean Sea. The aim of this initial monitoring mission, which was discontinued at the end of 2017, was to observe all the institutions involved in the closing of the EU borders as well as to support volunteers and NGOs who were working tirelessly on related humanitarian issues. In 2018, Sea-Watch sold the Sea-Watch 1 to the association Mare Liberum, which patrols the Aegean Sea similarly to us.

Our second key asset is the Moonbird aircraft, which we employ to rescue people in distress and to monitor human rights and international law violations in the Central Mediterranean. Outside Germany, our base camp also

plays a key role, housing crews and supplying the ship. Both Moonbird and the base camp are described in detail below. Our land team in Germany and the employees of Sea-Watch e.V. in Berlin and Hamburg have also been actively training and housing crews and helping arrange supplies.

In addition, we developed a Search and Rescue app. It is designed to enhance the coordination of rescue operations with other NGOs and the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Rome. The technical development is finished, but due to the politically difficult situation and reprisals that various sea rescue organisations have experienced in the last months, the app is currently not in use.

Sea-Watch also supports various other initiatives and projects. For example, we were significantly involved in the founding of the Seebrücke initiative and are still an essential part of it. We are also engaged in various operational projects, one of which is the 'Civil Fleet' project. Launched with Klaas Heufer-Umlauf, it is comprised of several rescue organisations and is particularly important to us. Also of note

is the Italian 'Mediterranea' project, in which several politicians and celebrities bought their own rescue ship, the Mare Jonio. We have provided the Italian Mediterranea project with financial assistance and advice from its inception. Its first successful mission, with participation of Sea-Watch activists, was carried out in October, 2018. Our financial contribution in 2018 has been included in the budget overview.

Since autumn 2017, our rescue crews have been working with the Sea-Watch 3 in the Search-and-Rescue (SAR) zone off the Libyan coast. As the name suggests, this is the third ship that Sea-Watch activists have been sailing with since the association was founded in 2014.

First, we had the Sea-Watch 1, which was launched in 2015. In April 2016, through crowdfunding, the former cutter was replaced by the 33-meter long Sea-Watch 2, a former research vessel which we modified for SAR missions. It already had a room for emergency medical care and offered space for a crew of 16, which was still made up entirely of volunteers - such as seamen, doctors and mechanics. But the Sea-Watch 2 quickly reached her limits.

In order to avoid endangering the safety of the crews and rescued persons, in 2017 we decided to deploy a larger and more flexible rescue ship than the Sea-Watch 2. With its 55-meter length and higher reliability, Sea-Watch 3 makes it possible for us to react more rapidly, safely and efficiently to boat accidents. The Sea-Watch 3 is also better equipped to deal with medical emergencies than her predecessors. In short, the Sea-Watch 3 enables us to provide significantly more people with adequate care.

The launch of Sea-Watch 3 was accompanied by a further professionalisation of our SAR operations, which raised our costs. Due to her size, the ship requires certified personnel (captain, mechanic, bosun) who, at a minimum, must be employed for the duration of the mission.

In order to minimise the number of long and costly journeys to the SAR zone, our missions now last three to four weeks. Between November 2017 and June 2018, Sea-Watch 3 completed eight such missions. More than 5,000 people were rescued directly by our crews,

taken over from other ships or reported as shipwrecked to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Rome.

Despite increased costs compared to the previous ship, the purchase of the Sea-Watch 3 was the right decision at the right time. The ship was urgently needed. This need is illustrated by the lamentable and shameful number of at least 1,700 drowned people from January to September 2018, not including the number of unreported cases. The need is also illustrated by the current dramatic situation off the Libyan coast.

Against this background, the ruthless behavior of the Nobel Peace Prize winning European Union is even more shocking. Rescue ships, carrying suffering people on board, are refused entry into safe ports. Their flags are taken away without reason or they are illegally detained.

