

Young Indigenous Europeans Pushing Back against Immigration that Is Changing the Culture of Europe

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Young Europeans on the far right, calling themselves the Identitarian Movement (IB), are raising money to run their own border-patrol mission in the waters separating Libya and Italy for their 'Defend Europe' campaign. IB has purchased a ship, paid by crowd-sourced donations, and intends to thwart the immigration mission of non-governmental organizations in the central Mediterranean Sea. IB blames Doctors Without Borders and Save the Children, along with the Italian Coast Guard and the European Union's Border Patrol who, in the name of 'rescuing' migrants, actually are the engines of mass migration and human trafficking. The IB says Europeans are losing their way of life and, if the current migration is not stopped, they will become a minority in their own homelands. –GEG

Some young European far right-wingers are so fed up with migrants reaching the continent's shores that they've decided to take matters into their own hands. The group is raising money to run its very own border patrol mission in the waters separating Libya and Italy.

The **Identitarian Movement** (known as IB) tries to appeal to its cohorts by putting a youthful spin on one of the far right's favorite narratives: Migrants are destroying Europe's social fabric. These "**hipsters of the far right**" are mostly young professionals under the age of 30 who preach primarily through social media.

The group's most high-profile endeavor so far is **Defend Europe**, a crowdfunding initiative to that aims to thwart rescue missions by non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) in the central Mediterranean Sea.

PayPal took IB's fundraising page down in June. Yet the group found workarounds and said it had raised more than \$117,000 as of Monday.

It used the funds to purchase a ship and hire a crew to keep an eye on NGO search-and-rescue missions and "intervene when they're doing something illegal," IB founder Martin Sellner said last week in a YouTube video. He claims that IB's crew will also rescue anyone in distress if its ship receives an SOS signal, but the group then will do everything in its power to send the people back to Africa.

"Our goal is to step in where our politicians are failing and to do what is necessary to stop the deadly illegal migration into Europe," according to the IB website. "An invasion is taking place. This massive immigration is changing the face of our continent. We are losing our safety and our way of life and there is a danger we Europeans will become a minority in our own European homelands."

About 90,000 migrants and refugees have traversed the central Mediterranean Sea route to Italy so far in 2017, according to the International Organization for Migration. (Chris McGrath via Getty Images)

IB blames humanitarian organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Save the Children – which, alongside the Italian coast guard and the European Union's border patrol, man vessels that rescue migrants and bring them to safety in Italy – for exacerbating the migrant crisis across Europe by enabling human traffickers. Traffickers are more likely to send people out to sea, the argument goes, if there's a panoply of rescue options in place.

The NGOs "are nothing less [than] a part of the international human [trafficking] ring and the migrant business," according to IB's website.

In his YouTube video, Sellner also made clear his group's objection to the flow of migrants into Europe. "If you invite the whole of Africa, you don't have Africa," he said. "You become Africa."

Almost 90,000 refugees and migrants – 15 percent of whom are children – have crossed the central Mediterranean Sea to Italy so far in 2017. More than 2,200 have died en route.

The influx has placed many European countries – especially Italy – under serious strain. Yet the efforts of the NGOs have mitigated the scale of the humanitarian crisis. Thousands of people have been rescued over a period of a few days.

Sending people back to countries like Libya isn't a long-term solution, said Sarah Crowe, UNICEF refugee and migrant spokeswoman. Smuggler networks have flourished in the lawless state, luring people there with promises of work. What these migrants often find instead is rampant abuse, imprisonment and sexual exploitation, propelling them to flee towards Europe.

"One of the reasons why migrants – children particularly – take these journeys is because what's happening at home ... pushes them to do so," Crowe said. "If you have a lion at your back and the sea in front of you, you're going to take the sea."



View photos

Illegal immigrants are held at a detention center in Zawiyah, Libya, on Monday. (TAHA JAWASHI via Getty Images)

NGOs claim they are filling the vacuum that European governments created and are merely fulfilling their life-saving obligations. Yet critics contend that the emergence of more search-and-rescue boats has spurred more people to attempt the perilous journey.

"The NGOs are almost like a ferry service. It's almost as if the smugglers were putting people directly on NGO boats," [an anonymous European official told Reuters in May.](#)

Italy's government last week proposed a [code of conduct](#) for NGOs operating in the Mediterranean. But officials with these organizations expressed concerns the rules will limit their ability to effectively carry out their missions by preventing vessels from entering Libyan waters.

The debate is fodder for far right groups across Europe, which have experienced a resurgence in response to issues such as the migrant crisis and terrorism.

Martin Sellner, IB's founder, insists that he sees no parallels between his ideology and Europe's more traditional far right movements.

"We see ourselves as [patriots, not neo-Nazis](#)," he told CNN last year. "We don't hate immigrants. But we also don't want to see the country change and end up minorities in our countries. We wanted to express this opinion without anti-Semitism, without the racism of the old right."

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