

**Priority question for written answer P-005167/2020/rev.1
to the Commission**
Rule 138
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Subject: Detention of Sicilian fishermen, blackmail by Libyan General Haftar, and the role of Europe

On 14 September 2020, news spread that the Libyan navy, under General Haftar, had seized two fishing boats from Mazara del Vallo, with 16 men on board.

The Italian vessels were fishing 35 miles from the Libyan coast and, according to the Benghazi authorities, had failed to respect the EEZ (exclusive economic zone) which had been unilaterally claimed in 2005 by the Libyan Government – led by Colonel Gaddafi at the time – and which covers an area of up to 74 miles from the coast.

According to the information available, General Haftar has apparently proposed to release the fishermen being held hostage only in exchange for the release of four Libyans arrested in Catania in 2015, who had been tried in the Assize Court and the Supreme Court and sentenced to 30 years in prison as migrant traffickers and murderers.

Can the Commission clarify:

1. what immediate action it intends to take to protect the lives of the Sicilian fishermen;
2. how it intends to promote greater security in the area at the EU level, over and beyond the competences of the individual Member State, by exercising its foreign policy and defence functions;
3. whether it would consider sending an EU-coordinated patrol to the Mediterranean in order to protect European borders and fishermen going about their business?