The Sea-Watch 3, for example, was blocked in Malta for almost four months without legal grounds. After a thorough inspection, alleged registration problems were proven to be false by our flag state, the Netherlands. Nevertheless, Malta denied us authorisation to leave the port. It was not until 21 October 2018 that we were allowed to leave Malta for a planned shipyard stay in Spain. After a brief maintenance time and the construction of a new base camp, we were able to resume our mission in the Central Mediterranean in October 2018.

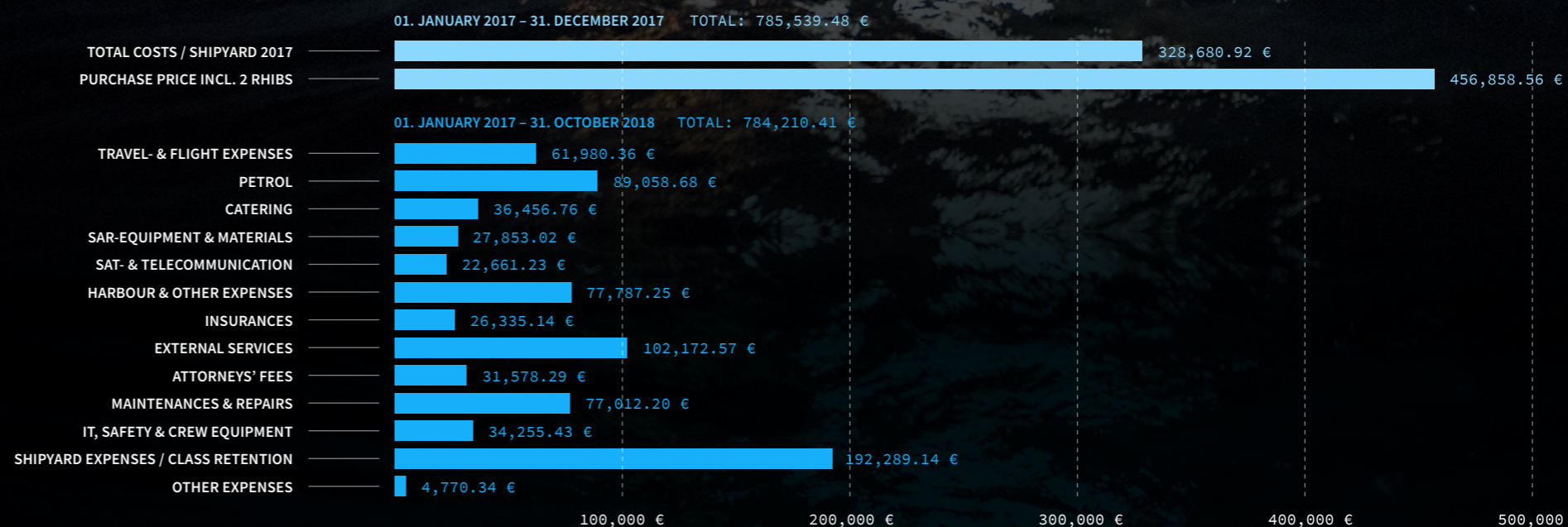
PROJECT

SEARCH AND RESCUE SHIP SEA-WATCH 3

Day and night, we keep a lookout for people in distress.
Photo: Nick Jaussi



STATEMENT OF COSTS SEA-WATCH 3





PROJECT

Photo: Felix Weiss

SEA-WATCH AIR: OPERATION MOONBIRD

'Operation Moonbird', conducted by Sea-Watch in cooperation with the Swiss Humanitarian Pilot Initiative (HPI), entered its second season in 2018. As fewer and fewer rescue ships are present in the SAR zone, aerial surveillance is increasingly important. The Moonbird, a single-engine Cirrus SR22, supports rescue ships in their search for boats in distress, assists in the coordination of rescue operations, and documents human rights violations by European or Libyan actors. This cost-intensive project - each flight costs around 2,800 € - is supported by the Protestant Church of Germany (EKD).

