



Press release

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SOS MEDITERRANEE dedicates UNESCO Peace Prize to those who lost their lives at sea in search for a dignified life

SOS MEDITERRANEE, European civic organisation for the rescue of life at sea, is very honoured to receive UNESCO's Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize alongside Giuseppina Nicolini Mayor of Lampedusa (Italy).

SOS MEDITERRANEE dedicates this award to those who lost their lives at sea in search for refuge and to those rescued in the Mediterranean Sea over the past 20 years.

« We're very happy to be given this award together with Nicolini », said Sophie Beau, co-founder and vice president of SOS MEDITERRANEE. « We visited her in Lampedusa when we founded our association in March 2015, explaining our project to start search and rescue activities with a ship chartered by European citizens. She declared to Klaus Vogel, a German merchant captain, co-founder of SOS MEDITERRANEE: 'You are crazy but I am with you, because this is what we need after the failures of the EU' «.

Lampedusa is a special place in SOS MEDITERRANEE's young history. Touched by the repeated calls from the Mayor of Lampedusa, who asked for a large-scale European reaction to the tragedy in the Mediterranean, some of the organization's members had the chance to witness the dedication of the people of Lampedusa firsthand in 2015. Lampedusa was chosen to launch our first campaign at sea, when the Aquarius left its port on February 26th 2016. It was also designated as first port of safety by the Italian authorities after the very first rescue operation of the Aquarius in March 2016.

The joy and honour to be awarded such a distinction by the UN agency is however overshadowed by the dramatic events in the Mediterranean Sea over this past Easter weekend, where more than 8,000 humans were rescued and at least a dozen died in their attempt to cross the sea.

During a hearing at the Italian Senate yesterday on Wednesday 19 April 2017, SOS MEDITERRANEE rejected recent allegations, accusing humanitarian organizations of colluding with criminal groups. Instead, the organization emphasized the necessity for active citizens to put the European values of solidarity and humanity into practice.

SOS MEDITERRANEE urgently calls for an adequate institutional response to the deaths at sea, by immediately deploying sufficient search and rescue means in the Central Mediterranean in order to avoid further loss of life.

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For more information, visit: www.sosmediterranee.org

SOS MEDITERRANEE is a European organization for the rescue of people in distress at sea. It was founded in 2015 and launched its rescue operations in February 2016. Together with its medical partner Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the organization has assisted more than 16.000 people within its first year of rescue activities.