

Press Release

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Migrant Children: shipwrecked, rescued or disappearing?

2015: a year of expected tragedies for migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Terre des Hommes planning to increase support and protection for unaccompanied children in Sicily. EU must operate a radical change of its migration policy. Destination Unknown, a program mobilizing NGOs in Europe to protect children on the move.

Easter break confirmed that the new season has resumed. Not the touristic one on the Mediterranean shores, but the one of smugglers and migrants tragedies. The pitch of the show is basically the same. As well as the consequences.

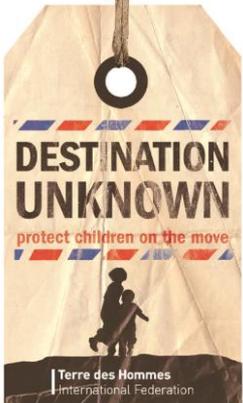
On Sunday 12th April, another tragedy raised the number of 400 additional migrants dying in the Mediterranean Sea. Among them, probably children and youth. 150 have been rescued. Some 10 bodies were found, raising the official number of death migrants in the Mediterranean to 500 since beginning 2015.

We need a radical change in the upcoming European Agenda on Migration

EU institutions and Member States must understand that we need and we want a radical change in European's migration policies, said Raffaele Salinari, Chair of Terre des Hommes International Federation. We want our continent to remain a space of human rights and opportunities he said. The EU must focus its cooperation in Mediterranean countries by supporting local civil society and democracy with more resources. And we must invest in Europe to protect and integrate migrants, in particular children and youth. Those are the two pillars expressing a new paradigm in EU migration policy that we want to see in the upcoming new EU Agenda on Migration to be adopted by the European Commission in May, Salinari concluded.

Terre des Hommes amplifies psycho-social work for traumatized children in Sicily

Terre des Hommes Italy plans to amplify its operations in order to face the increase of arrivals of unaccompanied migrants children and youth in Sicily. Today, Terre des Hommes met with local authorities in the Sicilian province of Ragusa to plan an increase of its work in additional reception centres for children. We might observe a new trend in the way smugglers will operate, by embarking high number of migrants in few days to cross the sea, producing regular peaks of arrivals in short time, observed Federica Giannotta, manager of Terre des Hommes program in Italy. *We therefore try to plan an increase of our activities in collaboration with local authorities and try to*



offer as much as possible psycho-social support to these children who arrive deeply traumatized she announced.

The worrying phenomenon of disappeared children

According to Italian Government official data, as of the end of march 2015, over 12.600 unaccompanied minors were residing in Italy – more than 3.500 of them being untraceable after having escaped from social services facilities, confirming the worrying phenomenon of children disappearing. “This is confirming the loopholes of the reception system in Italy, affirmed Alessandra Ballerini, lawyer and consultant for Terre des Hommes in Italy, “that does not enable a rapid transfer of children into permanent reception facilities to start their full integration path of migrant children. Moreover, these children and youth are *de facto* forced to institutional inactivity and to irregular status in Europe, with obvious social risks this is encompassing”.

Figures and data

According to various sources, more than 8,000 migrants were rescued and brought on Italian coast since beginning of April, more than 5.500 in the last days between 11th and 13th April. Among them around 450 children and youth according to estimates. Since 15 years, IOM estimates that 22.000 migrants died in the Mediterranean Sea. We know they are most probably much more.

These figures confirm what all observers, authorities and humanitarian organizations expect in 2015: a potential unprecedented year of migrants losing lives at the doors of Europe. A year of “unacceptable tragedies”, as this was said in October 2013 after the so-called “Lampedusa Tragedy”. Thousands of migrants will continue to risk their lives to reach Europe escaping violence or seeking for life opportunities. Including children and youth, alone or accompanied.

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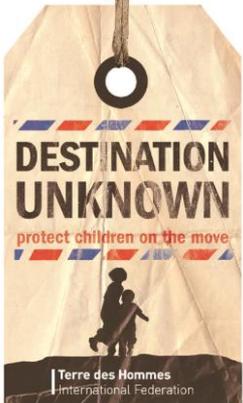
Press Dossier

Know more on FARO Project, a project to provide support for unaccompanied minors in Sicily <http://destination-unknown.org/italy-faro-i-and-ii-projects-in-lampedusa>

Know more on Destination Unknown Campaign to protect children on the move
www.destination-unknown.org

Know more on Terre des Hommes Italy
www.terredeshommes.it

Know more on Terre des Hommes International Federation
www.terredeshommes.org



Destination Unknown Campaign

With ***Destination Unknown***, a campaign to protect children on the move, Terre des Hommes protects children on the move, including unaccompanied minors, through field projects on the reception, protection, psychosocial and legal support of children in Italy (Sicily, FARO project), Malta (in association with KOPIN), Greece (in association with ARSIS), Cyprus (in association with Hope for Children Cyprus) as well as in Central and South-East Europe.

Destination Unknown campaign was launched in 2012 to raise awareness about violation of the rights of unaccompanied minors - children on the move - who are fleeing war, poverty and violence. According to the most recent data, children on age 4 the move who cross border are nearly 35 million worldwide (source: UN). The Campaign aims at enhancing adequate policy for effective protection and to provide concrete actions for these children, particularly those vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation and discrimination.

