

## Deadly Failure of Rescue Coordination in the Central Mediterranean

On the morning of Saturday, May 24, civil network Alarm Phone alerted authorities to two overcrowded wooden boats in distress in the Libyan Search and Rescue Region (SRR). Both had departed from Sabratha two nights earlier and were each carrying more than 100 people in urgent need of assistance. Only one boat received a coordinated response: the 128 survivors were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard and disembarked in Lampedusa on Sunday, May 25. **For the second boat, no SAR plan was launched, despite repeated alerts, worsening weather conditions, and the clear presence of distress.** At the time of the alert, the *Ocean Viking*, a humanitarian rescue ship run by SOS MEDITERRANEE, was more than 36 hours from the distress case.

A merchant vessel, *MV Bobic*, flying the Marshall Islands flag, found the second boat on Saturday evening after being alerted by Alarm Phone. Lacking adequate rescue equipment and without guidance from maritime authorities – despite desperate calls for assistance – the ship's Captain attempted to rescue the shipwrecked persons. Multiple people fell into the sea, one disappeared; 35 survivors were taken onboard before contact with the distress boat was lost. ***MV Bobic* issued a Mayday Relay, and the Captain and his crew spent hours seeking support and instructions from the responsible authorities to no avail.**

Despite the Flag State's and Captain's expressed concerns that disembarking survivors in Libya would violate international law, the Captain's wish to disembark people in Lampedusa, and a first instruction from the Libyan Rescue Coordination Center that survivors should be transhipped to the *Ocean Viking*, **the 35 rescued individuals were ultimately disembarked and sent to detention in Libya under an unclear chain of command – marking a grave breach of maritime obligations.**

Meanwhile, civil society organizations Alarm Phone and SOS MEDITERRANEE spent the night trying to offer remote support to the Captain of *MV Bobic* and his crew, while attempting to initiate a search for the missing boat. Alarm Phone finally reestablished contact with 79 remaining survivors early Sunday morning. Merchant vessel *MV Eco One* rescued 26 people Sunday evening. According to survivor testimonies, two people went missing during this second rescue attempt. *Ocean Viking* completed the rescue of the remaining 53 survivors. ***MV Eco One* disembarked in Lampedusa, the *Ocean Viking* was ordered to Livorno, further separating the shipwrecked people between different ports and unnecessarily prolonging their time at sea.**

Five survivors were medically evacuated from the *Ocean Viking* to Lampedusa on Monday, and Palermo's Juvenile Court ordered the disembarkation of minors in a closer port. 33 children and two adult family members disembarked in Sicily on Tuesday, May 27. Despite their medical conditions, which were reported to the authorities, 13 survivors were forced to endure two and a half additional days of sailing to Livorno.

**What the individuals in distress endured in Alarm Phone case 0555 is not an isolated incident, but a stark illustration of the arbitrariness and systemic neglect that defines maritime coordination in the Central Mediterranean today. This manufactured state of chaos is a direct consequence of EU migration policies that prioritize deterrence over the legal and moral imperative to save lives.**



- ➡ Despite repeated attempts to get in contact with Italian, Maltese and Libyan authorities, **none of them assumed effective coordination for this SAR case**, and no rescue plan was initiated at any stage.
- ➡ **NGOs filled a deadly operational gap**, first identifying the distress case and alerting authorities and assets at sea, then offering remote support to the merchant vessel and mobilizing further Search and Rescue operations.
- ➡ **The presence of NGOs was essential** to the conduct of the rescue operation as well as to alert involved actors to possible violations of international maritime and humanitarian law, ultimately monitoring and documenting violations that occurred.
- ➡ Despite overwhelming documentation of human rights violations in Libya and the clear indication of UN agencies and European institutions that Libya is not a safe place to disembark survivors of distress at sea – as confirmed by numerous rulings from Italian courts – **pushbacks and pushbacks-by-proxy using merchant vessels to Libya still occur regularly in the Central Mediterranean Sea**.
- ➡ **The policy of assigning distant ports to disembark survivors is politically motivated and punitive** and shows how operational decisions are being used to exhaust and obstruct NGOs, not to protect life at sea.

**Alarm Phone and SOS MEDITERRANEE urgently call for immediate measures to ensure accountability and prevent further violations of maritime and human rights obligations, in particular:**