The number of boats forced to return to Libya by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard has increased dramatically in 2018. Furthermore, our crew has on numerous occasions observed European warships obviously ignoring boats in distress. This is a blatant breach of the Law of the Sea, which obliges every seafarer to rescue people in maritime distress. We pass our records on to organisations which analyse these gross human rights violations and initiate related legal action. The Mediterranean Sea is not a legal vacuum in which

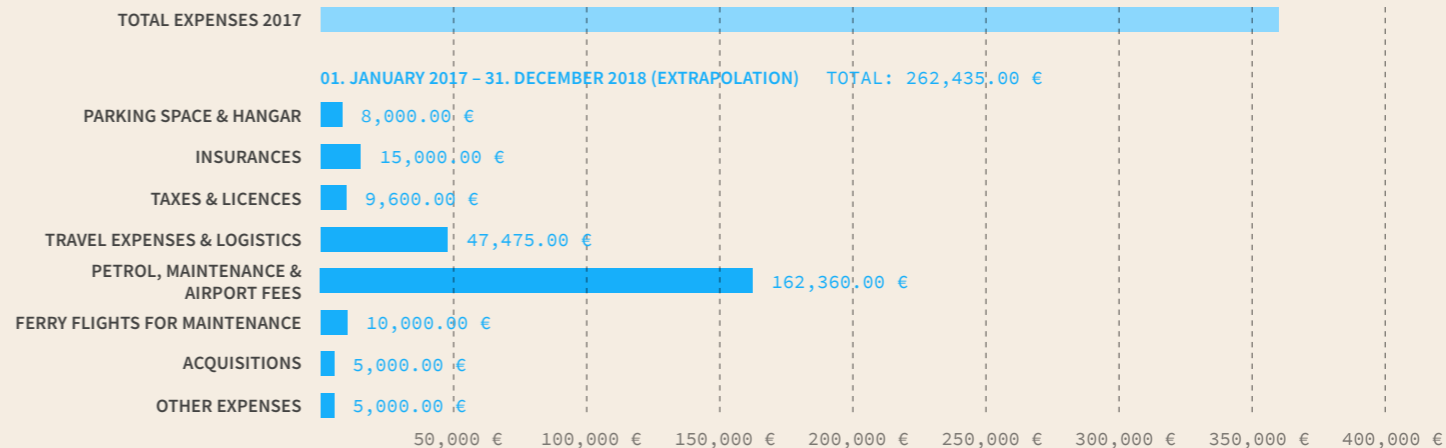
European and Libyan actors can commit such violations unobserved or unpunished, which is why our Moonbird mission is of great importance.

Like our ship, the plane was blocked by the Maltese government in the summer of 2018 without legal grounds. By then, the Moonbird had flown 23 missions and discovered 16 boats in distress. In her previous year, she undertook 70 missions and discovered 135 boats. Since June 2018, the Moonbird crews have been working with

the French Pilotes Volontaires, which in turn uses the Colibri aircraft for air reconnaissance off the Libyan coast. As of October, 2018, we have been able to carry out Moonbird reconnaissance flights again.

STATEMENT OF COSTS MOONBIRD

01. JANUARY 2017 - 31. DECEMBER 2017 TOTAL: 359,941.04 €



i

Project funding from the Protestant Church Germany

In 2017 the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) supported the acquisition of Moonbird with € 100,000. At the beginning of 2018, Sea-Watch received a generous funding commitment from the EKD for the years 2018 - 2020, thus covering substantial costs of the project.



Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland



June 5, 2018: From the Sea-Watch 3 we spotted an overcrowded boat in distress and were able to save 115 people from drowning. Photo: Erik Marquardt



Committed cooks care for the physical well-being of guests on board. Picture: Chris Grodotzki

main in the house for some time for debriefing and to exchange experiences with their successors. Our crew members receive psychological support before and after missions. During ship maintenance periods, which take place several times a year, volunteers carry out work on the ship in the Sea-Watch base camp, which means the house is used all year round.



