



*Rescue Report No. 1*

# Humanity 1 at Sea

*Rescue Rotation 1: 27.08.-22.09.2022*





September 9: SAR Team of Humanity 1 during first approach to boat in distress

”

*I left Libya because of the beating. They took me to work and refused to pay me, they threatened me with guns and knives.”*

**Unaccompanied minor from Gambia, 17 years**

## Content

Intro .....	3
Rescue Operations.....	4
Chronology of Search And Rescue Operations .....	4
Testimonies & Crew Stories .....	6
Analysis And Demands .....	7
Overview of Our Missions Since 2016 <sup>1</sup> .....	9

# Intro

The first operation of SOS Humanity's new rescue vessel Humanity 1 started on August 27. In four rescues 414 people have been rescued from distress between September 6 and 13. Among them were 40 women, 105 unaccompanied minors and 62 children under 13 years.

17 days after the first rescue and following 18 requests for a place of safety (PoS) to the Maltese, Italian and once the Greek Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) all survivors could finally disembark in Taranto, Italy, on September 22.

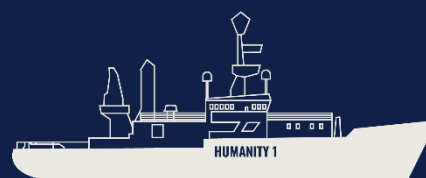
After the fourth rescue operation the humanitarian situation on board deteriorated quickly. Especially the children suffered from exhaustion as well as diarrhoea and high fever due to a spreading infection. Three babies and their families had to be evacuated for medical reasons.

There was an extraordinarily high number of women, children and families on board. Almost half of the survivors were minors. It was the first rescue by a civil rescue organisation that took place in the far in the east of the Maltese search and rescue (SAR) zone. The people rescued had left from far away Lebanon.

After 12 days of waiting for the assignment of a place of safety, the first rescue operation of SOS Humanity finally ended with the disembarkation of 398 people in Taranto. It is unlawful that the Humanity 1 has not been assigned a PoS immediately by the relevant authorities, especially with the huge number of vulnerable people and the difficult circumstances on board the Humanity 1.

## Humanity 1

 **Disembarkation 22.09.2022, Taranto**



### 17 Days between 1<sup>st</sup> rescue and disembarkation



#### Assignment of a place of safety

19.09.2022:  
21:24 CEST by Italian MRCC



#### Medical evacuation

18.09.2022: 16 persons (three babies with their families)



#### 4 Rescue operations:

06.09.2022 – 111 survivors  
09.09.2022 – 72 survivors  
10.09.2022 – 25 survivors  
13.09.2022 – 206 survivors



#### 18 Requests for a place of safety

## 414 Survivors



#### Nationalities

Bangladeshi, Cameroonian, Egyptian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Gambian, Guinean, Ivorian, Lebanese, Malian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Palestinian, Senegalese, South Sudanese, Sudanese, Syrian



#### 187 Minors

4 babies (<12 month)  
11 toddlers (<3 years old)  
62 children (<13 years old)  
105 unaccompanied minors (58,8 % of all minors)



