

International Conference, Budva, Montenegro, 25-27 March 2026

# BlueRights International Conference on Protection of Health at Sea

## Book of Abstracts



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BlueRights International Conference on Protection of Health at Sea  
25-27 March 2026, Budva, Montenegro  
COST Action CA23103

# International Conference on Protection of Health at Sea

**Protecting People at Sea**  
Their Rights to Life, Liberty and Health.

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**  
**BLUERIGHTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON**  
**PROTECTION OF HEALTH AT SEA**  
**25-27 MARCH 2026**  
**BUDVA, MONTENEGRO**

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# BlueRights

## WELCOME NOTE

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to present the *Book of Abstracts* of the BlueRights Conference, a collection that brings together diverse scholarly perspectives aimed at raising awareness of some of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary maritime and coastal communities.

This conference is organized by the University of Montenegro, Faculty of Maritime Studies Kotor, with the financial support of the COST Action, whose contribution has enabled interdisciplinary dialogue and international collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders.

The present volume represents an important contribution to advancing awareness of key societal and maritime issues through three interconnected thematic areas that form the core agenda of the conference. By bringing together research across disciplines, this collection highlights the significance of collaborative approaches in addressing complex global and regional challenges.

The abstracts included in this volume open discussions on highly relevant topics such as occupational health, crisis management, wellbeing, and legal frameworks within maritime contexts. At the same time, the conference embraces broader multidisciplinary perspectives, addressing emerging and insufficiently regulated areas related to demographic and climate change, decarbonization processes, and sustainable maritime development. In addition, numerous case studies provide insights from both global and national contexts, reflecting shared challenges as well as region-specific experiences.

The BlueRights Conference has gathered participants from more than 20 countries, demonstrating the growing international recognition of maritime research as a field requiring coordinated scientific and institutional engagement.

The University of Montenegro is privileged to participate in the organization of a conference of this scope and importance. Despite its small population, Montenegro has a significant number of seafarers and a strong maritime tradition, and it is proud to contribute to international research initiatives such as the BlueRights Conference.

We hope that this Book of Abstracts will serve not only as a record of the conference discussions but also as a platform for future collaboration, research innovation, and continued advancement of knowledge in maritime and coastal studies.

On behalf of the Organizing Committee,



*Dr. Senka Šekularac - Ivošević*



*Dr. Anna Petrig*

# LIVING AND WORKING CONDITION



# ABANDONMENT OF THE SEAFARER UNDER THE MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION 2006: A CRISIS OF WELL-BEING, DIGNITY AND STATE RESPONSIBILITY

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This paper criticizes the scope of the financial security system which regulates under the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC 2006) This criticism is to be raised especially considering the non-material damage because of the human rights violations during the abandonment. To tackle the abandonment problem, a financial security system was introduced under the MLC 2006 with 2014 amendments (Nifontov,117). It mainly covers economic losses such as unpaid wages, the costs of repatriation and the basic maintenance and support that should have been provided by the shipowner. Within this regard, abandonment considers as a financial issue connected to the employment agreement. Nevertheless, in addition to economic losses, abandoned seafarers are often faced with long periods of time without proper food, medical care, or clear information about their situation and these lead to serious psychological stress and related problems which are to be recoverable under the human rights instruments such as European Convention on Human Rights article 41. During this period, basic rights, including the right to health, humane treatment, and human dignity, and in extreme situations even the right to life are to be endangered. The MLC 2006 does not offer any system for compensating non-material damages because of emotional suffering, loss of dignity, or long-term trauma. It is also debatable topic in maritime law whether seafarers could claim maritime liens for such non-material damages (Aksoy, 2019,127). During this period, responsibilities in relation to seafarers, are dispersed among flag states, port states, and labour-supplying states, which complicates the determination of accountability and transparency. Consequently, resolving of abandonment cases take more time than it supposed to be, and increase in the moral harm suffered by seafarers. Although MLC 2006 is an important step, it is not sufficient to fully address the authenticity of abandonment, as evidenced by the increasing number of abandonment cases since 2024 (McQue, 2025). A broader, human rights-based approach is to be needed to protect and compensate the seafarers. It could only be achieved with strengthened cooperation among States.

**Keywords** Abandonment, human rights at sea, non-material damage, maritime lien, MLC 2006

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# DEEP SEABED MINERS: A REGULATORY BLINDSPOT?

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The international Seabed Authority (ISA) is negotiating regulations for deep seabed mining (DSM) of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction (the Area). The focus has been on environmental impacts and economic benefits. The rights, safety, and wellbeing of the individuals who will live and work aboard DSM vessels has been almost entirely unexamined. DSM operations are planned for remote sites 1-2 weeks' sailing from the nearest port and will run 24/7 for decades. Personnel will be at-sea for extended periods, operating heavy machinery, in hazardous conditions, and with limited access to medical care, emergency response, or external oversight. The workers will include maritime crew, and also DSM operators, scientists, trainees, observers and inspectors. Risks well documented in other maritime sectors will surely apply, including social isolation, unsafe labour conditions, health emergencies, person on person violence, and vulnerability to coercion or abuse. The legal responsibilities for protecting individuals in these situations seem profoundly unclear. Human rights law, labour law, criminal jurisdiction, and maritime safety treaties all apply in principle, but none are integrated into the ISA's current or emerging regulatory framework. Although UNCLOS Article 146 imposes a specific obligation on the ISA to adopt "*necessary measures ... to ensure effective protection of human life*" in the Area, this mandate that has received almost no operational interpretation to date. One reason is the complex jurisdictional patchwork. Potentially responsible actors include: ISA contractors (carrying out the operations), the States sponsoring the contractor under Part X I of UNCLOS, their flag States, the ISA itself, and even neighbouring vessels that may be expected to conduct search and rescue. Another factor seems to be reluctance from some Member States at the ISA to import any language or principles of human rights in their negotiations at all. As the ISA finalises its DSM regulations, this presentation calls for urgent attention to the human dimension of DSM: without which no regime governing activities in the Area can claim to be complete, responsible, or legitimate.

**Keywords** Deep Seabed Mining, International Seabed Authority, Rights and Protection of Workers at Sea, Sponsoring State jurisdiction, Human Rights at Sea.

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# ENSURING SEAFARERS' LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS AT SEA: CAN PORT STATE CONTROL SUPPORT THE EUROPEAN UNION CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY DUE DILIGENCE DIRECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION?

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The adoption of Directive (EU) 2024/1760, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), requires a reassessment of how seafarers' living and working conditions are addressed within maritime supply chains. Although the CSDDD does not directly regulate shipping activities, it introduces corporate due diligence obligations on human rights that may affect maritime transport. Shipping companies are not categorically excluded from the Directive's scope and may fall within it when meeting the applicable thresholds or when acting as business partners within the chain of activities of covered EU undertakings, particularly where maritime transport forms part of upstream sourcing or logistics operations. International standards on seafarers' living and working conditions are primarily established under international maritime law, notably the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006). Although the MLC 2006 is not explicitly listed in the annex to the CSDDD, its provisions on occupational safety, health, and decent living conditions substantially overlap with the human rights objectives underlying corporate due diligence (McConnell et al., 2011; Smit et al., 2020). These standards are formally enforced under flag State jurisdiction, which remains the primary supervisory mechanism. While Port State Control (PSC) plays an important role in monitoring onboard conditions in practice, particularly as a complementary mechanism following Flag State Control, its relevance for the enforcement of CSDDD-related obligations is necessarily indirect and complementary. Given the mobility of shipping and the possibility that working and living conditions may deteriorate after Flag State Control, PSC may reveal operational realities not fully captured by documentation (Özçayır, 2015). Against this background, the paper examines the relationship between the CSDDD and existing maritime compliance mechanisms and argues that, despite the absence of a sector-specific enforcement regime for shipping under the CSDDD, PSC may serve as a practically relevant complementary mechanism for identifying and monitoring human rights risks concerning seafarers within global maritime supply chains and supporting the CSDDD implementation.

**Keywords** Seafarers' Living and Working Conditions, CSDDD, MLC 2006, Port State Control, Flag State Control.

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Smit, L., Bright, C., McCorquodale, R., et al. (2020). *Study on due diligence requirements through the supply chain*. European Commission.

# HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA IN THE ERA OF MARITIME DECARBONISATION: A JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK FOR SEAFARER HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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The shipping industry's green transition has reached a decisive stage in which decarbonisation objectives are increasingly realised through the lived conditions of seafarers. As the primary operational agents of low- and zero-carbon navigation, seafarers are central to climate governance. Yet maritime decarbonisation remains largely technocratic, prioritising fuel substitution, digital optimisation, and compliance metrics while marginalising the human dimension. This imbalance directly affects the right to health, labour rights, and the broader protection of human rights at sea. The transition is reshaping seafaring in two interrelated ways. First, work is shifting from mechanical and experience-based practice toward technologically mediated decision-making, driven by digital monitoring, automated efficiency management, and cyber-risk awareness. Second, shipboard operations are integrated with shore-based compliance systems, remote technical support, and performance oversight. While these changes may enhance environmental performance, they also redistribute risk, responsibility, and accountability across the ship–shore interface. Decarbonisation must therefore be assessed not only through emissions outcomes, but also through occupational safety, dignity at work, and substantive equality. Alternative fuel pathways intensify these concerns. The coexistence of multiple fuels increases operational complexity, requiring seafarers to manage distinct storage conditions, bunkering procedures, and emergency protocols under time pressure. Fuels such as ammonia, methanol, hydrogen, and LNG pose different toxicity, flammability, and explosion risks, exposing limitations in safety management and medical preparedness. Psychosocial burdens—stress, fatigue, and employment insecurity—are unevenly distributed, risking indirect discrimination, especially for seafarers from labour-supplying States. A coherent legal response requires a Just Transition framework that embeds fuel-specific training, operational safeguards, and restrained criminal liability grounded in intent and material harm.

**Keywords** Maritime decarbonisation; Human rights at sea; Seafarers' rights; Rights to health; Shipping industry.

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# INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TOWARDS MARITIME DIGITALIZATION AND DECARBONIZATION

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A rise of advanced technologies is believed as a “promise” for future shipping, characterized by digitalization and decarbonization. Some advocate that such transitions should be just, creating opportunities for women to participate in this traditionally male-dominated industry (UN Women, 2023). This study examines the current legal status of gender equality, digitalization and decarbonization in five selected countries from Southeast Asia: Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam, and highlights how their labour policies vary with different priorities. The Philippines present strong legal frameworks such as the Magna Carta of Women and gender-responsive budgeting. Viet Nam has integrated gender into its digital and labour policies while Sri Lanka’s climate and maritime strategies are opening new spaces for women’s leadership. Timor-Leste’s Gender Equality Policy emphasizes rural inclusion and women’s rights, and Indonesia’s national development plans increasingly recognize the importance of gender in economic and digital transformation. However, there is still insufficient institutionalization of gender within technological and environmental policy spaces in the maritime domain. The study proposes strategic leadership to actively include gender perspectives in policy development and implementation to support just transition in the maritime industry.

**Keywords** Gender equality policy; Maritime digitalization and decarbonization; Just transition; Southeast Asia; Maritime industry.

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*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the International Maritime Organization or the Republic of Korea.*

# INTERNATIONAL LAW ASPECTS OF IMPROVING LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS TO ENSURE HEALTH AT SEA IN THE CONTEXT OF COMBATING CORRUPTION IN THE MARITIME TRANSPORT SECTOR

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The preamble to the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Economic Transactions, adopted in Paris in 1997, states that the phenomenon of corruption is widespread in the above-mentioned operations. The concept of international economic transaction is not legally defined in the aforementioned normative act, but the common meaning of the term may refer to international services such as maritime transport. In this field, there are employees who provide services, including at sea. We believe that working and living conditions at sea and the health of the personnel are interdependent. Corruption can manifest itself in illegal demands made by port officials regarding the ship and its cargo, and this can affect seafarers in terms of safety, well-being, health, working and living conditions on board. All these activities that are part of maritime transport are carried out in accordance with the international and national legislation of the state under whose flag the ship sails. At the level of national administration and international organizations, there are public officials whose duties include ensuring compliance with legislation in maritime transport activities. Lack of vigilance due to corruption affects these activities and, consequently, those who carry them out, in terms of the living and working conditions and physical and mental health of seafarers.

**Keywords** Health; sea; corruption; living and working conditions; maritime transport.

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# IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NORMS INTO THE NATIONAL LAW OF UKRAINE ON THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE AT SEA

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A legal analysis of the regulations on the protection of human life at sea was carried out in the context of Ukraine's experience as a member state of the International Maritime Organization (hereinafter referred to as the IMO) regarding the implementation of international legal norms of the relevant convention into the domestic law of Ukraine in terms of: ensuring the improvement of the level of safety of human life at sea in accordance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea of 1974; proposals for Ukraine's approval of the Geneva Convention on Human Rights at Sea in 2022. The main direction of harmonizing Ukrainian legislation with international treaties is its harmonization with the legal systems of international organizations. It is through the harmonization of Ukrainian legislation with the legal framework of international organizations that Ukrainian legislation can be improved more effectively. An important role in shaping international standards for the safety of life at sea belongs to the IMO. These standards are currently embodied in the following key conventions: the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974; the International Conventions on Search and Rescue at Sea, 1979; the International Convention on Salvage, 1989, among others. Ukraine, which has been a member of the IMO since August 28, 1994, has ratified the above conventions. After gaining independence, Ukraine enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine a provision stating that current international treaties, the binding consent of which has been granted by the Supreme Rada of Ukraine, are part of the national legislation of Ukraine. Article 19 of the Act of Ukraine “On International Treaties of Ukraine” contains the following provision: “If an international treaty of Ukraine ... establishes rules other than those provided for in the relevant legislation of Ukraine, the rules of the international treaty shall apply.” It is emphasized that the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Sea is a soft law instrument with international authority and an important international legal standard that will influence the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

**Keywords** Protection of human rights at sea; implementation; international standards for the safety of life at sea; Ukrainian legislation; International Treaties of Ukraine.

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# NAVIGATING MEDICAL AUTONOMY AT SEA: ADDRESSING THE LEGAL GAP IN REPRESENTATIVE CONSENT FOR SEAFARERS

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Medical autonomy constitutes a fundamental personality right, making informed consent a prerequisite for the legal validity of any medical intervention. In cases where the capacity to consent is lost due to severe mental health conditions or physical incapacities, the mechanism of “representative consent” arises. In essence, a strictly personal and non-transferable right is exercised through representatives on behalf of those lacking the capacity to act, specifically those unable to provide valid consent to medical intervention. For individuals lacking the capacity to consent, decisions regarding their treatment must, within the principle of respect for patient autonomy, be non-maleficent, beneficial, and just<sup>2</sup>, while fundamentally adhering to the best interest standard. The issue of the legal limits of representative consent in medical law, which is a contentious area even on land, drifts into a legal vacuum when combined with the unique dynamics of maritime law, such as complex jurisdiction, isolation, and distance from shore. While existing international instruments (particularly the MLC, 2006) contain provisions for health protection, they remain silent on who is authorized to consent for an incapacitated Seafarer, under which legal regime, and within what limits. This situation poses severe risks by potentially leading to the violation of the Seafarer’s medical autonomy or delays in emergency intervention, especially in acute psychiatric episodes, while simultaneously jeopardizing the safety of navigation. This study evaluates the issue of representative consent, an intersectional area of international maritime law and medical law, covering the Seafarer’s right to personal decision-making, the duties of the Shipowner, and the designation of a representative. It assesses the conflict between the jurisdiction of the Flag State, the laws of the Seafarer’s country of nationality, and the authority of the Shipmaster (challenging the archaic “Ahabian” notion of absolute command) in emergencies, guided by the best interest standard. To resolve the conflict between Flag State jurisdiction and the Seafarer’s national law, the study proposes the contractual recognition of pre-designated representatives within the Seafarer’s Employment Agreement. Accordingly, it introduces the “Blue Consent Protocol”, designed as a supplementary “Best Practice Guide” compatible with MLC Regulation 4.1, that structures processes for remote representative consent and advance healthcare directives. Crucially, the study also defines the limits of this approach by establishing a “Safety Override Mechanism”, affirming the Shipmaster’s statutory authority under SOLAS to intervene, based on the state of necessity, strictly when the safety of navigation is jeopardized.