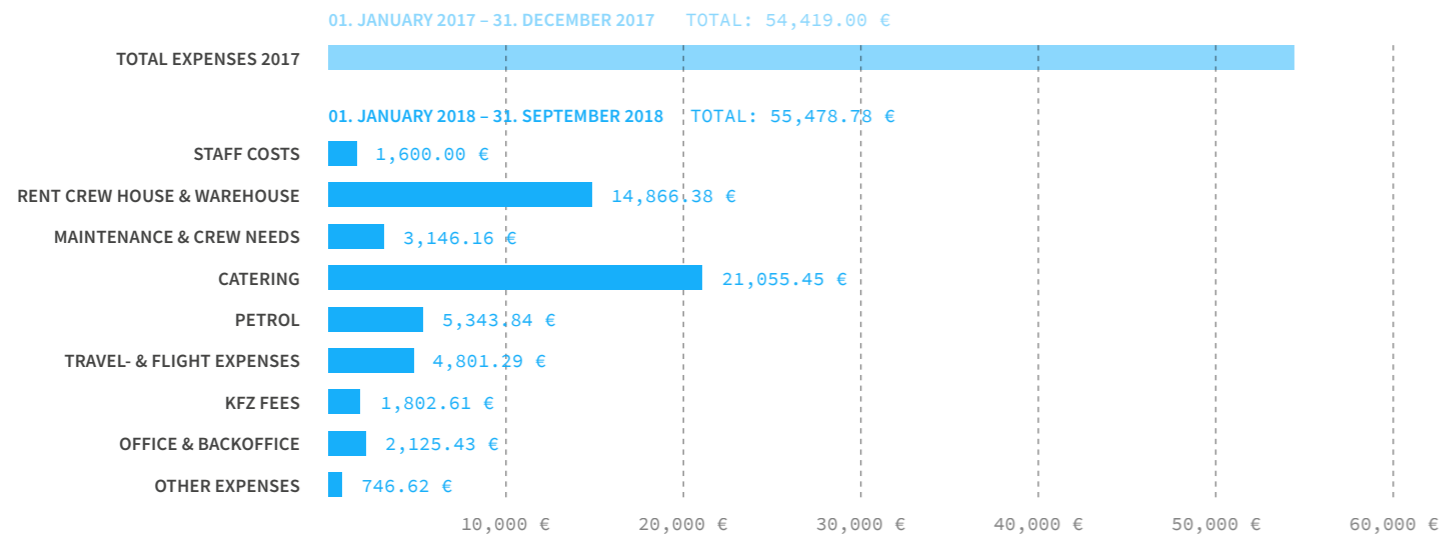
Volunteers during a shipyard stop in June 2018. Photo: Paul Lovis Wagner

SUBPROJECT

BASE CAMP

We have set up a base camp to supply our ship and crew. During the first missions with Sea-Watch 1 in summer of 2015, the base camp was on Lampedusa. With the purchase of the bigger Sea-Watch 2 in the following year, we relocated to Valetta (Malta), which remained our base for Sea-Watch 3 work in 2017 as well. In 2018, we rented a new, lower-priced house, which serves as a logistics headquarter and where our volunteers reside during crew changes. A volunteer camp leader takes care of the house, the car, spare parts, and supplies for the ship and crews. New crews arrive a few days before the start of the missions in order to be intensively trained and briefed. After returning from their missions, the Sea-Watch crews re-

STATEMENT OF COSTS BASISCAMP



SUBPROJECT

LANDCREW & OFFICES



Activists and employees at the Berlin office. Photo: Lennart Diesen

Behind our activists at sea and in the air is a team on land, consisting of hundreds of event helpers, dozens of volunteers, and a few permanent employees.

