



Analysis

The EU's self-interested response to unrest in north Africa: the meaning of treaties and readmission agreements between Italy and north African states

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The Italian government and the EU are attempting to urgently re-establish readmission agreements with new regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya with scant regard for the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers. A 'state of emergency' has been declared in Italy which has allowed the government to derogate from certain laws and fast-track the application process.

Migrants fleeing unrest in north Africa began arriving in Italy in late 2010. Between January and August 2011, Italy has attempted to deal with the arrival of 51,811 people on its shores. A popular uprising ousted Tunisian president Ben Ali, who had been in power since 1987, on 14 January 2011. In Egypt, president Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power since 1981, was forced to resign on 11 February 2011 handing power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The UN Security Council approved Resolution 1973 on 18 March 2011 and a NATO-led coalition intervened to impose a "no-fly zone" over Libya, supposedly to protect its population. Some countries (France in particular) armed and trained rebel forces in what developed into a civil war. Italy had good diplomatic relations with the three regimes prior to the crisis, signing readmission agreements and treaties that resulted in fast-track returns of migrants. These were widely condemned for enabling collective refoulements and stripping their nationals, or people who had travelled to Italy through these countries, of the chance to apply for asylum.

The Italian government responded to the sudden arrival of migrants by calling a "state of emergency." They introduced a series of measures to organise reception, detention and the issuing of

temporary residence permits for humanitarian protection and attempts to resurrect readmission agreements with regimes that were in gestation or any viable counterparts in the north African countries. The backdrop to these initiatives was continuing deaths of migrants at sea and increasing tension at Italy's formal detention facilities, reception centres for asylum seekers (CARAs) and identification and expulsion centres (CIEs). Tension was also high at the "temporary identification and expulsion centres" (CIETs) set up to deal with the new arrivals. The practice of funnelling arrivals through the small island of Lampedusa lent a visual aid to claims that a "biblical exodus" and "catastrophic influx" were underway, which reached a climax when interior minister Roberto Maroni warned of an "invasion by one and a half million refugees in Italy." Available figures show that Italy received only a fraction of the people who went to Tunisia or Egypt when they fled Libya. This did not stop the Italian government and EU Commission officials from exerting pressure on regimes that were in gestation for cooperation to counter "illegal" immigration, effectively subordinating their support to the implementation of repatriation agreements and tight immigration regulations involving control and punishment under penal law for attempted crossings. It is worth noting that periods which follow

such upheavals and revolts often entail the settling of scores with people or groups identified as collaborators or beneficiaries of fallen regimes. Thus, the existence of new authorities with which the resumption of “business as usual” is possible does not mean that their nationals will not require forms of protection from persecution (often ruled out as a result of readmission agreements). This may also apply to foreign workers in these countries. Reports from “liberated” (by the National Transitional Council) Tripoli in August 2011 mentioned cases in which black Africans were arrested or beaten up as possible mercenaries hired by the Gaddafi regime.

A joint report published in May 2011 by *Cimade* and *Gadem* (respectively, French and Moroccan migrant support organisations) who travelled to the Tunisian border with Libya in April 2011 described the dialogue between Tunisian authorities, the Italian government and Commission president José Manuel Barroso. The Tunisian authorities were determined to assume a “new attitude when facing pressure that was deemed unacceptable from Europe and Italy.” Post-revolutionary Tunisia would no longer allow migration to be treated as a mere “security” issue to the benefit of EU states. This had happened under Ben Ali, all the more so after the country let in 380,000 exiles from Libya. Nor would it accept having to close its borders to stop its own nationals from migrating. In this transitional phase, Tunisia needed support to resolve its economic and social problems. Mass repatriations from Lampedusa would not help it, striking a blow to democratisation and running contrary to public opinion in the country, which had become more attentive to “respect for human rights, social justice and personal freedoms.” Thus, “a bilateral agreement aimed at enabling expulsion and readmission...based on asymmetrical interests” may, in the long term, be incompatible “with immediate priorities for social and economic development,” wrote *La Presse de Tunisie*.