**Keywords** Seafarers’ Rights, Medical Autonomy, Representative Consent, Mental Health at Sea, MLC 2006.

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<sup>1</sup>The views and opinions expressed in this abstract are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the author’s employing institution

<sup>2</sup>Beauchamp, T.L. & Childress, J.F. (2019). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, (8th ed). Oxford University Press.

# MONTENEGRIN SEAFARERS IN CHALLENGING INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS AFTER TWO DECADES OF THE MLC, 2006

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Twenty years after the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, formal compliance with its standards does not always guarantee real protection of seafarers' wellbeing, including their rights, especially when crew operate beyond national borders. This paper examines persistent gaps between policy and practice affecting Montenegrin seafarers, based on selected real cases handled by national authorities, thereby contributing to the broader discussion on translating maritime labour law into effective implementation. Through individual incidents, the study highlights how deprivation of basic seafarers' and human rights, prolonged uncertainty, and inadequate support can seriously undermine working and living conditions on board. Analysing administrative records, official communications, and insights from affected seafarers, it argues for stronger enforcement and support mechanisms that go beyond written compliance. Recommendations include clearer and confidential reporting channels, and rapid international cooperation, contributing to broader efforts to protect rights, liberty and health at sea, and to strengthen coherence in the global maritime regulatory framework.

**Keywords** MLC; 2006; wellbeing; seafarers; compliance; seafarers' rights.

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# PROPOSAL FOR A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF ENFORCING SEAFARER RIGHTS THROUGH ARBITRATION

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International shipping carries over 80% of the world's trade (UNCTAD, 2025). It is estimated that there are approximately 1.9 million global seafarers and, according to the available data, the largest seafarer-supplying countries are Philippines (13.3%), the Russian Federation (10.5%), Indonesia (7.6%), China (7.1%), India (6%), and Ukraine (4%) (UNCTAD, 2025, p. 144). The interaction of international law, European law and national laws is evident in shipping, a multi-jurisdictional international activity. Seafarers' rights are directly or indirectly regulated by multiple sources of law, including international law and more importantly, the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC) and national laws. The MLC has been adopted by 111 Member States representing over 96% of the world's gross shipping tonnage and sets out the right of the world's seafarers to decent conditions of work in almost every aspect of their working and living conditions (ILO, 2006).

Despite the advancements in recognizing the rights of seafarers, the primary mechanisms for enforcement of the rights established by MLC and subsequent amendments are inspections and certifications. Enforcement by seafarers themselves by direct action against shipowners and their agents remains severely restricted by the absence of an effective remedy. A flag of convenience or open registry is a flag of a country other than the country of ownership, which is typically attractive to shipowners, because it can save them money. The extensive use of flags of convenience issued by national ship registries, primarily Liberia (Liberian International Ship & Corporate Registry—LISCR), the Marshall Islands (International Registries, Inc —IRI), and Panama (Panama Flag State), may also create additional hurdles to the effective enforcement of seafarers' rights. This paper first addresses the right to health at sea by examining the legal regime governing seafarers' living and working conditions. It first explores the international legal regime and national legal regimes in four key countries that are major players in the global maritime economy—Greece, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and the United States—as well as the European Union in a comparative perspective. In this way, the paper aims to identify the legal gaps in terms of regulation and enforcement. The paper aims to develop an international arbitration mechanism for the fair and effective enforcement of seafarers' rights. Such arbitration mechanism for seafarers' rights must provide: (i) a neutral forum; (ii) a set of rules with a specific focus on the nature of seafarer claims; (iii) a procedure that is efficient and financially accessible to seafarers; (iv) specialized arbitrators; and v) binding and enforceable arbitral awards (Human Rights at Sea, Shearman & Sterling, p. 2). An important concern pertains to the form and funding of an arbitration mechanism dedicated to seafarer claims. Many questions remain unanswered and merit further consideration and research. Should it be a centralized arbitration mechanism (like ICSID) or ad hoc arbitration? How can such a system be accessible and affordable? How can a group of specialist arbitrators and counsel be identified or trained? Which jurisdiction would be suitable and willing to develop relevant expertise and host such a mechanism for seafarer claims? This proposal considers the steps required for adoption of such an arbitral regime and the hurdles it will face.

**Keywords** Seafarers' rights; enforcement; fair; effective; arbitration.

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# RETHINKING IUU FISHING ENFORCEMENT UNDER ARTICLE 73 UNCLOS: HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

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Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is widely recognised as a global challenge that undermines marine biodiversity, sustainable fisheries management and food security. In response, States increasingly rely on enforcement powers under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), particularly Article 73, to regulate fishing activities within their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). While the application of Article 73 has been extensively discussed in the context of fisheries governance and State jurisdiction, its implications for the right to health of fishers at sea remain underexplored. In the South China Sea, IUU fishing enforcement takes place in a context characterised by intense fishing pressure, overlapping maritime claims and heightened geopolitical sensitivities. Within this environment, coastal States have adopted robust enforcement practices, including confiscation vessel, arrest of crews, detention pending judicial proceedings and the imposition of severe penalties. This paper examines how such enforcement measures, when carried out under Article 73 UNCLOS and their national laws, may directly affect the physical and mental health of fishers. These include risks arising from the use of force, prolonged detention on vessels or in onshore facilities, limited or delayed access to medical assistance. Through doctrinal legal analysis, the paper explores how Article 73 should be interpreted and applied consistently with international human rights norms, emphasizing that the provision does not operate in isolation from States' broader obligations to protect the health and human dignity of persons at sea. By highlighting normative tensions and gaps between fisheries enforcement objectives and the protection of health and human dignity at sea, the paper contributes to broader debates on safeguarding the fundamental rights of people working in one of the world's most contested maritime regions.

**Keywords** IUU Fishing; Article 73 UNCLOS; Human Rights at Sea; Health at Sea; South China Sea.

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# SYSTEMIC INTEGRATION AT SEA: MARITIME CONVENTIONS AND STATES' POSITIVE OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

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States have positive obligations to protect individuals against human rights violations, and the content and scope of these obligations vary depending on the circumstances of each case.<sup>1</sup> Maritime conventions adopted under the auspices of the ILO and the IMO contain detailed technical regulations governing living and working conditions on board, as well as safety and security. Accordingly, international human rights bodies can rely on maritime conventions to concretise States' positive obligations concerning living and working conditions.<sup>2</sup> As these instruments are specifically tailored to the maritime domain, their use as interpretative references, in light of the principle of systemic integration<sup>3</sup>, may provide a coherent framework. However, caution is required in this respect. First, extensive reliance by human rights bodies on external references may undermine their institutional legitimacy.<sup>4</sup> Second, it may have adverse long-term consequences for the protection of human rights at sea, as States may become reluctant to assume obligations under maritime conventions in order to avoid potential responsibility before human rights bodies.<sup>5</sup> In this context, this study argues that systemic integration may constitute an interpretative tool for assessing States' positive obligations regarding living and working conditions. It also identifies the limits of this approach, emphasising the requirement that it be applied in conformity with the structuring principles and rules of international human rights law.<sup>6</sup>

**Keywords** The principle of systemic integration; maritime conventions; positive obligations; international human rights law; international human rights bodies.

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# THE RESPECT FOR DECEASED MARITIME WORKERS BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL RIGHTS: ON SOME RECENT AMENDMENTS OF THE MLC, 2006

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The aim of the contribution/presentation is to explore a specific aspect of the right to decent living and working conditions onboard, i.e. the rights connected to the death of maritime workers. These rights have been the object of some amendments to the MLC 2006, adopted in 2022, in the framework of Regulation 4.1 (medical care on board and ashore) and Regulation 4.3 (health and safety protection and accident prevention). More precisely, the amendments set out the duty, in case of death during voyage, to facilitate the repatriation of the body or ashes, in accordance with the wishes of the seafarer or their next of kin. The Convention has been further modified in order to introduce the obligation to ensure adequate investigation of all deaths of seafarers, together with reporting and publication of all relevant data in a global ILO register.

