

HOW ITALY AND EUROPE FUNDED THE LIBYAN COAST GUARDS: 10 YEARS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Since 2015, the year that marked the crisis of the Common European Asylum System and EU migration policies, arrivals on Italian coasts have steadily declined. Unfortunately, the price of fewer landings, which is the objective of the European and Italian externalization policies, is counted in human lives: those lost in an attempt to cross the sea, and those of the people intercepted and sent back to the so-called Libyan coast guard in the detention centres, caught once again in the web of human smuggling, lacking any safe channels for access to Europe.

Sadly, it is a well-known fact that Libya cannot in any way be considered a safe harbour for intercepted migrants, who are forced to enter the cycle of detention and exploitation, and that Rome's Libyan partners are unable to carry out search and rescue tasks; facts that are disregarded by politicians who continue to sign agreements to fund and support the Libyan Coast Guard.

On 1 July 2021, the German NGO Sea Watch published a [video](#) recorded by the crew in Maltese SAR waters, which shows the violent attack by a Libyan patrol vessel against a boat carrying 63 migrants fleeing Libya, with rounds of bullets being shot, objects being thrown and an attempted ramming attack which seriously threatened the life of the people on the boat. The patrol boat used by the Libyan coast guard was the Ras Jadir, one of the four Coastal Patrol Vessels donated by Italy in 2009/2010, by then Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, which had been damaged during NATO bombings, repaired with Italian public funds, and then handed over to the Libyan authorities in 2017.

On May 6, 35 nautical miles off Misurata, a Libyan patrol boat [blew a machine gun](#) aimed at three Italian fishing vessels from Mazara del Vallo, injuring one of the captains. It was the patrol boat Ubari 660, handed over in October 2018 shortly after the patrol boat Fezzan, both Corrubia vessels the property of which was transferred in 2018 with Decree 84/2018, with which the then Conte I government ordered the transfer of 2 Coastal Patrol Vessels of the Guardia di Finanza and 10 smaller units of the Italian Coast Guard, in combination with theoretical and practical training courses for the Libyan crews, for a total of €2.5 million.

Cases of failure to rescue which have resulted in the death of fleeing men, women, and children are partly documented by the remaining organizations that monitor the dramatic situation in the Central Mediterranean. On April, 23 there was yet another [tragic shipwreck](#) in which more than 130 people lost their lives because of the Libyan, Italian, and Maltese authorities playing the blame game as Frontex officers remained silent.

In 2016, according to [UNISMIL](#) data, the number of boats carrying fleeing migrants intercepted by the Libyan authorities accounted for 7% of all arrivals in Italy. The figure rose to 9% in 2017, when Italy and the EU decided that the number of departures from Libya and that of landings on the Italian coasts needed to decrease at all costs. UNHCR data show a reduction in departures from Libyan coasts since the second half of 2017, yet the likelihood of dying in the waters in front of Libya have increased significantly, from 1 dead out of 42 people crossing the Mediterranean in 2017 to 1 out of 18 in the following year, also as a result of the gradual and strategic withdrawal of Italian and European resources from SAR missions in the Mediterranean, and of the criminalization of NGOs on a political, judicial, and administrative level by means of the [Code of Conduct](#) signed by Minister of Internal Affairs Marco Minniti. As a consequence, at least 60 thousand people have been intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and thrown back into the hellish cycle of detention since the signature of the 2017 Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya. In 2020, [1 out of 2 shipwreck survivors were pushed back](#) to Libya, and these numbers are set to grow: in the first six months of 2021 more than 10,450 people have been refouled, nearly as many as in the entire year 2020, while shipwrecks and invisible deaths continue.



In February 2020, the Memorandum of Understanding was renewed without any modifications and millions have been spent, over the years, to support the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. The frequent [institutional visits to Libya](#) over the past few months have, in fact, confirmed Italy's intention to keep supporting Libyan authorities to stop departures, as well as [the EU's renewed commitment](#) to build a new partnership framework with the new interim government of Libya.

It is no mystery that, since 2009, Italy - supported by the EU - has donated and funded the maintenance of dozens of vessels, including different types of patrol boats and ferry boats, providing training and assistance services to build the new Coast Guard authorities and a Search and Rescue area in Libya. Reconstructing the intricate web of resources from Italian and European programmes is not an easy task. Starting with Italy, since 2017 the country has earmarked more than 32.5 million euros for international missions in support of the Libyan Coast Guard, with 10.5 million being allocated in 2021, 500 thousand euros more than the previous year, on top of other [Italian international missions](#) in Libyan and the Mediterranean, each one contributing to some extent to the training of and technical support to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard to stop migrants. Whereas the EU has used numerous projects, naval missions, civil and military operations, and agencies to strengthen Libya's borders and support the Coast Guard, the most important being the IBM European programme of the EU Trust Fund for Africa which amounted to €57.2 million.

This analysis attempts to untangle the web of overlapping funds and trace back material and economic resources invested to support Libyan authorities (in particular the Libyan Coast Guard and Port Security, LCGPS, a Corp of the Libyan Navy belonging to the Libyan Ministry of Defence, and the General Administration for Coastal Security, GACS, belonging to the Ministry of Internal Affairs). Whether we are talking about agreements, declarations between ministers, secret arrangements or implementation programmes for the various projects, the common denominator in the constellation of measures that shape the cooperation between Italy and Libya to stop migration flows in the Central Mediterranean is a severe lack of transparency, often justified by Italian authorities as being “highly sensitive activities”¹, but which, in fact, seems to be aimed at keeping the reality of anti-migration measures – which constitute a serious infringement on human in violation of constitutional and international legislation – away from democratic scrutiny and the public eye.

Various international organisations – including the [Council of Europe](#) and the United- have called upon Italy to stop cooperating with the Libyan authorities in light of the violence of push-back operations and of the fact that the majority of migrants intercepted is thrown back into the web of smugglers and detention centres.” It is a known fact, confirmed also by the [United Nations](#), that the Libyan Coast Guard operates in collusion with the militias that control the region and lacks the operational capacity to manage the so-called “Libyan SAR region”, as declared in August 2017 [by will and with the support of Italy and the EU](#), the revocation of which has been repeatedly [requested](#) by civil society organizations and international observers.

Nevertheless, the policy of stopping landings “at all costs” is still supported in EU institutions and remains an objective for the next years, as confirmed by the debate on the Pact on Migration and Asylum and by the bilateral initiatives of EU Member States with the main transit and origin countries. While, in recent years, the number of people in search of protection worldwide has increased (82 million in 2020), and fewer and fewer people have been accepted in the wealthiest areas of the globe –EU included– (-30% in 2020 compared with 2019, according to UNHCR data), governments are focusing exclusively on what is known as the “external dimension”, in other words the objective of shirking responsibility on other EU neighbouring countries,

¹This was the reply to the numerous requests to access the documents submitted by associations and journalists over the years. The text of a call for tender for the reconditioning of two patrol boats actually states that “the work [should be] performed with the effectiveness and discretion demonstrated on the occasion of 3 previous similar works, to avoid making “highly sensitive” activities public. In the case examined, the vessels of the Libyan Coast Guard provide a police service “aimed at combatting illegal immigration by sea to the detriment of Italy and the European Union.”



preventing people from getting to Europe to exercise their right to asylum within the territory of the EU. The position of the Member States is, indeed, quite clear. Despite some residual difficulties in defining solidarity and shared responsibility measures, all MSs agree to foster cooperation with third countries to support “rapid and decisive” interventions to stop migrants from leaving by every means available. Meanwhile, safe and legal channels of migration remain marginal in the Italian and EU agenda.



#externalizationpolicieswatch

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EU border externalization initiatives in Libya

According to a [report of the Transnational Institute](#), between 2004 and 2011 the EU allocated 41.6 million euros to fund 14 programmes to manage migration in Libya, despite numerous international human rights organisations having highlighted a total lack of protection and safeguards for migrants and refugees in Libya, as well as instances of violence and abuse by the Libyan authorities in the detention centres. In its [Conclusions of October 2009](#), the European Council recognised the need to take action in Libya to manage migration, including through border control; thus the EU presence in Libya aimed at migration control become more structured, with a cooperation agenda on mobility, asylum, and border management that will delineate the roadmap for the following years.

