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Saving lives is not a crime

Mission Lifeline judgement

In the case of Malta against the captain of the private sea rescue boat 'Lifeline', captain Claus-Peter Reisch was today sentenced to a fine of 10,000 euros due to alleged inadequate registration of the vessel.

This takes place in a context in which at least 64 people drowned in a shipping accident off the coast of Tunisia at the weekend. At the same time, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini proposed a new law punishing the rescue of refugees and migrants in distress at sea with fines of up to 5,000 euros for each individual rescued. Meanwhile, the Lower Austrian government plans to oblige asylum seekers and immigrants to comply with "10 commandments of immigration", including the commandment to live in gratitude to Austria.

Ska Keller, President of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament and lead candidate of the European Green Party for the European elections, comments:

"Saving lives is not a crime. It is a disgrace when lifesavers are branded criminals, prevented from rescue operations and dragged to court on shaky grounds and at the same time the European Union seals the end of Operation Sophia for the saving of refugees. Those who take over what should be the duty of EU governments and save human lives deserve support and recognition.

"Charging fines for every person rescued or the obligatory expression of gratitude in Austria could not be more offensive.

"Europe has a humanitarian duty to end the tragedy in the Mediterranean. EU governments must not surrender to the right-wing populists in Germany, Austria and Italy. EU governments must work to ensure that non-governmental organisations are free to rescue people and that the European Union sets up a civilian European sea rescue mission. EU member states willing to take responsibility must go ahead and provide shelter for refugees."

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