

France and Italy wrangle over migrant ship

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Migrants sleep on the deck of NGO rescue ship 'Ocean Viking,' in the Mediterranean Sea, November 6, 2022. (Photo by Reuters)

Paris, November 10 (RHC)-- France has denounced as “unacceptable” Italy's refusal to take in a migrant ship, as the two countries wrangled over which should accept a vessel with 234 people aboard. The row centres on the Ocean Viking, a charity ship which has sailed away from Sicilian waters toward France after unsuccessfully waiting for permission to dock in Italy since late October.

Run by European charity SOS Mediterranee under a Norwegian flag, the ship appealed to France to accept it and it was expected to approach Corsica by Thursday. A diplomatic row over its fate was

building on Tuesday after Italy's new right-wing Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni thanked France for opening a port to the Ocean Viking -- in anticipation of any confirmation, or denial, by France.

Humanitarian groups said Italy had broken international law by refusing to let in migrants plucked from the sea. On Wednesday, French government spokesman Olivier Veran branded Italy's refusal to allow the ship to dock as "unacceptable." "The ship is currently in Italian territorial waters, there are extremely clear European rules that were accepted by the Italians," Veran said, adding that "the current attitude of the Italian government, notably its declarations and refusal to accept the ship" were "unacceptable."

Italy's new far-right government, led by Meloni's Brothers of Italy party, has vowed to stop the tens of thousands of migrants who arrive on the country's shores each year.

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