



Press release

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## **Humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean continues: Switzerland joins the European SOS MEDITERRANEE network**

The humanitarian tragedy in the Mediterranean continues and European citizens continue to mobilise. As a reaction to the on-going crisis, the SOS MEDITERRANEE movement is expanding on the international level with a new member: This month SOS MEDITERRANEE Switzerland joined the European network.

*"The drama that is taking place in the Mediterranean concerns us all because it touches upon our fundamental values. SOS MEDITERRANEE is a practical demonstration of active citizenship, solidary and simply humane, that is faced with a real political failure",* declared Thomas Bischoff, president of the recently founded SOS MEDITERRANEE Switzerland. *"We will mobilize Swiss citizens, raise the awareness on the situation in the Mediterranean and contribute to the finance of operations".*

Last week, SOS MEDITERRANEE alongside its medical partner Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), rescued 606 people from drowning at sea - including 241 minors, 50 of whom were under the age of 13. Yesterday night, the Aquarius welcomed another 111 people from North Sudan, Morocco and Syria on board, previously rescued by an Italian navy vessel. Following instructions given by the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Rome, the Aquarius is currently on its way to Sicily to disembark the 111 survivors in a port of safety. 35% of the survivors rescued by the Aquarius this year were minors.

Since the start of SOS MEDITERRANEE's rescue mission in February 2016, the situation in the Mediterranean has not changed. Men, women and children are still fleeing the chaos, insecurity and widespread violence in Libya.

Sophie Beau, Vice-President of the international SOS MEDITERRANEE network, added: *"The crisis at Europe's doorstep is on-going and the need for professional search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean is still there, as we are preparing ourselves for a second difficult winter at sea. The creation of SOS MEDITERRANEE Switzerland demonstrates the growing awareness of European citizens across our national borders, and the strength of the civic mobilization in regard to the tragedy in the Mediterranean".*

**For immediate release. Photo credits:** Anthony Jean.

### **Press contacts:**

France: Laura Garel / [l.garel@sosmediterranee.org](mailto:l.garel@sosmediterranee.org)

Germany: Jana Ciernioch +49 173 4071721 / [j.ciernioch@sosmediterranee.org](mailto:j.ciernioch@sosmediterranee.org)

Italy: Barbara Amodeo +39 351 208 35 68 / [b.amodeo@sosmediterranee.org](mailto:b.amodeo@sosmediterranee.org)

Switzerland: Caroline Abu Sada / [c.abu-sada@sosmediterranee.org](mailto:c.abu-sada@sosmediterranee.org)

International: Mathilde Auvillain +39 347 328 24 12 / [m.auvillain@sosmediterranee.org](mailto:m.auvillain@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 23.689 people. Since the beginning of 2017, the Aquarius has welcomed 12.539 people. 9.830 lives that were directly rescued by the teams of SOS MEDITERRANEE, 2.709 were welcomed on board following transshipment.