

**EVERY PERSON
HAS A NAME**





Since 2014, over 20,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea.

More than 100 million people worldwide are fleeing war, conflict and persecution. There have never been so many refugees in the world as now. However, instead of offering them help and support, Europe is increasingly shutting itself off and tightening asylum policies. Refugees and migrants are being detained in camps and stripped of their rights, repelled illegally and with violence, left defenseless and abandoned – even in acute life-threatening situations. As there are fewer and fewer legal escape routes to Europe, people in their desperation are forced to take life-threatening journeys – often falling into the hands of dubious smugglers or criminal traffickers.

Thousands of asylum seekers die each year at the EU's external border. Since 2014, over 20,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, which is an alarmingly high number.

But refugees are human beings, not numbers. They all have a name and a story. They all have parents, friends and relatives. We must not forget their personal fates.

We give these people names! This brochure tells the stories of 20 individuals who lost their lives at the EU external borders. These stories remind us of who these people were, what hopes and goals they had and what they had to endure. Their stories highlight the urgent need for a change in refugee and immigration policies. Only then can more deaths at Europe's borders be prevented.



MARYAM

24 years old

† Nov 24, 2021

Maryam

was 24 years old, in love and engaged. Frustrated by failed attempts to legally travel from Iraq to join her fiancé in the UK, Maryam boarded a rubber dinghy. Filled with anticipation, she wanted to surprise her fiancé with her arrival. Alongside a friend and 27 other men, women, and children, she embarked on the journey across the English Channel. As the dinghy began to sink, Maryam sent her fiancé a final text message from her phone. Only two people survived the tragedy.

Joseph

was only 6 months old when he, his mother and around 100 other people were rescued in the Mediterranean Sea while fleeing from Libya. However, help came too late for him and five others. Joseph passed away on November 12, 2020, aboard the rescue ship operated by Proactiva Open Arms, before the requested medical evacuation by the Italian Coast Guard arrived. He was buried on the island of Lampedusa.



JOSEPH

6 Monate

† Nov 12, 2020

Aboubacar

is among 91 people who have been missing since a boat accident on Sunday, February 9, 2020, in the Mediterranean Sea. They were fleeing from Libya. When the motor of their dinghy failed and water started entering the boat, panic ensued. Several people fell into the sea. At dawn, at 5:35 AM, contact with the civilian emergency hotline Alarm Phone was lost. The last known position of Aboubacar and the other 90 people was N33°09.069, E013°49.514. State rescue agencies in Malta, Italy, and Libya were informed about the sinking boat, but no rescue was sent.

ABOUBACAR

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† Feb 9, 2020

Avin

Avin was a Kurdish woman from Iraq. In the winter of 2021, she and her family attempted to reach Poland via Belarus. In the forests at the border, she suffered a miscarriage. After seven days, Polish volunteers found Avin and her family. On November 11, she was brought to a hospital unconscious – dehydrated and severely hypothermic. Doctors fought for weeks to save her life, but she never regained consciousness. Avin passed away on December 3, 2021, at the age of just 38. She leaves behind her husband Murad and five children.



AVIN

28 years old

† Dec 3, 2021



SAMIA

21 years old

† Apr 2012

Samia

was a sprinter. Besides athletics, she loved swimming and basketball. In 2008, she participated in the Olympic Games in Beijing. She achieved her personal best in the 200-meter race with a time of 32.16 seconds. When she was threatened by Islamist extremists in her homeland Somalia, she had to run for her life. She fled the country. Because she wanted to compete in the Olympic Games in London, Samia risked the journey across the Mediterranean Sea with her aunt. When she and the others were about to be rescued off the coast of Malta, it seemed the perilous journey was over. But Samia fell into the water and drowned. She was only 21 years old.

Bassem's

story is told by his fiancée Doaa. They fled the civil war in Syria to Egypt. The following years were spent without work permits and with no prospects for the future. Bassem spoke of marriage and a future together in Europe. Doaa knew the risks of the crossing. She couldn't swim. Yet for the second time in her life, she felt she had no choice but to flee. Bassem paid the smugglers a lot of money to take them and 400 other people to Europe in a dilapidated fishing boat. When bandits attacked and rammed the boat, it capsized. Everyone below deck drowned immediately and most of the others shortly after. Doaa managed to cling to a life buoy, and Bassem was with her. But on the second day in the water, he grew too weak. Bassem sank before her eyes into the sea. Two other women handed their babies to Doaa before they drowned too. Doaa drifted on the open sea for four days, clinging to the life buoy, with the children in her arms. When she spotted a ship, she screamed for her life. By a miracle, they were rescued. One of the babies survived.

