

Press release – Stop cooperation with and funding to the Libyan coastguard, MEPs ask



In a debate in the Civil Liberties Committee with representatives of the Commission, Frontex, UNHCR, the Council of Europe and NGOs, a majority of MEPs insisted that Libya is not a “safe country” for disembarkation of people rescued at sea and demanded that the cooperation with the Libyan coastguard stops.

Most of the speakers acknowledged the challenges faced by front line countries receiving most of the migrants and asylum-seekers fleeing Libya, namely Italy and Malta, and underlined that the European common asylum system needs to be reshuffled, with a focus on solidarity among member states and respect of international legislation. Others made clear that member states are entitled to protect their borders, especially in the middle of a health crisis such as the current one. Some instead criticised the closure of ports due to the COVID-19 pandemic and stressed that letting people drown cannot be a solution.

Background

According to UNHCR, the human rights situation inside Libya is extremely complicated, in the context of intensifying combat, the coronavirus crisis and the high number of economic migrants, refugees and internally displaced people needing material and humanitarian assistance. Around 1,500 people remain in detention centers in appalling conditions, arbitrary detentions continue to take place and resettlement schemes of the most vulnerable people

to neighbouring countries have been suspended.

Since the beginning of the year, [3,277 persons have arrived in Italy by sea and 1,135 in Malta](#). On 1 April, the [EU naval Operation Irini](#) succeeded Operation Sophia, with a focus on enforcing the arms embargo to Libya, in an attempt to contribute to the pacification of the country.

You can [watch the debate again](#).