#### 40 Women

1 pregnant woman



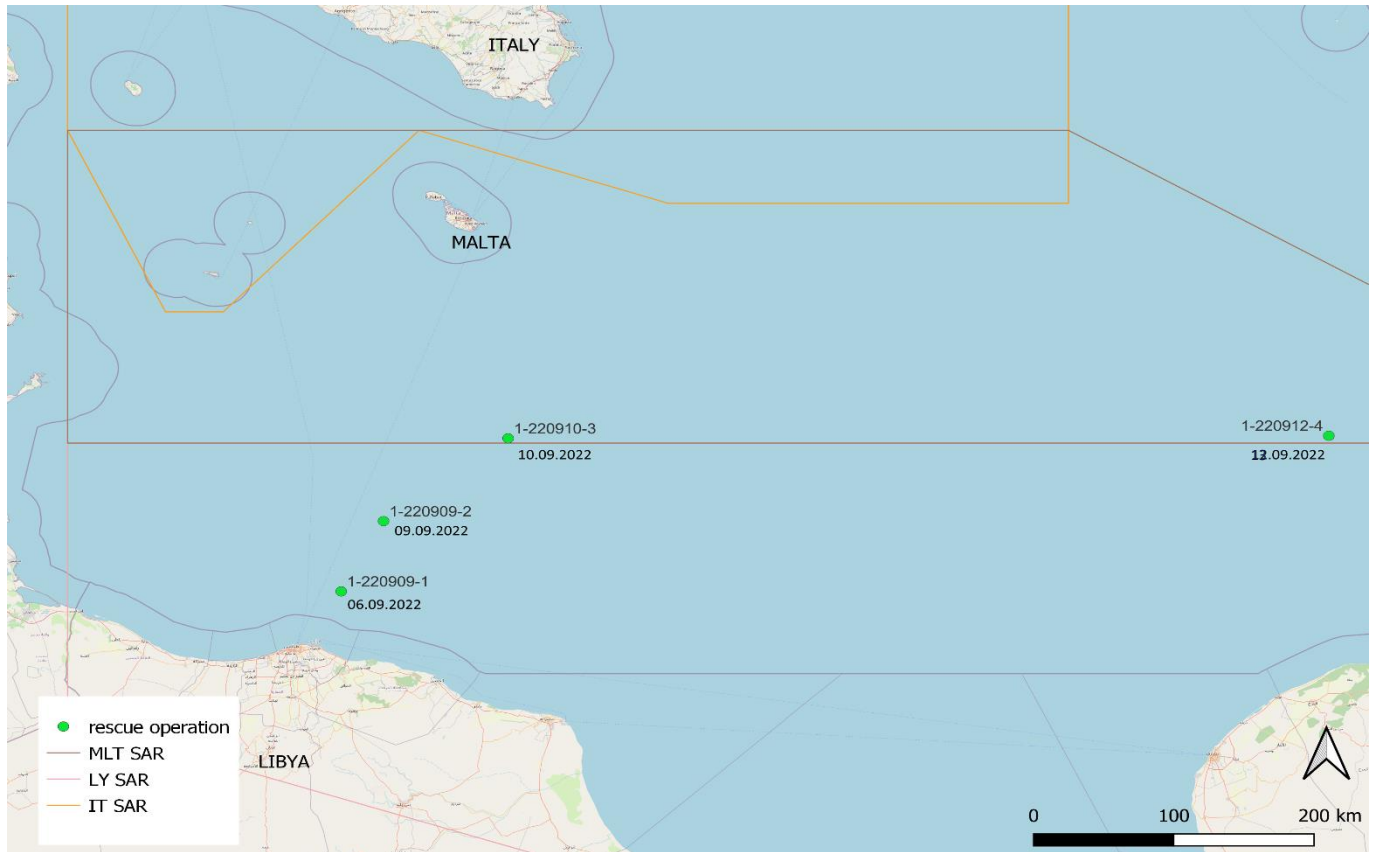
#### 187 Men



#### Medical situation on board

Dehydration, fuel burns, hypothermia, fever, spread of infection, traumatic injury, mental health problems, disability, one person with a bullet in his body which could not be removed on board

# Rescue Operations



Rescue operations by Humanity 1

## Chronology of Search And Rescue Operations

### 6. September

#### Rescue operation 1:

The crew of the Humanity 1 rescues 111 people from distress in international waters off the coast of Libya.

In the morning, SOS Humanity becomes aware of conspicuous flight movements by a Frontex drone and the two Frontex reconnaissance aircrafts Osprey 3 and Seagull 21. At 17:06 CEST the crew receives a distress alert from the sailing vessel Nadir (Resqship) about a boat in distress which is almost in the same position as the movements of the Frontex assets. Nadir stabilises the situation until the arrival of Humanity 1. The boat in distress is a heavily overcrowded unseaworthy rubber dinghy with two women, 21 men and 88 minors on board, 86 of them unaccompanied. Five survivors, who were previously taken on board SV Nadir for medical reasons, are transferred to Humanity 1. The rescue starts at

19:48 CEST and is completed at 21:28 CEST. At least ten people have fuel burns due to the saltwater-gasoline mixtures in the inflatable boat.

