

Italian government allows Ocean Viking to bring 176 migrants ashore



Rome, October 19 (RHC)-- Italy's authorities have allowed the Ocean Viking to dock 176 African migrants in the port of Taranto. Apparently, this decision could put an end to the former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini's "Closed Ports" policy which has been in effect since 2017.

"Italy has assigned Taranto, in southern Italy, as a safe place for the Ocean Viking. We are relieved to know that the 176 survivors can arrive safely without delays," said the captain of the Ocean Viking, a rescue vessel that belongs to the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and SOS Méditerranée charities.

"Most of the migrants rescued off the Libyan coast and landed today were transferred by bus to a hotspot in Taranto for identification and photo-signaling procedures, local media La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno reported. "The 23 unaccompanied minors and the four pregnant women will find temporary accommodation in municipal facilities in the city."

According to the information provided by the Ocean Viking crew, among the 176 migrants rescued from the sea are four pregnant women and 33 minors, 23 of whom are unaccompanied. "These men, women

and children have lived a terrible and frightening voyage by sea," the SOS Méditerranée operations director Frederic Penard said, adding that the Ocean Viking's mission is to save lives in danger.

Previously, Malta, Italy, France and Germany had agreed to establish a "landing mechanism" which was supposedly aimed at solving the migrants' living conditions after arriving at the port.

During the last meeting of the EU interior ministers, however, those countries did not reach any binding commitment regarding a new scheme to distribute migrants rescued at the Mediterranean.

"Ad hoc agreements cannot be the solution. We urge governments to put an end to this unacceptable situation," Lassalle stressed.

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