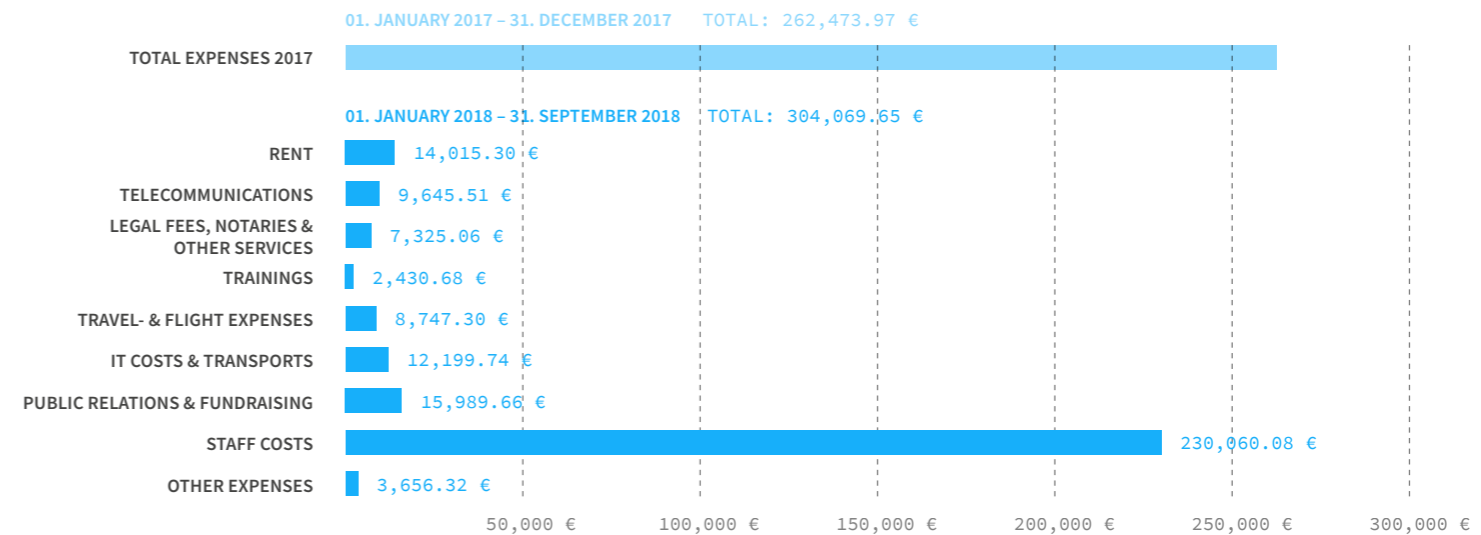
The Sea-Watch office in Berlin is primarily responsible for administration, organisation, finance, press, public relations, and fundraising. Our IT, security and graphic design work is based in Hamburg. Sea-Watch currently has three full-time positions in the areas of office and organisational coordination as well as finance and administration. In addition, there is a fundraiser, two

half-time positions for media work, and a further half-time position for donation administration. Sea-Watch also employs temporary staff in the areas of media, public relations and advocacy.

Our paid work is complemented by regularly working unpaid volunteers. Their work is invaluable and makes Sea-Watch activities possible in their current

i Sometimes expenses arise from various assignments of our volunteers and full-time staff such as flight and other travel expenses, as well as expenses for meals and accommodation, which are allocated to the Land Team and Employees area of this report.

STATEMENT OF COSTS LANDCREW & OFFICES BERLIN & HAMBURG





September 2018: Panel discussion in the German Bundestag (federal parliament) organised by Sea-Watch on 'The future of civil sea rescue'.
Photo: Lennart Diesen

SUBPROJECT

ADVOCACY

2018 has clearly demonstrated that political polarisation has replaced the rule of law in Europe's migration and asylum policies and, ultimately, civil sea rescue. With our political public relations work, we fight for the right to flee. We uncompromisingly demand the rescue of all refugees in danger of losing their lives, particularly at sea. Since the illegal detention of Sea-Watch 3 and Moonbird, our advocacy work has become more important than ever.

A strong international public relations team in Germany, Italy, Malta, and the Netherlands is dedicated to making our political demands heard and respected. To this end, we prepare documentation and research, maintain contacts with organisations and politicians on a national and international level, and organize and represent civil sea rescue at events.

