

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3296/09  
by Sebastiano (Nello) Musumeci (UEN)  
to the Commission

Subject: Maltese Government's failure to provide assistance in Strait of Sicily

The failure to rescue the desperate people aboard the Turkish cargo ship 'Pinar' is but the latest scandalous instance of Malta failing to provide assistance in such cases. Despite the fact that the cargo ship was in a Maltese SAR (search and rescue) area, it was instructed to sail to Lampedusa, on the grounds that it was the closest island with a safe port.

There have been 670 instances in which Malta has failed to provide assistance and Italian airborne and naval rescue services have been obliged to step in.

1. Would the Commission not agree that it should condemn the behaviour of the Maltese Government, in view of the commitment that government has given, including under European agreements, to take swift action in cases where vessels full of illegal immigrants run into difficulty off its coasts?
2. Given the considerable costs incurred by Italy in rescuing and providing assistance, in Malta's place, to 42 602 foreign nationals accommodated for at least 45 days in an immigration centre, should thought not be given to increasing the funding provided to Italy to cover sea patrol and rescue operations?