



PRESS RELEASE – PILOTES VOLONTAIRES

The observation aircraft Colibri 2 grounded for 20 days :
we sound the alarm and contest this decision

On September 5, 2025, our aircraft, the Colibri 2, was grounded for 20 days by the Italian authorities. This detention comes with an exorbitant financial penalty of €100,000.

This procedure is part of a disturbing trend: the systematic criminalization of civilian search and rescue actors at sea. In just a few months, our partners — RESQSHIP, Sea-Eye, Sea-Watch and Compass Collective — have all seen their ships or aircraft detained, their missions obstructed by arbitrary fines.

Every grounding, every sanction, directly translates into lives lost at sea.

With this decision, Italy continues its repressive policy and takes a further step towards its aim to keep NGOs and associations away from their areas of operation. The fine imposed on Pilotes Volontaires has nothing to do with a supposed respect for the law: it instead illustrates administrative harassment driven by a political agenda to stifle and eliminate civilian rescue organizations in the Central Mediterranean, particularly since the adoption of the Flussi decree-law.

Yet Italian courts, up to the Constitutional Court, have reaffirmed that any decision based on punitive and discriminatory regulations that circumvent international maritime law must be regarded as illegal and illegitimate. The Flussi decree-law, which notably requires systematic notification of the so-called Libyan “coast guard”, is a striking example: it is illegal, illegitimate, and contrary to human rights.

Since our founding, we have always respected maritime law and fundamental rights. This is precisely why we have refused to systematically notify the Libyan militias responsible for violent interceptions, who force people on the move back into camps where they face abuse, exploitation, and torture, and who have fired war weapons at our partners. We have only done so when it was undeniably necessary.

We contest this detention and its exorbitant fine, and we strongly denounce this decree and its dramatic consequences.

We demand:

- The immediate release of the Colibri 2 and the lifting of financial sanctions.
- The repeal of the Flussi decree-law.
- An end to the financial, material, and operational support from the European Union and Italy to the so-called Libyan and Tunisian coast guards.

We call on citizens, organizations, and institutions to support us in our legal action against this detention, and in our efforts to ensure that the Colibri 2 can once again be operational. Let us stand together for the respect of life and human dignity, for freedom of movement for all, without conditions, and for the upholding of maritime law.

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In solidarity,
Pilotes Volontaires