In 2010, the [Sahara-Med EU project](#) was launched, by leveraging Italy and Libya's bilateral initiatives, with the objective of "prevention and management of irregular migration flows from Sahara desert to the Mediterranean Sea", which was co-funded by the European Commission. The [implementing partner](#) of this 36-month long project – from 1 February 2010 to 1 March 2013, was the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which was allocated 10 million euros by the EU for personnel training and maintenance of the patrol boats handed over to Libya.

The EU has been supporting the Libyan Coast Guard and Military Navy since 2011 through the EUBAM Libya – the civilian mission tasked with supporting integrated border management –, EUNAVFOR MED operation and Frontex, integrating these initiatives with other programmes in coordination with the Member States and training Libyan authorities on all fronts, from basic maritime techniques to SAR control functions. EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, established in June 2015 with the contribution of 25 EU Member States in response of the rise of migration flows and loss of human lives, has been tasked since 2016 also with training the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy. A [communication](#) of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Central Mediterranean route of 25 January 2017, clearly states that the objective of programmes such as the Sahara-Med is to allow the Commission to fund and support the training of the Libyan Coast Guard, since the EU budget cannot earmark any funds directly for Operation Sophia. On 1 April 2020, Operation Sophia was replaced by [Operation Iriini](#), which retained the tasks of enforcing the UN embargo on the supply of weapons to Libyan factions and training the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy (with the Italian government constantly calling for its strengthening), while Europe confirms its withdrawal from any search and rescue tasks.

In 2013, a new project led by the Spanish Guardia Civil is launched for a total of €7.1 million: the Seahorse Mediterranean Network; within this framework, the Italian [Guardia di Finanza](#) signed an ad hoc agreement with the Spanish Guardia Civil to provide training courses to the Libyan authorities of the Ministry of Defence and Internal Affairs, which were held in 2018 in Gaeta.

These initiatives are in addition to the training offered within Frontex Operations. Although the EU never fails to mention human rights in the training provided to Libyan authorities, the documents obtained through a series of [requests to access documentation submitted by Access Info](#) in 2017 reveals that the respect and protection of human rights constitutes a very marginal part of Frontex-led training (0.5% of all materials).



Based on the [EUBAM Libya Initial Mapping Report](#), in 2017 the LCGPS has 4 26.4-metre long Coastal Patrol Vessels, which at the time were in Naples for maintenance. In addition to the boats handed over by Italy, the LCGPS also has 4 fast boats, all operational, 3 small fibre glass boats in Zabratha, and an undefined number of 12-metre long dinghy boats used for patrolling, rescue activities, and to counter any kind of illegal activities. The GACS had 8 Coastal Patrol Vessels (CPS) and Coastal Patrol Boats (CPB), of between 14 and 35 metres in length, none of which are operational: in 2017, 6 were in Tunis for maintenance, 1 in Tripoli, and 1 in Zwara. The latest [report](#) of February 2021 by the EU External Action Service on the EUBAM Libya operation shows that a pilot project was launched, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry and Frontex, to increase the GACS capacity to carry out SAR operations, leading GACS to take on a more prominent role in interception operations since the end of 2020.

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: building the Libyan Coast Guard and SAR region

In 2015, the EU continued to support Italy's operations in Libya through the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTFA), the emergency trust fund for addressing the root causes of irregular migration in Africa – funded with a total of €4 billion, of which Italy gave 123,000 – characterised by a flexibility in the implementation of projects and definition of objectives which enabled it to use resources mainly earmarked for development aid to fund border externalization and strengthening activities. The above-mentioned [Communication](#) of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of January 2017, examined the possibility of using the EUTFA and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) to integrate the training of the Libyan Coast Guards provided within the framework of the Seahorse programme, of the European Agency, and of the other operations.

