



To: Josep Borrell Fontelles  
Commission Vice-President in charge of coordinating the external action of the  
European Union.  
Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius  
Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Brussels, 9 November 2020

Ref: Sicilian fishers jailed in Libya

Dear Vice President Josep Borrell Fontelles

Dear Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius

We are writing to express our concerns about the case of 18 fishers from Sicily detained at sea on 1 September by the Libyan Coast Guard while fishing for red prawns.

The Italian vessels were fishing 40 miles from the Libyan coast and according to the Benghazi authorities had failed to respect the Exclusive Economic Zone unilaterally extended to 74 miles by Libya in 2005.

We understand that the fishers have been held in a jail close to the city of Benghazi for the past two months.

We further understand that there is a Libyan demand for a prisoner swap: the Italians in exchange for four Libyans convicted by the Italian courts of human trafficking and murder. This is completely unacceptable.

Together with their families, the trade unions organizing fishers from all European countries are extremely concerned over the health and safety of these fishermen, due to the objective situation of high instability and internal armed conflict in Libya.

We are calling on your influence and immediate action for the immediate and unconditional release of these fishers and we call you to put in place appropriate measures to ensure security for European fishers in the Mediterranean.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours respectfully,

Livia Spera  
Acting General Secretary

Cc: Commissioner Ylva Johansson, Home Affairs  
Luigi di Maio, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy