



Libya: Irini begins inspections in Benghazi for the new Maritime Coordination Center

Published on 11/05/2026

Benghazi, May 11, 2026 – The first concrete steps are being taken for the extension of the maritime monitoring and rescue system in eastern Libya. A high-level technical team conducted a series of inspections in **Benghazi** to assess the feasibility of a new **Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC)**.

The initiative sees the synergistic collaboration between the European naval operation **EuNavFor Med - Irini**, the EU delegation in Libya, the border assistance mission (**Eubam Libya**), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (**UNODC**).

The technical inspection and institutional talks

During the visit to Cyrenaica, the international delegation met with key local actors to define the operational parameters of the project: **the Libyan Coast Guard, the General Command of**

the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Khalifa Haftar, and the local Port Authority.

The talks focused on fundamental technical requirements: critical infrastructure, utility supply, and strict safety standards.

The initiative is solidly based on Italian experience and contribution. The European Union's goal is indeed to replicate in Cyrenaica the success of the MRCC center in Tripoli, **a project entirely carried out by Italy using European funds.**



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In the new Benghazi project, **Italy's role remains prominent:** the center is expected to be built by Irini **in collaboration with the Italian government** and Eubam Libya. This participation confirms Italy's position as a key technical and political partner in maritime and migration cooperation with Libya, acting as a bridge between European security needs and local authorities.

Migratory dynamics and new routes in 2026

The urgency of the project is dictated by changes in migratory flows. **Since the beginning of 2026, there has been a sharp decline in arrivals compared to the previous year: just over 7,000 migrants have arrived in Italy from the Libyan coasts, compared to over 16,000 in the same period of 2025.** However, the Libyan route remains predominant, representing about 85% of the total landings in the country.

Additionally, a new route is consolidating that connects **Cyrenaica to Greece** (particularly to the island of Crete). This route is fueled by the growing presence of **Sudanese migrants in**

eastern Libya and the ability of smuggling networks to adapt to stricter controls implemented along the western coast.

While the EU and Italy promote the project as a step towards stability, there are critical voices. The organization **Mediterranea Saving Humans** has denounced that the new Benghazi center could strengthen the system of interceptions at sea and pushbacks to Libya, a territory still considered unsafe for migrants' rights.

Conclusion: A long-term strategy

Despite the criticisms, the Benghazi MRCC project is presented as a pillar of the strategy to strengthen Libyan maritime capabilities. European envoy Nicola Orlando reiterated that Irini represents a "fundamental contribution to Libya's path towards unity and stability," emphasizing how training and technical cooperation (led by the EU and Italy) are essential to building sovereign and secure institutions in the central Mediterranean.

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