Through the [‘Support to Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya’ \(IBM\)](#) programme of July 2017, the EU provides training and assistance to Libyan authorities to contrast irregular migration and enhance SAR capacity. Phase 1 of the programme has been funded with a total of 42 million euros through 31 December 2023, whereas Phase 2 will receive an additional 15 million euros; the main implementing partner for both steps is the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs. In practice, the objective of the programme is to help Italy finish what it had started: sealing Libya's maritime and terrestrial borders to stop the outflow of migrants and establish a Libyan Coast Guard and SAR region to close the Central Mediterranean route, as European countries pass the buck on search and rescue obligations. In detail, the funds are used to strengthen the LCGPS and GACS capacity, do maintenance on watercrafts and provide new vessels; strengthen the border with Niger through a pilot project in collaboration with the IOM and UNHCR; most importantly, the primary goal is to build a National Interagency Coordination Centre and Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (basic NCC + MRCC) and support Libyan authorities in the management of the Libyan SAR region, established in August 2017. Phase 1 of the IBM programme will also fund the handing over of 20 newly built vessels, with a contract worth €9.3 million. Furthermore, the IBM programme supports the institutional capacity of Libyan authorities in controlling land borders as well: 30 Toyota all-terrain vehicles for “needs associated with the contrasting of irregular immigration”, plus 10 minibuses. The IBM programme supposedly includes the provision of 4 training courses addressed to 5 Libyan police crews to pilot 4 Libyan Coastal Patrol Vessels, currently docked in Tunisia for reconditioning. The content of the training and other actions carried out remain inaccessible, with the exception of sparse information contained in the tenders available on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The establishment of the MRCC and of the Libyan SAR region constitutes a separate contract awarded by the Italian Coast Guard through the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for a total of 1.8 million euros within the framework of the project for the [“Assessment of the Libyan Coast Guard legal framework and capability in terms of SAR Services”](#). The website of the Italian Guardia di Finanza contains information only on a dozen meetings



between delegations of the various missions present in Libya, EUBAM, Sophia, Frontex, the IMO, and delegation of coastal countries, which were held between July 2017 and May 2018.

[Civil society associations](#) have reported a lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the IBM programme, as confirmed by the number of denied requests to access information and documents submitted over the years, and by the fact that the reporting documents on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is the implementing partner for the project, only covers a minimum portion of total resources allocated. The lack of transparency and inability to report expenditures through the public sources of the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs are even more concerning in the context of serious violations, torture and abuse undergone by people fleeing Libya. Against this backdrop, ARCI, ASGI and GLAN have lodged a [complaint](#) with the European Court of Auditors claiming that the program is based on the diversion of funds earmarked for development aid which are, instead, used to stop migration: an aspect of externalization measures that is bound to characterise the EU budget [for the next years](#), and which is often adopted also at national level.

Italy's Border Externalization Initiatives in Libya

The year 2009 marks the beginning of a policy of systematic collective refoulement to Libya by sea. Between May and August of 2009 alone, Italy intercepted and refouled to Libya more than 600 people. It is precisely within the context of the collective refoulement of 200 Somali and Eritrean migrants in May 2009, that in 2012 the European Court of Human Rights condemned Italy for its push-back policy. Nonetheless, efforts to push back people travelling to Europe have never ceased.

In those years, the Berlusconi government signed an agreement with Libyan authorities for the handing over to the Libyan Coast Guard of 6 vessels of the Italian Guardia di Finanza, including taxes and the delivery of maintenance on those vessels, as set out in the Protocols ensuing from the 2008 Friendship Treaty between Berlusconi and Gaddafi and the 2007 agreement for joint patrolling of the Libyan coastline. The first three Coastal Patrol Vessels were [handed over](#) on 14 May 2009 in the presence of Minister of Internal Affairs Roberto Maroni; these were patrol boats of the Bigliani Class, II Series whose crews are trained by the Guardia di Finanza at the Nautical School in Gaeta. The other three vessels were handed over to Libyan authorities in February 2010. The vessels would become part of the surveillance system which includes the Italian patrol boats in the international waters and European vessels employed within the framework of Frontex operations, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. **As a result of the handing over of the three patrol boats in February 2010, push backs started to be conducted directly by the newly-gifted Italian patrol boats. The new approach was expected to reduce landings on Italy's shores by 90% within 1 year.** Italy aimed to "stop flows at the source" and turn Libya into a hub for the reception of migrants and refugees in transit.

In 2017, there was an acceleration in the push-back strategy and cooperation between Italy and Libya. In the spring of 2016, the Ministry of Internal Affairs resumed negotiations with DCIM, GACS, and LCGPS for migration control and collaboration on security which led to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of National Accord signed by Serraj and Paolo Gentiloni in Rome, and to [secret negotiations](#) with officers and associates of the Libyan authorities accused of oil and human trafficking in UN inquiries.