### 9. September

#### Rescue operation 2:

Following a distress alert reported by Alarm Phone at 07:50 CEST, 72 people in distress are rescued by SOS Humanity in the Libyan SAR zone in the morning of September 9 (09:07-10:45 CEST). Among the rescued are one woman and seven minors. The boat is an unseaworthy and overcrowded wooden boat with two stories. No lifesaving equipment is on board.



## **10. September**

### **Rescue operation 3:**

Just before sunset (18:26-19:14 CEST), the crew of Humanity 1 rescues 25 people, 16 men and 9 unaccompanied minors, from a small black rubber boat in the Maltese SAR zone. There is no lifesaving equipment on board. The alert was received by Frontex reconnaissance airplane Osprey 3 via VHF on a distress channel that reaches all vessels and aircrafts.

## **13. September**

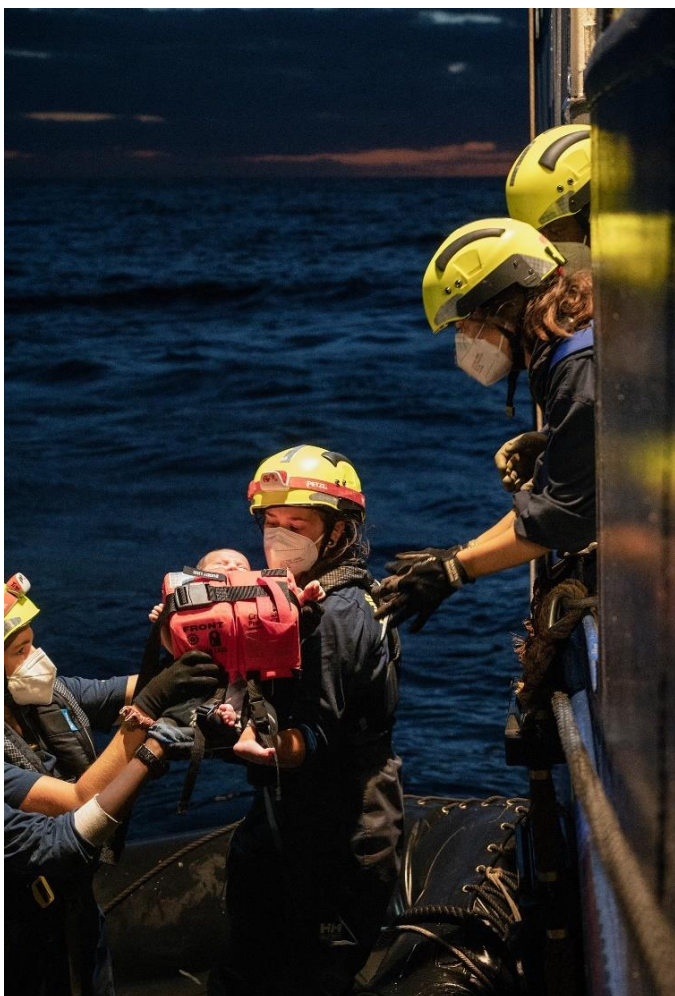
### **Rescue operation 4:**

206 more people are saved from distress at sea in the very east of the Maltese SAR zone. It is the first rescue of a boat that departed from Lebanon by a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

At 13:00 CEST on September 12, the crew of Humanity 1 receives an urgent distress alert from Alarm Phone about a boat more than a 20-hours-drive away further east from Humanity 1's current position. Reportedly, about 250 people

departed from Lebanon and have been at sea for several days without any food, water or fuel left. After consulting crew and survivors, the Humanity 1 sets course towards the last known position of the boat in distress. The next morning, at 11:38 CEST, Humanity 1 receives an e-mail from Alarm Phone, giving information that a cargo vessel stopped next to the boat in distress. Trying to reach it, people jumped overboard. They can later be recovered from the water by the cargo vessel. Together with another cargo vessel, both not equipped to conduct a rescue of this scale by themselves, it stays at site until Humanity 1 reaches the scene at 17:30 CEST on September 13.

