

Mare Nostrum operation: commitment and courage

The military and humanitarian operation "Mare Nostrum" has been launched to boost surveillance and rescue system on the high seas and to increase security for human lives. It began on October 18, 2013 after the tragedy off Lampedusa where 300 migrants died.

The Italian police is taking part in "Mare Nostrum" operation with officers from the immigration office, the forensic police and the special immigration squad working in Sicily. They take turns every 15 days on the ships of the Navy. Two intercultural mediators complete the team put together by the Department of Public Security.

The tasks entrusted to forensic police officers on board ships are basically two: one group is responsible for speeding up identification procedures of migrants taken on board, taking photographs and fingerprints, except for under-14s. Another group gathers evidence provided by immigrants assisted by the cultural mediators to start targeted investigations into criminal organizations specialising in human trafficking.

The results achieved are noteworthy: from 18 October to 23 December 2013, 2,330 migrants were rescued, 1,246 of them were fingerprinted and photographed and taken to the reception centres of Pozzallo (Ragusa), Porto Empedocle (Agrigento), Augusta (Siracusa), and Catania. During rescue operations 19 people were identified and arrested.

At the end of their period on board, some police officers, having realized that this unforgettable experience had enriched them both professionally and personally, wished to thank the whole crew in a letter addressed to the captain of the Italian Navy ship San Marco.

Two of them, Stefano Biasone and Domenico Pirozzi, also wrote their own "logbooks" to tell about their personal and professional experience aboard the vessels, where determination and commitment of the crew mingled with the courage of the refugees, who risk their lives searching for a better future. These "logbooks" will be published in full in the January issue of Poliziamoderna, the official magazine of the Polizia di Stato.

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