- 1. An investigation is needed to clarify why the competent authorities delayed assuming coordination of the rescue operation initiated by MV Bobic, despite being repeatedly alerted to the distress case.**
  - a. Alarm phone relayed alerts to two vessels in distress on Saturday morning. One of them was duly assisted, and all survivors were disembarked in Lampedusa. This case was only approximately 23 nautical miles North of the case described above (AP0555), which had a completely different fate.
  - b. This clearly indicates that rescue capacity was available but not deployed for the second case.
  - c. An official alert to the second distress case was only published by Italian authorities on behalf of the Libyan Coastguard 34 hours after Alarm Phone's first alert. The Libyan Coast Guard, after an alleged attempt to reach the vessel on Saturday afternoon, did not intervene further.
- 2. A formal inquiry is needed to determine who gave the order to disembark survivors in an unsafe port in violation of maritime law. MRCC Rome must disclose its operational role and coordination with JRCC Libya.**
  - a. Pushbacks of rescued persons to Libya constitute a breach of international maritime law. Multiple legal precedents from Italian courts confirm their illegality.
  - b. Communication logs indicate that the Marshall Islands-flagged *MV Bobic* initially planned to proceed to Tunisia, the ship's original destination, and the shipmaster was aware that disembarkation in Libya would be unlawful. A message from the Flag State reads: *"It has now been clarified that MRCC Rome has coordinated with JRCC Libya to ensure that the 35 migrants are removed from the vessel as soon as possible."*
  - c. This indicates an involvement of MRCC Rome that needs to be investigated.

**3. Frontex involvement and communication with national authorities regarding SAR case AP0555 must be clarified.**

- a. Frontex aerial assets were present in the vicinity of the SAR incident on Sunday (*Sparrow 1*), yet no lifesaving coordination with available rescue assets followed.
- b. A serious incident report must be launched and made available to the public to clarify accountability for the refoulement and reported deaths.

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**4. We demand that the Italian government end the punitive practice of assigning distant ports for disembarkation – a policy that, in this case, forced the *Ocean Viking* to disembark 13 survivors in Livorno, inflicting undue hardship on vulnerable individuals.**

- a. The 53 people rescued by the *Ocean Viking* survived an incredible ordeal. Survivors were weakened and dehydrated, many suffered severe fuel burns and witnessed the drowning of three of their peers. All survivors, without exception, needed urgent medical and psychological care as assessed by medical professionals onboard *Ocean Viking* and reported to the authorities.
- b. The five most severe medical cases were evacuated to Lampedusa to receive emergency treatment on land on Monday, May 26. The Juvenile Court of Palermo intervened on behalf of the 33 children onboard, 27 of whom were without an adult guardian.
- c. Despite repeated calls for a full disembarkation in Porto Empedocle (Sicily), 13 vulnerable shipwreck survivors were forced to spend additional 2.5 days onboard to reach the assigned port in Livorno, 1150km from the rescue location. The government's need to arrange reception for 13 people cannot reasonably be used to justify this decision.
- d. This punitive policy of distant port assignment contradicts IMO guidelines that prioritizes access to survivors' basic rights and needs.

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**Annex:**

- Detailed timeline of events
- Screenshots of relevant emails and alerts



## Annex 1: Timeline of events – May 24 – 29

All times in CEST (UTC+2); times quoted in emails are in UTC. All quotations in italics are reproduced verbatim from original email or phone communications.

### Saturday, May 24

**6:39:** Alarm Phone relays a distress alert to a boat in distress in the Libyan Search and Rescue Region carrying more than 100 people to the relevant Libyan, Maltese and Italian authorities after being alerted by a relative of the persons in distress.

**10:06:** *Ocean Viking* is in copy of an email from Alarm Phone relaying the distress alert to the Libyan, Maltese and Italian authorities. *Ocean Viking* starts proceeding at maximum speed towards the last known location of the distress case.

**Note:** On Saturday morning, the estimated time from the position of the *Ocean Viking* to the last known location of the boat in distress is more than 36 hours, as the ship was transiting back from the distant port of Ancona assigned for the disembarkation of survivors from the previous mission. Alarm Phone sends multiple updates on the case to relevant authorities throughout the morning and afternoon, including updated positions. *Ocean Viking* and Alarm Phone try to identify and contact vessels in the vicinity of the distress case to mobilize assistance.

**14:37:** Alarm Phone informs the *Ocean Viking* that the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) reportedly sent a boat from Zawiyah at 10:50 and that it would take their patrol vessel 4-6 hours to reach the distress case.

**16:30:** Alarm Phone informs the *Ocean Viking* that the LCG officer told them the patrol boat has returned to port and did not reach the distress case due to bad weather.

**17:33:** Alarm Phone emails merchant vessel *MV Bobic*. *MV Bobic* responds with the Captain signaling his willingness to assist but saying that he is seeking instructions or support from the Libyan or Italian authorities.

**17:39:** *Ocean Viking* reaches ITMRCC via telephone, expressing concern about case AP0555 and offering support. The Duty Officer answers “*we know what we are doing.*” *Ocean Viking* cannot get any more precise information than that.

