

# 1,971 migrants died or disappeared in the Mediterranean in 2021

On 'CommemorAction Day' 36 NGOs gather in Senglea to remember migrants that died, went missing or faced prosecution whilst crossing borders

1,971 migrants died or disappeared in the Mediterranean in 2021, and at least 23,000 over the past decade, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

On "CommemorAction" Day on Sunday, 36 NGOs gathered by the harbour in Senglea, to remember all those that faced prosecution, died, went missing, or disappeared whilst crossing the sea and the world's borders.

They remarked that although the Mediterranean remains one of the world's deadliest migratory routes, Maltese authorities are looking away from their duties to protect the lives of people seeking asylum in our search and rescue zone.

"Today, we join people across the world to strongly denounce the deadly violence of the world's border regimes and call on responsible authorities to respect human rights, international law and the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, and to act humanely to prevent deaths and disappearance of lives," the NGOs said.

"It is an established fact that Maltese authorities collaborate with the Libyan Coastguard in illegal pushbacks. We regularly read reports of Malta ignoring distress calls and refusing disembarkation to the rescued. We witness asylum seekers being subjected to degrading and humiliating treatment," they said.

They said the "imprisonment" of people on Captain Morgan boats in 2020, was a tragic case in point. "We call on authorities to remember that saving lives at sea is a legal and moral obligation."

They remarked that human rights and international laws safeguard the right to seek asylum and oblige states to treat asylum seekers with respect and dignity at every stage of the process.

“We call on EU institutions to offer strong assistance measures to ensure Malta and other Member States can offer the safety and dignity migratory peoples are entitled to,” the NGOs said.

This event was one of many taking place to mark the Global Day of “CommemorAction”, where people stand in solidarity with the relatives of those who died or disappeared along migratory routes and call for action to prevent this from happening again.

CommemorAction Day occurs on 6 February, as on the day in 2014, Spanish border police killed at least 15 people attempting to cross into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Tarajal. The NGOs said those migrants drowned as the Guardia Civil armed with aggressive riot gear fired rubber bullets into them.

“This tragedy has become a shameful symbol of deadly migration policies across the world. Spanish courts have since then ruled that no crime was committed and acquitted the Guardia Civil officers. The victims’ families still wait for justice.”

The first CommemorAction took place on the 6 February 2019 in Oujda, where families of deceased, missing or disappeared migrants called for an end to border violence.

“The Tarajal massacre is but one example of 20 years of aggression where victims remain without justice, graves without names and borders without rights.”

The event was organized by aditus foundation; African Media Association; Anti-Poverty Forum Malta; Blue Door English; Department for Social Policy and Social Work; Department of Gender and Sexualities, University of Malta; Drachma LGBTI and Drachma Parents Group; Fondazzjoni Sebh; Free El Hiblu 3 Campaign; Great Oak Malta Association; Integra foundation; Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS); Justice and Peace Commission – Archdiocese of Malta; KOPIN; Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh; L-Għaqda għall-Ġustizzja, Ugwaljanza u Paċi; LGBTI+ Gozo; Malta Gay Rights Movement (MGRM); Malta Humanist Association; Maltese Association of Social Workers; Men Against Violence; Migrant Women Association Malta; Moviment Graffiti; OASI Foundation; Office of the Dean – Faculty of Education; Office of the Dean, Faculty for Social Wellbeing; Paulo Freire Institute Foundation; President Emeritus, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca; Repubblika; Richmond Foundation; Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali – Azzjoni Kattolika Maltija; SOS Malta; SPARK15; St Jeanne Antide Foundation; Sudanese Community; The

Good Shepherd Sisters - Dar Merħba Bik Foundation.

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