

European Union Advancing Plans for Military Response to Migration Crisis

By [Common Dreams](#)

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Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Coffins are carried through Brussels in protest at the EU's cruel policies on migration April 23, 2015. ([Amnesty International](#)/Flickr/cc)

At a time of [historically high](#) human displacement, and [lagging humanitarian response](#), the European Union is advancing plans to stage military attacks in a bid to prevent migrants from traversing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya.

The Guardian [reported](#) on Sunday:

Britain is drafting the UN security council resolution that would authorize the mission, said senior officials in Brussels. It would come under Italian command, have the participation of around 10 EU countries, including Britain, France, Spain, and Italy, and could also drag in Nato although there are no plans for initial alliance involvement.

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On Monday, Federica Mogherini, the EU's chief foreign and security policy coordinator, is to brief the UN security council in New York on the plans for a "chapter seven" resolution authorizing the use of force. The British draft is believed to call for the "use of all means to destroy the business model of the traffickers."

This would entail having EU vessels in Libyan territorial waters, including the Royal Navy flagship HMS Bulwark – currently in Malta – and deploying helicopter gunships to "neutralise" identified traffickers' ships used to send tens of thousands of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East on the short but highly risky voyage from the Libyan coast to the shores of southern Italy.

Critics have assailed the military response to the displacement crisis as heartless, especially as wealthy nations seal off their borders while fueling the wars and economic inequality driving people from their homes. Writing for *Open Democracy*, David Held and Kyle McNally [argued](#) earlier this week:

What we now see in the Mediterranean migration crisis is in many respects an

extension of western failure in two ways. First, the failed intervention created the instability that led to the Central Mediterranean route becoming so popular as a passage to Europe. Second, the European countries scaled back recovery efforts just at a time when they were needed the most. From late 2013 to November/December 2014 the Italian government ran a relatively effective operation called Mare Nostrum, during which time more than [100,000](#) migrants were rescued at sea.

Bulgaria, which two decades ago celebrated the dismantling of a wall that caged people in, is [building a wall](#) at its border with Turkey to keep mostly Syrian refugees out. Bulgaria became a preferred route after the construction of a fence at the Turkey-Greece border for the same reason.

With land borders cut off, refugees, no less desperate for security, are predictably [risking dangerous sea voyages](#) on rickety vessels to reach safety.

In an article published earlier this month in *Electronic Intifada*, journalist Rania Khalek argued militarized responses to migration in fact amount to a strategy of “death as deterrence.” Khalek [wrote](#):

Smugglers are merely a symptom of Europe’s deadly border policies.

Over the last decade, the EU has deliberately sealed its land borders, effectively pushing refugees to use deadly sea routes.

The border between Spain and Morocco, one of just two land borders connecting Europe to Africa, is sealed by [fence](#) that is seven yards high and reinforced with barbed wire. Though the fence hasn’t stopped people from trying to climb over it, the barbed wire tearing through their flesh in the process, those who manage to scale the fence alive are [swiftly deported](#).

“As the Mediterranean Sea becomes a graveyard for refugees, it’s more apparent than ever that Europe has learned all the wrong lessons from one of the darkest chapters in its history,” Khalek concluded.

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