**18:31:** Alarm Phone relays to *Ocean Viking* an EGC message – SAR coordination to circular area:

**SAR CASE 792**  
ON BEHALF OF LIBYAN NAVY COAST GUARD AND AS PER SOLAS CONVENTION AND SAR CONVENTION HAMBURG '79, WE INFORM YOU ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF A BLUE WOODEN BOAT IN DISTRESS WITH ABOUT 102 PEOPLE ON BOARD. THE LAST KNOWN POSITION IS LAT. 33 46 N - LONG. 012 20 E - AND DATES BACK TO 24 MAY AT 0932 UTC.  
PLEASE YOU ARE REQUESTED TO DIVERT YOUR COURSE TOWARDS THIS POSITION AND WHEN IN VISUAL CONTACT WITH THE TARGET YOU HAVE TO COMMUNICATE THE INFORMATION TO THE FOLLOWING COMPETENT AUTHORITY:



**19:00:** Alarm Phone relays to *Ocean Viking* a conversation with the Designated Person Ashore (DPA) of the *MV Bobic* shipping company. According to the DPA, *MV Bobic* has a visual on the distress case and is still seeking formal instructions from ITMRCC or Libyan Joint Rescue Coordination Center (LYJRCC), to no avail. **The DPA reports that the Captain is fearful of the danger of a rescue operation, citing the shipwreck off Pylos.**

**In the absence of instructions or assistance from relevant authorities, Alarm Phone provides *MV Bobic* with supporting information on mass rescue operations ("rescue kit").**

**19:17:** Alarm Phone calls ITMRCC. Duty Officer says they will not provide instructions to *MV Bobic*, claiming the merchant vessel was in contact with the Libyan Coast Guard.

**19:52:** *MV Bobic* emails Alarm Phone, stating *MV Bobic* is launching a rescue operation, stating: "Once the operation is completed vessel will bound to the port of destination Sfax, Tunisia. Owners indeed intend to render all necessary assistance to the people in need." **Starting time of the attempted rescue operation is unclear.**

**21:38:** The Captain of *MV Bobic* emails the relevant Maltese, Italian and Libyan authorities with Alarm Phone in copy, stating: "Please note that 35 persons recovered but the boat drift away due to lack of fuel, due to darkness is difficult to locate them, please inform ALL MRCCs in the area to send more vessels to assist on *MV Bobic* on the SAR mission."

**22:26: *MV Bobic* sends a Mayday Relay on distress channel 16, alerting to possible persons in the water.<sup>1</sup>**

**22:42:** On the phone with Alarm Phone, the Captain of *MV Bobic* reports trying to get support from Libya but getting no answer and asks Alarm Phone to call Italy. The Captain expresses his intention to stay in the area until sunrise and voices concern over the capacity of his vessel and crew to provide adequate care to the 35 survivors rescued.

**23:44:** *Ocean Viking* is in copy of an email from *MV Bobic* Shipping Company to LYJRCC, ITMRCC and Malta RCC:

**Subject:** BOBIC - S.A.R operation 24 May 2025  
Dear All  
We need support on what to do please. Read Below.  
Master is standing alone with 35 people rescued and no-one is providing any guidance on next step to be taken for those people.  
Your attention and engagement is expected as a priority.  
Appreciate.  
Best Regards

**23:44:** *Ocean Viking* emails *MV Bobic* offering to assist remotely in developing a search pattern to find the boat in distress and eventual persons or bodies in the water. *MV Bobic* responds shortly after, providing information on the rescue operation and the boat in distress.

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<sup>1</sup> According to testimonies collected onboard the *Ocean Viking* before disembarkation, one person was confirmed missing during this attempted rescue.



**Sunday, May 25**

**00:23:** In an email to *MV Bobic*, the shipping company informs the captain that "[...] we have not receive any green light for the place that we can disembarked those people on board, thus remain adrift at the vicinity and shall revert the soonest we have something".

**00:26:** *MV Bobic* emails their Shipping Company, Alarm Phone, and *Ocean Viking*:

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Sunday, May 25, 2025 12:26 AM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: RE: Search and Rescue of SAR case - AP555

All.

We have onboard already 35 people.

We need to focus on a safe place for their disembarkation.

Another vessel is already engaged as responded to our Captain's MAYDAY Broadcast. The MRCCs have not proceeded in any further arrangements and we have not any further advise.

What we need to focus on:

1. Guide us or advise in which place we disembark these people for further treatment (if needed) and monitoring,
2. Coordinate and push from your end as well with JRCC Libya, MRCC Rome, RCC Malta or else to assist us,
3. JRCC Libya have released our vessel but we do not know where to sail in order to disembark those people for further treatment.

Be guided that everyone is asking something from the vessel, Captain and Crew have done anything could be done but no one assisting.

We need to support those people already onboard.

Contact Rescue Coordination Centers from your end as well.

You have the expertise and the experience to support and succeed on this

Appreciate.

Best Regards  
[REDACTED]

**00:48:** *Ocean Viking* calls ITMRCC about the partial rescue by *MV Bobic*. *Ocean Viking* expresses willingness to support but emphasizes the distance of the vessel to the distress case and asks the Duty Officer to coordinate assets in the vicinity of the distress location to perform a SAR operation.

**The Duty Officer instructs the *Ocean Viking* to communicate with the competent authority (most probably referring to LYJRCC).**

**01:21:** *Ocean Viking* calls JYJRCC. **The Duty Officer instructs the *Ocean Viking* to proceed towards the distress case, perform the rescue of the people adrift on the missing distress case, and to transship the 35 people rescued by *MV Bobic*.**

**01:33:** *Ocean Viking* calls ITMRCC relaying the instruction by LYJRCC to coordinate with *MV Bobic* for the rescue of the remaining persons in distress and transshipment of survivors already rescued. *Ocean Viking* explains that the distance to the distress case is 24 hours. *Ocean Viking* asks ITMRCC to coordinate with LYJRCC to define the best SAR plan, as other assets closer to the case are present in the area.





**01:48:** Alarm Phone emails all relevant authorities, stating *"MV Bobic [...] are doing their best to assist the distress case, but as you know, they are not either equipped or trained to carry out a proper SAR operation. It's your responsibility to ensure an efficient coordination to provide them and the people in distress the assistance needed. These people are in urgent distress."*

**01:49:** *Ocean Viking* emails all relevant authorities, *MV Bobic* and the Shipping Company, relaying *MV Bobic's* request for assistance from 00:26, requesting urgent action to prevent further loss of life. *Ocean Viking* relays the instruction from LYJRCC to proceed to the distress location and transship the survivors from *MV Bobic*. *Ocean Viking* informs all recipients of the intention to proceed to the last known position of the distress case and assisting *MV Bobic* by sharing knowledge and expertise, but emphasizes: *"MV Ocean Viking, 193 NM away from the last known position (best ETA 23.00 UTC 25.05.205) is not the adequate asset to respond to this urgent request, due to the distance from the target."*

**After the attempted rescue operation, *MV Bobic* conducts a search for the missing boat in distress. The Captain and the Designated Person Ashore send numerous emails to the relevant authorities requesting assistance in the search and instructions for the disembarkation of the 35 survivors.**

**Alarm Phone and *Ocean Viking* remain in contact with *MV Bobic* and the shipping company throughout the night, offering support in conducting a search pattern and reiterating the maritime law principles prohibiting a return of the rescued individuals to Libya. Alarm Phone and *Ocean Viking* send numerous emails to the relevant authorities attempting to mobilize support for *MV Bobic*.**

**6:20:** Alarm Phone is able to reestablish contact with the remaining approximately 75 persons in distress on the drifting wooden boat asking for urgent assistance. Alarm Phone shares the updated position with the relevant authorities with *Ocean Viking* and *MV Bobic* in copy at 06:37.

**08:14:** *MV Bobic* emails Alarm Phone and *Ocean Viking* requesting confirmation that *Ocean Viking* will transship the 35 survivors from *MV Bobic*:

-----Original Message-----  
From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Sunday, May 25, 2025 8:15 AM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: BOBIC - S.A.R operation 24 May 2025

Good Day.

Understand that you have received instructions from JRCC Libya to undertake the transshipment of people onboard *MV Bobic*.

Qte  
At 23:21 *MV Ocean Viking* called JRCC Tripoli (00218910349739), in order to ask information and coordination for the abovementioned case, the officer on duty instructs *MV Ocean Viking* to approach the case and perform the rescue of the people adrift on the target and the transshipment of the people already on board of the *MV Bobic*, in coordination with the captain of *MV Bobic*, despite *MV Ocean Viking* indicating the current distance to the last known position of the target.  
Uqte

Confirm in return so Master can be prepared accordingly.

Best Regards



**12:19:** *Ocean Viking* receives a call from the Captain of *MV Bobic* relaying information that the 75 remaining shipwrecked persons were rescued by one of the offshore suppliers around the oil fields in the area. We don't know where they got this information and which vessel they are referring to – no rescue occurred by this time.

**At this time, the track of *MV Bobic* indicates that the vessel has started proceeding South. From 13.00, Alarm Phone and *Ocean Viking* warn the Captain, Shipping Company, and Flag State in multiple calls and emails that Libya is not a Place of Safety and returning survivors of shipwreck to Libya violates international maritime law. The Captain of *MV Bobic* stops the ship just after 14.00, stating they do not want to return the survivors to Libya against maritime law and are awaiting further instructions.**

**14:00:** *Ocean Viking* calls LYJRCC. The Duty Officer confirms that *MV Bobic* is proceeding to Al Zawiyah. Asked about the fate of the missing distress case, the Duty Officer first states not having any information about the case, and then says that as an NGO, we cannot address LYJRCC.