SUBPROJECT

PRESS & MEDIA

The media team also works continuously to ensure that Sea-Watch and civil sea rescue do not disappear from the public eye. Volunteers and permanent staff go on our missions, as well as to relevant media events. They follow and aim to affect public discourse, inform and answer press inquiries. They moderate our various social media channels, conduct research and use their resulting evidence-base in various editorial contributions. So far, these efforts have been hugely successful. Sea-Watch is one of the ten most influential human rights organisations in German-speaking social media.



Public actions to raise awareness. Photo: Chris Grodotzki



In July 2018, 12,000 people demonstrate in Berlin against people dying while trying to cross the Mediterranean, and against the criminalisation of sea rescuers. Photo: Nick Jaussi

TEILPROJECT

EVENTS

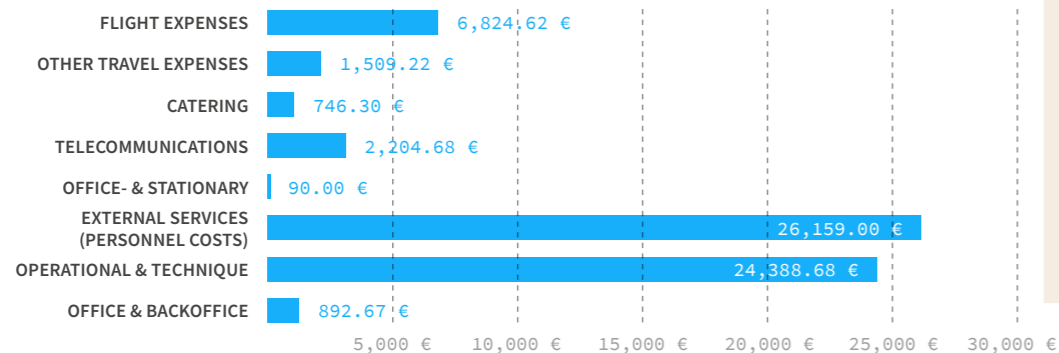
In order to make our mission and vision of a #SafePassage more visible and to gain supporters for our work, we were present at over 300 events in 2018 alone. The events team, supported by hundreds of activists from across Germany, manages events of all kinds: benefit concerts, international congresses, film screenings, sports events, demonstrations, and panel discussions. Every public appearance and every powerful presentation of our work brings our vision another step forward!



