

Transnational
Red Sea
Center

Bridging Science
& Diplomacy for
the Future of Corals

PRESS RELEASE

Le Transnational Red Sea Center forced to suspend its first expedition season

The sailboat *Fleur de Passion*, which left from Aqaba/Eilat towards Sudan, is stranded in Egypt after running aground in the southern Gulf of Aqaba. The boat was to serve as a logistical platform for an initiative to preserve for the preservation of Red Sea corals, which have developed a resistance to climate change

Lausanne, 21st July 2021 - The Transnational Red Sea Center (TRSC) had to suspend its first Red Sea expedition season due to a navigation incident early on Wednesday 21 July 2021 in the southern Gulf of Aqaba.

At around 4.30am, the expedition sailboat *Fleur de Passion* hit a reef in the Straits of Tiran, north-east of the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh, while sailing south after leaving Eilat on Tuesday 20 July at midday.

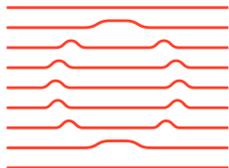
The ten people on board (four crew members and six Swiss and international scientists), all of whom were unharmed, were taken in charge by the Egyptian Navy and transferred to Sharm el-Sheikh. The TRSC thanks the Egyptian Navy for its valuable support in these circumstances. The 33-metre Swiss sailing boat, chartered from the Geneva-based Pacific Foundation, will have to be towed to the Egyptian port so that the damage can be accurately assessed and repairs carried out as soon as possible.

At this stage, the TRSC and the Pacific Foundation, in conjunction with the Egyptian authorities, are taking all the necessary steps to secure the boat and to collect the elements that are needed to assess the continuation of the expedition this season. The expedition was scheduled to run from the end of July to the end of August along part of the Sudanese coast in partnership with Red Sea University in Port Sudan.

Several scenarios are currently under consideration: the first is to repair the vessel quickly so that it can return to sea and carry out its mission on schedule; the second is to charter a replacement vessel to enable the TRSC and Red Sea University scientists to carry out their first sailing season.

From 2021 to 2024, the Transnational Red Sea Centre planned to conduct four expeditions around the entire Red Sea, along its 4000 km coastline, each summer for the next four years.

In any case, the ambition of the TRSC remains unchanged. Created in 2019 at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) with the support of the Swiss Confederation, the Transnational Red Sea Center aims to promote a regional approach to the research



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and preservation of what is de facto the last coral "refuge" in the world. Over the past 30 years, 50% of the world's corals have disappeared due to global warming, pollution and other destructive human activities, and only 10% are expected to survive beyond 2050.

Recently, however, there is a unique hope for the survival of at least one major reef ecosystem in the world. Recent studies involving EPFL researchers have revealed that Red Sea corals are resistant to global warming because of their particular genetics. Their survival is therefore possible, provided that the environmental pressure exerted by human activity in the countries bordering the Red Sea is mitigated.

The *Fleur de Passion* left Seville at the end of April and arrived in Aqaba on 10 June, where an official ceremony was held to launch the expedition. It then called at Eilat where a second series of awareness-raising activities took place, before leaving for Sudan.

Media contacts:

Transnational Red Sea Center

Samuel Gardaz, coordinateur

samuel.gardaz@epfl.ch

Mobile suisse (appels WhatsApp, Signal): +41 76 563 65 43

Mobile soudanais (appels téléphoniques): +249 961 570 291

EPFL

Emmanuel Barraud, porte-parole

emmanuel.barraud@epfl.ch

Mobile suisse: +41 79 628 36 42