**14:27:** Email from the Marshall Islands Flag State to *MV Bobic* and the Shipping Company in response to Alarm Phone sharing the legal provision from UNCLOS and the SAR Convention on Place of Safety:

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Sunday, May 25, 2025 2:27 PM  
To: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Re: AP0555 SAR Operation Bobic

Dear Captain,

To reinforce the information provided by [REDACTED], please note the attached documents. We understand that the next port of call is Tunisia. If the migrants are seeking asylum, it may be possible to do so in Tunisia. However, it would be prudent to confirm with port authorities that the migrants will not be sent back to Libya prior to their disembarkation.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]  
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs  
Republic of the Marshall Islands





**15:38:** Email from the Marshall Islands Flag State to *MV Bobic* and the Shipping Company with *Ocean Viking* and Alarm Phone in copy:

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
Sent: Sunday, May 25, 2025 3:28 PM  
To: Alarm Phone <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Re: AP0555 SAR Operation Bobic

Captain,

In reference to my previous correspondence, it has now been clarified that MRCC Rome has coordinated with JRCC Libya to ensure that the 35 migrants are removed from the vessel as soon as possible.

When the RCC responsible for the SAR region in which assistance is needed is informed about the situation, that RCC (Libya) should immediately accept responsibility for coordinating the rescue efforts, since related responsibilities, including arrangements for a place of safety for rescued persons, fall primarily on the Government responsible for that region. The first RCC (Rome), however, is responsible for coordinating the case until the responsible RCC or other competent authority assumes responsibility.

While an assisting ship may serve as a temporary place of safety, it must be relieved of this responsibility as soon as alternative arrangements can be made.

Given the current circumstances, it is unsafe and insecure to have 35 extra persons on board BOBIC. We appreciate your cooperation in following the instructions of the responsible RCC.

We understand the complexity and urgency of this matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out if further assistance is needed.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED] MA, MBA, AFNI  
Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs  
Republic of the Marshall Islands

**15:41:** *Ocean Viking* emails LYJRCC, with RCC Malta, ITMRCC, Marshall Islands Flag State, *MV Bobic* and Shipping Company in copy, underlining that a LYJRCC Duty Officer informed the *Ocean Viking* that *MV Bobic* was instructed to proceed to Al Zawiyah while the instruction from the same RCC, given at 01:21 the same day, was for the *Ocean Viking* to transship survivors from *MV Bobic*. *Ocean Viking* highlights the UNCLOS, SAR Convention and SOLAS clauses on the duty to disembark survivors in a place of safety and asks for clarification on the unlawful assignment of Al Zawiyah. *Ocean Viking* also requests official information about the search for the 75 missing persons onboard distress case AP0555 and confirmation on whether or not the vessel's assistance is required.

**From the attempted rescue operation carried out by *MV Bobic*, *Ocean Viking* and Alarm Phone sought information on the missing approximately 75 persons in distress and whether any Search and Rescue operations were launched to locate and assist the distress case. While no information was shared by the relevant maritime authorities, public flight records show that Frontex aircraft (callsign *Sparrow 1*) was flying over the distress location in the morning of Sunday, May 24.**

**16:20:** After three unanswered calls, *Ocean Viking* reaches LYJRCC and asks for information on the 75 missing shipwrecked persons on AP0555. **The Duty Officer says that as an NGO vessel, *Ocean Viking* is not entitled to information from them, they no longer need the *Ocean Viking*'s assistance and will contact us if they need our assistance in the future.**

**17:00:** *Ocean Viking* reaches ITMRCC via telephone and asks for information on the 75 missing shipwrecked persons on AP0555. The Duty Officer refers *Ocean Viking* to the competent RCC. *Ocean Viking* asks whether assistance is required, **ITMRCC Duty Officer responds that there are no requests for assistance from ITMRCC.**



**17:22:** *Ocean Viking* receives an EGC message – SAR coordination to circular area:

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EGC Message --- SAR Coordination to circular area ---
Message Sequence No. : 03011
LES : Telecom Italia
Priority : Distress
Size : 1304 characters
Receive Date & Time : 25-05-25 15:22 (UTC)

FM IMRCC ROME - ITALIAN COAST GUARD

TO ALL SHIPS TRANSITING IN THE AREA

SAR CASE 792 - NEW UPDATE

ON BEHALF OF LIBYAN NAVY COAST GUARD AND AS PER SOLAS CONVENTION AND
SAR
CONVENTION HAMBURG '79, WE INFORM YOU ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF A BLUE
WOODEN
BOAT IN DISTRESS WITH ABOUT 102 PEOPLE ON BOARD. IN POSITION LAT. 33
25 N -
LONG. 013 00 E -

PLEASE YOU ARE REQUESTED TO DIVERT YOUR COURSE TOWARDS THIS POSITION
AND
WHEN IN VISUAL CONTACT WITH THE TARGET YOU HAVE TO COMMUNICATE THE
INFORMATION TO THE FOLLOWING COMPETENT AUTHORITY:

TEL: 0021 [REDACTED] - 0021 [REDACTED] - 0021 [REDACTED] -
0021 [REDACTED]
FAX: 0021 [REDACTED]
MAIL:
<mailto:[REDACTED].LY> [REDACTED].LY
<mailto:[REDACTED].LY> [REDACTED].LY
<mailto:[REDACTED].LY> [REDACTED].LY
[REDACTED]@GMAIL.COM <[REDACTED]@GMAIL.COM>

IMRCC ROME
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**17:27:** *Ocean Viking* calls LYJRCC, to no avail.