Nonetheless, an agreement with Italy allowing returns to Tunisia was reached on 5 April 2011 (see below). As for the EU’s reaction, while Barroso stated on 12 April that “Europe is with you,” stressing his “admiration for the Tunisian people,” and pledging that Europe will “support reform in Tunisia” and “the enormous challenges” it faces, he also spoke of initiatives to get Tunisia to cooperate “in the management of migration flows.” Thus, the EU supports reform in Tunisia, but expects “strong and clear action by Tunisia to accept the readmission of its nationals who are irregularly in Europe” and in “fighting irregular migration.”

The value of treaties

Extract from the *Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation* between Italy and Libya, signed by Silvio Berlusconi and Muammar Gaddafi in Benghazi on 30 August 2008, ratified by Italy in law no.7/2009, on 6 February 2009.

Art. 3 - Not resorting to the threat or use of force

The Parties make a commitment not to resort to the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of the other Party, or to any other means that are incompatible with the UN Charter.

Art. 4 - Non-interference in internal affairs

1. The Parties abstain from any form of direct or indirect interference in the internal or external affairs that fall within the other Party’s jurisdiction, keeping to a spirit of good neighbourhood.

2. Within respect for the principles of international legality, Italy will not use, nor will it allow the use of its territories in any hostile act against Libya, and Libya will not use, nor will it allow the use of its territories in any hostile act against Italy.”

On 26 February 2011, only two years after the treaty’s ratification by Italy, foreign affairs minister Franco Frattini stated:

Effectively, the Treaty between Italy and Libya is .. not there anymore, it is not operating, it has already been suspended.

On 7 March, Frattini clarified that:

Our Euro-Atlantic loyalty leads us to say that we will not be able to deny the [use of] military bases and logistic support.”

The next step was to emphasise that Italian support for the operation would not be merely logistical. Aircraft would be provided for missions, then their participation in “neutralising” (i.e. bombing) key military infrastructure. Arming and funding the rebels in Libya was also mooted as a possibility.

Following the approval of Resolution 1973 by the UN Security Council on 18 March, the Council of Ministers (the Italian Cabinet) announced that it authorised any “initiative to guarantee humanitarian support to the civilian populations in Libya, assuring an active role by Italy in the protection of civilians and of the areas in danger of an attack, including [the] concession of the use of existing military bases that exist on the national territory.” It was left to defence minister Ignazio La Russa to explain the

technical aspects, including which air bases would be made available, namely “Amendola, Gioia del Colle, Sigonella, Aviano, Trapani, Decimomannu and Pantelleria.” He added that Italy could contribute to a “strong capability to neutralise radars and hypothetical opponents in Libya,” in likely reference to the suppression of enemy air defences operation. Frattini confirmed that Italy will “guarantee use of its bases and not just that,” noting that active participation also had the “objective of signalling Italy’s absolute loyalty to the Atlantic [NATO] and European Union perspective.” He justified the decision thus:

It is absolutely obvious that without Italy, this mission cannot be enacted...you can perfectly understand that we could not even imagine, before a unanimous consensus by the international community, not to allow this mission to commence.

It is worth recalling that the inclusion of the articles prohibiting the use of force and on non-interference in the other country’s internal affairs had been a source of controversy when the treaty between Italy and Libya was first struck. However, if one side can unilaterally decide that a treaty no longer applies provisions in articles or formal commitments carry little importance. In this instance, the Italian government could refer to article 6 as justification for its shift because it contains a commitment by the two countries to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in compliance with the UN Charter. However, while it is true that the UN Security Council supposedly adopted Resolution 1973 on human rights grounds in order to save civilian lives from an onslaught by the Libyan army, it also appears evident that intervention by foreign countries quickly developed into an effort to impose regime change and depose colonel Gaddafi by using rebels, who were unlikely to entertain hopes of ousting the regime without external involvement, as a proxy force, supporting them through air raids and assistance on the ground.

