



**□ 5 November 2014 - Italy's "Mare Nostrum" search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean ceased operations 1 November and was replaced by a more limited effort to control arrival of migrants.**

In the place of the Italian operation, the European Union has launched "Operation Triton", which will be carried out only within 30 miles off the Italian coast. According to media reports the scale of Triton is only one third of Mare Nostrum. IOM, the International Organization of Migration, has warned that lives are at risk since the Triton Operation pales next to Mare Nostrum.



“Operation Triton cannot be considered a replacement of Mare Nostrum. The Mediterranean still needs to be patrolled as it has been done so far: in terms of means, scope and geographical extension. The flows of migrants will probably be the same for some time and therefore the risk of shipwrecks will not decrease,” said IOM Director General William Lacy Swing.

Earlier a spokesperson for the UN's high commissioner for refugees had warned that any reduction in the capacity of the new mission – to be called "Frontex Plus" – would have a clear impact. "The risk is that more people will die, of course," the spokesperson, Carlotta Sami, told the Guardian. "If the operation is reduced, the risk is that we will have more people dying."

IOM has paid tribute to the “heroic work” of Italy’s maritime forces in rescuing at sea thousands of migrants seeking safety in Europe.

“Under Italy’s “Mare Nostrum” operation, some 150,000 so-called “irregular” migrants, many of them from the most troubled nations in Africa and the Middle East, have arrived safely over the past 10 months in Europe, where today many are pursuing claims for asylum,” IOM said in a Press Release. Operation Mare Nostrum (OMN) was established by the Italian Government last October 18, 2013 to tackle the dramatic increase of migratory flows during the second half of the year and consequent tragic ship wreckages off the island of Lampedusa.

IOM notes that despite the rescue efforts of Italy and other Mediterranean coastal nations – including Greece, Malta and Spain – an estimated 3,200 migrants have perished attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2014, many of them victims of ruthless criminal gangs seeking to profit from the misery of men, women and children fleeing conflict and oppression.

“Despite the rising number of migrants rescued, IOM does not believe that Europe is faced with an “invasion” along its southern coast, nor that the safety net provided by Mare Nostrum represented a “pull factor”. “

“The emergency is not in the number of people involved, but in the humanitarian and operational consequences,” said IOM Director General William Lacy Swing. “This is not a crisis of a so-called ‘excess’ of migrants overburdening the continent, but an emergency of more people needing protection, aid and safe migration channels, especially for those not covered by existing protection systems.”

*Photo: 1.) Abandoned migrant boats lie lifeless opposite the port of Lampedusa, Italy. UNHCR/Phil Behan. 2.) William Lacy Swing, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré.*

# **IOM deplores cuts in the efforts to save migrants on the Mediterranean**

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