



## **EUROPEAN CIVIL RESCUE ORGANISATIONS STAND UP AGAINST SMUGGLING ALLEGATIONS**

NGOs which rescue people from drowning at sea are encouraging smugglers who profit from dangerous Mediterranean crossings, Frontex Director Fabrice Leggeri told the German newspaper "DIE WELT" on Feb 27, 2017.

We, the signatories of this statement, reject critiques that distort the facts. People do not migrate because they support smuggling networks. Smuggling networks exist because people have to flee. Only safe and legal routes to Europe can put an end to the traffickers' business.

Fabrice Leggeri's comments make it sound like an allegation that "40 percent of all recent rescue operations" (EUNAVFOR MED data) were carried out by non-government organisations. Rather, these numbers highlight that the EU is not assuming its share of the responsibility. Private SAR organizations have to help those in need because there is no official support. It is cynical to discredit those organisations that save people from drowning at sea. Our mandate differs very clearly from that of police and military ships in the area. The common *Code of Conduct* shows: [Our crews are not deployed to disband trafficking networks, but to provide humanitarian aid.](#)

Contrary to Leggeri's claims, there are no attempts to provide ways of legal immigration. The closing of the Balkan route, the EU-Turkey Deal and the training of the Libyan Coast Guard are measures aimed at preventing immigration to Europe, thereby worsening the desperate situation and insecurity of refugees. Instead of providing safe and legal ways to enter the EU, officials criminalize migration and civil rescuers.

We - thousands of private donors, voluntary rescuers and supporters - are defending European values by actively doing something about the appalling conditions in the Mediterranean. In the long run, taking care of people in need at Europe's borders cannot remain the responsibility of civil society!

March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017

[Sea-Watch](#) ♦ [Jugend Rettet](#) ♦ [Alarmphone](#) ♦ [Mission Lifeline](#) ♦ [Borderline Europe](#) ♦ [CADUS](#) ♦