The rescue operation, including a transfer of the four people who previously were recovered from the water by the cargo vessel, is completed at 20:54 CEST. There is an extraordinarily high number of women and children among the people rescued: 37 women, one of them heavily pregnant, many children and three babies. Due to the lack of food and water and full of despair after being stranded at sea, the survivors suffer from severe exhaustion, stress and anxiety. Many are dehydrated, seasick, have sunburns, body pain and panic attacks.



September 13: Humanity 1 SAR Team bringing a baby on board safely



September 13: The heavily overcrowded steel boat right before the rescue, life vests have already been distributed.

## Testimonies & Crew Stories

”

I left Syria because of the war, political conflicts, personal threats, violence and discrimination due to my religion, my world view and my sexual orientation, because of personal and family health issues and to get a better education. I left Lebanon because of racism and violence, no education and poor living conditions. I don't have enough money to bring the rest of my family from Lebanon. I am in a state of depression, sadness and nostalgia.”

Girl from Syria, 14 years

”

It is unusual to have so many unaccompanied minors on board. The law states that every child seeking protection needs to be provided for. And this is for a good reason: These unaccompanied minors are at a higher risk and therefore in greater need to receive guidance and protection. On their path to seek safety they had to count on themselves while passing through the three hells of the Sahara, Libya, and the Central Mediterranean. And they still prepare themselves for surviving on their own.”

PIETRO, Protection Coordinator

”

I am grateful to be able to make an emergency call at home in Germany and get immediate help. At sea, such a rescue structure does not exist. Therefore, it is stipulated in maritime law that seafarers must provide mutual assistance and that this assistance is coordinated by rescue coordination centres. Our mission shows once again that seafarers are left alone with maritime emergencies in the Mediterranean, which is unacceptable to me. I therefore call on the European states to fulfil their obligation to coordinate maritime emergencies at European level.”

KONRAD, Chief Mate

# Analysis And Demands

**During our first rotation with Humanity 1, we witnessed state actors circumventing their obligations under international law and ignoring human rights in the Central Mediterranean. Contrary to their legal obligations, RCCs frequently do not inform the Humanity 1 about distress cases at sea, do not adequately coordinate SAR operations and severely delay the assignment of a place of safety for the survivors to disembark. By doing so, they willingly put human lives at risk.**

## No information from authorities

Humanity 1 conducted its first rescue operation on September 6 without any coordination neither by RCCs nor the support of Frontex, which was at site with a drone and two reconnaissance aircrafts. It was only the civil monitoring sailing vessel Nadir which reported the distress case to the Humanity 1 and coordinated the rescue.

Considering potential drifting, the boat's position given by Nadir when issuing their distress alert, matched the position of the Frontex' aircraft and drone movements. **Thus, SOS Humanity assumes that Frontex had spotted the boat in distress but refrained from sharing information with operational rescue vessels regarding the 111 people in distress.**

In addition, the second rescue of Humanity 1 took place after a distress alert by a civil actor. The hotline Alarm Phone informed Humanity 1 about 72 people being in distress in the Libyan SAR zone. No RCC appeared as a coordinating actor, though legally being obliged to.

SOS Humanity's fourth and quite dramatic distress case in the Maltese SAR zone on September 13 is a crucial example of how people in distress and also civil rescue organisations are left alone by the relevant authorities: again, it was only Alarm Phone who informed the Humanity 1 about the boat in distress drifting in the Maltese SAR zone for several days without any food, water or fuel.

At no time did Humanity 1 receive information on the boat in distress from the responsible Maltese RCC, even though we learned later on that there was communication between the two supporting cargo ships and the Malta RCC. However, they did not inform the Humanity 1 about the boat in distress, which was – despite the huge distance – the closest and only suitable rescue vessel being able to rescue the people from distress at sea. Even worse, they did refrain

from answering any of the captains' inquiries about the case while proceeding towards the boat.

