

PRESS STATEMENT

“Once again, political discussions take precedence over human lives. It is at times like these that our consciences are called to do what is right, to ensure a full respect for the fundamental human rights of all persons irrespectively of colour, origin and status.”

It appears that the Maltese and Italian authorities are once again disagreeing over where to disembark a group of around 100 rescued migrants. Rescued earlier today by a Spanish frigate, the Almirante Juan de Borbón, the group of migrants seems to be largely composed of men but also includes several women and children. According to news reports, the stranded migrants were rescued in Sunday morning yet the date of departure from Libyan shores is as yet unconfirmed.

It is important to emphasise that the rescued persons have fled a situation of civil war, and have possibly been through several harrowing experiences. *“It is unclear when they left Libya, yet they have definitely been out at sea for over 5 days. This can only mean that they are probably exhausted, dehydrated and are in urgent need of physical and psychological assistance. A warship is definitely not the place to provide this urgent assistance”*, commented **aditus** Chairperson Dr. Neil Falzon.

aditus applauds the crew of the Juan de Borbón for rescuing the persons in distress, yet urges the Italian and Maltese authorities to immediately relieve the warship of rescued migrants, in the interests of both the latter and of the crew itself. **aditus** further recalls that international maritime law requires a prompt disembarkation at a place of safety for all persons rescued at sea, and that any prolonged period spent aboard the warship poses severe security, humanitarian and human rights concerns.

aditus therefore appeals to the Italian and Maltese authorities to allow the immediate disembarkation of the rescued persons so that their safety may be guaranteed.

For the longer-term, the two States are urged to seek resolution to this on-going legal *impasse* that too often has resulted in these tragic incidents. To this end, **aditus** strongly recommends the involvement of competent international and regional agencies particularly the European Union, the International Maritime Organisation and NATO.

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