



Coastguard rescues some 1,000 refugees and migrants off Italy

Briefing Notes, 13 May 2016

This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at the press briefing, on 13 May 2016, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

Approximately 1,000 people of various nationalities, including refugee families and unaccompanied children, were rescued yesterday in operations coordinated by Frontex. In one operation, some 500 people travelling in two fishing boats that had departed several days earlier from Egypt were rescued off Sicily, south east of Cape Passero.

According to the Italian Coastguard, among this group there are some Syrians and Iraqis, as well as people from other nationalities.

Apart from the two fishing boats that sailed from Egypt, it is believed that there were other smaller boats that came from Libya. Disembarkation of the 1,000 people rescued yesterday is taking place today at four different locations in southern Italy: Catania, Palermo, Augusta and Crotona, and will probably last the whole day. UNHCR staff will be present and will be giving information and assistance to the persons rescued.

So far this year, 187,920 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe by sea, including 155,765 to Greece and 31,252 to Italy.

UNHCR continues to advocate for legal pathways for refugees to reach Europe through resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, family reunification, private sponsorship, humanitarian and refugee student or work visas, etc, as a way to help put an end to the smuggling of human beings.

For more information on this topic, please contact:

- In Sicily (on mission), Carlotta Sami, sami@unhcr.org, +39 335 679 4746
- In Rome, Federico Fossi, fossi@unhcr.org, +39 349 084 34 61
- In Rome, Barbara Molinaro, molinarb@unhcr.org, +39 33 85 46 29 32
- In London, Andrej Mahecic, mahecic@unhcr.org, +44 788 023 09 85
- In Paris, Céline Schmitt, schmittc@unhcr.org, +33 6 23 16 11 78
- In Geneva, William Spindler, spindler@unhcr.org, +41 79 217 3011