# Analysis of media articles on the Sea Watch Case: Facts and controversial issues



**ERUM Project Subreport**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- Analysis of media coverage of the rescue operations conducted by the NGO boat Sea Watch 3

- Period of analysis: 12-29 June 2019

- European and international interest

- Media and political manipulation

- AIM: debunking some of the misrepresentations surrounding the case

# 2. METHODOLOGY

- 30 online newspaper articles (20 Italian, 5 Austria, 5 international)

- Choice of reports rather than opinion papers/commentaries

- Focus on facts but not immune from misrepresentations or shortcomings

- Critical Discourse Analysis

# 3. FACTS & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 12/06: Sea Watch 3 announces rescue of 53 migrants off the Libyan coasts and contacts relative authorities

- Given lack of reply, SW3 heads towards closest POS (i.e. Lampedusa) waiting for further indications

- 16/09: GdF enters SW3 to notify captain about new "Security Decree"

- 26/06: Captain enters Italian territorial waters to take "migrants to safety"

- 28-29/06: Captain enters port of Lampedusa and is taken under arrest

- Jan 2020: Italian Supreme Court of Cassation concludes that the captain should have never been arrested
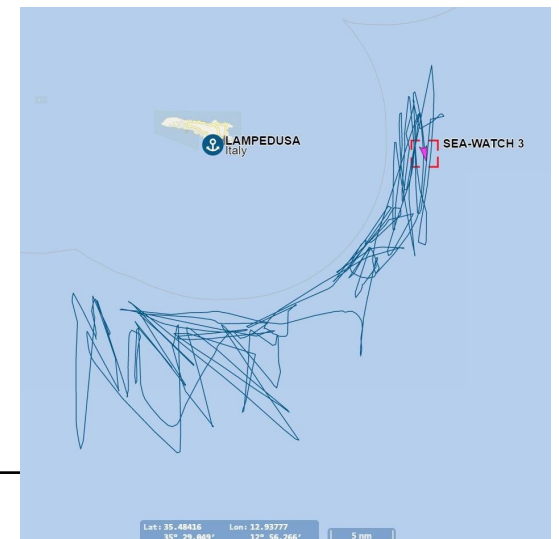
# 3. FACTS & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- Italian Constitution: "the Italian juridical system conforms to the norms of international law" (art. 10)

- UNCLOS, SOLAS, SAR Convention: Obligation to render assistance to any person in distress at sea

- 1951 Refugee Convention: Principle of non-refoulement (art. 33) → Libya & Tunisia are not safe POS

- Increasing securitisation of external EU borders and criminalisation of migration movements

- Increasing restriction of national laws on migration movements and SAR operations

# 4. ANALYSIS

- General neutral tone and stylistic choices, but…

- Lack of reference to the international legal framework – only some reference to new Italian laws

- Reporting institutional (controversial) declarations without comments or counterarguments (4)

- Exaggeration of main facts (5) or explicit mis-/disinformation (4)

- Use of strong figures of speech (13), sarcasm/denigration (4), paternalism towards the captain (5)

- No use of evidence-based research and little reference to experts

# 4. ANALYSIS

| Misrepresentation in analysed articles | # |
|---|---|
| Number of articles that have misrepresented the topic by disinforming (intentional misleading information) | 4 (13 %) |
| Number of articles that have misrepresented the topic by omission of information | 5 (16,5 %) |
| Number of articles that have provided a one-sided representation of the topic (which is as well the fact that they have not reflected the controversy and different issues at stake) | 4 (13 %) |
| Number of articles that misrepresented the topic by not providing a critical interpretation or comment of the information shared | 27 (90 %) |
| Number of articles whose images and visuals were not related to the content of the article | 3 (10 %) |
| Number of articles that misrepresented the topic by using titles that did not reflect the content of the article | 2 (6,5 %) |

# 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Development of media and learning strategies

- More comprehensive analysis of broader political framework

- Integration of more evidence-based research and data

- Adoption of interdisciplinary perspective

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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