The 2017 Memorandum of Understanding was followed by a bilateral meeting of experts on 22 March 2017, where the parties agreed, among other things, on the provision of training courses and on the return of the Bigliani vessels that had been handed over by Italy and remained in maintenance. During the Summit, the parties also agreed on the handing over of other 6 Libyan vessels after additional reconditioning, training, and transport from Biserta (where they were dry docking) to Tripoli.



Despite the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country since 2011, the EU's support and bilateral initiatives of Member States have continued. Thus, the Italian initiative resumed as well, within the framework of all the agreements mentioned above, as announced in the [2012 Tripoli Declaration](#). By explicitly referencing the European project Sahara-Med, Italy commits to reconditioning the patrol boats handed over in the past, as well as other Libyan patrol boats, and to provide training courses to Libyan security forces and assistance in the construction of a reception centre to facilitate repatriations. After the 2011 bombings, 2 of the 6 patrol boats handed over by the Berlusconi government were destroyed, while the other 4 were brought back to Italy in August 2013 to be repaired. According to the calls for tender available on the website of the Italian State Police, a first series of reconditioning interventions was carried out in 2013 but the vessels could not be returned to Libya because of the instability of the country. The 4 vessels handed over by Italy in 2009/2010 would be repaired and returned to Libya in 2017 by Minister Marco Minniti.²

Italian military operations - Most of the resources allocated to international missions to fund initiatives in support of the Libyan Coast Guard come from Italy's public funds, starting with [Decree Law 8/2008](#), which earmarks over 6.2 million euros for the participation of Guardia di Finanza officers to the mission in Libya to enforce the 2007 cooperation agreement. Since then, various decrees extending the international missions have authorised the participation of officers of the Italian Guardia di Finanza in support of Libyan Coast Guard authorities. More specifically, the resources for the repairs carried out by the Guardia di Finanza on the patrol boats handed over to Libya within the framework of the Italy-Libya cooperation, come from the military mission to [support the Libyan Coast Guard](#), approved in 2017. Between 2017 and 2020, Italy allocated 22 million euros to this mission, in addition to providing Italian personnel for technical support, training and, finally, with the extension of the mission from [2020 to 2021](#), additional practical training through the establishment of a Shipyard and a small Nautical School in Libya. In 2021-2022, funds are expected to be increased by an additional 500 million euros, to a total of 10.5 million.

The website of the Guardia di Finanza provides very limited details on the maintenance costs of the 4 patrol boats handed over in 2009 and reconditioned in 2017 to be returned to the Libyan authorities. For instance, the Guardia di Finanza awards a contract for the maintenance of the engines of the Bigliani and Corrubia vessels "that have been or will be handed over to the Libyan Coast Guard" for a total of €2 million for the year 2020, and a framework agreement for spare parts for €900 thousand for 2021-2022. Our reconstruction pieces together calls for tender containing explicit references to the Coastal Patrol Vessels 654 Sabratha, 656 Zawia, 644 Zuwara and 648 Ras Al Jadar for a total of approximately 400 thousand euros. Other calls for tender generically refer to maintenance of the engines of the Bigliani and Corrubia vessels "that have been or will be handed over to the Libyan Coast Guard", such as the one worth €2 million for the year 2020, or the 2021-2022 framework agreement for spare parts for €900 thousand.