**17:35:** *Ocean Viking* calls ITMRCC to inquire about the time of the last known position given in the GMDSS alert. **Duty Officer states that the competent authority is LYJRCC but confirms that the location is recent and inquiries about the *Ocean Viking's* estimated time to the distress case.**

**17:56:** *Ocean Viking* emails LYJRCC with Malta RCC and ITMRCC in copy informing all relevant authorities of the ship's readiness to provide first assistance. The distance to the last known position of the distress case at this time is 60 Nautical Miles, estimated time of arrival in the distress location is 0.00.

**18:05:** Alarm Phone receives information from a relative of one of the 35 people rescued by *MV Bobic* that the survivors were returned to Al Zawiyah and are detained in Al-Nasr Az Zawiyah Detention Centre (commonly called "Osama Prison").

**22:45:** *Ocean Viking* establishes radio contact with *MV Eco One*. The Captain confirms being on scene of the distress case. *MV Eco One* reports having recovered 26 people, but having to abort the rescue



operation due to bad weather conditions.<sup>2</sup> *MV Eco One* intends to remain on scene to shelter the distress case and reports that ITMRCC instructed either *MV Eco One* or *Ocean Viking* to proceed to the evacuation of the remaining shipwrecked persons once weather conditions allow. ETA of *Ocean Viking* 00.01.

**23:00:** *Ocean Viking* attempts to call LYJRCC, to no avail. *Ocean Viking* then calls ITMRCC to inform about the ship's communication with *MV Eco One* and the intention to proceed to the distress position to assist the remaining shipwrecked persons. **The Duty Officer acknowledges the intention of *Ocean Viking* and greenlights to proceed to the assessment of the distress case.**

**23:02:** Email from *Ocean Viking* to LYJRCC with ITMRCC and Malta RCC in copy, relaying the information provided by *MV Eco One* and the confirmation by the assessment of *MV Eco One* that the boat matching AP case 0555 is in distress. *Ocean Viking* reports having called LYJRCC at 23:00 to request coordination of the case to no avail.

**00:00:** The *Ocean Viking* RHIBs arrive at the scene of the distress case.

After three attempts to reach LYJRCC at the onset of the rescue operation, *Ocean Viking* emails LYJRCC, ITMRCC, and Malta RCC sharing the observations made by the *Ocean Viking* RHIBs: the boat in unseaworthy, inapt for navigation in high seas, lacking fuel, food or water, competent crew and command, children and women are present onboard, all exposed to the elements without lifesaving appliances. The *Ocean Viking* receives no reply from any maritime authority during the rescue operation. Almost all survivors, approximately 50 people, are found on the lower deck of the wooden boat.

## Monday, May 26

**00:32:** *MV Eco One* informs *Ocean Viking* that ITMRCC assigned Lampedusa as a Place of Safety and instructed *MV Eco One* to proceed to Lampedusa once all remaining people were rescued by the *Ocean Viking*.

**01:14:** *Ocean Viking* completes the recovery operation of 53 people from the boat in distress.

**01:35:** *Ocean Viking* emails JYRCC with ITMRCC in copy to inform the authorities of the completion of the rescue operation and to request a Place of Safety.

**03:35:** *Ocean Viking* calls the International Radio Medical Centre based in Rome (CIRM) relaying information on the urgent medical needs of the survivors onboard as well as first testimonies of missing persons: Survivors witnessed 5 people falling into the water during a previous attempted rescue operation, several people remain missing.

**05:02:** ITMRCC instructs *Ocean Viking* to proceed to Livorno for the disembarkation of survivors.

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<sup>2</sup> According to testimonies collected onboard the *Ocean Viking* before disembarkation, two persons were confirmed missing during this attempted rescue.



**05:12:** *Ocean Viking* responds to the ITMRCC's instructions via email, urgently asking for a disembarkation in Lampedusa to be considered.