By these provisions, Member States showed their intention to permanently embed in the Convention and aspect that, besides having been already dealt with by the ECHR in the context of maritime work (Papanicolopulu, 2018), is receiving growing attention in human rights theory and practice (Cattaneo, 2022). Notably, the obligation for States to deal with deceased individuals and their relatives in a human and dignified way has been the object of Council of Europe Resolution 2596(2024), focusing on the situation of missing migrants and asylum seekers and underlining the relevance of investigation, identification and information sharing, considered as part and parcel of the right to life. At the same time, the Resolution stressed the importance of decent burial, possibly respecting the religious and spiritual beliefs of the deceased. Along the same line are some provisions of the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, adding to the previously mentioned rights the obligation for States to repatriate the remains.

If, therefore, the purpose of the 2022 amendments is to apply these concerns to seafarers as part of their right to medical care and to a healthy working environment, the peculiarities of maritime work might make the implementation of these rights more burdensome than is usually the case on land. Notably, investigation and identification duties are incumbent on the flag State through a due diligence obligation, while repatriation is the object of a direct obligation and follows a “zonal” logic, distinguishing between the State in whose “territory” the death occurred and the State towards which the ship next enters. The implementation of this latter provision is likely to face difficulties linked to the sovereignty of the port State and to the potential adoption of measures aimed at hindering entrance – including orders justified on public health grounds. From this perspective, the protection of the rights of deceased seafarers therefore needs to cope with the legal obstacles connected to repatriation and disembarkation and, on a more general plane, to the complex relationship between the different level of obligations – and related actors – which form the texture of the MLC.

**Keywords** Human rights; right to life; social rights; Maritime Labour Convention.

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# THE LAW AND ECONOMICS OF SEAFARERS' HUMAN RIGHTS: HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTECTION IN THE ERA OF SHIPPING DECARBONISATION

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This paper examines seafarers' human rights in the context of shipping decarbonization, with a particular focus on occupational health issues arising from the uptake of alternative fuels. It first outlines recent developments at the International Maritime Organization (IMO); see IMO docs LEG 112/13/2 and LEG 112/13/5 (IMO, 2025). Alternative fuels such as ammonia and methanol introduce new hazards into seafarers' daily work, including toxicity, corrosivity, increased procedural complexity and heightened cognitive and psychological stress linked to handling unfamiliar and hazardous substances. The paper analyzes these developments through the lens of seafarers' human rights as protected under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), with particular emphasis on Article IV, Reg. 4.3 on health and safety protection, and Reg. 2.8 on career and skill development and training. Recent discussions within the Joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group on seafarers' issues and the human element are also examined (ILO, 2025). Finally, the paper presents a law-and-economics framework tailored to occupational health (Faure, 2007; Politakis, 2023), focusing on the prevention of chronic exposure, stress and fatigue rather than accident avoidance. The paper concludes that effective maritime decarbonization requires a rights-based and economically coherent approach that internalizes occupational health risks and prevents the degradation of seafarers' living and working conditions.

**Keywords** Just transition; shipping decarbonization; alternative fuels; seafarer's working conditions.

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# THE RIGHT TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD AND SAFE DRINKING WATER: A CORNERSTONE OF SEAFARERS' HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT SEA

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Seafarers, who play a critical role in the global economy, are exposed to multiple risks on board, where access to adequate food and safe drinking water directly shapes their physical health, mental well-being, safety, efficiency, and resilience. These provisions are not luxuries but fundamental human rights, articulated in the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), Regulation 3.2, which requires ships to provide food and drinking water of appropriate quality, quantity, nutritional value, and variety, free of charge, culturally appropriate, and sufficient to meet the diverse needs of crew. Ensuring these standards underpins the right to health at sea, which is closely linked to the rights to life and liberty, as poor nutrition can lead to fatigue, nutritional deficiencies, weakened immunity, and broader welfare concerns. Despite this comprehensive regulatory framework, implementation gaps persist. Limited catering budgets, supply chain constraints, particularly on long voyages, and restricted access to drinking water that meets required quality and quantity standards all undermine seafarers' right to adequate food and water (Oldenburg et al. 2013). Crew members often have little influence over menu planning, which can result in food that does not reflect cultural preferences or nutritional needs, further affecting their health and morale (Neumann et al., 2024). These challenges are compounded by demanding shipboard living and working conditions, as well as geopolitical tensions, climate change, and rapid technological change, all of which intensify pressures on maritime operations and welfare systems (IMO, 2019). A rights-based and inclusive approach is therefore essential to strengthen seafarer welfare and resilience. This includes more effective implementation of MLC 2006 through rigorous monitoring, clear policy guidance, and enhanced cooperation among flag states, shipowners, seafarers' representatives, and international bodies. Holistic strategies that link nutrition with mental health care, crisis preparedness, and non-discrimination can transform food and water provision from a minimal compliance issue into a proactive human rights safeguard on board (WHO, 2022). This paper positions nutritious food and safe drinking water as central to the broader agenda of protecting workers at sea. It advocates urgent, coordinated action by all maritime stakeholders to normalize nutritious diets and reliable drinking water as standard practice on all ships.

**Keywords** Seafarers' health; Nutritious food; Safe drinking water; MLC 2006, Maritime welfare.

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# USE OF AT-SEA ASSESSMENTS TO IMPROVE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS ON BOARD

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In light of reported incidents in the seafood industry in recent years, and some serious shortcomings in crew living and working conditions at sea, a number of voluntary international standards and company-led frameworks have emerged to guide improvements in working practices and crew welfare. Thai Union formalised its commitment in 2015 through its Business Ethics and Labour Code of Conduct<sup>1</sup> and expanded this in 2017 with the Vessel Code of Conduct and Improvement Program (VCoC)<sup>2</sup> under the Fisher Work and Welfare Programme<sup>3</sup>. The VCoC outlines 12 Fundamental Principles, tailored to the operational and social conditions at sea, providing guidance on labour practices, safety and working conditions. This includes "Workers' health and safety are protected at work"<sup>2</sup>.

Audits against such standards are routinely undertaken in port, but opportunities for monitoring at sea are limited. Vessels that meet audit criteria in port may not maintain compliance once at sea. At-sea assessments offer a means to evaluate compliance under actual working conditions; however, logistical constraints, safety considerations and cost have historically limited their feasibility. In 2022 and 2024, Thai Union undertook pilot at-sea assessments, using independently trained and contracted auditors, familiar with at sea conditions, to better understand the realities of conditions once at sea. These assessments are undertaken by one individual deployed on a carrier vessel, which routinely undertakes transshipments with multiple fishing vessels over the period of one month, before returning to port. This gives the assessor access to these fishing vessels, which commonly remain at sea for extended periods, during transshipments. They conduct vessel tours, paperwork inspections, and crew interviews to collect the information needed. Here we explore the lessons learned, including key challenges, such as language issues, risks to fisher welfare and safety following any interactions, and potential benefits and future applications of these lessons for a broader scope, including at sea observer programmes.

**Keywords** Work and Living Conditions; Fishers; at-sea assessment; Thai Union; Fisher Work and Welfare Programme.

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# WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH



# A HEALTHY ORGANISATION MODEL: CONCEPTUALISATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SEAFARERS' WELLBEING

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Seafaring takes place in one of the most demanding work environments, characterised by prolonged separation from home, multicultural crews, high safety responsibility, irregular work–rest cycles, limited privacy, and constrained access to timely psychosocial support. These conditions intensify exposure to occupational stressors and may contribute to adverse mental health outcomes (e.g., anxiety symptoms, depressed mood, burnout) and physical health complaints (e.g., sleep disruption, chronic fatigue).

