

# Amnesty International

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### **Stranded at sea: Europe must stop playing with human lives**

**629 men, women and children aboard the rescue ship Aquarius were left adrift in the Central Mediterranean Sea for two days because Italy and Malta both refused to save them.**

With the only option to dock in Spain, 1,300 km away, survivors, including injured and sick people, pregnant women and children, are being forced to brave the waves in bad weather conditions and continue an unnecessarily long journey to reach safety.

Malta and Italy's refusal to allow already traumatized and exhausted people to dock in their ports is a cruel political game, that is putting lives at risk.

The European Union asylum rules have placed an uneven responsibility to help asylum-seekers on the first country where people arrive. In recent years a handful of EU countries, including Greece and Italy, have been left alone to support people fleeing war in Syria or torture in Libya.

The broken European asylum system allows most EU countries to dodge their responsibilities of helping asylum-seekers, while a few others are overstretched. This is unfair and can result in coastal countries refusing to respond to rescue calls, as calls for solidarity from the rest of Europe go unheeded.

But this cop-out system can change and be replaced with a fair, efficient and compassionate one based on distribution of asylum-seekers among all the countries of the European Union. When leaders meet in Brussels at the end of June, they have an historical opportunity to fix an unfair asylum system that doesn't work for refugees nor for the people in Europe.

#### **Why is this urgent?**

Human beings cannot be left stranded at sea. We need to avoid this from happening again and this is only possible if all countries in Europe help each other and accept to receive their quota of people in need of protection.

**Send an email to European leaders and urge them to work together to save the lives at sea, keep ports open and fix the broke asylum system.**

By [taking action](#), you will be contributing to put pressure on European leaders to fix the system and create new rules based on compassion, fairness and shared responsibility by all countries in Europe.