

Appeal to the Government of the Czech Republic to condemn criminalization of humanitarian aid to refugees on sea

The Organisation for Aid to Refugees (OAR) considers it necessary to show support to the courageous act of German captain Carole Rackete. In reaction to her decision to save more than forty people on – board of Sea – Watch 3 and in accordance to the international law, it was inevitable for Rackete to enter the Italian port of Lampedusa without a permission. With regard to the decision she had taken she is currently facing charges of people smuggling according to which she faces up to 15 years in prison.

We believe that with her brave action Captain Rackete was committed to saving lives and stood behind the moral values that we identify with. According to the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, the act of humanitarian aid is not to be criminalised, but the current practice shows the opposite trend. We strongly reject any kind of punishment of individuals or other actors providing humanitarian aid.

In addition to German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Foreign Minister of Germany Heik Maas, or the spokesman of the French government Sibethy Ndiaye, we join the critique of the Italian Government whose actions we believe are contrary to international law. With other human rights organizations and other stakeholders, we stand for Captain Rackete and dismiss the allegations raised by Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who labels the current political situation as „political blackmail“ by foreign politicians. We also strongly reject the absurd statement of Matteo Salvini, who calls Rackete 's action „act of war“. We strongly reject any kind of similar incriminations designed to contribute to the reduction of effectiveness of humanitarian acts.

Along with this proclamation, we challenge the Government of the Czech Republic, representing a country that refers to Masaryk humanism, and other politicians and people, to actively oppose similar practices made by populist governments that create a narrative which normalizes the criminalization of humanitarian aid.

Prague, 2 July 2019