

# EU steps up police and military operations against refugees after special summit

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Following an official moment of silence “in remembrance of the dead in the Mediterranean,” the leaders of the EU member states reached an agreement on the “ten point plan on migration” that the foreign and interior ministers had prepared on Monday. Its chief aims are to escalate police and military operations against refugees while laying the foundations for a massive military intervention in Africa.

Point one of the plan provides for the reinforcement of “Joint Operations in the Mediterranean, namely Triton and Poseidon, by increasing the financial resources and the number of assets.” At the same time, it will “extend their operational area,” allowing them “to intervene further, within the mandate of Frontex.”

“Triton,” “Poseidon,” and “Frontex” are code words for “Fortress Europe.” “Frontex” is the name of the infamous EU border protection agency, which is responsible for the hermetical sealing of the EU’s external borders (some 12,000 kilometers on land and 45,000 at sea). To meet this objective, Frontex-led operations “Triton” and “Poseidon” are now to be expanded into veritable war operations against refugees and their boats.

The second point of the EU plan formulates “a systematic effort to capture and destroy vessels used by the smugglers. “It goes on to say, “The positive results obtained with the Atalanta operation should inspire” the EU Commission.

The reference to “Operation Atalanta” underscores the character of the planned measures. “Atalanta” is the name of an EU military action in the Horn of Africa in which battleships of EU member states hunt down pirates off the coast of Somalia, destroying not only boats but alleged pirate camps on land as well.

Fabrice Leggeri, director of Frontex, left no doubt that the EU’s reinforcement of “Triton” was concerned

not with “sea rescues,” but with border patrols—i.e., a cracking down on refugees. As Leggeri explained to the *Guardian*, “Triton cannot be a search-and-rescue operation [for refugees] ... This is not in Frontex’s mandate, and this is in my understanding not in the mandate of the European Union.”

British Prime Minister David Cameron emphasized that, even after the most recent disasters, it is not the job of the EU to rescue refugees, but to take more effective action against them. In reference to earlier sea rescue measures related to the discontinued EU operation “Mare Nostrum,” Cameron cynically declared: “It seemed that more lives were being lost because of what the Italian navy was doing. More people were taking to the sea, more people were dying.”

This statement is as criminal as it is false. According to Selmin Çal?kan, General Secretary of Amnesty International in Germany, “Significantly more immigrants and refugees attempted to reach Europe, not fewer” since the end of the operation. While the purpose of “Mare Nostrum” was first and foremost border security, more than 100,000 refugees were also rescued in the Mediterranean during the course of the operation.

The latest report from Amnesty, called “Europe’s Sinking Shame,” documents the fatal consequences of discontinuing even such a limited rescue plan as that last autumn. Amnesty writes, “If figures from the latest incidents are confirmed, as many as 1,700 people will have perished this year, 100 times more than in the same period in 2014.”

The strategy of the EU is murderous in two respects. After the European powers, in league with Washington’s war policy in Africa and the Middle East, destroyed entire societies, they made the

conscious decision to let refugees drown to keep them out of Europe.

The war against refugees will now be intensified. The European elite has responded to the chaos in Africa, which they themselves created, and the mass deaths in the Mediterranean exclusively with police and military means. This underscores the reactionary character of the EU and its institutions.

It is significant that the ten point plan only strengthens the defense against refugees and omits even a single “humanitarian” measure. Point five warns member states to “ensure fingerprinting of all migrants.” Point eight calls for a new “return programme for rapid return of irregular migrants coordinated by Frontex from frontline Member States.”

In addition to this, “initiatives in Niger” and “engagement with countries surrounding Libya” are to be “stepped up” (Point nine). This is nothing but the outsourcing of the fight against refugees to dictatorships like Egypt’s Sisi regime, which brutally oppresses its own population and has sentenced 1,212 people to death in mass trials since the beginning of last year.

The *Guardian* has reported on a confidential draft from the EU summit. It says that “only 5,000 migrants will be allowed to resettle in Europe with large numbers likely to be repatriated.”

The inhumanity of the EU policy is so shocking that even its own bourgeois media openly remarks on it. “That is not humane, that is not a humanitarian initiative. That contradicts the words of Angela Merkel. Rescue is not the same as deterrence. Refugee deterrence is not refugee rescue,” the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* commented on the EU’s ten-point program.

In reality, the measures of the ruling elite go far beyond “refugee deterrence.” They are using the catastrophe that they themselves caused for their own imperialist ends and preparing a renewal of military intervention in Africa behind the back of the population.

Italian Defense Minister Roberta Pinotti said on broadcaster Sky TG23 TV, “We know where the smugglers have their boats, where they meet.” Plans for a military intervention lay directly ahead, she said, “We are ready to contribute our part.” According to *Die Zeit*, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said, “A long-term strategy of the EU must include, among other things,

sea patrols and refugee camps in African countries such as Niger or Sudan.”

Not only the former colonial powers in Libya, but the entire EU is preparing itself for a new military adventure. According to media reports, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini is being charged with “beginning with preparations for a possible security and defense operation in accordance with international law without delay.” Initial consultations about the draft had demonstrated the political will to give a “strong signal,” according to sources who spoke to the AFP press.

According to media reports, former colonial powers Britain and Belgium are already holding out the prospect of sending ships and weaponry.

Unlike in 2011 in the NATO war against Libya, the German elite is now trying to place itself at the forefront of the new “scramble for Africa.” The *Deutsche Presse Agentur* claims to have learned from circles in the German armed forces that the government is offering to withdraw the task force supply ship “Berlin” and the frigates “Karlsruhe” and “Hessen” from the Horn of Africa and send them in the direction of Italy.

“More than 600 German marines would then be able to take part in emergency sea rescue operations relatively quickly. The ‘Berlin’ could serve as a floating hospital,” wrote *Deutsche Welle*.



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