This paper presents a conceptual model proposed as a core foundation for a doctoral dissertation, advancing a healthy organisation perspective in the maritime industry. The model explains seafarers' wellbeing through a structured pathway whereby onboard stressors increase perceived stress, which subsequently influences health-related outcomes. Crucially, these links are not fixed: their strength depends on organisational conditions. Timely and adequate company and onboard leadership responses can buffer the translation of stressors into heightened stress, while trust in institutional support mechanisms and psychologically safe environments can weaken the extent to which stress results in harmful health consequences. Within this framework, health-promoting HRM policies and practices strengthen prevention, early intervention, and sustained support across the ship–shore interface. The expected contribution of this work is twofold. Theoretically, it integrates occupational stress perspectives with organisational moderators in a maritime context, offering a structured explanation of how organisational factors shape stress-related health outcomes at sea. Practically, it provides a roadmap for shipping companies and policymakers to operationalise the right to health at sea through concrete measures such as supportive leadership behaviours, fatigue risk management, accessible reporting and referral pathways, and stigma-sensitive mental health support. Ultimately, the model aims to inform evidence-informed HRM strategies that prevent avoidable stress, strengthen crew resilience, and improve maritime safety.

**Keywords** Healthy organization; mental health; occupational stress; organisational support.

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# DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF CARE AND SUPPORT: THE ROLE OF SEAFARERS' WIVES IN SHAPING WELLBEING IN MONTENEGRO

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Seafarers' health and wellbeing have become increasingly important topics in contemporary research, particularly in the context of prolonged periods spent on board, intensive work demands, and separation from family life. Recent studies have highlighted the significant psychological and social challenges faced by seafarers' partners, including the burdens of a "dual life" and the impact of partners' absence on their mental health (Slišković & Juranko, 2019a; 2019b). Building on these findings, the present study focuses on the role of seafarers' wives in Montenegro in supporting seafarers' mental and emotional wellbeing during voyages. The study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in discourse analysis. Through the narratives of Montenegrin seafarers' wives, the research explores how care and support are discursively constructed, as well as the discursive strategies through which women express and place their role in coping with the everyday challenges of seafaring life. The study also examines societal narratives and mental matrices in which women are sometimes framed as "white widows" living a comfortable life during their husbands' absence, reflecting traces of local gendered stereotypes. The findings show that emotional support, regular communication, and family closeness are discursively framed as crucial resources for seafarers' subjective experiences of health and psychological stability. This study contributes to a broader understanding of wellbeing in the maritime context from a family and discourse-oriented perspective, emphasizing the need for seafarers' health policies to move beyond exclusively individual or work-related factors and to incorporate family, social, and gendered aspects, particularly in patriarchal societies such as Montenegro.

**Keywords** Seafarers; Wellbeing; Mental health; Discourse analysis; Gender roles.

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# EFFECTIVENESS OF MLC 2006 AND LEGAL OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTATION ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SEAFARERS IN MEDITERRANEAN WATERS

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The mental health of seafarers is important. It constitutes a key element in the overall living and working conditions on board, although it is often underestimated in legal and institutional practice. In the Mediterranean region, as a result of the existence of strategic ports, problems arise from search and rescue operations, from migratory movements which directly or indirectly affect the mental health of seafarers. These situations, exacerbated by external factors, increase the risks to their psychological well-being. The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006) aims to guarantee minimum standards for the health and well-being of seafarers, but the treatment of mental health remains fragmented and often unclear in practice. This paper analyses how the legal protection for the mental health of seafarers in the Mediterranean works. The study is conducted on what the MLC 2006 guarantees and defines and regional monitoring, highlighting the role of the Mediterranean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control. The legal obligations of flag states and port states, the responsibilities of shipowners in ensuring decent living and working conditions on board will be compared to understand the importance of mental health. In the paper, the legal comparison will analyze the MLC 2006, ILO, IMO, and the policies of the EU. The article concludes with the idea that, despite the existence of a consolidated normative framework, the effective protection of the mental health of seafarers in the Mediterranean requires interpretation of legislative provisions, strengthening of enforcement measures and a more complete integration of psychological well-being as an integral part of the concept of "decent work" in international maritime law, focusing on inviolable mental health.

**Keywords** Mental health; seafarers; (MLC 2006); Mediterranean Region; Port State Control.

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# FROM INTERNATIONAL NORMS TO DOMESTIC REMEDIES: DISCRIMINATION, JURISDICTIONAL GAPS AND THE PROTECTION OF SEAFARER'S RIGHTS

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This paper examines diversity and inclusion as essential components of the protection of seafarers' health, dignity and safety at sea, situating equality and non-discrimination within a rights-based approach to living and working conditions in the maritime sector. Despite increasing regulatory attention to violence, harassment and unsafe working environments, significant legal and jurisdictional gaps continue to undermine seafarers' physical and mental well-being (Piñeiro and Kitada, 2020; Kitada, 2021). The paper analyses the international framework governing working conditions at sea, focusing on the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) (ILO, 2019) and the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 (MLC, 2006). While Convention No. 190 establishes a universal right to a workplace free from violence and harassment and recent amendments to the MLC strengthen crew welfare protections, the absence of an explicit diversity and inclusion framework limits their effectiveness in treating discrimination and harassment as occupational health and safety issues. The paper also considers recent amendments to the IMO International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers as amended (STCW, 1978), introducing mandatory training on preventing bullying, harassment and sexual assault. The international limitations are directly linked to shortcomings at domestic level. Focusing on the United Kingdom, the paper examines the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Work on Ships and Hovercraft) Regulations 2011. Through analysis of *Walker v Wallem Shipmanagement Ltd* and *Brian Phipps* (2020), it demonstrates how territorial limitations restrict access to effective remedies for seafarers recruited ashore for service on foreign-flagged vessels. We argue that strengthening inclusive maritime governance is essential to improving living and working conditions and protecting health at sea.

**Keywords** Diversity at sea; inclusion at sea; jurisdictional limits; harassment; violence

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# MARITIME MASCULINITY AS A REGULATORY REGIME: IMPLICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT SEA

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This paper introduces and defines maritime masculinity as a distinctive configuration of hegemonic masculinity that regulates identity, sexuality, and leadership within the global maritime sector. While scholarship on oceans and shipping is expanding, the gendered organisation of power at sea, and its consequences for psychological safety and well-being, remains underexplored. Drawing on Connell's (1995) theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' and Chitty's (2020) account of 'sexual hegemony', this study conceptualises *maritime masculinity* as a hybrid regime of power, both disciplinary and biopolitical, that shapes who can belong, lead, and thrive at sea. Based on qualitative research with 40 maritime professionals across ranks, sectors, and sexual identities, the findings show that maritime masculinity operates through three interrelated mechanisms. First, it constructs a normative archetype, the self-reliant, emotionally restrained, hetero-masculine leader, against which all workers are measured. Second, it regulates sexuality by naturalising heterosexual virility while framing queer desire as risky, disruptive, or incompatible with shipboard discipline (Ewald and Castel, 1991; Chitty, 2020). Third, it institutionalises endurance as a professional virtue, equating competence with the suppression of vulnerability and the capacity to withstand prolonged isolation, fatigue, and surveillance. Together, these processes produce *compliant subjects* while marginalising those who cannot, or refuse to, conform. Participants' testimonies reveal how identity management becomes a condition of employability. Sexual discretion, emotional restraint, and overperformance function as survival strategies, particularly for LGBTQ+ workers whose visibility may invite ridicule, gossip, or stalled career progression. The reduction of shore leave, technological intensification, and hierarchical command structures further restrict opportunities for intimacy and self-expression, reinforcing a culture in which sexuality is either hyper-heterosexualised or silenced. Even where formal grievance mechanisms exist (International Labour Organization, 2006), the stigma attached to complaint, coded as weakness or professional inadequacy, discourages reporting and undermines psychological safety. By situating these findings within broader maritime governance structures and capital-driven labour regimes (Campling and Colás, 2018; 2021), the paper argues that well-being at sea cannot be addressed solely through resilience training or individual coping strategies. Mental health outcomes are inseparable from the gendered and sexualised norms embedded in leadership models, training institutions, maritime history and traditions, and regulatory frameworks. Protecting health at sea requires structural reform that confronts the entrenched authority of maritime masculinity and redefines professional competence beyond endurance and silence. By demonstrating that psychological well-being is inseparable from the gendered organisation of maritime labour, the paper advances debates on work, health, and inequality, arguing that meaningful change depends on transforming the institutional norms that shape life and labour at sea.