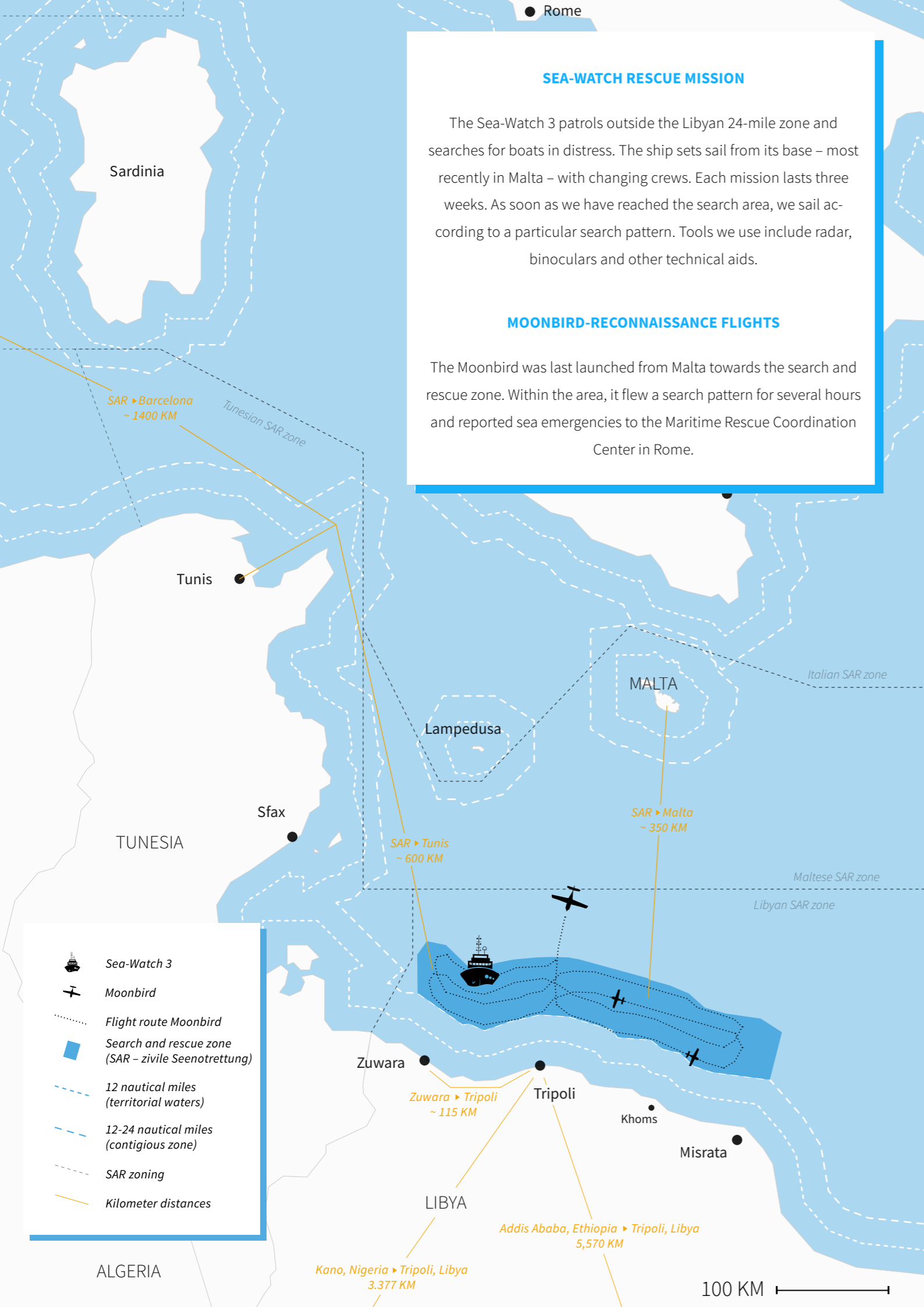
Information booths inform the public about the Sea-Watch.
Photo: Cornelia Schmidt

STATEMENT OF COSTS TEAM ITALY

01. JANUARY 2018 – 31. SEPTEMBER 2018 TOTAL: 62,815.17 €



i The Italian team, alongside to their public relations work, also supported and organised the project Mediterranean. As project partner, Sea-Watch contributed to Mediterranean financially by providing technology and operational equipment.



SEA-WATCH RESCUE MISSION

The Sea-Watch 3 patrols outside the Libyan 24-mile zone and searches for boats in distress. The ship sets sail from its base – most recently in Malta – with changing crews. Each mission lasts three weeks. As soon as we have reached the search area, we sail according to a particular search pattern. Tools we use include radar, binoculars and other technical aids.

MOONBIRD-RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS

The Moonbird was last launched from Malta towards the search and rescue zone. Within the area, it flew a search pattern for several hours and reported sea emergencies to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center in Rome.

FAQ

The obligation to rescue people at sea

Rescue at sea is not only a moral duty but also an international legal and human rights obligation. According to international maritime law, every captain is obliged to rescue persons in distress at sea and bring them to a safe harbour. Non-compliance can be prosecuted under criminal and international law, for example by bringing an action before the European Court of Human Rights.

