

Press release 17th of June 2024

More border deaths in the Mediterranean: 10 dead and 2 unconscious people in refugee boat – 51 people rescued

Sailing ship Nadir finds wooden boat with 61 people in distress

On Monday night (17 June), the crew of RESQSHIP's German sailing ship Nadir rescued 51 people from an unseaworthy wooden boat south of Lampedusa. 10 bodies were found in the waterlogged lower deck of the wooden boat. The crew took the survivors on board and two unconscious patients required emergency medical treatment. In the morning, all the survivors were taken over by the Italian coastguard and brought to Lampedusa. The Nadir is currently on its way to Lampedusa to transfer the bodies of the ten dead people.

The crew of the sailing vessel found the unmanoeuvrable and overcrowded wooden boat about 50 miles south-west of Lampedusa in the Maltese Search and Rescue Region following a distress call from Watch the Med – Alarm Phone. The boat's engine had stopped. "We first rescued the people from the upper deck. Only then were we able to reach into the lower deck, where we found several dead bodies who had either suffocated from petrol fumes or had passed out from the fumes and drowned in the full hull," said Ingo Werth, skipper of the Nadir. "We were able to rescue two unconscious people alive from the lower deck. To get to one of them, we had to open the deck with an axe, as entering the locked room could have been a trap due to the imminent sinking of the boat".

The Nadir immediately informed the authorities and requested a medical evacuation for the two unconscious men, who received emergency medical treatment on board. "We treated the two patients who were unconscious due to toxic gases, severely hypothermic and dehydrated. Eventually, we were able to stabilise their condition on board. When they were transferred to the coast guard vessel, one patient required further intensive care," said Dr Ferdinand Hofer, a doctor on the Nadir. Together with the other survivors, they were then taken over by the Italian coastguard, which had arrived in the morning. The ten young men who died remained on the wooden boat, which was then towed by Nadir and moved towards Lampedusa.

According to the survivors, the 61 people had set off from Zuwara in Libya two days earlier. Half of them were from Bangladesh, with others from Pakistan, Syria and Egypt.

It was the third boat in distress that the Nadir has helped this weekend. The previous two boats, with a total of 90 people on board, were first treated by the crew and then handed over to the Italian coastguard. A few days earlier, the Nadir had received a distress call from a surveillance aircraft about a metal boat that had sunk and its occupants were floating in the water. As the Nadir was too far away, the Italian coastguard took charge of the rescue.

About RESQSHIP:

Resqship e. V. has been conducting observation missions in the central Mediterranean since 2019 to draw attention to the precarious situation of people on the move and to document human rights violations. In an emergency, the crews provide support measures for sea rescue and thus fulfil their maritime duty to help. In 2023, the Nadir was able to help around 5,200 people in distress at sea.