

Childbirth during rescue: "A miracle amid the human drama" 860 refugees rescued by SOS MEDITERRANEE within one day

Yesterday, a Cameroonian gave birth on a wooden boat in middle of the Central Mediterranean. Baby boy and mother were rescued by SOS MEDITERRANEE and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). When taken aboard, mother and child were still connected by the umbilical cord.

"As soon as they boarded, I accompanied them to the clinic and separated them by cutting the umbilical cord. The placenta was delivered on board. Both mother and little Christ are doing very well, but of course it would have been better for both if she hadn't had to give birth in middle of the Mediterranean, surrounded by one hundred men," said MSF midwife Alice Gautreau on Twitter.

Christ is already the fifth baby born aboard the Aquarius since the launch of SOS MEDITERRANEE's search and rescue operations in February 2016.

"This woman giving birth in the middle of the open sea, demonstrates the dimension of human drama that we're facing at Europe's borders today. What extreme situation must the woman been facing, that made her embark a wooden boat even shortly before giving birth? What would have happened to her and the baby if our teams had not arrived in time? No one should ever have to take such risks," said Timon Marszalek, General Director of SOS MEDITERRANEE Germany.

Mother and child were applauded when arriving on board the Aquarius. Meanwhile, rescue operations were ongoing.

"This is incredible. I have never seen anything alike. I can barely imagine the situation of giving birth on a boat in the middle of the sea, while you don't even know if you are going to survive this journey yourself," said Nick, rescue team member of SOS MEDITERRANEE, who witnessed the delivery.

10.000 people welcomed on board since the beginning of the year

Early Tuesday morning, the team of Aquarius rescued 133 people from a rubber boat. Only a few hours later, people from further four boats had to be saved – summing up to a total of 860 rescued people that very day. Among the rescued are nationals of Guinea Conakry, Mali, Morocco and Ivory Coast.

Yesterday night, the Aquarius received instructions from MRCC Rome to head North towards Italy to let the 860 rescued disembark at a harbour of safety.

Including the rescue operations carried out on Tuesday, SOS MEDITERRANEE has saved 10.000 people from drowning at sea since the beginning of 2017. *"It's barely mid-July and we have already rescued 10.000 people – that is almost as many as rescued by our teams throughout the whole last year. In the absence of a response by the European Union to this human tragedy, the intervention of NGOs is urgently needed to prevent further loss of life,"* commented Marszalek.

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