The meaning of readmission agreements

Member states and EU institutions have been busy attempting to ensure that whatever regimes come to power in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt respect agreements to stem ‘illegal’ migration. There has been a remarkable lack of soul-searching about the signing of readmission agreements which effectively replaced scrutiny of asylum applications and access to relevant procedures with fast-track returns and exclusion from the right to seek asylum. These agreements are based on the assumption that “genuine” refugees could not arrive from countries with which EU governments had good relations,

including the signing and execution of readmission agreements. However, they included countries in which human rights violations were rife, resulting in many political prisoners. In pre-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia, nationals were returned almost routinely, sometimes when they were at risk of being tortured or persecuted. In the wake of the so-called “Arab spring,” the signing of agreements and their effects in terms of human rights violations (in this case: the refoulement of scores of people including non-nationals, sometimes within 24 or 48 hours of their arrival; centres to detain foreigners in inhumane conditions; serial repatriations of asylum seekers and a general fostering of racism against non-nationals in north Africa) should have had an impact on discussions in the bodies of an EU wishing to present itself as a beacon for human rights.

One example of these practices involved a boat carrying 131 people which landed near Catania (Sicily) on 26 October 2010. Passengers were held in the *PalaNitta* sports hall in the city’s outskirts without UNHCR, or other organisations authorised to provide legal assistance or to monitor their treatment, being allowed to visit them. On 27 October, the interior ministry issued a press release that announced the expulsion of 68 of them to Egypt, explaining that: “Today’s repatriation, enacted only a day after the illegals were spotted, is a direct consequence of the excellent relationship of cooperation that has been established for some time with the Egyptian authorities.” The passengers had claimed they were Palestinians, but the interior ministry justified their repatriation on grounds that they were “all Egyptian citizens”. The remaining passengers were either arrested (19) for “assisting illegal immigration” or held in specialised facilities for minors (44). This was hardly an isolated incident. “22 Egyptians were expelled in a charter flight from Rome to Cairo on 5 October,” 21 of whom had landed on the Tyrrhenean coast near Latina (Lazio) the previous day; “55 Egyptians left Catania towards Cairo in two charter flights” on 20 and 29 September, part of a group of 82 people who had disembarked near Catania, and 34 Algerians who had disembarked on the Sardinian coast were expelled to Algeria between 14 and 22 October 2011. In a hearing in the *Camera dei Deputati* (the lower house of parliament) on 12 April 2011, Maroni noted that the bilateral agreement with Egypt worked better than the one with Tunisia, because “the agreement with Egypt allows us to immediately repatriate all the Egyptian citizens who arrive in Italy within 24 hours, with very fast bureaucratic and consular formalities,” whereas the 1998 agreement with Tunisia, which Tunisia has always interpreted “restrictively, envisages the possibility of repatriating only three or four Tunisian citizens per

day.”

The Italian government has pressed to reinstate readmission agreements with the new regimes as soon as possible. On 5 April 2011 a Cooperation Agreement was stipulated between the Italian and Tunisian interior ministries to enable the “direct repatriation” of Tunisian nationals through a “fast-track procedure.” Italy’s eagerness to seal and enact this kind of agreement was evident on 17 June 2011, when it reached an agreement with the Libyan NTC after recognising it as the country’s legitimate authority, despite the ongoing civil war. The NTC prime minister and foreign affairs minister Mahmud Jibril stressed “the NTC’s commitment to respecting Libya’s previous agreements with a country that is an historic friend like Italy.” The agreement includes “shared management” of migration flows and the “repatriation of migrants in an irregular situation.” ASGI (*Associazione di Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione*) criticised the agreement on 30 June, noting, among other concerns, that its text was not disclosed to the public, that it was struck with a body that was not in control of the whole country and that departures were mainly from the part administered by Gaddafi (Tripolitania), who would presumably be returned to the region controlled by the NTC (Cyrenaica) in application of such an agreement. The fact that Libya has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees is deemed further evidence that the country cannot be considered a “safe haven.” To conclude, the ASGI statement notes that “it is necessary to recall that the entire Libyan territory is subject to military operations and is certainly not a safe area for people’s life, security and safety.”

