

Rome: July 3, 2020

ARCI migrants: additional funds to the militias and continued aid to the coast guard to take back people to Libya. is this the EU's response to the Covid-19 emergency?

Today the UE Commission has decided to earmark € 110 millions to support Libyan authorities during the COVID-19 emergency. These millions must be added to the € 445 already allocated to the Libyan partner by means of programs funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTFa)(1). The European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, made the announcement: These funds have been allocated in response to the existing medical emergency and to sustain the needs of the weakest communities, migrants and refugees in the first place, and to ameliorate the standard of living in towns, especially those located in the country's South. (2)

After numerous condemnations by the United Nations and civil society, and after a number of investigative reports have demonstrated a lack of transparency in the recent past by Libyan authorities on how hundreds of millions of euros received from the EU and its Member States, Italy included, have been apportioned and spent, this last allocation is a kick in the teeth. Just today *Avvenire* (3) published an investigative report by Nello Scavo that illustrates how it is unrealistic to expect local communities, largely controlled by militias and local clans – the very forces with whom Italy has been negotiating for years to stop the departure of migrants – to be able to guarantee that allocated funds will be used to improve sanitary and social conditions of the municipalities involved.

Along with its humanitarian concerns, the EU has chosen to reinforce what has been the primary mainstay of its program to control migration from Africa: the creation of a Search and Rescue Area (SAR) off Libya and the buttressing of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and Navy. Today the Commission has announced that an additional € 30 millions, part of the funds that were given to finance activities to face the COVID-19 emergency, will be reallocated from the program of border management financed by the Africa Trust Fund. Nonetheless the *border management* program will still retain resources totaling € 57.2 millions that the EU will use to consolidate its collaboration with Libyan authorities to strengthen their search and rescue missions, to further their training and to create a Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC.)

**We consider the Commission's decision to continue its support of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, whose involvement with the militias' activities of traffick in human beings, oil and arms is well known, as shameful.**

For years European, Libyan and African civil society has held the position that it is impossible to consider Libya a safe country, a position shared by the UN Secretary General António Guterres. (4) This decision was taken after hundreds of organization, international networks and individuals petitioned repeatedly the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to revoke the Libyan SAR Area, a fictitious venture that could not have been set up without the indispensable backing of the EU and Italy, which over the years has given its 'strategic partner' hundreds of millions. (5)

On April 27, 2020, ARCI together with numerous organizations denounced the use of funds from the Trust Fund for Africa, tagged for development aid, to help the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. This use of EU funds is in clear violation of its own budgetary procedures, in the first place because there is no monitoring of its impact on human rights and, secondly, because it is a diversion of funds from the original allocation.(6) Even the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) has asked that that the EU stop its collaboration with Libya to control migration

while grave violations of migrants and asylum seekers' human rights persist.

We believe that the EU and its Member States have become accomplices of the violations that occur in centers of detention in Libyan territory, centers to which the so-called Libyan Coast Guard has returned thousands of men, women and children. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM,) since the beginning of 2020 the coast guard has intercepted and returned to Libya 5.475 people.

We ask all EU bodies and all Member States to review their cooperation with Libya and to stop the aid and financing of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. We want to put an end to the turning back of thousands of people in flight. We can no longer be complicit with hellish abuses, mistreatment and violations of fundamental rights.

1 - [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_1244](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1244)

2 – The approach is defined also by the joint communication on a global EU COVID-19 response, see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/joint\\_communication\\_global\\_eu\\_covid-19\\_response\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/joint_communication_global_eu_covid-19_response_en.pdf)

3 - <https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/i-fondi-segreti-ai-sindaci-libici-nello-scavo>

4 - [https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s\\_2020\\_360\\_e.pdf](https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2020_360_e.pdf)

5 – See last initiative: <https://framaforms.org/open-letter-asking-the-international-maritimeorganization-imo-to-deregister-the-libyan-sar-zone>

6 - <https://www.arci.it/esposto-sulla-complicita-finanziaria-dellue-nei-respingimenti-verso-la-libia/> and <https://www.arci.it/app/uploads/2020/04/Joint-statement-on-EU-financial-responsibility-final.pdf>

7 - <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200427IPR77915/stop-cooperation-with-and-funding-to-the-libyan-coastguard-meps-ask>