



In September we carried out our first search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean with our ship Sea Punk I. On September 1st we set off from Burriana, Spain towards the central Mediterranean. Due to storms and unfavorable weather conditions, we had to stop off Sardinia on the way for a couple of days, before the Sea Punk I finally could proceed towards the operational area, where it arrived **in the night of September 9th**.

PATROLLING IN COOPERATION WITH RESQSHIP & CURRENT STATE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Once we arrived in the so-called **Tunisian corridor**, we patrolled together with the sailing ship Nadir from the NGO Resqship, in the early morning hours of September 10th.

Since the departures on the escape routes across the Mediterranean increase in good weather conditions - i.e. no waves or only flat waves - we had to assume that people would set off on the route. In addition, due to the bad weather conditions in the previous days, a particularly large number of departures were expected. In fact, this assumption was confirmed in the days in which we were operational in

the Mediterranean - but also in the days that followed, in a dramatic way.

Since mid-September, many people fled across the Mediterranean to Europe and reached the Italian island of Lampedusa. So many people, that even the news is reporting about it again. This is certainly also due to the fact that **Lampedusa has declared a humanitarian emergency** because they are not able to adequately care for the amount of refugees arriving. This humanitarian emergency is anything but unexpected, which is why EU politicians should not be surprised! The number of arrivals to Lampedusa has been increasing since spring this year. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 260 percent more people got on boats in Tunisia from January to August 2023 than in the same period last year.

This is not a coincidental development: by closing other routes such as the central Mediterranean route through the establishment of Libyan militias, a so-called Coast Guard and massive racist pogroms in Tunisia, this development was massively strengthened.

What the media often forgets in its reporting on the number of people who reach Europe via Lampedusa is the number of unreported cases - i.e. the number of **people who die during their attempt to seek asylum or refuge**. If many people arrive on Lampedusa, that means one thing first and foremost: many people are currently embarking on the life-threatening Mediterranean route - and many are not arriving.



FIRST RESCUE ON SEPTEMBER 10 2023

A few hours after starting to patrol in the operational area, our crew spotted the first potential rescue case in far distance. A small fishing boat that was massively overcrowded with **around 150 people** on it. Before the crew could get closer to the case with the RHIB and evaluate the situation, they discovered another overcrowded iron boat and had to prioritize this case.

The overcrowded iron boat was carrying **44 people**, including six women, 17 minors, some of them un-accompanied, and an infant. After initial inspection, our crew took the RHIB to the overcrowded boat and assessed that it was unseaworthy. The people had **no life jackets, no sufficient water reserves or food on board, and no gasoline** to make it to a safe harbor on their own. After distributing life jackets and reporting the case to the designated authorities, the crew began evacuating people and bringing them aboard the Sea Punk I - supported by the Nadir crew from RESQSHIP! When our Medic Team from Medical Volunteers International MVI examined the rescued people aboard the Sea Punk I, they found that some were suffering from severe fuel burns, sea-

sickness and dehydration. There was also a medical emergency that required urgent evacuation and hospitalization. The crew reported this case to the Italian Coast Guard, whereupon only this person and his brother were initially evacuated.

In the meantime, the crew had spotted **another overcrowded boat** on the horizon and reported the case to the authorities - the people on this boat were also taken over by the same Italian Coast Guard unit and subsequently all the rescued people on board the Sea Punk I were also taken over were brought to Lampedusa. The Sea Punk I then had no more rescued people on board and remained on standby in the search area, ready to help.

The overcrowded fishing vessel that had previously been spotted subsequently went out of sight and could not be found. It was probably one of the two boats of a similar design that arrived in Lampedusa in the following days. But we can't say or confirm that exactly.





SECOND RESCUE SEPTEMBER 10/11 2023

It only took a few hours until the crew became aware of another maritime emergency in the early evening of September 10th. Another **boat made of iron**, about 8 meters long, without an identification number, without navigation. There were 39 men on it, including 11 unaccompanied minors.

This boat also had **no lifesaving equipment, no sufficient water reserves and food on board, and no sufficient supply of gasoline** to make it to a safe harbor on its own. Additionally, there was no one capable of safely navigating the boat to shore. Our crew distributed life jackets, reported the case to the designated authorities.

They assigned the crew to accompany the iron boat towards Lampedusa as long as possible and to secure the situation. However, shortly after, the boat suffered water ingress. **The crew therefore quickly evacuated the people** to the Sea Punk I.

The rescue was successfully completed after two and a half hours. Medical examinations revealed no serious emergencies, but cases of dehydration and seasickness. That same night our crew received instructions to drive to Lampedusa. The Sea Punk I was able to let everyone rescued **safely ashore** in the early afternoon of September 11th.

WHAT'S NEXT?

During the first rescue, both **our RHIB and the Sea Punk I** were slightly damaged.

The iron boats that have been used for about a year now, are extremely dangerous. On the one hand, they often leak or weld seams break apart while driving. On the other hand, they have dangerous sharp edges and corners, sometimes even under water. With our RHIB, an inflatable boat with a solid hull, it is very risky to drive so close to an iron boat. During this maneuver, an air chamber on our RHIB was damaged. Because of this, for safety reasons, we decided to end this first operation after the second rescue.

After the end of the first operation, Sea Punk I is now in Augusta, Sicily, where we are carrying out the necessary repairs and preparing for the second rotation.

Sea Punks e.V. wants to thank the crew for their commitment! And to all supporters for their support! Sea rescue is a promise - and with your support we can keep the promise.

Thanks!
Your Sea Punks