The right to flee

Sea-Watch vehemently advocates for the right to flee. The number of people fleeing war, conflict, and persecution has never been as high as it is today. At the end of 2017, 68.5 million people worldwide were on the run because, for various reasons, they were no longer safe in their home countries or their livelihoods were destroyed. Libya, which has been in civil war for years, is neither safe for Libyans nor for refugees from other countries. The lack of functioning state structures and the violence of various militias active in the country further aggravate the situation, especially for people who, once they have arrived in Libya, find themselves at the mercy of violent traffickers.

The non-refoulement principle and why we do not bring people to North Africa

Where people rescued from distress at sea are taken (i.e. which port a rescue ship has to go to) is not decided by the captain. It is decided by the sea rescue control centre responsible for the respective search and rescue zone. The non-refoulement principle prohibits the extradition, expulsion, or repatriation of a person to a country in which they are threatened with inhumane treatment, torture, or persecution. This also applies to people fleeing Libya fearing maltreatment, rape, and torture. The UN Refugee Agency and Amnesty International have repeatedly declared detention in Libyan prison

camps to be unacceptable and inhumane. In addition to Libya, we do not bring people to Tunisia, as there is no access to an asylum procedure, or even an asylum law. A push-back to Libya or Tunisia is against international human rights and international maritime law, as neither Tunisia nor Libya qualify as safe havens. Returning vulnerable people found in maritime distress to either of these countries would therefore make Sea-Watch activists liable to prosecution.

Escape to Europe: Is Sea-Watch a „pull factor“?

„No one puts their children on a boat unless the water is safer than the land.“ The words of the escaped Somali poet Warsan Shire speak clearly; people who get into a boat and risk the potentially fatal crossing have a reason to take this risk and often have no choice. They find themselves in an acute emergency situation, fleeing war and persecution, poverty or misery. Current developments again clearly indicate that the desperation of people fleeing on the one hand, and the unscrupulous, murderous behaviour of smugglers on the other, are independent of our presence at sea. A recent study by ISPI shows that in September 2018, 234 people reportedly drowned - the highest death rate since the beginning of the survey in 2014. The study also documented the interventions of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which were in violation of international law. They had intercepted 70 percent of those who risked the crossing from Libya. Even more alarming is the fact that people continue to try to flee, regardless of whether civilian sea rescue organisations are present or not. It is clear that fewer rescue teams would only mean more deaths.

We answer many more questions here: sea-watch.org/en/project/faq/

Legal principles of our work

- Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority [Article 1 para. 1 German Basic Law].
- Rescue at sea is not only a moral obligation, but also an obligation under international law. It is embodied in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Law of the Sea [for example, in Article 98 (1) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea].
- Everyone has the right to seek and gain asylum from persecution in other countries [Article 14(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights].
- According to the principle of non-refoulement the extradition, expulsion, or return of a person to a country where there is a serious risk of inhuman treatment, torture, or persecution for that person is prohibited. This principle is acknowledged under customary law and is anchored in various international legal agreements [for example, in Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 19(2) of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 33 of the Geneva Convention].
- Collective expulsions of foreign persons are not permitted [Article 4 of the Fourth Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights].
- No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment [Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights].

IMPRINT

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Why no phone numbers? As an association in the field of migration and flight, we are constantly exposed to hatred and agitation. In order to protect activists and employees, we issue telephone numbers only after consultation. Thank you for your understanding!

DONATIONS

Our Sea-Watch rescue missions are financed solely by donations. We want to keep saving people from drowning and continue our sea rescue. **We urgently need your support for the upcoming missions! Thank you very much!**

Bank Account

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Further donation possibilities

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**TOGETHER WE WILL SET A SIGN
FOR HUMANITY!**

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Our missions are solely financed through donations. We want to keep saving people from drowning and to continue our sea rescue operation. Our search and rescue missions are associated with high costs, therefore we urgently need your support also for the futures missions!

Become a rescuer and make the missions of our Sea-Watch crews possible. Together we stand for a Europe of solidarity and humanity. Together we will make sure that nobody has to drown in the Mediterranean Sea. Let us work together to ensure that no one ever has to die in the Mediterranean again.

Help us to help, donate now:

sea-watch.org/donate/

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