On 11 May 2011, Maroni claimed that the agreement with Tunisia “is working”, and “envisages forms of cooperation between our police and security forces...to counter illegal immigration but also and primarily to save human lives.” He was speaking at a ceremony during which four patrol boats were handed to the Tunisian authorities in Civitavecchia, a port city near Rome. He said that these last-generation boats will be the “direct responsibility” of the Tunisian National Guard, unlike in Libya where mixed Libyan-Italian crews were on board. Further material was provided, including 60 personal computers, 10 scanners, 20 printers, 20 portable metal detectors, with a view to handing over 28 off-road vehicles adapted to tropical conditions, 10 speedboat engines and 10 four-wheel cycles in the near future, and to repair seven 17-metre vessels that Tunisia already possessed. Maroni claimed that the agreement also envisaged training and the deployment of Italian liaison officers in Tunisia, noting that deportation flights from Lampedusa to

Tunisia began on 8 April 2011.

Organising reception: emergencies, decrees, ordinances, circulars, Frontex

During the first half of 2011, a number of decrees and measures for their implementation were approved to deal with the influx of migrants in Italy. Their scope has been wide-ranging:

Since 15 January, 12 naval vessels were deployed to control sea routes, with 24-hour aerial surveillance. On 12 February, a prime ministerial decree declared a “humanitarian state of emergency” in Italy due to the extraordinary influx of citizens of north African countries, until 31 December 2011.

On 1 April 2011, interior ministry circular no. 1305 on “access to centres for immigrants,” denied access to anyone other than organisations that are participating in interior ministry-funded initiatives, including UNHCR, IOM, the Italian Red Cross, Save the Children, Médecins sans Frontières, Amnesty International and Caritas. The stated purpose for this decision is “not to obstruct activities” to deal with the substantial “influx of immigrants from north Africa.”

Critics including Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo of Palermo university have noted that the circular has been used to “limit the exercise of rights to defence” and deny access to lawyers wishing to provide those detained legal counsel and to migrant support organisations and journalists. It is all the more serious because the situation has resulted in the opening of several emergency detention or reception sites, like the euphemistically-named “solidarity village” CARA set up in a holiday village in Mineo (Catania) to host up to 2,000 asylum seekers, or a tent city set up on an airstrip in Manduria (Taranto) as a provisional CIE with places for 720 people.

Asylum seekers who were already in Italy before the present crisis were also sent to Mineo, interrupting their integration programmes and the social relations that they had established over time in the areas where they were held. Critics warned that this may have been a way to empty CARAs to enable them to be used as CIEs for new arrivals. This could be done, even though they do not comply with specifications for such centres, in view of powers entrusted to the Palermo police chief as special commissioner under the “state of emergency”.

On 5 April 2011, a prime ministerial decree laid out temporary protection measures connected to the exceptional influx of nationals from north African countries, by issuing a six-month “residence permit for humanitarian reasons” to those who arrived

between 1 January and 5 April 2011. The permit would be issued to those who have travel documents and are not excluded by other circumstances such as their being deemed dangerous or having been issued an expulsion order in the past which is still in force, and would allow them to travel throughout the Schengen area. On 12 April, Maroni explained that the migrants were identified, photographed, had their fingerprints taken and were entered into the Eurodac database in accordance with European rules and the Schengen Convention. Within three days, France re-established controls on its borders with Italy. This was followed by Denmark's announcement on 11 May 2011 that it would re-introduce border controls. Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malström criticised the actions of the three countries, accusing Italy and France of not respecting "the spirit of the Schengen rules" and expressing "concerns about the compatibility of Denmark's strengthened internal control measures with the freedoms provided under the EU Treaty including the Schengen acquis," She called on Denmark to "demonstrate factually that the gravity of the situation justifies putting in place controls."

On 7 April 2011, a prime ministerial decree declared a "humanitarian state of emergency in north African territory." This was done in order to be able to act to counter the influx of third-country citizens into Italy and to enable a humanitarian mission in the Tunisian-Libyan border region.

On 12 April 2011, the civil protection department produced a *Plan for the reception of migrants*. It had the three-fold aim of ensuring early reception, guaranteeing even distribution across Italy, and providing assistance to up to 50,000 migrants. The "even" distribution of migrants who arrive would be proportional to the different regions or autonomous provinces' populations - except for Abruzzo, due to the earthquake it suffered on 6 April 2009; thus Lombardy, the region with the highest population (10,808,366), would receive 8,557 migrants, while Valle d'Aosta, with a population of 136,073 would receive 108.