Please be aware that although MV Ocean Viking does have a medical team and clinic on board, the current needs are exceeding the capacity of our medical team, as we are equipped for stabilization and not for prolonged treatment of a larger number of severe cases. Multiple people have severe fuel burns and our medical team is still discovering more people with fuel burns. Several of these cases are at high risk of severe complications, due to prolonged exposure to chemicals and lack of hygiene facilities. All of this adding up to plausibility of infection, potentially life threatening. These people will need urgent review in clinic to prevent further harm. Already 12 of the people rescued are in need of referral to medical facilities on land, 3 of which are urgent, and more are likely to follow as assessment is still ongoing. For more information we refer you to the **attached medical report**

Apart from their severe medical conditions, please keep in mind the prolonged mental strain the shipwrecked people have undergone prior to the recovery on board of MV Ocean Viking. As described in rescue report below, the people have experienced fearful weather conditions, multiple challenging and incomplete rescue operations, separation of families and, split amongst multiple different vessels and destinations. Moreover they have reportedly witnessed loss of life at sea, with at least **five person falling overboard during the journey** that could not be recovered timely by the people on board the distress case, this vessel is investigating the situation and we will report to you soon, the survivor are exhausted and interview are not fast in order to perform that in a dignified way.

Furthermore, MV Ocean Viking would like to reiterate the fact that people of SARcase 792/AP0555, have been split between 3 vessels. We urgently ask you to consider a prevention of further breakup of linked families by assigning MV Ocean Viking the port of **Lampedusa as well as Place of Safety** where the **MV ECO ONE** is directed with the 26 survivors of the same distress case, where their prolonged and stressful journey of the survivors can end as soon as possible. This vessel not understand the reason why the two vessel assisting the same distress case are assigned to different Place of Safety.

Please also be aware that the majority of the people recovered on board MV Ocean Viking are under 18 years old, with 5 children under the age of 5 and more than 50% unaccompanied minors. (for more details please see attached the rescue report with breakdown). These children are extremely vulnerable and are in need of a closer Place of Safety.

**05:48:** ITMRCC responds that requests for a closer port are only considered in case of issues concerning safety of navigation and states: *"Remind that in Italy the Decree Law of January 2, 2023 No. 1 (converted with amendments by Law 24 February 2023, n. 15) is in force and therefore you are requested to proceed without delay, with direct route and at the maximum sustainable and continuous speed towards the port of Livorno."*

From: itmrcc [REDACTED]  
Sent: Monday, May 26, 2025 5:02 AM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: R: MV OCEAN VIKING - 26052025 - SAR case 20250526\_01 - END

Captain,  
with reference to your last communication received at 01:35 LT, it deems necessary to specify that MRCC Rome did not coordinate the case referred in your last message and that the operation took place outside the Italian SRR. However, the port of **Livorno** has been assigned as the place of safety for the persons rescued on board your ship. Remind that, according to the Italian Decree Law of January 2, 2023 No. 1, converted into law of February 24, 2023 No. 15, you are requested to proceed without delay, with direct route and maximum sustainable and continuous speed towards the indicated port. According to the mentioned Decree Law, you are also requested to provide the following useful elements for the coordination of activities and for the organization of the disembarkation, which shall be communicated without delay:

1. Priority information to provide as allowance of POS in Italy:
  - a. maximum sustainable and continuous speed;
  - b. ETA to **Livorno** Harbour;
2. SitRep:
  - a. people rescued: numbers, age, minors unaccompanied, gender, nationality, health situation highlighting any emergencies,
  - b. operations: time and location of beginning/conclusion, type of migrant boat, other air-sea assets present in the area, photos and videos;
3. Actions taken to inform recovered people on board about the possibility to apply for international protection.
4. VDR data (IF AVAILABLE) is requested to be downloaded and saved. The "SAVE" button must be pressed upon receipt of this email without delay and further confirmations.

I highlight that any unjustified delay to provide information required shall be considered as a violation of therefore mentioned decree Law  
Please acknowledge.



**15:52: *Ocean Viking* requests a medical evacuation for five survivors onboard.** Arrangements for the medical evacuation are made with the Italian Coastguard.

**17:27:** The *Ocean Viking* alerts the Juvenile Court of Palermo to the presence of 33 minors on the ship.

**18:37:** The Juvenile Court of Palermo intervenes, requesting that all minors be allowed to disembark in a closer port:

The further stay on board of minors, also taking into account the represented precariousness of their conditions from a sanitary and psychological point of view, due to the lack of space on board, promiscuity with adults and the absence of psychological and health support appropriate to their age, makes it necessary to take all protective measures as a matter of urgency.

All this being said, since this Public Prosecutor's Office must initiate civil proceedings for the protection of all the m.s.n.a. and also verify the conditions of the accompanied minors, **it is requested that all the non-EU minors aboard the M/V OCEAN VIKING, be allowed to disembark in the port of Agrigento or however closer**, so that they can be immediately placed in the dedicated facilities and can be provided with adequate protection.

We look forward to your prompt reply, thank you for your attention and extend cordial greetings.

Palermo, May 26, 2025

THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Claudia Caramanna

**18:53:** The medical evacuation of five survivors, four adults and one infant, to an Italian Coastguard vessel off Lampedusa is completed.