**Keywords** Maritime Masculinity; Sexual Hegemony; Labour Regimes; Seafarer Rights; Maritime Governance.

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# NUTRITION ON BOARD FERRY VESSELS: LEGAL STANDARDS AND THE WELLBEING OF CREW AND PASSENGERS

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Ferries transport passengers across water on journeys ranging from minutes to days. On longer voyages, food and nutrition become a concern. The right to adequate food (UDHR, 1948, Art. 25(1); ICESCR, 1966, Art. 11(1)) is a fundamental human right, essential for health and wellbeing. In maritime contexts, these concerns are heightened given the limited access to alternative sources and personal storage (Baum-Talmor & Şahin, 2024). Yet food quality on ferry routes remains underexamined. While international standards require the provision of "food and drinking water of appropriate quality, nutritional value and quantity that [...] takes into account the differing cultural and religious backgrounds" (MLC, 2006, Reg. 3.2(1)), they offer limited guidance on what constitutes nutritional quality and diversity. Although 2024 amendments strengthened this obligation by requiring free provision of food and water and reinforcing the Master's responsibility to regularly inspect catering arrangements (ILO, 2022), significant ambiguities remain. Through comparative analysis of selected States where ferries serve as essential infrastructure, this study examines obligations, enforcement mechanisms, and practical challenges in ensuring adequate nutrition at sea.

**Keywords** Nutrition at sea; human rights; ferry transportation.

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# PRESENCE OF INTERFACE STRESS IN SEAFARERS DURING EMBARKATION AND DISEMBARKATION

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Psychological stress in seafarers is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that includes a range of specific stressors related to isolation, shift work, physical exhaustion, and limited social support. However, one very important and practically often emphasized aspect, the stress associated with the waiting period for embarkation and disembarkation, has not yet been the subject of focused scientific research. Although occasionally mentioned within broader studies of maritime stress, this phenomenon largely remains marginalized and underdeveloped in the field, lacking adequate measurement instruments that would allow for its objective assessment. During the period between assignments, while awaiting a call and flight tickets for embarkation, and the time leading up to the actual boarding, seafarers exist in a state of constant readiness, emotional tension, and uncertainty. The inability to plan daily life, family obligations, or rest because the call can come at any moment -creates a high level of discomfort and psychological pressure. In the disembarkation phase, although the general schedule and destination port are known in advance, crew replacements often run late, resulting in situations where seafarers who are ready to return home remain on board for several additional days or weeks. Such conditions, which we term interface stress or transitional wait stress in seafarers, represent a specific phenomenon that merits dedicated scientific attention.

**Keywords** Embarkation and disembarkation of seafarers; seafarers' mental health; transitional wait stress.

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# PROTECTING HEALTH AT SEA THROUGH POLICY COHERENCE - BRIDGING MARITIME LABOUR, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS

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Protecting health at sea is shaped by a complex but fragmented set of international and European frameworks spanning maritime labour regulation, occupational safety and health, public health policy, and human rights protection. Instruments such as the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006), EU occupational safety and health policies, and international human rights standards establish core principles for living and working conditions, access to medical care, and the protection of life, dignity, and health at sea. However, these frameworks have largely evolved in parallel, rather than forming a coherent and integrated governance approach. This presentation focuses on living and working conditions and mental health at sea as a policy coherence challenge. Maritime labour frameworks primarily address employment standards and minimum conditions, while occupational safety and health policies increasingly recognise psychosocial risks and mental health concerns. Yet both remain only partially adapted to the specific realities of maritime life, characterised by isolation, long deployments, fatigue, and limited access to support services. Public health systems, meanwhile, remain territorially organised, offering limited operational solutions for mobile maritime workers whose health needs frequently arise across jurisdictions. Human rights frameworks provide a strong normative foundation by articulating the right to health and related protections, but they offer limited guidance on how maritime, labour, and health authorities should coordinate in practice. The presentation argues that the core problem is not the absence of regulation, but a lack of policy coherence across existing frameworks. Governance remains fragmented, continuity of care is weak across borders, and mental health support is insufficiently operationalised. These gaps become particularly visible during situations of crisis and instability, such as pandemics or geopolitical tensions, when responsibilities between flag states, port states, employers, and health systems are unclear. Strengthening alignment and coordination across maritime labour, occupational health, public health, and human rights frameworks is essential to improving protection, resilience, and equity for people living and working at sea, in line with the objectives of the BlueRights Action.

**Keywords** Health at sea; policy coherence; living and working conditions; mental health; human rights.

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# STRUGGLE AND SOLIDARITY AT SEA: MIGRANT LABOUR AND PRECARIETY IN THE FISHERIES OF SESIMBRA, PORTUGAL

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Portugal, as a coastal country, has a long-standing historical relationship with the sea. The historical and cultural significance of its coastal communities is closely linked to the development of major ports and cities, such as Sesimbra. In recent decades, climate change has intensified a set of interconnected global crises (economic, political, ecological, and crises of social reproduction) that have profoundly reshaped fisheries. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with fishers in Sesimbra, this research examines how contemporary fishing conditions have been transformed through processes of commodification of nature and labour. Currently, one of the key survival strategies adopted by local fishing operators in the face of marginalization and devaluation is the incorporation of migrant labour. Migrant fishers from Asia and Africa have become essential for the continued operation of certain vessels, similarly to other European contexts (Marschke & Vandergeest, 2023), yet they experience heightened levels of precarity, marginalization, and vulnerability, mirroring historical and colonial dynamics (Robinson, 1983). Despite these conditions, important practices of solidarity emerge onboard and ashore, shaping everyday living and working relations and sustaining fishing livelihoods (Sá Couto, 2025). This presentation focuses on selected life histories of migrant fishers, their living and working conditions, and their struggles, in order to draw attention to structural inequalities within contemporary fisheries. By situating migrant fishers' experiences within broader dynamics of racial capitalism (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Leong, 2013; Marschke & Vandergeest, 2023), labour precarity, and environmental vulnerability, this research contributes new empirical insights to international debates on labour relations at sea, blue justice, and human rights in ocean-based economies.

**Keywords** Migrant labour; fisheries; struggles; solidarity.

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# THE RIGHT TO HEALTH AT SEA AS A PROBLEM OF LEGAL FRAGMENTATION

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Despite growing attention to the oceans as spaces of economic activity, environmental concern and strategic competition, the health of people at sea remains unevenly protected. International law contains numerous provisions relevant to maritime health, but these are dispersed across distinct regimes with different logics and priorities. This paper argues that the persistent under-protection of health at sea is not simply the result of regulatory gaps or weak implementation. Rather, it reflects a deeper structural problem rooted in the fragmented architecture of international maritime law.

Health at sea is addressed, often indirectly, by the law of the sea, maritime labour law, international safety regulation and international human rights law. Yet none of these regimes, taken alone, provides a coherent framework for safeguarding the physical and mental health of those who live and work at sea. Their interaction frequently produces overlap, uncertainty and regulatory silence, with health risks treated as incidental to maritime activity rather than as matters engaging core human rights obligations. The paper demonstrates how legal fragmentation operates as a form of structural harm in the maritime context. It argues that technical adjustments within existing regimes are unlikely to address these challenges in a sustained way. Instead, greater attention must be paid to how health at sea is conceptualised within international law and to the need for more integrated, rights-based approaches capable of bridging existing legal divides. In doing so, the paper contributes to broader debates on the application of human rights at sea by considering the right to health through the broader lens of the fragmented legal architecture at sea.

**Keywords** Health at sea; human rights; legal fragmentation; maritime labour; law of the sea.

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# TOWARDS HEALTHY SHIPPING ORGANISATIONS: CONCEPTUAL GUIDANCE FOR BUILDING WELL-BEING FROM WITHIN

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Research in maritime psychology and occupational health consistently shows that seafaring is a highly demanding and stressful profession with negative consequences at both individual and organisational levels. However, this evidence offers limited guidance on how shipping organisations can proactively support sustainable well-being. Building on the concept of the healthy organisation (Slišković et al., 2025), this paper adopts a resource-oriented perspective, viewing organisational health as a dynamic system that actively promotes employee well-being, engagement, and organisational resilience. It further draws on a pilot study by Slišković and Katsounis (2025) examining seafarers' and managers' perspectives on healthy shipping companies, revealing shared recognition of organisational support alongside meaningful differences in how responsibility for organisational health is understood and enacted. By integrating prior stress-focused research with contemporary organisational health theory and stakeholder perspectives, this paper advances the discussion by proposing that healthy shipping organisations must be built "from within". It argues that sustainable well-being cannot be achieved through isolated interventions, but requires the active and coordinated engagement of all stakeholders; management, seafarers, and, in particular, organisational policies and practices. The paper concludes by offering conceptual guidance for developing shipping organisations that simultaneously support seafarers' well-being and long-term organisational sustainability.

