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Berlin, Lampedusa , 28.08.2015

The crew of the "Sea-Watch" - the first privately funded German boat for first aid for refugees in the Mediterranean Sea - rescued five boats with more than 500 people on board from distress at sea this Thursday alone.

"Sea-Watch" rescued five boats from distress at sea on one day.

"Sea-Watch" urgently demands the creation of greater capacity for maritime salvage and ways of legal entry for refugees.

The MS Sea-Watch which has been in action on the central Mediterranean Sea since June, and which has since then been able to rescue more than 1,500 people from distress at sea in five separate operations, has today, in one single day, rescued more than 500 people from rubber dinghies. There were several injured people, some of them with severe injuries, on board as well as two who were already deceased, when the "Sea-Watch" reached the scene.

After 8.5 hours the Italian coast guards arrived, the cooperation with the coast guards was very good. However, the fact that the "Sea-Watch" was initially alone for several hours with an extremely complicated rescue mission shows that it is absolutely necessary to create more capacity for rescue on site.

The "Sea Watch" had to use all the rescue life saving devices (life jackets and life rafts) left after two other rescue missions and apart from that all the drinking water was used up. Therefore the "Sea-Watch" had to stop their mission on site to return to Lampedusa to pick up new rescue resources.

In total, the "Sea-Watch" was able to rescue more than 800 people during their fifth operation. "Whilst last weekend when more than 4,000 got into distress at sea the ships of the EU missions EUNAVFORMED and Triton were also involved in the rescue missions, we felt left alone again today." says Ingo Werth, captain of the "Sea-Watch", who together with his crew rescued nearly 600 people in a 10 day operation in July.

"Of course the area of operation in the Mediterranean Sea is very big and the EU ships can't be everywhere at once. However, there are two main routes where almost all of those emergencies at sea happen. The fact that we are, together with the ships of the "Doctors Without Borders" and MOAS, often the only ones who are searching in this area really makes us start to doubt that the EU is actually willing to save those people." says Werth. "The vast majority of boats are coming from the coastal town of Zuwara or put out to sea from the beaches east of Tripoli and head for the oil platform El-Bouri the torch of which is visible from a long distance. Mainly the boats don't get further than twenty or thirty miles.

Sea-Watch | Das 1. Privatschiff zur Flüchtlings-Ersthilfe im Mittelmeer aus Deutschland

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The main search area can therefore be clearly localized; it is there that we so urgently need support as again the "Sea-Watch" is now once again the only rescue ship in this area of the sea as the other aiders are also underway to take rescued people ashore.

"As early as July, I asked the EU ships repeatedly for help and repeatedly I got the same reply: "Sorry Sir, there are no other ships". It is a scandal that nothing has changed and the "Sea-Watch" has to wait in such a complicated rescue mission, with many injured and even dead, for the coastal guards - who are really doing a very good job - to set to sea from Lampedusa." says Werth. "Also the Bundeswehr only take part in rescue missions if they get the order from the MRCC rescue coordination centre. However, a lot of the boats do not even have the facilities to send a distress alert. Therefore we actively have to search for those people or it would be too late for help."

In the early hours of this morning, "Sea-Watch" members have already helped to take care of the survivors of the boat tragedy who were brought ashore by the coast guards in Lampedusa. A rubber dingy had sunk and about 50 people did not survive. "The tragedy of the 27.08.15 shows that more rescue capacity has to be provided urgently and rapidly." concludes Werth. "At the same time legal ways of entry have to be created, to solve this problem in the long run".

"Sea-Watch" is a private initiative who send out a ship with a medically trained crew for first emergency aid for refugee boats in distress on the Mediterranean Sea. After only a little less than half a year of preparations and planning, the MS Sea-Watch has since 20 June 2015 been administering first rescue aid to refugee boats off the coast of Libya and is running rescue missions to the best of their capabilities. Apart from that they are contacting the institutions in charge to demand rescue missions and speed up the rescue process. All members are working on a voluntary basis.

You can contact the initiative "Sea-Watch" and press spokes person Ruben Neugebauer on +49 176 61406978 (between 07:00 and 23:00 CET) and by email at presse@sea-watch.org.

We hope for your understanding that interviews with the crew members on site are only allowed in exceptional cases so the missions and the work on board are not disturbed.

You can check the present location of our ship at www.sea-watch.org.

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