**20:03: *Ocean Viking* emails ITMRCC, formally requesting a closer Place of Safety, taking into consideration the hardship experienced by all survivors onboard, the medical evacuation, and the fact that after a disembarkation of minors and their family members, only 13 people would remain onboard, all of whom require medical attention and protection.**

**22:00:** ITMRCC emails *Ocean Viking* instructing the transshipment of all minors and their family members to an Italian Coastguard vessel off Porto Empedocle.

## **Tuesday, May 27:**

**08:53:** *Ocean Viking* emails ITMRCC expressing concerns about the planned transshipment to a Coastguard vessel which contradicts the order of the Juvenile Court of Palermo. The order states: "[...] it is requested that all the non-EU minors aboard the M/V OCEAN VIKING, be allowed to disembark in the port of Agrigento or however closer, [...]". *Ocean Viking* emphasizes that the court order has already been disregarded by refusing a disembarkation in the port of Lampedusa even though the vessel was close



for the medical evacuation, and stresses: *"Please consider that this disembarkation involves children less than 5 years old, and minors, who are vulnerable and already underwent many hardships during the last days and prior. They are already weakened by the 5 days journey and a transshipment, in any weather condition, implements another avoidable risk, jeopardising their safety."* Ocean Viking therefore requests a disembarkation alongside in the port of Porto Empedocle and, to avoid a fifth separation of survivors from the same boat, requests a full disembarkation.

**11:37:** Transshipment of 26 unaccompanied minors, 5 children and 4 adult family members to Italian Coastguard vessel CP860 at anchorage off Porto Empedocle complete.

### Thursday, May 29

**19:41:** All 13 survivors have disembarked from the *Ocean Viking* in Livorno. Almost six days after the first alert to the boat in distress was shared with all relevant authorities by Alarm Phone and at least eight days after the departure of the unseaworthy boat, the rescue operation is complete.

#### Annex 2: Images



*The distress boat during the first assessment from the Ocean Viking's fast rescue boats.*

*Note: Approximately 50 survivors were found below deck.*

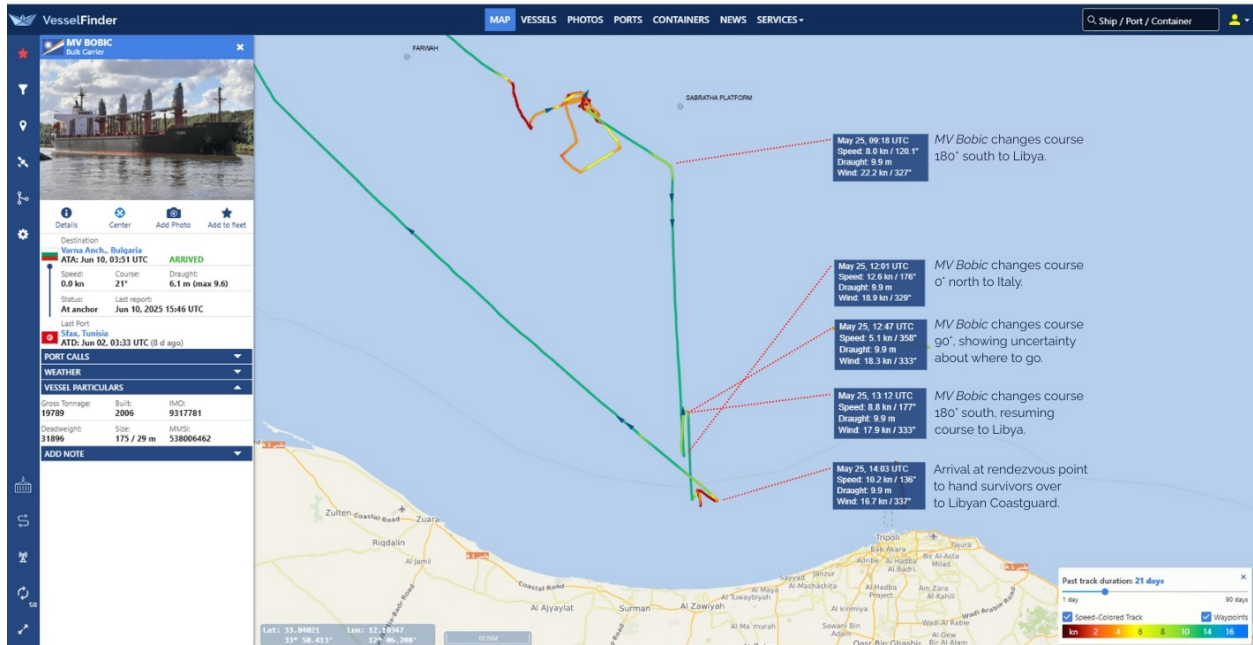
*Source: Fellipe Lopes / SOS MEDITERRANEE*





ALARM PHONE

**SOS**  
**MEDITERRANEE**



Timestamped track of MV Bobic showing change of course and moment of uncertainty.