BASSEM

—
† Aug 2014

Tamimou

grew up with three brothers and a sister in a village near the town of Kpalimé in southwestern Togo. After finishing school, Tamimou worked as a mason, first in Kpalimé, then in Ghana. He wanted to earn money to pay for medical treatment for his sick mother. When the money wasn't enough, he decided to go to Europe. He traveled through Nigeria to Libya, a journey that took several months. He stayed in contact with his family and former school friends throughout. In Libya, he lived for 1.5 years and reported arbitrary arrests and violence. His family urged him to return, but Tamimou was determined to reach Europe. He made it across the Mediterranean. However, without papers, he couldn't find legal work in Italy and decided to try his luck in France. In the middle of winter, he attempted to cross the Alps on foot. The day before his death, he sent a voice message to his family. Early the next morning, a truck driver found him lying in the snow by the roadside, heading towards the Montgenèvre Pass. Paramedics took him to the hospital but help came too late. Tamimou froze to death in the heart of Europe.

TAMIMOU

29 years old

† Feb 7, 2019

Lazhar

Lazhar Chaieb had advanced cancer. Due to his illness, he could no longer work and support his family. He wanted to seek treatment in Europe to recover and return to his family, his three-year-old daughter Beya, his friends and his job at a restaurant in the Tunisian city of Sfax. On October 6, 2019, Lazhar set off in a boat loaded with dozens of people. The following night, disaster struck. The boat crashed against the rocks off Lampedusa. Lazhar and three other young people lost their lives.



LAZHAR

33 years old

† Oct 7, 2019



FATIM

19 years old

† Oct 27, 2016

Fatim

was a talented footballer with great potential: At just 17 years old, she became the goalkeeper for Gambia's women's national football team, having previously participated in the U-17 World Cup. On October 27, 2016, Fatim drowned while attempting to cross from Libya to Italy by boat. Her dream was to achieve a better life and play for a major European football club. Fatim was only 19 years old.

Ibrahim

was a young Somali from Djibouti. He drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. What we know about Ibrahim comes from Husein. The two met in a refugee prison in Libya. In two overcrowded halls, each with 200 people locked inside, conditions were so cramped they had to take turns sleeping. There were only two toilets for everyone. Husein doesn't know much about Ibrahim because he was just one of many fellow prisoners. Husein says, "Everyone thinks for themselves: Why am I here? I'm going to die here. What will my parents think, how are they doing? Will they have problems?" Ibrahim survived the journey through the Sahara and the smuggler's camp in Libya. However, he perished on the sea crossing.

IBRAHIM

19 years old

† May 29, 2016

Suzan

fled Syria with her family to escape the war. Her husband, Salah, continued on alone from Turkey. He reached Germany in the spring of 2015 with plans to bring Suzan and their children over. However, the political climate in Germany had shifted. Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière spent months vilifying Syrian refugees, and the grand coalition restricted family reunification for Syrian asylum seekers. Thus, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) granted Salah only "subsidiary protection." There seemed to be no hope of a reunion. Suzan and the children were stranded with no prospects in Turkey, and Salah had never met their younger child. The family suffered greatly from the separation. Only two kilometers of water separate Turkey and the Greek island of Samos. However, the weather was poor on March 24, 2017, when Suzan and the children boarded a dinghy. The waves were high, the wind was strong. The small boat capsized. Suzan, her two children, and eight others drowned. A few weeks later, BAMF finally recognized Salah as a refugee under the Geneva Convention. As a recognized refugee, he would have been allowed to reunite with his family. However, this decision came too late. If BAMF had made the correct decision from the beginning, Suzan and her children would still be alive today.

SUZAN

—

† Mar 24, 2017

Mahamed

grew up in Luuq, Somalia. To protect him from militias that recruit teenagers as child soldiers, his parents sent him alone to Kenya. He attended high school in a refugee camp and later went to a high school in Nairobi. However, he faced danger again when he returned to Somalia to visit his parents and pursue medical studies. The Al-Shabaab militias viewed him as a spy or agitator and threatened to kill him. Mahamed fled back to Nairobi. Despite waiting in vain for a university placement, he decided to seek his luck in Europe. Unfortunately, he never made it there. Mahamed drowned in the Mediterranean Sea on May 29, 2016.



