

TIMELINE (ALL TIMESTAMPS IN CEST)

23 MAY

15:27 Alarm Phone receives a distress call in Arabic.

15:40 Alarm Phone calls back with an Arabic speaker: The people report that they had left from Tobruk. They share a GPS-position, which shows them in the Maltese search and rescue zone: N 34 55 E 19 45. They say that the engine of the boat is not working anymore, that the boat is a rusty iron boat and that water enters the boat. They note that they are around 500 people, including 45 women, and 55 children and report that they have to take water out of the boat with buckets. They say that there are no life jackets on board. According to their account, the boat has two decks and about half of the people are on the lower deck. There are pregnant women among them. The people emphasise that the boat is in danger of capsizing. They also say that they saw a black and red ship passing by.

16:04 Alarm Phone sends an email to alert authorities, putting several UNHCR officers in cc, as well as SAR NGO ships which are operational.

16:20 Alarm Phone speaks with the distressed again who report that their engine is still not working and no one knows how to fix it. The boat remains adrift.

16:30 Alarm Phone calls RCC Malta. They confirm that they received the email and the operator says they will do something. Alarm Phone alerts the company of merchant vessel SIARGAO, IMO 305473000, vessel in position N 34 46, E 19 34, which is close to the boat in distress, but it doesn't intervene.

16:45 Alarm Phone realizes that the airplane Seagull of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini was flying in the morning in the direction of the drifting boat, at around 09:00h CEST at position N 35 06 E 19 06 the ADS-B signal stopped, which is about 60km north-west of the drifting boat in distress. No Inmarsat message (alerting vessels about boats in distress) seems to have been issued by the Italian and Maltese authorities.

16:27 The people in distress report an oil tanker in the distance. This time, a woman is on the phone, saying that they are in need of help. The woman repeats "the boat is sinking". A child is crying in the background.

17:02 Life Support, the vessel of the NGO EMERGENCY sends an E-Mail to the relevant RCC, offering assistance to go the place of distress to perform an assessment and provide assistance in case of need. Competent authorities are required to coordinate and authorise the SAR operations, should immediate assistance be deemed necessary. Life Support then altered its course to reach the latest known position.

17:04 The distressed report that one of the women is about to give birth. They say that there is a ship on their left, carrying 'red tanks'.

17:28 Alarm Phone tweets: "Alarm Phone was alerted by a large boat in distress. The people report that they fled from #Libya several days ago & that their engine has stopped. Authorities are informed – rescue efforts are needed urgently & without delay!" https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1661031464576663555?s=09

18:00 The people on board report that more water entered the boat and that all people on the lower deck moved to the upper deck. Now the boat drifts, moving to the left and right. The ship with four red tanks on board is still in sight.

18:22 Alarm Phone sends another email, including to the shipping company Briese, manager of SIARGAO.

18:35 Other vessels nearby are the OCEAN LEO, IMO 9258117 and SEA ICON, IMO 9806615.

18:56 Alarm Phone receives another call by the people in distress. They say the situation is becoming increasingly dangerous. They report that someone contacted them and asked for details like the number of people on board, the number of women, the number of children, and

the situation on board. They say that they spoke to this person in English and Arabic. They add that they have no drinking water left.

19:00 The NGO EMERGENCY (operating the Life Support) calls the Italian MRCC to inquire about the coordination of the SAR case and operations ongoing. Italian MRCC responds that the case is in the Maltese SRR and advises to contact the Maltese RCC. Several attempts to reach the Maltese authorities failed afterwards.

19:17 Alarm Phone receives a new position: N 34 59 E 019 42, position clearly in the Maltese SAR area. The people say a mechanic among them is trying to fix the engine but they need oil to make it work again.

19:35 The oil tanker STI GUARD is only three nautical miles away from them but doesn't intervene.

19:40 The people report that the situation remains dangerous. They are very afraid and say they would rather jump into the sea than to go back to Libya. They share a new position which shows them quite close to the position received at 19:17h.

20:01 Alarm Phone sends an E-Mail to authorities updating them about the situation.

20:09 Alarm Phone receives an E-Mail from the NGO vessel Humanity1, operated by SOS Humanity, which states that they are heading towards the last known position.

20:25 Alarm Phone calls MRCC Rome: The officer on the phone confirms that they have received the latest E-Mail update. Alarm Phone asks if there is a rescue operation ongoing and who is coordinating. The officer responds that they do not know, adding that they have lots of SAR cases and therefore cannot stay on the phone.

20:36 Ships close to the latest known position are ZHEN HUA 27, IMO 8710182, and MAERSK KOTKA, IMO 9085534.

20:39 The people on the phone report two container ships very close by but moving further away from them. One of the vessels has many illuminated windows. We cannot get more info about these two ships. They also say that somebody pointed a spotlight at them, but it's unclear which boat did that.

20:56 The people on board say that the spotlight was pointed at them from one of the container ships, not the one with the many illuminated windows.

21:02 Alarm Phone calls the RCC Malta and asks the officer if there is a rescue operation ongoing and if they are coordinating the rescue. The officer responds that Alarm Phone should send an email. Alarm Phone confirms that an E-Mail had been sent. The officer responds that he cannot check but that it is good. We ask again but he says he has no information.

22:25 Alarm Phone receives a new location: N 35 02 E 019 39 and sends an update E-mail to authorities.

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00:18 The people on board report that they had an incident some minutes earlier. A very large vessel that seemed not to see them nearly collided with them. The people pointed their mobile phone lights toward the large vessel, then it turned away. They say that they are still drifting, also their petrol is finished.

00:28 The people in distress pass a new location to Alarm Phone: N 35 00 E 19 39. Alarm Phone sends an E-Mail to the Italian and Maltese RCCs and rescue NGOs, updating them on the boat's location and situation.

