



## **ICRC | Migrant and refugee deaths a cry to European countries to take humanitarian action**

### **Statement attributable to ICRC president Peter Maurer on migrant deaths**

**20 April 2015**

I am deeply shocked and saddened by the loss of hundreds of lives in such tragic circumstances in the Mediterranean. These deaths of men, women and children, are an appalling reminder of the impact of worsening conflicts in Libya, Syria and other Middle Eastern and African countries in driving people to desperate decisions to meet their most basic needs for safety. Some of them are fleeing from the violence which has engulfed their countries, others are simply caught up in it along their way as they seek to escape oppressive poverty.

Their deaths are the result of a fundamental failure to meet citizens' needs for protection and safety. And they are a cry to European countries, as the EU Foreign Affairs Council meets in Luxembourg today, to take the necessary humanitarian actions. They must make sure that the search and rescue measures that Europe puts in place to replace Italy's Mare Nostrum operation are wide enough and strong enough. All parties concerned (States, civil society, humanitarian organisations, NGOs, etc.) have to take action to prevent the recurrence of these tragedies. They must work to ensure that the responsibilities are shared and not just left to Italy and other countries on the front line. And they must play their part in working for political solutions to the conflicts which are driving tens of millions of people from their homes.

The ICRC is on the ground in all the conflict hotspots such as Syria, Libya, Iraq and Somalia, working to help civilians caught up in the fighting and engaging with all parties to try to persuade them to respect the laws of war. We are also working with Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, throughout the regions, to help those who have been forced to flee their homes to find separated family members; we visit many of those migrants and refugees who find themselves imprisoned or detained along the way and we provide relief and medical care to some of those on the move. But these actions can only play a limited part in tackling what has become one of the most serious humanitarian problems of our time. The key players who must step up to their responsibilities are States – in this case European states. We understand that EU member states have other preoccupations, but right now they have to give priority to humanitarian concerns. We stand ready to support with whatever we can contribute. But they must recognise the humanitarian imperative and take action accordingly.