

# Press Release

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## Commissioner for Human Rights issues statement on Mediterranean tragedies

Strasbourg, 03.06.2007 - Following last week's tragic events at the Mediterranean sea, in which several groups of irregular migrants were denied assistance for days, and over 50 people of mostly Eritrean origin have disappeared, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights has said the following:

"European governments will need to further strengthen coordination and cooperation in rescue operations along the Mediterranean coast, and all governments should take seriously their individual responsibility for humanitarian assistance to irregular migrants," Thomas Hammarberg said.

"My office is grateful for the swift humanitarian response by Italian and Spanish crews and would hereby urge the Maltese authorities to soften their stance on providing assistance to irregular migrants whose lives are in danger. Support to people in distress and in dire need of assistance should always be a first priority," the Commissioner said.

## Le Commissaire aux droits de l'homme du Conseil de l'Europe s'exprime sur les tragédies en Méditerranée

Strasbourg, 02.06.2007 - Suite aux événements tragiques en mer Méditerranée la semaine dernière - dans lesquels plusieurs groupes d'immigrants clandestins se sont vu refuser toute assistance pendant quelques jours et qui ont vu disparaître plus de 50 personnes, pour la plupart d'origine érythréenne -, le Commissaire aux droits de l'homme du Conseil de l'Europe a déclaré :

"Les gouvernements européens doivent renforcer encore leur coordination et leur coopération pour les opérations de sauvetage le long des côtes méditerranéennes, et tous les gouvernements doivent prendre au sérieux leurs responsabilités individuelles en matière d'assistance humanitaire aux immigrants clandestins", a déclaré Thomas Hammarberg.

"Mon bureau est reconnaissant de la prompte réaction humanitaire des équipages italiens et espagnols et recommande donc vivement aux autorités maltaises d'assouplir leur position quant à l'assistance à apporter aux immigrants irréguliers dont les vies sont en danger. L'aide aux personnes en détresse ayant terriblement besoin d'assistance doit toujours être la première des priorités", a ajouté le Commissaire.

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