**Keywords** Occupational stress; healthy organisations; maritime psychology; shipping companies.

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# WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF SEAFARERS ON MERCHANT SHIPS: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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The working and living conditions of seafarers on merchant ships are an important factor that affects the safety of navigation, the efficiency of ship operations, and the physical and mental health of the crew. Although international regulations such as the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC, 2006) have set minimum standards regarding accommodation, working hours and protection of seafarers' rights (ILO, 2006), numerous studies indicate the existence of permanent challenges related to fatigue, sleep quality, psychosocial stress, isolation and workload (Jepsen et al., 2015; Hystad and Eid, 2016). Considering the growth of scientific production in this area, there is a need for a systematic literature review and identification of key research trends. The aim of this paper is to carry out a bibliometric analysis of scientific papers on working and living conditions on merchant ships. The analysis was performed using the Scopus database, where bibliographic records were collected based on a predefined set of keywords within the title, abstract and keywords fields. Descriptive bibliometric methods were applied to analyse publication trends, citations and distribution of works according to authors, institutions and countries. Additionally, analyses of collaboration networks and keyword co-occurrences were conducted to identify dominant thematic clusters and their evolution over time. The results of the bibliometric analysis provide an insight into the development of research in this area, identify the most influential scientific sources and indicate key thematic directions, among which fatigue and work organisation, psychosocial risks and mental health, quality of accommodation and working environment, and crew well-being stand out.

**Keywords** Seafarers; merchant ships; working conditions; living conditions; fatigue; mental health; bibliometric analysis.

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A photograph showing two rescue workers in bright orange protective suits and helmets. They are focused on a patient lying on a stretcher. The worker on the left is kneeling and looking down at the patient, while the worker on the right is partially visible, also attending to the patient. The scene is set in a confined, industrial-like space with concrete walls and a gravel floor. The text 'HEALTH IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

# HEALTH IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT

# CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR CRISIS AND CONFLICTS: IMPLICATIONS ON HUMAN HEALTH

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Modern maritime operations increasingly face geopolitical conflicts that threaten both vessel safety and seafarer health. To mitigate these risks, companies must implement robust contingency plans guided by IMO Resolution A.1072 (28). A successful strategy rests on three pillars: self-sufficiency, connectivity, and legal integrity. In conflict zones, port infrastructure is often the first to fail. Vessels must maintain long-term self-sufficiency by stockpiling food, medicine, and hygiene products. Water security is paramount; integrating portable water maker ensures a continuous supply of potable water, even if primary systems are compromised or the vessel is detained. Isolation is a major psychological and operational threat. Utilizing portable satellite technology, such as Starlink Mini, provides the bandwidth necessary for real-time intelligence and crew morale. Furthermore, integrating 24/7 telemedical services like MedSea (International SOS) allows officers to manage shipboard medical emergencies effectively when shoreside evacuations are impossible. Navigational safety requires dynamic passage planning that avoids ITF-designated risk areas. Clear procedures must be in place to move vessels to safety using intelligence-led routing. Central to this is the protection of seafarer rights. Crew members must be briefed on risks and hold the fundamental right to refuse to sail into conflict zones. Those exercising this right are entitled to immediate repatriation at the company's expense. Conversely, those who sail must receive enhanced entitlements, including hazard pay and increased insurance benefits.

**Keywords** Contingency; crisis; health; procedures; rights.

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ITF WARLIKE AND HIGH RISK AREAS <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/resources/ibf-warlike-and-high-risk-areas>

# EFFECTIVENESS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION IN THE MARITIME SECTOR

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In today's business environment, characterized by rapid technological changes, globalized markets and growing uncertainty, crises are an unavoidable part of how maritime organizations operate. Drawing on Timothy Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), this study examines the effectiveness of crisis management in the maritime sector. SCCT posits that crisis responsibility guides response strategies across different crisis clusters (Coombs, 2007). Vlachos et al. (2022) highlight the importance of team cohesion and a sense of belonging especially in isolated and demanding environments. Providing social and emotional support helps employees manage stress, feel secure and remain engaged, suggesting that crisis management can positively influence job satisfaction. The research aims to determine the relationship between perceived crisis management effectiveness and job satisfaction among Montenegrin seafarers working for various shipping companies. A descriptive research design was applied, using a survey as the main data collection instrument. Results suggest a positive relationship between perceived crisis management effectiveness and employee satisfaction. These findings underscore that effective crisis management is crucial for enhancing the work environment and overall employee satisfaction in the maritime sector. This study also identifies areas for improvement in human resource practices, communication and transparency, offering practical implications for organizational development.

**Keywords** Crisis management; employee satisfaction; maritime sector; work environment.

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# ENSURING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN TUNA FISHERIES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PACIFIC – PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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The Fishing Industry Association of Papua New Guinea (FIA PNG) was founded in 1991, with the sole aim of lobbying the government on fisheries rights. Since 2018, FIA PNG has been collaborating with Seafoodmatter, a consultancy firm based in the Netherlands, which has vast experience in fisheries matters and developed a Crew Welfare & Social Responsibility audit tool in 2014. Since 2020, this Social Accountability tool (due diligence) has been collecting, monitoring, and auditing Crew working and living conditions from FIA PNG tuna purse seine members, and reporting publicly on an annual basis. Despite increasing pressure to protect the rights of the fishing crew, the ratification of the International Work in Fishing Convention remains low. In light of increasing market demand for social accountability and in the absence of formal governance, fishing companies are looking towards private sector social due diligence and/or accountability certification. However, doubts have been raised regarding the effectiveness of private due diligence and /or certification processes for ensuring the welfare of the fishing crew. This paper aims to strengthen academic consideration of social accountability certifications as a tool for improving fishing crew welfare. We have assessed the third-party audit reports of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Fishing Industry Association (FIA) tuna sector against the ILOC188, and the Fairness, Integrity, Safety, and Health (FISH) standard for Crew. The paper shares the improvement in crew working and living conditions from 2021 to 2023. The results showed that non-conformities can be grouped into five themes, with the majority reflecting either a lack of relevant policies and procedures or the lack of communication between the employer and crew. Although this paper is based on a case study, essential insights can be drawn for other fishing companies that seek to strengthen their protections for crew welfare. Overall, initial due diligence and later third- party certifications can make an important contribution to strengthening fishing crew welfare; however, they cannot replace strong governance. Ultimately, broad ratification and implementation of the international convention remain key to protecting the human rights of fishing crews.

**Keywords** Crew Welfare; ILOC 188; Labour Rights; Social Accountability Traceability; Auditing; Certification.

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# HEALTH IN CRISIS AND ARMED CONFLICT

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This paper aims to reveal seafarers' mental health and emotional state before, during and after armed threat, conflict and potential captivity. The paper outputs focus on a competent Master, who psychologically unravels only after the danger is over. Armed conflicts and piracy attacks (including drones) constitute exceptional and extremely high-risk situations in maritime operations, particularly in geopolitical conflict affected regions. These events represent acute and prolonged threats to physical and mental health for every seafarer, particularly to Master. In affected regions, before armed threat and conflict, Master will act with suppression of fear to maintain authority, and he will proceed with dominant emotions such as controlled vigilance and low-level anxiety. During initial armed conflict, Master's emotions are subordinated to function, and his actions becomes purely operational. During potential captivity (either onboard or at shore), Master's moral is heavily injured. This represents the most psychologically damaging phase and this stage plants the seed of post incident trauma. The paper also focuses on emotional collapse after the rescue and delayed trauma response. Masters suffer stronger effects due to responsibility load. The paper implies and contributes to key lessons for Maritime industry at armed conflict zones. Ship Masters are high risk individuals where emotional suppression increases PTSD risk and where leadership multiplies psychological burden. Survival is not the end of the incident — it is the beginning of psychological accounting. The absence of physical injury does not equal absence of harm. The right to health, as recognized under international human rights law and maritime labour standards, includes access to timely medical care, protection from harm and conditions necessary for physical and mental wellbeing.