MAHAMED

21 years old

† May 29, 2016



Muhammad

was shot dead by Greek border guards.

He was from Pakistan and had been living in Greece since 2007, sending money earned as a craftsman back to his family in his homeland. In January 2020, he returned to Pakistan to marry his childhood love, Sana. Both dreamed of starting a life together in Europe. They set out on their journey but became pawns in political maneuvers. In February 2020, Turkish President Erdogan transported thousands of asylum seekers to the Turkish-Greek border to pressure the EU. Muhammad and Sana were among those who reached the border.

Initially, Greek police used tear gas and blank ammunition against the crowd. Suddenly, Muhammad collapsed beside his wife. A bullet had struck him in the chest. 75 minutes later, he was pronounced dead in a Turkish hospital at the age of 42. The Greek government has denied any wrongdoing and refused to investigate the murder. However, investigations by Forensic Architecture, Bellingcat, and Spiegel magazine have conclusively demonstrated that Greek forces used live ammunition. Since 2020, several people have died due to shootings by Greek border guards.

MUHAMMAD

42 years old

† Mar 4, 2020

We know almost nothing about this person. We do not know their name. We do not know where they grew up, if they had family, or if there is anyone who misses them. The little we do know: This person likely came from Somalia, Eritrea, Ghana, or Sudan. On Thursday, August 21, 2008, they embarked from Libya with 77 others on a dinghy heading towards Italy. When the dinghy filled with water and capsized on Monday, August 25, 2008, during bad weather, almost everyone drowned. Eight people managed to hold onto the boat and were rescued the next day by a Maltese fishing boat 70 kilometers south of Malta. Seventy people drowned. Most of them were never found.

N.N.

—

† Aug 25, 2008

GHALIB

4 years old

† Sept 2, 2015

Ghalib

A young boy lies face down in the sand. He wears blue pants and a red T-shirt. The photo of Alan Kurdi spread across the globe. However, he also had a brother who drowned that same day. His name was Ghalib, aged four. Their family came from Syria. Fleeing from war, they sought refuge in Turkey, aiming for Canada, where Ghalib and Alan's aunt resided. She tried in vain to secure the family's entry permit. In the early hours of September 2, 2015, the Kurdi family boarded a dinghy in Bodrum, Turkey. Their destination, just four kilometers away, was the Greek island of Kos. But moments later and 500 meters from shore, the boat capsized. Ghalib, Alan and their mother Rehan drowned.

Zahair

was fleeing Afghanistan with his mother Fahima and three siblings. They aimed to reach Greece via Turkey, where they had relatives. Shortly before reaching their destination, their boat began to sink. Despite repeated distress calls to the Greek police and coast guard, no help arrived. Sixteen people drowned, including Zahair, his siblings, and five other children. Mother Fahima survived as one of the three survivors. Zahair was only 8 years old.



ZAHAIR

8 years old

† Mar 16, 2018



ALIREZA

14 years old

† Apr 23, 2015

Alireza

April 2015. Tens of thousands of people are fleeing towards the European Union via the Balkan route. Among them are Alireza and his brother Mahdi from Afghanistan, traveling on foot. Along with a larger group, they walk along the railway tracks between the Macedonian town of Veles and the capital, Skopje. It's late at night and already dark, and the railway tracks help them navigate. They notice the approaching train too late. Mahdi manages to jump off the embankment in time but loses sight of his brother. Fourteen people from the group do not make it in time and are hit by the train. Macedonian authorities do not attempt to identify the dead. Is Alireza among the casualties? Or did he have luck and was only separated from Mahdi in the chaos of the accident? Mahdi receives no answer about whether his brother is among the dead. Instead, he is detained by the police and deported to Greece. He now lives in Bremen. After years of waiting in vain, Mahdi can no longer bear the uncertainty. Along with other family members, he goes on a search for answers in Macedonia. It's only then that he finally gets closure: his brother Alireza perished in the train accident.

