

Testimonios recogidos la noche del 21 de diciembre de 2019

Suha Diab, Humanitarian Affairs Officer on-board Ocean Viking.

"The people we have on board are extremely vulnerable. I was on board our previous search and rescue vessel the Aquarius for four months and I've never heard such stories before. There are people on board who tell us they were in Tajoura detention centre when it was hit by airstrikes. They told me about all the bodies and body parts, all the blood they saw around them on the night of the shelling. People tell me about the physical abuse they have suffered.

For me this shows that European migration policies have only gotten worse, that people are have no choice but risk crossing the Mediterranean Sea to escape Libya. Right now it is even more dangerous due to the winter conditions. Yet people continue to risk their lives and they tell us it's because they see no other choice. And the numbers show that, people are telling us they have been intercepted by the Libyan coastguard and forced back to Libya four or five times before. One couple told me on their first attempt to cross the sea their boat capsized and more than 100 people died. They were two of only a few survivors. She was pregnant at the time."

Aloys Vimard, MSF Project Coordinator on-board Ocean Viking. [from audio recording]

"We are in international waters between Malta and Sicily heading northeast. Weather conditions are deteriorating. We have 162 people on board after two different rescues that occurred yesterday, [Friday] 20 December. There were two critical rescues. We found the first boat in a very difficult situation. It was a rubber boat with the bow deflated and it is very fortunate that we could bring them safely on board. And then there was another one during the night between Friday and Saturday. This was a wooden boat that had spent more than 24 hours at sea, overcrowded and extremely unstable. People were very agitated and desperate, so it was a very extreme rescue in very dire weather conditions, and we are very glad that all on board now.

We have eight small children on board and 41 minors and altogether they are from 17 different nationalities. The situation is currently stable. We explained to the people that we are heading north and we are requesting relevant and competent authorities to assign a port of safety for them to be able to disembark as soon as possible.

I just discussed with a man from Cameroon who claimed it is his fifth attempt and eventually he could be rescued. The last attempt he explained [to] me that the boat capsized and there were only four survivors. He told me there were more than 120 people and all unfortunately drowned. He had many relatives among them. So it is extremely concerning to see how much they are aware of the risks they are taking to seek safety, but still they are departing. We are now currently in very bad weather conditions and in the middle of the winter and people are still departing. Let us imagine what are the conditions they experience there [in Libya] to take those risks to seek safety."