ENCESA 2027

WATCHING FOR CHANGE

One sea. So many names.

Mare Nostrum. Our sea.

Mare Internum. The inland sea.

Mesógeios Thálassa. The sea amongst the lands.

Al-Baḥr al-Abyaḍ al-Mutawassiṭ. The middle white sea.

Mediterranean Sea. The sea surrounded by lands.

For centuries, different people have named this sea the way they see it and experience it. Because **names do more than simply identify things: they also reveal our perspective.** For some people, the Mediterranean means home, landscapes, holidays and horizons. For others, it means a journey, a border, fear and ultimately death. **The same sea can be a paradise or a graveyard.** And we refuse to accept that it should end up with another name: **the sea of death.**

As young people, we want to break free from the labels that prevent us from seeing people for who they truly are. Words such as irregulars, foreigners or *MENAS* hide names, stories, fears and dreams. **Labels shouldn't define lives.** Why do we look with suspicion at those fleeing war, hunger or persecution? Why does wealth make a foreigner welcome, while poverty becomes a reason for rejection?

We raise our voices because **human rights are not a reward to be earned.** They belong to us from the moment we are born. Yet all too often, they are lost while crossing borders: invisible walls and bureaucracy that forgets that dignity knows nothing about passports. We cannot allow lives to be reduced to numbers, nor can we grow accustomed to counting the dead while forgetting the people behind those numbers.

Everyone's blood is red. Why should we have to bleed to prove that we are equal?

Perhaps the question is not what makes us different, but why these differences prevent us from recognising what makes us the same. Because sometimes **it is not reality that divides us, but the way we look at it.**

For centuries, watchtowers were used to keep an eye on the sea and warn of possible threats. When boats appeared on the horizon, warning signals were lit. Today, we return to these towers with a different purpose**: where once people**

saw a possible threat, we want to recognise fellow human beings; where once a warning signal was lit, we now light a beacon of solidarity.

For us, this is what watching for change means: challenging prejudices and transforming the way we see the world, but also taking action. It begins when we refuse to laugh at a racist joke, when we stand up for someone facing discrimination, when we refuse to spread a lie and when we seek to understand before judging. **Because change does not begin with grand speeches, but smaller daily actions.**

From these vantage points, we want our commitment to travel like the signals of old, from island to island, from coast to coast and from village to village. May it herald a Mediterranean where diversity is not a cause for division and where no border is worth more than a human life.

One sea. So many names.

Mare Nostrum, our sea. Everyone's sea. But calling it that is not enough. **A sea where men, women and children risk their lives in search of a place to live, and where so many people never reach the other shore, cannot truly be ours.**

Today, from these watchtowers, we light a beacon. **A beacon to watch for change and, with it, a call to action is raised:**

What kind of Mediterranean will we call our own?