R. "One side of the boat was completely underwater, the other side was hanging in the air," recounts N. "The boat hit the rocks several times. I don't remember what happened next, only that at some point I was in the water." N. managed to reach the rocks, but his son R. did not survive the tragedy. They were trying to reach the Greek island of Samos from Turkey. When a storm arose, their boat collided with the rocks near the island and capsized. Despite the Greek coast guard being informed of the emergency, it took hours for rescue to arrive on the scene. Two coast guard boats arrived at the scene overnight but did not provide assistance. R. was found dead on the rocks the next morning. After the incident, N. was charged by the Greek authorities with endangering his child. It wasn't until May 2022 that he was acquitted. Now, he is suing the Greek coast guard for failure to provide assistance.

R.

6 years old

† Nov 7, 2020

MOUSTAFA

ca. 18 years old

† Mar 1, 2016

Moustafa

died of thirst far away from Europe in the Sahara. His death still concerns us deeply. Moustafa and eleven other young men were held captive by smugglers in Mali near the border with Algeria. Their captors beat them. The young men feared being beaten to death because they couldn't pay the money for the onward journey. One night, they climbed over the wall. They followed power lines northward. They were all hungry, thirsty, and weakened. If one fell, no one stopped, fearing they wouldn't be able to continue themselves. Eventually, Moustafa collapsed and lay down. He died in the desert. More and more people are dying of thirst or hunger in the Sahara, or are being murdered by smugglers and terrorists. This is also due to the EU member states' policy of sealing themselves off: They pay millions of euros to African countries to militarily seal their borders. This drives people to take even more remote and dangerous routes. And it destroys regional economic cycles. Many people live from cross-border trade or work in different countries, for example, depending on the season in agriculture or in the city. Where the EU destroys this regional labor migration, people lose their livelihoods. And Europe creates additional causes for flight. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that at least twice as many people die in the Sahara as in the Mediterranean.

Shahida

was the captain of the women's national hockey team in Pakistan. She lived in Quetta near the Afghan border. She set out hoping to arrange medical help abroad for her three-year-old son. Shahida managed to reach Turkey. In the port of Izmir, she boarded the "Summer Love" cutter with around 120 others from Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The boat reached Italy but crashed against the cliffs off the coast of Calabria, near the city of Crotona. Debris and bodies were washed ashore by the waves. More than 70 drowned victims have been found so far, including Shahida. Her son will grow up without his mother and is living with his aunt in Pakistan.



SHAHIDA

27 years old

† Feb 26, 2023

FIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT CIVILIAN SEA RESCUE

1. WHY ARE ALL THOSE RESCUED BROUGHT TO EUROPE? COULDN'T THE RESCUE SHIPS TAKE THE PEOPLE BACK TO NORTH AFRICA?

People rescued from distress at sea must be brought to the nearest "Place of Safety" (POS), as stipulated by Article 98 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Therefore, it is illegal to return people to the danger from which they are fleeing. International law also prohibits returning people

to states where they face torture or other serious human rights violations. Accordingly, Libya is not safe. In internment camps there, people are tortured, raped, abused, and enslaved. Returning people to North Africa would also deny them the opportunity to apply for asylum. Furthermore, Tunisia or Morocco do not have asylum systems and therefore cannot be considered safe places.



2. DOES SEA RESCUE NOT PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF SMUGGLERS?

No. Civilian sea rescue was established in response to the thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean. Due to the lack of legal and safe escape routes, people have no choice but to fall into the hands of criminal smuggling networks or dubious traffickers. Thus, the desperation of people becomes a business.

In Libya, local militias and criminal clans are particularly active. They operate the so-called coast guard, which is co-financed by the EU. They also run torture camps

where fleeing individuals are returned. This has established a lucrative cycle where militias profit doubly: from smuggling operations and from capturing and returning refugees. Many who have managed to escape this cycle report attempting the crossing multiple times and their families being repeatedly extorted for ransom. This conflict economy, where people's desperation becomes a business, can only be dismantled by ending the conditions of distress and injustice in Libya.



3. WHY DO PEOPLE FLEE ON LIFE-THREATENING ROUTES IN THE FIRST PLACE?

As the stories in this booklet illustrate, people have diverse reasons for undertaking perilous journeys. Many flee from violence, terror and destitution. Others have lost their livelihoods in their homeland, fleeing out of despair and lack of prospects, hoping for a better future for themselves and their families. The rescued individuals recount varied experiences, but all attest that the suffering on land was greater than the fear of drowning.

Legal entry routes for refugees into the EU are nearly closed off. The externalization of border controls accompanying Europe's fortress mentality is the reason for the mass

fatalities at Europe's borders, especially in the Mediterranean, as it forces people onto increasingly perilous paths. Thus, crossing the Mediterranean is typically just one particularly deadly part of a long and hazardous journey.