06:10 The vessel TAREQ BEN ZEYAD from Benghazi moves in peculiar patterns. The last AIS signal of TAREQ BIN ZEYAD is issued close to the last known position of the distressed boat at N 34 53 E 019 45.

06:20 In the Alarm Phone's **last contact with the people in distress**, they pass a new location: N 34 57 E 019 34. The situation is still unchanged, engine stopped, boat adrift. They ask when rescue is coming.

06:27 Alarm Phone sends an update to authorities per E-Mail.

07:58 Alarm Phone calls RCC Malta once again who confirm that they received the E-Mail. When mentioning the boat with 500 people adrift, the officer says “wait a second” and puts the call on hold. Shortly after, the officer comes back and replies that they are currently very busy. When asked if they are going to assist the distressed boat, the officer hangs up the phone.

08:27 Alarm Phone calls the boat in distress, the line is busy.

09:00 Alarm Phone calls the boat in distress, it rings but no answer.

09:05 EMERGENCY reaches the Maltese joint operations by phone. They advise to write an email to report the distress case. When reminded that an email had already been sent, they respond that they are busy, do not know more and cannot provide additional numbers to contact.

11:42 The NGO vessel Life Support, operated by EMERGENCY sends a second email, reiterating the information previously shared and requiring coordination. Also this email remains unanswered.

10:03 Alarm Phone calls the boat in distress, phone rings but no answer.

11:44 Alarm Phone calls the boat in distress, phone rings but no answer. The credit of the satellite phone dropped to 41.97, indicating the last use of the satellite phone.

12:39 Alarm Phone calls the boat in distress, the phone rings but no answer. Their phone credit remains unchanged at 41.97.

13:31-14:12 The airplane Seagull of EUNAVFOR MED Irini is flying in the area of the boat’s last known position.

13:45 Seabird 2, monitoring airplane from Sea-Watch, reaches the area and searches unsuccessfully for the boat until 16:10h.

13:56 Alarm Phone calls RCC Malta who note that they are really busy and will answer by email, which they do not do.

14:04 Alarm Phone learns that, according to the Italian coastguard, this case is coordinated by RCC Malta.

14:09 Alarm Phone sends a SMS to the boat in distress, asking for their GPS position and if they can see an airplane.

14:10 Alarm Phone calls the boat in distress, it rings but no answer.

14:25 Seabird 2 spots EUNAVFOR MED Warship “FGS Bonn” (German Navy) in position N 34 40 E 018 51, approximately 55nm from the last known position of the boat in distress.

16:10 Seabird 2 leaves the area after its unsuccessful search.

In the following hours and days, Alarm Phone is continuously calling the boat, but is unable to reach the people . Several relatives contact Alarm Phone to ask about the fate of the boat.

00:00 The NGO vessel Life Support, operated by Emergency, starts searching for the boat. Also Ocean Viking, operated by SOS MEDITERRANEE, and Humanity 1, operated by SOS Humanity, are supporting in the search for the boat.

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Life support of EMERGENCY continues to do search pattern in order to locate the missing boat.

08:38 Alarm Phone calls RCC Malta to ask about the boat. The officer says that they would pass the request to the Officer on Duty and that we can call again in one hour.

09:50 Alarm Phone calls RCC Malta again, the Officer on Duty does not take the call but asks Alarm Phone to send an email.

11:58 Alarm Phone sends an email to all authorities, including Frontex and EUNAVFOR MED to ask for information about the missing boat: “Since yesterday we lost contact to the people on the boat. We receive a lot of phone calls of relatives who are afraid what happened to there beloved ones. Can you provide any information what you did to rescue the boat in urgent distress? Can you confirm that Malta coordinated the Search and Rescue Operation and that the people are safe? Thank you for your attention, Watch the Med – Alarmphone”

13:10 The airplance Seabird 2 reaches the area again and searches unsuccessfully for the boat until 17:40.

17:40 Seabird 2 leaves area after an unsuccessful search.

18:01 The NGO civil fleet Ocean Viking, Life Support and Humanity 1 were unable to locate the boat in distress and abandon the search. Life support

tweets: https://twitter.com/emergency_ong/status/1661770984557363200

19:53 Alarm Phone calls the Italian authorities in Augusta, Catania and Rome asking information about the disappered boat. Officials respond that the boat was in Malta SAR. After Alarm Phone saying to be worried for a possible pushback from Malta SAR which would be forbidden by international law, the MRCC Rome officer recommends Alarm Phone “not to be worried”.

20:00 Alarm Phone calls MRCC Rome but does not receive information.

20:13 The people in distress are still not reachable.

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12:20 A relative reports to Alarm Phone that the 500 people were brought back to Benghazi, Libya.

13:13 More people contact Alarm Phone, saying that the people were returned by force to Libya.

15:15 Further persons call Alarm Phone and confirm that the people are back in Libya. They say that they were detained in a prison in Benghazi. They are worried that they are being mistreated.

16:42 One of the relatives of people on the boat provides further information regarding the pullback: “They told us now that they had entered the territorial waters, but the boat got stuck with them and they had to retreat, then the Libyan forces came and forced them to turn back. My brother spoke to me three hours ago and told me he was in a prison in Benghazi.”

17:04 Another person contacts Alarm Phone to report that the mobile devices of all persons were shut down after they were shortly able to call some family members. One relative adds that the people fled wars and prisons in Syria, and now, unfortunately, they have been returned to Libya. One of the relatives highlighted the violent and dangerous behaviour of the Libyan forces, stating: “Libyan coastguard wanted sunk them by pushing boat with strong waves and hitting them.