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23 May 2011

Lives lost in the Mediterranean sea: who is responsible?

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Ms Tineke STRIK and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

More than a thousand people are thought to have perished in the waves of the Mediterranean since January 2011 while trying to reach European soil. According to the UNHCR, five boats coming from Libya with a total of 2400 persons on board have reached Lampedusa, some having required rescue operations to save human lives. Another three boats, which are thought to have carried up to 800 people, have gone missing.

On 8 May, the Guardian reported that 61 boat people escaping from Libya had died after their appeals for rescue had been ignored by armed forces operating in the Mediterranean. The intercepted boat in distress was left drifting for 16 days before the currents brought it back to the Libyan coast. According to witnesses, back in Libya, the 10 survivors were imprisoned for days, during which one person had succumbed.

Following this tragic incident, the President of the Assembly called for an immediate and comprehensive inquiry into the circumstances of the death of these 61 people.

The Assembly should carry out an enquiry into this particular incident, but also into other cases where better interception and rescue co-ordination could have saved human lives. No vessel has the right to ignore another in distress on the sea. Under the circumstances where an increased number of makeshift boats are likely to embark from Libya as the conflict continues, Europe should do everything possible to provide humanitarian aid and prevent the loss of human life at sea, and to offer protection where it is needed.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left