

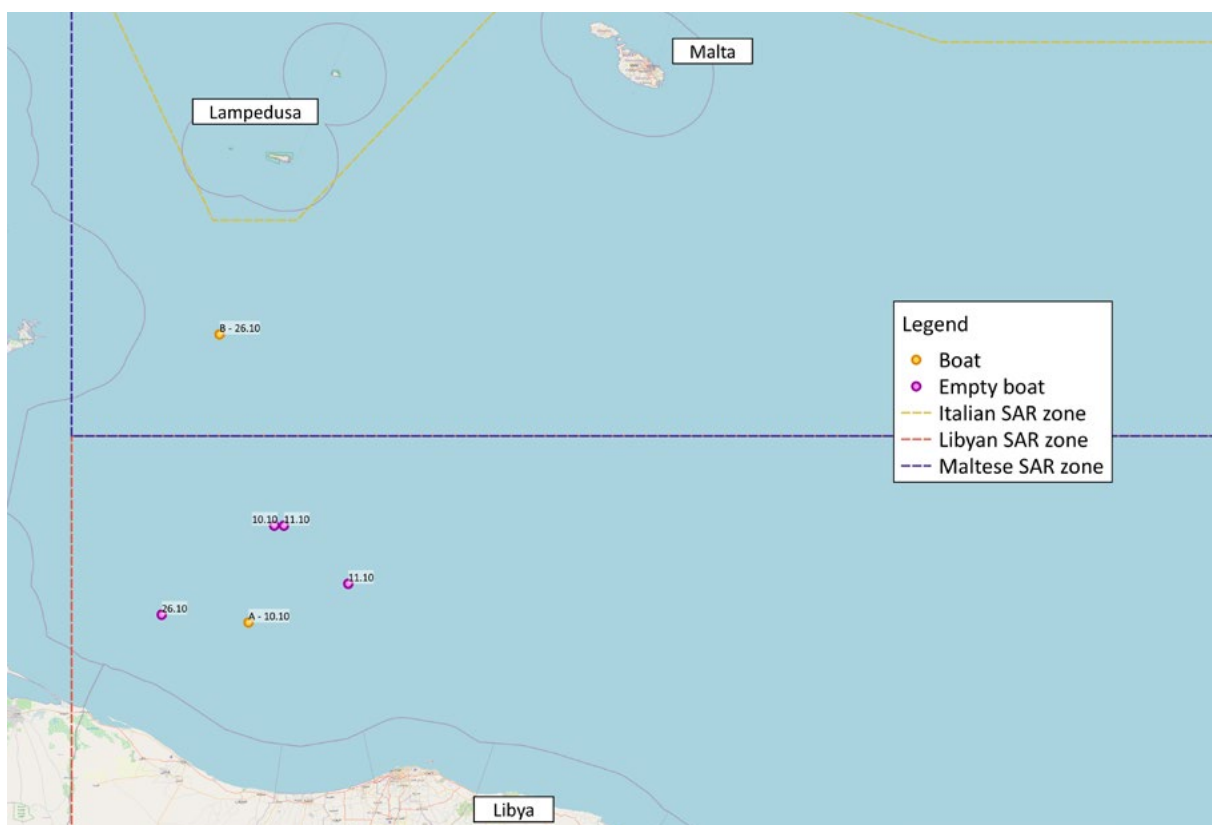
## Airborne Monthly Factsheet October 2020

This factsheet outlines a summary of the distress cases witnessed in October 2020 by *Sea-Watch's* Airborne crew from the aircraft *Moonbird* and *Seabird*.<sup>1</sup> In October 2020, due to criminalization measures against *Moonbird*, we were only able to fly **7 missions**, with a total flight time of **61 hours and 05 minutes**. We spotted **around 217 persons in distress**.

<sup>1</sup> Since 2017, together with the Swiss NGO *Humanitarian Pilots Initiative*, *Sea-Watch* monitors the Central Mediterranean with the airplanes *Moonbird* and, recently, *Seabird*.

<sup>2</sup> These numbers are based upon the estimations of *Moonbird's* crew, as well as numbers which the initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone*, the UNHCR and IOM have provided to us.

### 1. Overview of the distress cases and empty boats spotted



#### Maltese Search-and-Rescue (SAR) zone

- 1 distress case was rescued by the *Italian Coast Guard* and disembarked in Italy
- Estimated<sup>2</sup> number of persons in distress: 87



## Libyan Search-and-Rescue (SAR) zone

- 1 distress case was intercepted by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* and pulled back to Libya
- Estimated number of persons in distress: around 130

## 2. Details and outcome of the distress cases

10.10., **empty boat, delegation of the duty to render assistance to the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard*, pullback to Libya.** *Seabird's* crew spotted an empty boat together with the remains of life vests and other plastic debris in the Libyan Search-and-Rescue (SAR) zone. The crew was able to spot a so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* patrol boat in the vicinity, with around 80 people on the deck. We assume that these people were intercepted shortly before *Seabird's* arrival on-scene.

10.10., distress case A, around 130 persons: **heavily overcrowded boat with an EUNAVFOR MED aircraft on-scene and one merchant vessel waiting for instructions, unresponsiveness of the Libyan authorities.** *Seabird's* crew spotted a heavily overcrowded rubber boat with around 130 persons on board, in the Libyan SAR zone. The Libyan, Italian and Maltese authorities were informed. The offshore supply vessel *Almisan*, flying the Italian flag, was informed about the distress situation by *Seabird's* crew as the nearest vessel to the scene, but refused to move towards the people in distress and replied that the vessel was "waiting for instructions from the platform" (*Sabratha* platform, to which it stood adjacent). Shortly after this, the EUNAVFOR MED aircraft *Pirate* was also spotted on-scene. The Libyan authorities were called 13 times about this case: the numbers did not work in 5 cases, and in 5 other cases nobody answered the phone. 1 number worked, but during 3 calls from the Air Liaison Officer (ALO), the communication was very poor and the officer stated that he could not speak English. The ALO still provided him with the coordinates of the distress case, though without any certainty that they were correctly taken. Each time, the officer hung up at some point. The people in distress were later pulled back to Libya by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard*.



26.10., distress case B, 87 persons: **non-assistance and lack of cooperation by the Maltese authorities**. The initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone* was called by the people on board and alerted the authorities. *Moonbird's* crew spotted the people in distress in the Maltese SAR zone. The people onboard were not wearing any life jackets. The ALO called the Maltese authorities 2 times in the afternoon. The first time, the operator said that the duty officer was busy and advised the ALO to call again in 30 minutes. The second time, the operator confirmed that they were working on the case but refused to provide any further information on steps taken to rescue the persons. The persons were rescued in the late evening by the *Italian Coast Guard* and disembarked in Lampedusa, Italy.

This month, *Seabird* and *Moonbird's* crew also **spotted 4 empty boats adrift in the Libyan SAR zone**, including 1 which was likely the remnants of a so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* interception shortly before *Seabird's* arrival. The 3 other empty boats could not be matched with any distress case.

## These missions highlight once again:

- the deadly consequences of European migration and border policies
- the systematic non-assistance of European Member States and the delegation of rescue operations to the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard*
- the unjustified and systematic delays by European Member States to fulfill their obligations to conduct and coordinate sea rescue in their SAR zones
- the need for NGO vessels in the Central Mediterranean in order to uphold the law and save human lives