

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003371/25
to the Commission
Özlem Demirel (The Left)
(3 September 2025)**

Subject: Attack on the Norwegian rescue ship Ocean Viking

On 24 August 2025, the Norwegian rescue ship Ocean Viking was fired upon by the Libyan coast guard for 20 minutes in the Mediterranean Sea. In an emergency call, the crew alerted the NATO mission Sea Guardian, Frontex, the Italian Navy responsible for Operation IRINI and the Norwegian authorities, requesting assistance and military escort. Despite these requests for help, the crew was left to fend for itself. Both the Commission and Frontex have since expressed their concern, but no concrete follow-up measures have been taken so far.

1. How does the Commission assess the fact that the Ocean Viking's requests for assistance remained unanswered at EU level, and how exactly could Operation IRINI and Frontex have helped?

2. What measures will the Commission take to ensure effective coordination between NATO and EU missions, EU agencies and national authorities in similar cases where civilian sea rescuers are threatened by Libyan militias, and to what extent could protocols or routines be put in place in this regard?

3. Given that the EU has invested hundreds of millions of euros in migration control in Libya in recent years, while at the same time repeatedly turning a blind eye to human rights concerns: Does the Commission plan to reassess this policy, and what role will this latest incident play in that regard?

Submitted: 3.9.2025

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European
Commission
(9 December 2025)**

The EU Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Irini (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) operates in the central Mediterranean, a vast area, and had no assets near the incident that could have been informed.

All vessels, including those under EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, are legally obliged to assist persons in distress at sea and to follow the instructions of the competent rescue coordination authorities.

Such assistance is only possible if a vessel is informed and able to reach the location within a reasonable timeframe, which was not the case for EUNAVFOR MED IRINI's assets.

Coordination of Common Security and Defence Policy operations and missions⁽¹⁾ falls under the political authority of the Council. A structured North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-EU political dialogue exists to enhance coordination between operations active in the same area.

While the Commission has no operational competence in this regard, it continues to underline to the Libyan authorities responsible for maritime law enforcement the importance of strengthening mechanisms to monitor respect for human rights, to investigate incidents, and to ensure accountability and transparent reporting.

The Commission, alongside international partners, will continue to work with Libyan authorities with the aim of improving conditions for migrants and asylum seekers.

At the same time, the Commission continues to reinforce monitoring and dialogue mechanisms to ensure that human rights standards are upheld.

As this written question falls as well under the responsibility of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the Commission has asked the Agency to provide a response to the question raised by the Honourable Member. The Commission will send the Agency's reply to the Honourable Member as soon as possible.

¹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_en.