On 21 April 2011, prime ministerial ordinance no. 3935 identified three new sites to be used as "temporary identification and expulsion centres": Santa Maria Capua Vetere in the province of Caserta (Campania), Palazzo San Gervasio in Potenza (Basilicata) and Kinisia in the province of Trapani (Sicily). Five hundred extra detention places would be distributed between the three facilities, which were set to function until 31 December 2011, at a cost of €10m.

Further ordinances were adopted concerning staffing

and funding for the emergency (on 26 July 2011), to give civil protection staff access to personal data to help them resolve the emergency (on 26 July 2011), and to enable "voluntary returns" by the IOM (on 10 August 2011). Circulars were issued by the civil protection department to regulate procedures concerning unaccompanied foreign minors who request protection (on 16 July 2011) and family reunion (on 12 July 2011).

Italy was also active in international fora, requesting assistance at the EU justice and home affairs ministers' summit on 25-26 February 2011. They asked for the influx of migrants to be dealt with by sharing the burden between the member states in application of EC Directive 55/2001. The 5,526 arrivals (until 13 February) were not deemed to require this special assistance. Nonetheless, following an urgent request from the Italian interior ministry on 15 February, operation Hermes 2011, which had been scheduled to begin in June, was brought forward and started deploying in the central Mediterranean area on 20 February 2011. Italy, the host country, played the lead role and provided naval means, aerial means (alongside France, Germany, the Netherlands, Malta and Spain) and experts alongside others from 11 different countries. A Europol mobile office was also deployed to Lampedusa in this operation in which maritime means were used to "patrol a predefined area with a view to detecting and preventing illegitimate border crossings to the Pelagic Islands, Sicily and the Italian mainland," supported by aerial means to provide "enhanced border surveillance and search and rescue capability." "[D]ebriefing and screening experts to identify migrants' nationalities and to gather intelligence on people-smuggling networks" will be involved in what is termed "second-line border control." On 23 March 2011, Frontex announced a five-month extension of the operation until the end of August 2011, extending its operative area to include Sardinia. The cost of running the operation for the first 40 days was €2.6m.

In her report to the *Camera dei Deputati* on 3 August 2011, on the umpteenth occasion migrants have died attempting to cross from Libya (25 men), the under-secretary for interior affairs, Sonia Viale, provided some official figures concerning arrivals from north Africa. She stated that 51,881 migrants had arrived in Italy by sea in 2011, 44,639 of them in the Pelagic islands, which marked a large increase on the number of arrivals recorded for the same period in 2010, (1,479 and 205 respectively). Viale noted that 84 vessels had set off from Libya and had carried 23,890 people to Italy, while there were a comparable number of arrivals, 24,854, from Tunisia. Those who arrived between 1 January and 5

April 2011 (almost all of them Tunisians) were granted temporary residence permits on humanitarian grounds. The under-secretary went on to note that since the readmission agreement struck with Tunisia on that same date, arrivals have decreased and repatriations are taking place more regularly. An understanding on countering “illegal” immigration was reached with the Libyan NTC on 17 June 2011, even though it only controlled part of the country. Operations by the police, which deployed a task force to Agrigento (Sicily), resulted in the arrest of 122 people in connection with arrivals in Lampedusa, 42 of them for “assisting illegal immigration.”

The “crisis” reveals questionable practices and routine abuses

The measures adopted in response to the increasing number of migrants arriving from north African countries serve to highlight a number of practices that have become commonplace in Italy in recent years.

The first of these is a widening of the concept of “emergency.” Calling an emergency gives the government a wider remit to derogate from specified laws so as to resolve situations that cannot be dealt with through ordinary measures. Emergency powers are meant for “natural disasters, catastrophes or other events that, due to their intensity and extent, must be faced using extraordinary measures and powers,” but over the last few years have been called to deal with issues as wide and unexceptional as “urban security,” “Roma camps and settlements” (see *Statewatch news online*, November 2009), “waste disposal in Naples” or structural problems like “prison overcrowding.”

