

# Introducing Human Rights at Sea

Institute of Maritime Law  
University of Southampton Seminar  
22 October 2025

# Film: Death of a Fisheries Observer



<https://youtu.be/sM4WpGNfDzw>

# About



[www.humanrightsatsea.org](http://www.humanrightsatsea.org)

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- Established 2014.
- Registered UK non-profit Charity (2015-2025).
- Patron: Lord Robin Teverson (UK House of Lords, LibDem Cross bench Peer).
- UN Global Compact Member (2015).
- Observer to Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (2019).
- Registered Community Interest Company non-profit social enterprise (2025-).
- UN Economic and Social Council Accreditation (ECOSOC) (2022-).
- Year 12 as a global research, investigation and advocacy resource hub.
- Originator of the Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea.
- Subject of House of Lords Inquiry into ‘UNCLOS: Fit for Purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?’
- UK MOD facilitator for Human Security training (civil society maritime perspective).
- Financed through Human Rights at Sea International Ltd and voluntary donations.

## Websites

[www.humanrightsatsea.org](http://www.humanrightsatsea.org) | [www.hrasi.org](http://www.hrasi.org)

# Context

- **Estimated 30 Million people living, working and transiting at sea every day.**
- **September 2020 Global pandemic and seafarer crew-change crisis identified labour abuses at sea (extended contracts, lack of access to medical care, logistic hub failures, unlawful orders by owners to ship's Masters, abandonment).**
- 45% of women working at sea reported sexual harassment.
- Estimated 100,000 fishermen's deaths per annum.
- 11% of all seafarer deaths 2019-2023 were from suicide surpassing the number of deaths caused by onboard injuries.
- 52 countries where Human Rights at Sea (HRAS) has influenced Law & Policy development.
- 150 reports, publications and resources issued since 2014.
- 130,000 seafarers' onshore welfare facilities assured by updating primary legislation in one coastal state (New Zealand).
- Recent fieldwork and investigations in Ukraine, Philippines, Northern Ireland.
- Ongoing investigations: Pacific Region for unexplained fisheries observer death at sea.

# Need

- **Independent organisations in the civil society sector that are trusted to report facts in a transparent, objective and accountable manner.**
- Ongoing and unresolved human and labour rights abuses at sea, including:
  - *Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking*
  - *Serious sexual offences (men and women)*
  - *Homicide and disappearances*
  - *Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing*
  - *Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Exploitation*
  - *Seafarer Abandonment*
  - *Attacks against civil society Search and Rescue Vessels*
- Serious organised crime groups operating globally through sea lanes and containerisation.
- Lack of military detailed awareness of human rights abuses at sea.
- Growing levels of mixed migration by sea linked to organised crime syndicates.
- Impunity in unlawful operations by flag states, coastal states, beneficial owners, recruiters and managers of crew.

# Soft Law Development



[www.gdhras.com](http://www.gdhras.com)



# Geneva Declaration

## Four Fundamental Principles

1. Human rights are universal; they apply at sea, as they do on land.
2. All persons at sea, without any distinction, are entitled to their human rights.
3. There are no maritime specific reasons for denying human rights at sea.
4. All human rights established under both treaty and customary international law must be respected at sea.





## Lawlessness in the Mediterranean Continues with Attack on Ocean Viking

The August attack by the Libyan Coast Guard on the MV Ocean Viking as it searched for a vessel in distress was another demonstration of how international law and the value of human life is being disregarded in the Mediterranean Sea. The Ocean Viking had 87 survivors and 34 humanitarian and maritime

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Migrants & Refugees



## Are Humanitarian Activists of the Global Sumud Flotilla prepared for Israeli Use of Force?

At the time of writing the 22 vessel humanitarian flotilla are off-shore Tunisia preparing for the next leg towards Gaza to attempt to breach the Israeli blockade and deliver aid - but are they

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## Maritime Cadet awareness film on Bullying, Harassment and Exploitation Launched

In pro bono support of the Sailors Society 2025 Wellness at Sea Cadet conferences preparing the next generation for work, Human Rights at Sea has produced a new lived-experience film. The need to

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Projects and Initiatives

# Our Reporting



05 Sep 2025

## 'Normalize human rights narrative' urges Manila Maritime SAR and HRAS Forum Participants

From C-suite boardrooms to ship control rooms: 'Normalize human rights narrative' urges Maritime SAR and HRAS forum participants OP-ED Yrhen Bernard Sabanal Balinis MNI MANILA, PHILIPPINES - In an effort to identify current opportunities in the field of maritime search and rescue and support the

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02 Sep 2025

## Endorsing the Manila Declaration for Seafarers Human Rights, Safety and Wellbeing

Human Rights at Sea has endorsed and committed to supporting the Manila Declaration on Seafarers' Human Rights, Safety and Well-Being. 2 September 2025. On the final day of the 2025 International