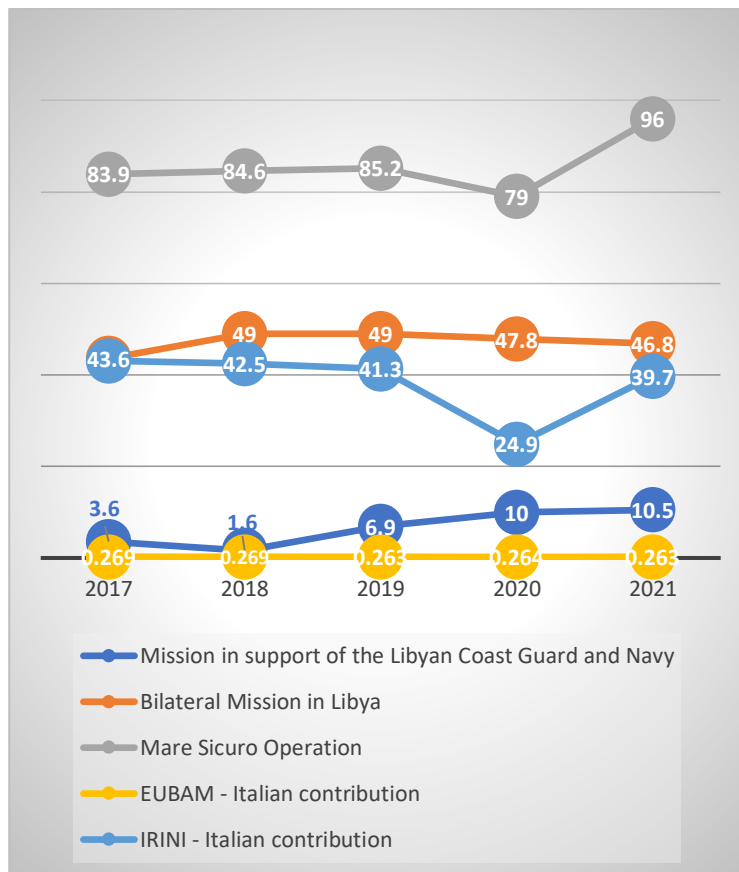
However, support to the Libyan Coast Guard comes also from other international missions in Libya and the Mediterranean, such as the bilateral mission in Libya, for which a total of [€189 million](#) have been spent between 2017 and 2020, plus additional €47 million earmarked with the Decree approved on 15 July 2021. With the Mare Sicuro (Safety at Sea) Operation (€429 million from 2017 to its renewal in 2021) the Italian military has provided liaison and consultancy services to GACS and LCGPS, as well as collaboration to establish an Operational Maritime Centre in Libya for surveillance, maritime cooperation, and coordination of joint activities, contributing also to rebuild land, sea, and air infrastructure using, among other resources, the vessel stationed in Tripoli.

² According to [journalistic](#) sources, the 4 Coastal Patrol Vessels handed over by Italy in 2009/2010 eventually repaired and returned to Libya in April 2017 were the 654 Sabratha (ex G.82 Galliano), the 656 Zawia (ex G.85 Fortuna), the 644 Zuwara, and the 648 Ras Al Jadar.



Besides the bilateral missions, Italy also funds and takes part in the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) for the integrated management of Libyan borders, and in the EU Naval Operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI). This year, the Italian government has significantly increased the costs of participation in the Irini mission, from €24.9 million in 2020 to €39.7 million in 2021-2022, with a view to contributing to greater commitment, promoting and expanding the role of the EU in supporting the Libyan Coast Guard, as stated on the eve of the vote on the Decree for the extension of the military missions.

Italy's participation to international missions in Libya and the Mediterranean



Source: *senato.it* - Elaborations by ARCI, EPW project

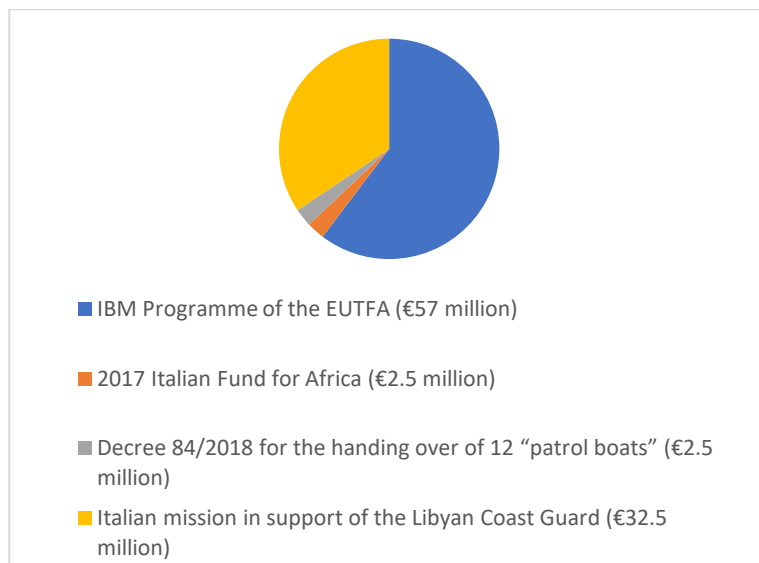
The 2018 Patrol Boats Decree - In 2018, with Decree 84/2018 also known as the [Patrol Boats Decree](#), the Conte I government authorised the handing over of additional vessels with the aim of “drastically reducing migration inflows originating from and transiting through Libya, providing additional tools to contain the migratory pressure, also with a view to protecting the external borders.” **Overall, the Decree provides for the handing over to the Libyan government, free of charge, of 12 vessels worth a total of €2.5 million** using the funds earmarked for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to cover maintenance, transport, logistic support, and crew training costs. In detail, 10 CPBs, 10 metres long, of the 500 class, from the Coast Guard fleet (CP 515-522, CP 526, CP535) and 2 CPVs, 27 metres long, of the Corrubia class, from the Guardia di Finanza fleet (ex G.92 ALBERTI, G.115 ZANOTTI, now 660 Orbari and 658 Fezzan). The 12 patrol boats were handed over to the Libyan Coast Guard, Navy and Police between [October 2018](#) and November 2019.