Although the situation in north Africa was worrying, the emergency was called when slightly over 5,000 migrants had arrived. An analysis by Massimiliano Vrenna and Francesca Biondi Dal Monte for ASGI notes that the government has repeatedly called and extended states of emergency since 2002 to deal with immigration, which is treated as though it were a “natural calamity” even when there is a wholly predictable influx of people from third countries. The urgent need specified in decrees declaring a state of emergency is to conduct “activities to counter the exceptional - later referred to as massive - influx of immigrants on Italian territory” (as happened on 11 December 2002, 7 November 2003, 23 December 2004, 28 October 2005, 16 March 2007, 31 December 2007, 14 February 2008 for Sicily, Calabria and Apulia and was extended to the whole nation on 25 July 2008 and 19 November 2009), stemming from a prime ministerial decree of 20

March 2002. Thus, Vrenna and Biondi Dal Monte’s observation that the emergency is “structural” appears well-founded. It has serious repercussions for the treatment of migrants (see below) and the awarding of contracts outside of normal procedures, with the involvement of the civil protection department whose competencies have been expanding considerably.

The second practice involves the expulsion, refoulement or deportation of migrants outside the limits and procedures established by legislation for this purpose. The failure to identify people, to issue formal decisions on an individual basis to refuse them entry or expel them, or to give them the opportunity to apply for asylum or other forms of protection, was a key concern when boats were intercepted at sea and either the vessels or their passengers were taken back to Libya between May and September 2009, when 1,329 people were returned. These rights were also denied to people arriving from Egypt and Tunisia in application of readmission agreements in the framework of the fight against illegal migration. Their presumed nationality was deemed sufficient to enact expulsions to these countries, because ongoing cooperation and good relations with Italy appeared sufficient to indicate that they were not in need of protection, regardless of the situation in their home countries. Moreover, information released by the Italian interior ministry details instances when people were sent back to Egypt in 2011. On 21 April, 18 Egyptians were flown to Cairo from Bari-Palese airport, and the press statement revealed that since the start of the year 183 Egyptians were repatriated only a few hours after their arrival. Similar operations using charter flights were also enacted on 22 April from Catania (19 people), on 23 April from Trieste (20), on 26 April from Bari (54) and on 27 April from Lamezia Terme (40). On 1 September, following evidence that returns at sea were taking place again, UNHCR spokeswoman Laura Boldrini explained that “We are only asking for the law to be applied,” namely, “access to the territory, identification procedures, access to asylum procedures and - if it is denied - a return decision.” The fast-track procedures enacted by Italy bypass the legal obligations of individual assessments, access to asylum procedures and the issuing of formal expulsion measures against which the people in question may file an appeal.

The third practice is the ill-treatment of migrants held in detention centres. Without dealing with this issue in depth, it is worth noting that what could be viewed as arbitrary detention is occurring on a large scale, in the absence of formal measures decreeing detention and without the possibility of appealing

against decisions. In fact, after landing, migrants are summarily identified as either “illegal” migrants or asylum seekers, largely on the basis of their nationality. As Maroni stated in parliament on 12 April, “those who come from Tunisia are economic migrants, who therefore do not have the requirements to be considered refugees or asylum seekers,” unlike those from Libya, many of whom are from central Africa or the Horn of Africa, largely Somali or Eritrean nationals. On this basis, they are then sent to either CIEs to await their expulsion or CARAs for asylum seekers. Protests by detainees have included escapes, in Lampedusa, Manduria and Mineo (although the latter is regarded as a “model” by the interior minister), particularly when Tunisian detainees began realising that the agreement between Italy and Tunisia increased the likelihood that they would be repatriated. These have been echoed by a growing protest movement within detention centres nationwide leading to revolts, fires, hunger strikes and statements by detainees about their treatment. The complaints include overcrowding, unbearable heat, violence by guards, sexual abuse, the use of tranquilisers in detainees’ meals and their detention for lengthy periods. The protest gained strength after the latest legislative step, law decree no. 89 of 23 June 2011, adopted in response to a European Court of Justice ruling that found Italy to be in breach of the Returns Directive (115/2008) by imprisoning “illegal” migrants, an effect of the criminalisation of illegal status. The new law raised the maximum length of detention in CIEs three-fold, from six to 18 months, the maximum allowed by the Returns Directive.