4 ■ DOESN'T CIVILIAN SEA RESCUE CREATE ADDITIONAL INCENTIVES FOR EVEN MORE BOAT REFUGEES?

No. Refugees are fleeing from war, persecution and destitution. There is no evidence to support the claim that civilian sea rescue operations prompt more people to attempt the Mediterranean crossing. Various empirical studies confirm that there is no proven correlation between the presence of rescue ships and the number of refugee boats. Therefore, the so-called "pull effect" lacks factual basis. Observational evidence supports this: Even during periods when no civilian rescue ships are active for weeks, many people still attempt the Mediterranean crossing. On the other hand, studies do show that more people drown when rescue ships are not present.



Furthermore, civilian sea rescue operations only became active from 2015 onwards, in response to increasing drownings and the absence of state-run rescue efforts. Civilian sea rescue is thus a response to refugee boats and the fatalities in the Mediterranean, not the other way around.



5 ■ ISN'T ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF MIGRATION MORE IMPORTANT THAN CIVILIAN SEA RESCUE?

Certainly, it is crucial to prevent the reasons that force people to flee, so they can live with dignity and safety in their home countries. However, rescuing people from distress at sea is both a humanitarian and legal obligation. It would be wrong to pit different approaches and forms of assistance against each other. Refugee protection requires both long-term efforts for global justice and peace, as well as immediate emergency aid and sea rescue. Therefore, United4Rescue, as a coalition for civilian sea rescue, brings together various actors and aid organizations, including those involved in development assistance.

→ Still have questions?

Visit united4rescue.org/en/about-us/faq



INTERCESSION

EVERY PERSON HAS A NAME

God, you know it: along the borders of Europe, people are dying.

They drown, freeze, thirst.

You know their names.

You also know the names of the dead, whom no one has buried,
who are missing.

In silence, we think of them.

(Silence)

They were all loved by people,
who now remain behind in despair
and must go on alone.

We ask you: Have mercy.

So many flee from war, from hardship and destruction.

We ask for refuge for them, for a new home.

And we ask for all who cannot flee:
give them confidence and courage to live.

You also see us and our church, God.

We ask you: Do not let our conscience rest.

Give us hope and energy,
so that we may walk the path of your justice.

God, you know those who bear political responsibility.

We ask you: Let your will be done through them.

Your kingdom come, God, Your kingdom come.

Your will be done.

On earth as it is in heaven.

Amen – so be it.

WHAT IS UNITED4RESCUE?

United4Rescue is a non-profit, independent organization that supports the rescue of human lives along the EU external borders, particularly through civilian sea rescue in the Mediterranean, aiming to save lives. With the help of donations, we have deployed four rescue ships into operation and facilitated numerous rescue missions.

At the same time, United4Rescue is a broad alliance of hundreds of organizations united by the belief that no one should drown. The alliance advocates publicly for sea rescue operations and safe escape routes.

HOW DOES UNITED4RESCUE HELP?

United4Rescue supports civilian sea rescue efforts across organizations in a non-bureaucratic manner, especially where there is an acute lack of funding for rescue operations. This includes activities such as purchasing and retrofitting rescue ships, acquiring equipment, and covering operational costs related to rescue missions.



SUPPORT US



HOW CAN I SUPPORT?

Whether through donations, time or other forms of commitment, there are many ways to support our common goal!

DONATE OR GIVE A DONATION:

By donating to United4Rescue, you help sea rescue efforts where funding is most urgently needed.

BECOME A SUPPORTING MEMBER:

Our supporting members play a crucial role in enabling us to provide planned assistance and reduce our administrative costs.



BECOME A ALLIANCE PARTNER AND ADVOCATE:

The larger the alliance, the louder our voice! Whether you're a farm, management consultancy, diving school or social organization – become an alliance partner or invite friendly organizations to join us!

INFORM AND ARGUE:

United4Rescue thrives on the commitment of many alliance partners and supporters who raise awareness and inform about the situation in the Mediterranean. Use our argumentation guide or FAQs, subscribe to our newsletter and follow our channels on social media to stay informed about the missions of our alliance ships and current issues in sea rescue. We also provide you with our action materials such as flyers, postcards, stickers or flags.

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DONATIONS ACCOUNT

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