



The [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has commended the continued efforts of the European Union to save the lives of migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe.

The High Commissioner also insisted on the importance for European Union leaders to respect international human rights and refugee law and not force people to return to countries where they could face persecution.

“I urge EU leaders to ensure that respect for non-refoulement, a cornerstone of international human rights and refugee law, and protection of all human rights underpin their discussions and decisions in Malta”, Zaid was quoted as in an OHCHR press release as telling an informal summit of European Union Heads of state and government being held in Malta.

Malta currently holds the [presidency of the Council of the European Union](#) which rotates every six months. Malta has made a holistic approach to migration issues as one of the top priorities

of its presidency which runs through the end of June 2017.

In his remarks, the High Commissioner praised the European Union as well as the Italian Coast Guard and non-governmental organisations for their role in working to save people who have fallen prey to smugglers and traffickers using unsafe boats to transport migrants on the route to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea.

The UN Human Rights Office and the UN Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)) have described appalling mistreatment of migrants crossing from Libya to Europe, the OHCHR press release said.

The High Commissioner urged the European Union to end arbitrary detention of migrants while welcoming EU proposals to improve conditions in detention centres in Libya.