The Africa Fund – Finally, by examining the calls for tender of the Guardia di Finanza and of the Central Directorate of Immigration and Border Police, we were able to reconstruct, at least partially, how the funds earmarked for the training and maintenance of the patrol boats of the Libyan police, which is the Naval Corp belonging to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, are used. The resources come in part from the Italian fund dedicated to international cooperation, in part from European projects, and in part from the [€2.5 million of the Africa Fund](#), which had authorised the diversion of funds originally earmarked for development aid and cooperation with African countries and which, instead, had been used for monitoring activities, migration flows reduction, and border strengthening in Libya, and in particular for the maintenance of Libyan Police Patrol Boats.

The resources of the Africa Fund, of the Sahara-Med project and of the IBM programme within the EU Trust Fund for Africa, have funded the training of Libyan police and the maintenance of several vessels, including those of the P 200 and P 300 series. Based on the calls for tender, in December 2020 a training course was held at the Nautical School of Gaeta – funded by the IBM programme within the EUTFA – for GACS crew personnel in preparation for the return of patrol boat P200, which took place in March 2021.

Who supports the Libyan fleet?



Elaborations by ARCI, EPW project

Partial list of programmes and initiatives in support of the Libyan Coast Guard

<p>Italian International Missions</p>	<p>Bilateral Assistance and Support Mission in Libya (MIBIL) - assistance to the Government of National Accord + support to the Libyan Coast Guard</p> <p>Resources deployed 2017 - 2021: 325 million</p> <p>Bilateral mission to assist the Libyan Navy Coast Guard with personnel from the Guardia di Finanza and the Carabinieri Corps - Start 1 August 2017: Combating illegal immigration and trafficking Libyan Coast Guard support and training.</p> <p>Resources deployed 2017 - 2021: 32.5 million</p> <p>Mare Sicuro Operation - Protection of ENI platforms, SAR vessels and merchant traffic; combating illegal trafficking; gathering information on terrorist groups and human trafficking; from 2017 includes tasks to support the Libyan coast guard.</p> <p>Resources deployed 2017 - 2021: 429 million</p>
<p>EUBAM</p>	<p>The mission, launched in 2013, aims to support the Libyan authorities in the management of land, sea and air borders and to develop an integrated border management strategy in cooperation with other actors and projects in the area.</p> <p>Italy's contribution 2017 - 2021: 1.4 million.</p>
<p>EUNAV FOR MED</p>	<p>In June 2016, the mandate of Operation Sophia was expanded to include the tasks of supporting and training the Libyan coastguard and navy, and contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo. Since 2016, the Operation has trained more than 100 members of the Libyan coastguard and navy, both at sea and in EU states (in particular in Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain and planned also in Croatia). From 2020, Operation IRINI will take over, with the main mandate of implementing the UN embargo and maintaining the tasks of training Libyan border authorities.</p> <p>Italy's contribution for 2021: 39.7 million</p>
<p>Seahorse Project</p>	<p>The project was launched in 2013 and concluded in 2019. The main objective was to strengthen the capacities of the Libyan authorities and in particular the Libyan Coast Guard; a total of 141 Libyan personnel were trained.</p> <p>Budget: 5.5 million</p>
<p>EUTFA</p> <p>'Support to Integrated border and migration management in Libya' Project (SIBMMIL)</p>	<p>Objectives: strengthening of the GACS and LCGPS fleet; establishment of a National Inter-Agency Coordination Centre and Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Tripoli (basic NCC + MRCC); establishment of a Libyan SAR zone; strengthening of land borders in southern Libya. The implementing partners are the Italian Ministry of Interior for the training and support of the Libyan Coast Guard, and IOM for the management of the southern border. Phase 1 of the programme had a budget of EUR 45 million and a duration from December 2017 to December 2023. Phase 2 provided another 15 million, with the specific objective of providing 3 additional naval units for the coast guard.</p> <p>Budget phase 1 + phase 2: 57.5 million euro</p>
<p>European Borders and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)</p>	<p>Since February 2018, Operation Themis has been active in the Central Mediterranean, which followed Operation Triton to assist Italy and Malta in activities to control maritime borders and block migratory flows towards Europe, through satellites with which it monitors the Libyan coast as part of the Eurosur surveillance system. In January 2021 Frontex signed a cooperation agreement with Operation IRINI to strengthen border control and training of Libyan LNCG and GACS personnel. Other Frontex projects are the EU4Bordersecurity project and the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) project.</p> <p>Agency's budget for 2020: 460 million euro</p>