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30 Aug 2025

## Awareness of human rights at sea raised among maritime officials in Vanuatu

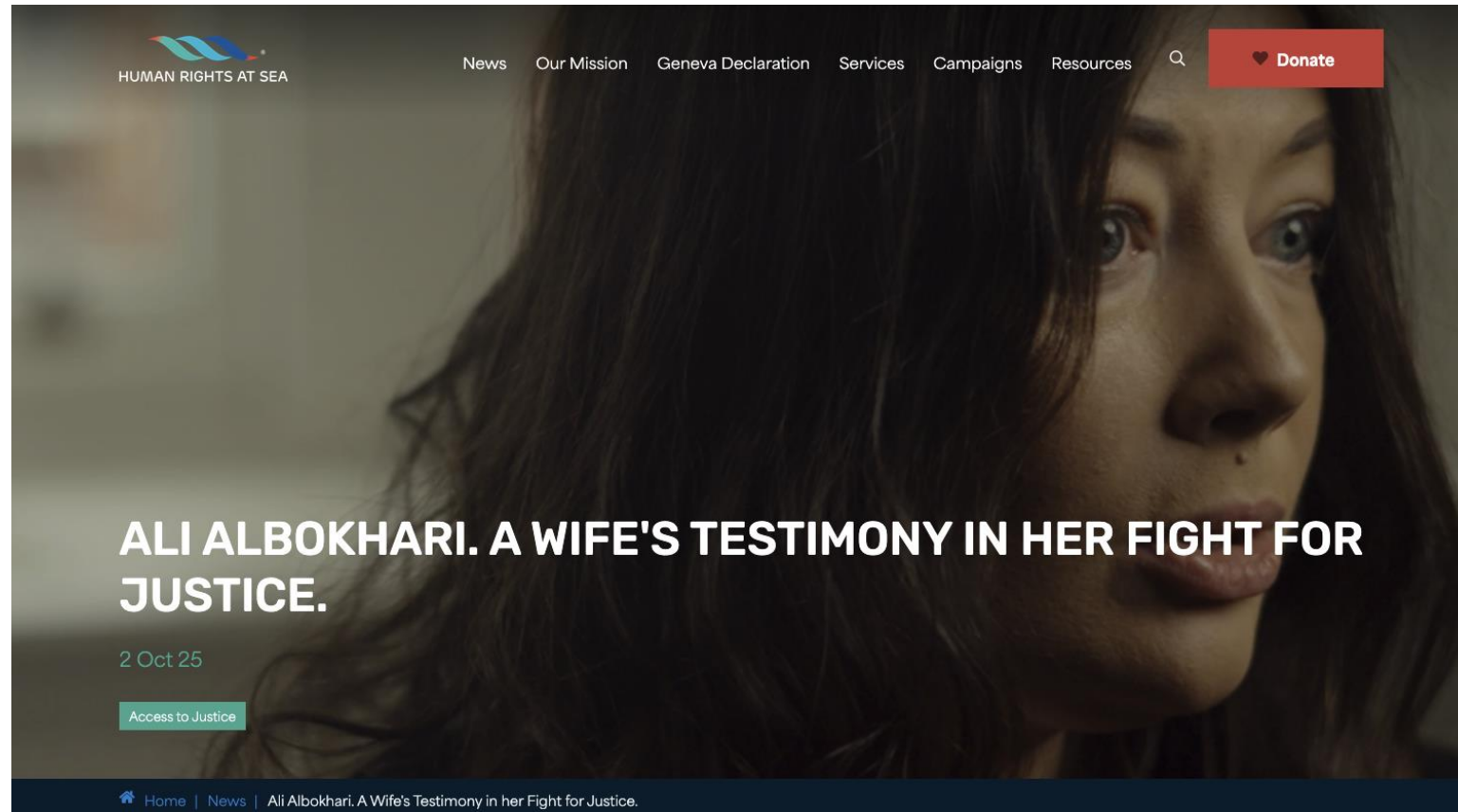
GUEST BLOG - Dr Marika McAdam On 25 - 29 August 2025, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Office on Southeast Asia and the Pacific (UNODC ROSEAP) facilitated a workshop on responding

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Slavery at Sea

# Criminalisation of Seafarers



<https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/news/ali-albokhari-wifes-testimony-her-fight-justice>

# Ali Albokhari Case



<https://youtu.be/ewzi5fBlnbU>

# QUESTIONS

## Resources

- NEWS: <https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/news>
- ARCHIVE: <https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/resources/resources>
- GDHRAS: <https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/GDHRAS>

## Contact

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