

EU Grapples with Mounting Illegal Migrant Crisis in the Mediterranean



Illegal migrants in overloaded boat in Mediterranean

Source: UK Telegraph

The EU is in the midst of another refugee crisis in the Straits that separates Sicily from North Africa. The flash point of the humanitarian crisis is the Island of Lampedusa 297 kilometers offshore of Tripoli, Libya. 168 kilometers north of Lampedusa is the Island Republic of Malta which is also in the crosshairs of this crisis. Refugees from the Jihadist conflicts throughout the Middle East, North and Sub Sahara Africa, even South Asia packed into a flotilla of overloaded vessels make a bee-line for this Italian landfall with less than 5,000 full time residents, where heretofore they received a welcome. Off shore of Lampedusa is a flotilla of EU coast guard vessels on rotating duty alert for distress calls escorting floundering vessels to port on the Italian Island and hence to Sicily and the Italian mainland. Unfortunately, these days Italian and EU coast guard vessels search for the bodies of illegal migrants washed overboard.



Italian Coast Guard Operations Center Rome, April 19, 2015

Source: AFP

The illegal refugee crisis in the Mediterranean reached a new peak last week when thousands of illegal 'migrants' attempted the perilous journey. They were seeking refuge and access to generous welfare and absorption benefits from the EU. In one

tragic instance an overloaded 66 foot fishing vessel [capsized](#) on Sunday, April 19th when migrants rushed to one side of the deck hailing a commercial vessel responding their distress call. The result was over 700 downed, less than 49 survived and 28 bodies have been pulled from the water so far. Another ship disaster last week [claimed](#) 400 lives off Tripoli. The picket line of Italian and other EU coast guard vessels were pressed into service endeavoring to recover the remains. Last week, an estimated 8,500 made the crossing on questionable vessels arranged by human traffickers. In 2014 more than 1,600 died during turbulent crossings. So far this year more than [900 lives](#) have been lost. Frontex data [shows](#) that migration across the Mediterranean in 2014 peaked to a level more than twice as high as its previous peak in 2011. 170,760 migrants crossed the Mediterranean in 2014, [compared](#) with 64,300 in 2011, 15,900 in 2012, and 40,000 in 2013.

Sunday night Italian President Renzi and Maltese PM Muscat [requested](#) an emergency EU Summit to address these deadly illegal migrant ship disasters. It was quickly added to the agenda of the EU Foreign Ministers meeting today in Luxembourg. According to a *USA Today* [report](#) Renzi said, "How can it be that we daily are witnessing a tragedy?" Muscat seconded Renzi calling "it the "biggest human tragedy of the last few years." The illegal migration problem was [discussed](#) at the *Informal meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries* held in Barcelona on April 13th to discuss the future of the European Neighborhood Policy.

However, there was a new development. In one illegal crossing, 12 Christians from Nigeria and Ghana were thrown overboard from a sinking raft by Muslim compatriots, because they couldn't recite the Shahada – the profession of faith or other Qur'anic verses. The perpetrators were arrested by Italian police. Onshore, ISIS followers in Libya beheaded 30 Ethiopian Orthodox Christians seeking to make the illegal passage across

the Mediterranean, yet another outrage. That sparked [anger](#) from the Obama Administration which appears unable to do anything about it. However, in the 20 months remaining of President Obama's final term in office the priority is engagement with Iran over its nuclear program via the P5+1 process hoping to deprive the Islamic regime of nuclear weapons. That priority leaves a legacy for his successor to deal with a welter of international crises.

[Danish psychologist Nicolai Sennels](#) in a *10 NewsDK* blog post today [noted](#) the scandal of EU cooperation with North African human traffickers:

Last weekend the EU coast guard transported 8,500 people from North Africa to Italy alone. EU says that it "saves" the "refugees" (many of them turn out to be jihadis or fake refugees) from the dangerous travel across the Mediterranean. However, it is the EU that lures millions to do this potentially deadly trip by promising Western welfare to those willing to take the chance. The EU should either start offering free transport from Africa to Europe or start sending all refugees back to local camps. I advise the latter option, and not just because it would make us able to give safety to more people for the same amount of money – which is more compassionate. But also because it would dissuade people from taking the deadly chance. Thereby nobody would die in the attempt to reach EU shores. That is how Australia does it – and since Australia introduced this policy, the amount of drowned boat-refugees decreased to zero.

It is obvious that the situation is unsustainable, but as long as our politicians continue to obey the EU and the UN, the human tsunami of refugees seeking the help of European tax payers will continue. According to