Conclusions

Over the past 4 years, with the support of the EU, Italy has provided maintenance and training for the crews of 6 or 7 Libyan patrol boats and has handed over free of charge 12 vessels previously owned by the Italian Guardia di Finanza and Coast Guard and 20 newly built vessels, in addition to the 4 Coastal Patrol Vessels provided under the 2009 agreements.

A multitude of resources, contracts and agreements contribute to the reconditioning of this fleet employed in interception and refoulement operations in the Mediterranean. However, the lack of transparency encountered over the years makes it virtually impossible to reconstruct the content of the various inter-institutional agreements as well as how much Italy has spent, and how, to equip and train the Libyan authorities. This in spite of the fact that all the institutions involved are well aware of the serious human rights violations and abuses and infringement of International Humanitarian Law, including summary executions, forced disappearances and torture, which continue to be committed and go virtually unpunished. Indeed, the report of the European External Action Service states that “the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights confirm that migrants and refugees are still systematically subjected to arbitrary detention and torture in official and unofficial places of detention. Sex violence, rape for ransom, extortion, forced labour, and extrajudicial killings are still widespread. According to the UN, the perpetrators of such violations include government officials, members of armed groups, smugglers, traffickers, and members of criminal groups. This situation applies not only to migrants’ detention centres, but also to formal prisons under the control of the Ministry of Justice, and “informal” prisons controlled by the militias.”

Nonetheless, support is still being given to actions aimed at combatting migration and pushing back migrants and asylum seekers. Zero landings are still the goal, at all costs.

Recommendations to Italian and EU institutions:

- Provide a complete and transparent account of how public funds earmarked for cooperation and the provision of training and equipment to Libyan authorities for migration control have been used;
- Suspend funds and material support to Libyan border authorities in the absence of safeguards for human rights and of an assessment of the impact of the measures adopted on the rights of the migrants involved;
- Dedicating more funds and efforts to resettlement initiatives and the promotion of humanitarian channels to evacuate Libyan detention centres;
- Promote a Search and Rescue mechanism in the Mediterranean to avoid new mass drownings, in coordination with Non-governmental Organisations which have been carrying out search and rescue operations and providing testimonies for years, ending the repeated limitations and attacks they have been enduring for saving lives at sea.

**The reconstruction presented in this report is necessarily partial, as it is based on the data and information available to the public on the websites of the relevant institutions; the documents consulted include over 80 calls for tender issued by the Italian State Police and Guardia di Finanza; Decrees extending the international missions; documents of the EU institutions on European programmes.*

For any notifications, corrections, integrations, database access requests, please contact us via mail at: giorgiajana.pintus@gmail.com and immigrazione@arci.it

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