Deaths in the Mediterranean on the rise

Fortress Europe, the blog run by Gabriele del Grande which records the certified deaths of migrants attempting to enter the EU, has estimated a figure of 1,674 deaths in the Sicilian Channel. That is 84% of the 1,931 who have died in the Mediterranean Sea during the first seven months of 2011. This figure is the highest ever recorded for the Mediterranean. It far outstrips the worst year on record, 2008, when there were 1,274 deaths in the whole year, which was more than twice those recorded in any other year since 2002. Comparing the figures to the estimated number of arrivals, Del Grande notes that the rate of deaths along the route from Tunisia, where 188 deaths were recorded, was one death for every 130 arrivals. From Libya, where 1,486 deaths were recorded, the figure was of one death for every 17 arrivals. The figures in the chart (below) only take into account cases that involved the highest number of casualties, but there appears to be a consistent trickle of deaths. On 10 May 2011, Migreurop issued a press release that was critical of the EU’s policy concerning people fleeing unrest and fighting in north Africa. It noted that the EU’s “war against migrants” in which forces acting due to a “responsibility to protect” are “disregarding...international law” has “caused more than 1,000 deaths since January 2011.” If Maroni’s claim that preventing deaths is a key priority were true, one would have to argue that it is failing in this regard. Restrictive immigration policies by the EU and its member states (in this case Italy) continue to result in deaths, human rights abuses and a lowering of standards, both internally and beyond its borders.

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L'Onu diffida l'Italia: Basta con i respingimenti, Antonello Mangano, Melting Pot, 1 September 2011,

<http://www.meltingpot.org/articolo16967.html>

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- 12 February A collision off the coast of Zarzis (Tunisia) between a fishing boat that was heading for Lampedusa carrying 120 migrants and a Tunisian navy corvette resulted in five deaths and 30 people disappearing, amid allegations by survivors that the boat was deliberately rammed.
- 14 March A shipwreck off the coast of Zarzis resulted in 35 people disappearing en route to Lampedusa, according to claims by the five survivors.
- 1 April The bodies of 27 young Tunisians (between 19 and 23 years old) who died in two shipwrecks on 13 and 27 March, were recovered near the island of Kerkennah.
- 3 April Following a shipwreck off the Libyan coast, 68 dead bodies were recovered on the coast near Tripoli; the number of people who disappeared at sea is unconfirmed, although Habeshia press agency claimed that there may have been 250.
- 7 April A boat capsized during a rescue operation, resulting in at least 213 people disappearing at sea, 39 miles off the coast of Lampedusa.
- 13 April Two boats carrying around 495 Eritrean migrants from Libya towards Lampedusa were declared missing at sea twenty days after setting off, and after they had both called their community in Rome for assistance, but never arrived.
- 6 May A boat capsized after leaving Tripoli with 600 passengers on board, resulting, according to Somali sources, in 16 deaths and 32 people disappearing.
- 9 May Confirmation of allegations by the Eritrean community about boats lost at sea (see above) in the Guardian article on a boat carrying 72 Eritreans and left at the sea's mercy for a fortnight while NATO ships failed to intervene. 61 passengers died.
- 11 May The Tunisian government admits finding the bodies of 58 youths on several beaches who set off towards Lampedusa during the month of April.
- 21 May An eye-witness claims that a shipwreck near Zuwara (Tunisia) on 28 April resulted in 320 people disappearing at sea, while around ten others fell overboard from another ship and drowned, due to a storm at night.
- 2/5 June A fishing boat carrying 700 people capsized near Kerkennah island (Tunisia), causing two deaths and the disappearance of 270 people; the bodies of 26 people were recovered three days later.
- 29 July Egyptian coastguards recovered 30 bodies of people who died in the high sea near Alexandria during an attempted crossing to eastern Sicily.
- 1 August 25 bodies of people who died of asphyxia were found in the engine room of a boat. Another man was reportedly thrown overboard after a fight during the crossing.

Source: Fortress Europe, "Nel Canale di Sicilia almeno 5.962 morti dal 1994", 3.8.11. <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/02/nel-canale-di-sicilia.html#more>