

**Question for written answer E-007026/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE)**

Subject: Death of 61 boat people in the Mediterranean in March 2011

On 8 May 2011, the Guardian reported that 61 boat people escaping from Libya had died after their appeals for rescue were ignored by forces operating in the Mediterranean. The intercepted boat in distress was left drifting for 16 days before the currents brought it back to the Libyan coast on 26 March 2011. Among the dead persons were counted 47 Ethiopians, 7 Eritreans, 5 Sudanese, 6 Algerians and 6 Ghanaians, including one pregnant woman and two children. According to witnesses, back in Libya the 10 survivors were imprisoned for days, during which two people, a man and a woman, died.

What information has the Commission received concerning this tragedy? How does the Commission intend to shed light and conduct an enquiry into the precise circumstances of this accident? How does the Commission intend to clarify where responsibility lay in this, considering the gravity of the allegations? Can the Commission guarantee that national border guards and vessels deployed by the Member States and the agency Frontex are not implicated?

What measures does the Commission plan to take to improve the coordination of interception and rescue at sea and to offer protection to people fleeing the conflict in Libya, in accordance with European and international law, notably Council Decision No 2010/252/EU of 26 April 2010?

How does the Commission ensure that Frontex operations in this area rescue promptly boat people in distress and treat them properly? Do experts in international protection from Member States and/or the UNHCR participate in these Frontex operations?

Does the Commission consider that humanitarian action should be implemented, notably by exploring the possibility of setting up a humanitarian corridor?