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**THE CHALLENGES OF REPORTING SEARCH AND RESCUE OF
MIGRANTS CROSSING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA BY NGOs SHIPS:**

MY EXPERIENCE ON BOARD OF AQUARIUS



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The aim of this lecture is explaining the dynamics behind rescues done by NGOs ships in the Mediterranean, a phenomenon that has deeply affected not only the migration fluxes from Africa but also European politics. The number of NGOs operating in the Mediterranean has radically diminished in the last months along with the Italian Government's decision in late June to close the ports to all NGOs. A choice that has been controversial and opposed by many humanitarian.

One of the arguments backed by Italian Government has been outlined by a 2017 FRONTEX report. According to that European border control agency, international laws on search and rescue operations is what smugglers rely on and NGO act as a pull factor and "all parties involved in SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean unintentionally help criminals achieve their objectives at minimum cost, strengthen their business model by increasing the chances of success".

Taking steps from my experience on board of Aquarius, where I've had the chance to witness what happens in the international waters few miles off Libya's coast and how closely rescue operations are to traffickers and facilitators activities, I discuss the political battles the NGO's ships presence has led to and if it's possible to study legal and sustainable ways for migrants to get to Europe without being used by smugglers.

Keywords:

NGO, search and rescue, Mediterranean sea, Libya, migrant crisis

About the author

Francesca Ronchin is a freelance journalist, contributing to RAI, LA7 and newspapers like 'Il Corriere della Sera', 'Il Fatto Quotidiano'