**By not following their legal obligations to coordinate search and rescue at sea, the RCCs willingly put lives at risk.**

**SOS Humanity demands that European coastal states must make every effort to rescue people in distress at sea without delay. Any delay can mean the difference between life and death. Nearby ships and aircrafts – such as civilian rescue organisations or merchant vessels – must be informed to rescue people in distress at sea fast and safely. This information must not be withheld.**



September 10: SAR Team bringing people to safety on board Humanity 1

## 12 days of waiting for a place of safety although conditions on board deteriorated dramatically

According to maritime law, a rescue operation at sea is only complete when the survivors have disembarked at a place of safety. The responsible state in the respective SAR zone must assign such a place of safety as quickly as possible.

Within 24 hours after the first rescue, on September 7, the captain sent a first request for a place of safety to the Libyan, Italian and Maltese RCCs. Until the final positive response by the Italian MRCC twelve days later, on September 19, he reiterated 17 further requests to the authorities while the physical and psychological condition of the survivors on board worsened – especially after the fourth and last rescue on September 13:

Among the 206 people rescued were an exceptional high number of vulnerable people who needed



special care and protection by SOS Humanity's Care Team on board.

Until a medical evacuation of three babies and their families due to the babies' bad health condition on September 18, there were 187 minors on board, of whom 105 were unaccompanied, and 62 children. More than 30 children had a fever, some were also suffering from diarrhoea and infectious diseases were spreading. Furthermore, not all women could find space in the women's shelter but had to sleep on deck. Appropriate baby milk powder was about to run out, as well as food, fresh water and medicine.

On September 19, SOS Humanity felt compelled to report the situation on board with regards to the minors to the responsible Juvenile Court in Catania, Italy, which was closest to the ship's position off the Sicilian coast.

Despite these circumstances in which the crew of Humanity 1 was not sure if they could care for the survivors much longer, they had to wait for 12 days after their first request for a PoS until Taranto, Italy, was assigned by the Italian MRCC on September 19.

Moreover, Taranto was not the closest port where the people on board could have disembarked. It took 42 more hours until the rescue ship reached Taranto waters, which meant that the first 111 people rescued had to stay on board for 16 days until they were finally able to go onshore.

During the first rotation with Humanity 1, SOS Humanity had to witness again the erosion of the SAR system in the Central Mediterranean. Against their legal obligations, RCCs did not coordinate search and rescue at sea and did not swiftly assign a place of safety for the 414 survivors on board Humanity 1.

**SOS Humanity urges the EU and its member states to ensure that applicable international law is respected and implemented in the Central Mediterranean. Obligations under international law must not be knowingly circumvented. This includes the duty to rescue at sea, the coordination of search and rescue operations and the fastest possible assignment of a port that can be considered a place of safety for the survivors to disembark at.**



# Overview of Our Missions Since 2016<sup>1</sup>

	Rescue operations	Transfer operations	Total number of survivors	Men	Women	Minors
<b>Humanity 1 (2022-today)</b>	4	0	414	187	40	187
<b>Ocean Viking (2019-2021)</b>	62	1	5.108	4.584	524	1.628
<b>Aquarius (2016-2018)</b>	240	62	29.523	24.829	4.694	6.502
<b>Total (2016-today)</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>35.045</b>	<b>29.600</b>	<b>5.258</b>	<b>8.317</b>

<sup>1</sup> SOS Humanity was founded in 2015 as SOS Mediterranee Deutschland e. V. and deployed the rescue ships Aquarius and Ocean Viking from 2016 to 2021 together with the European SOS Mediterranee network, partly with one partner organisation (mainly MSF from April 2016 to July 2020). Since 2022, SOS Humanity has been independently operating the rescue ship Humanity 1 under a new name.

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Postbox 44 03 52, 12003 Berlin, Germany  
[www.sos-humanity.org](http://www.sos-humanity.org)  
[kontakt@sos-humanity.org](mailto:kontakt@sos-humanity.org)

Editing: Marie Michel, Janna Sauerteig, Mirka Schäfer (V.i.s.d.P.), Wasil Schauseil  
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