**Keywords** Master; armed conflict; risk; health; crisis.

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# INTRODUCING THE MARESANITAS DOCTRINE: A NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH, DIGNITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT SEA

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This paper introduces the *MareSanitas Doctrine*, a legal framework linking health, human dignity, and accountability in maritime governance. The term derives from Latin: *mare* means “sea” and *sanitas* means “health.” It reflects the idea that the sea is not only a space for navigation and commerce but also a domain where legal duties and moral responsibility converge to protect life and dignity. The doctrine is presented as a conceptual and discussion model rather than a binding legal instrument. *MareSanitas* is built upon three interrelated pillars. The first, *Jus Sanitatis Maritima*, affirms the right to health at sea as part of the right to life. The second, *Transboundary Duty of Care*, extends protection to all persons under a state's effective control, including seafarers, migrants, and offshore workers. The third, *Accountability for Maritime Neglect*, identifies serious omissions as possible violations of international obligations. Together, these pillars establish a continuum of prevention, protection, and enforcement grounded in human rights law and the law of the sea, reinforcing the state's obligations toward individuals under its effective control. The doctrine does not create new law but builds on existing obligations under Article 98 of UNCLOS, Article 12 of the ICESCR, and Articles 2–3 of the ECHR. It integrates these with the principles of negligence and omission, forming a hybrid approach to maritime accountability. Failure to provide medical care or rescue at sea may therefore amount to a breach of existing duties rather than a mere humanitarian lapse.

To operationalize this model, three non-binding mechanisms are proposed:

1. Maritime Health Impact Assessments: periodic reviews of health and safety conditions on vessels and offshore platforms;
2. Maritime Health and Welfare Corridors: safe routes ensuring humanitarian access and medical evacuation during crises;
3. Maritime Health Tribunal: a quasi-judicial body under IMO-WHO-ICC coordination to review grave cases of neglect and, where appropriate, refer them to the International Criminal Court under Article 7 of the Rome Statute.

*MareSanitas* seeks to bridge maritime law and global health governance. It draws lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and migration crises, highlighting the need for stronger legal accountability at sea. Ultimately, it advances a rights-based vision of ocean governance and offers a roadmap toward a Framework Convention on Health and Human Dignity at Sea, encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue.

**Keywords** MareSanitas Doctrine; Right to Health at Sea; Maritime Accountability; International Law; Human dignity.

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# NAVIGATING LEGAL WATERS: HEALTH RIGHTS OF SEAFARERS DURING MARITIME CRISES AND CONFLICTS

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The health rights of seafarers during maritime crises and conflicts pose significant challenges as they navigate legal and ethical waters (Senu, 2020). Seafarers, often caught in the crossfire of geopolitical tensions and humanitarian crises, face heightened health risks, including inadequate medical care (see Global Seafarer Federation, 2023), exposure to violent environments, and psychological distress (Aleksandrov et al., 2015). This paper examines the legal frameworks governing seafarers' health rights, including international maritime law (UNCLOS) (see UNCLOS, 1982), human rights treaties (see Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 2021), and national regulations. We analyze case studies that illustrate the precarious situations seafarers face in conflict zones and the implications for their health and well-being (Galani, 2025). Furthermore, the study advocates more vigorous enforcement of health rights and greater accountability for shipping companies, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems to safeguard seafarers' health in crises (see International Maritime Organization, 2022). By highlighting the intersection of maritime law and health rights, this research contributes to a broader understanding of states' and corporations' responsibilities to ensure seafarers' welfare amid ongoing conflicts (Tran, 2021).

**Keywords** Seafarers; health rights; maritime crises; legal frameworks; humanitarian challenges.

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# NOLI ME TANGERE. COVID 19 AND TOUCH DURING MEDICAL CRISES

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“Noli me tangere”, Jesus Christ says to his mother Mary: don't touch me, since he still needed to leave earth and if she would hold him here, he could not go to heaven (John, 20: 13-18). During Covid-19, it seems we had the same motive and of all the inhuman measures then taken, the absence of human touch was probably the worst. During Covid-19, people actually died without the possibility of human touch. But there are also other reasons to object the exclusion of touch in medical encounters, e.g. from a professional (health) perspective. Before the Covid-19 pandemic changed the healthcare context, touching patients belonged to the unquestioned daily activities for many healthcare providers. The standard professional tasks and responsibilities of doctors involve clinical examinations. Next to that, patients were embraced, touched, and supported by their beloved ones or family members. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy described touching as a core dimension of human beings as relational beings. In *Corpus*, Nancy calls the exposure of surfaces to one another *expeausition*—playing on the term “exposition”: “peau”, in French, means skin (Nancy 1992, 31–4). Skin is literally exposed to contact with another skin or surface. Such exposure and such contact is world, in the same way that a product exchange between two people is. The world, Nancy concludes, stands for an “*attouchement de toutes choses*”, a touching of all with all (Nancy 2001, 184), thereby referring to the importance of touch in human existence. In my presentation, I elaborate on the idea of *expeausition* and the absence of touch during medical crises. I will argue that research has shown how “touch” initiated by caregivers can generate trust, a sense of safety and comfort. In certain instances, “touch becomes an indicator for the quality and the perception of certain forms of care”. Hunter and Struve advocate that touch has the propensity to establish, maintain and deepen healthcare relationships (Edwards, 1998; Van Dongen and Elema, 2001; Hunter and Struve, 1998) . I will go through their arguments and conclude with lessons learned from Covid-19 regarding the importance of touch in human encounters. Shan et al. (2024) notice how Covid-19 has put seafarers in precarious conditions and how the implementation of public health measures, including travel restrictions and quarantine requirements, created additional obstacles to take care of seafarers (mental) well-being. The lockdowns and travel restrictions during the pandemic further compromised international seafarers' rights to crew change, shore leaves and medical care. Without any hope for human touch, they were even more vulnerable than others.

**Keywords** Touch; crisis; health.

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# PROTECTION OF HEALTH IN ARMED CONFLICTS AT SEA: CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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The armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, which is also taking place in the Black Sea, and the proxy war in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden are some examples that have highlighted how the maritime domain has been largely ignored when it comes to protecting people, who may be affected by armed conflicts at sea or by armed conflicts with maritime consequences. These war situations can negatively affect different categories of people, namely: seafarers and fishermen may be trapped on ships at sea or in foreign ports, living in subhuman conditions, or may be in danger as a result of the presence of sea mines, attacks and forced boarding for inspections; civilians trying to preserve their lives in a context of armed conflict may become victims of acts of maritime piracy, drowning, dehydration and starvation; and combatants or those wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea may be adversely affected by the difficulty of accessing medical care, food and rescue measures at sea, which may be hindered or severely affected in a war scenario. In all these circumstances, the health of these categories of people will be affected.

In light of the above, this proposed paper aims to address various legal aspects related to the health of people in the context of armed conflicts at sea. Firstly, the traditional legal framework created after the Second World War will be presented, consisting mainly of the II Geneva Convention (1949) and its Additional Protocol I (1977), and the San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts at Sea (1994). Secondly, the protection of human health in armed conflicts will be analysed from the perspective of its link with the environment as the living space, the quality of life, and the very health of human beings (ICJ, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 1994). Therefore, the work of the International Law Commission will be analysed, as well as the response of the World Health Organisation to the challenges that human health has faced in recent years and its relationship with armed conflicts at sea.

**Keywords** Health; Armed conflicts at sea; International law; International Law Commission; World Health Organization.

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# REFRAMING THE PROTECTION OF HEALTH AT SEA IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS: LESSONS FROM GLOBAL CLIMATE LITIGATION

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This research places the protection of health at sea in the context of climate crisis, which falls within one of the Conference themes “Health in Crisis and Conflict”. Courts and human rights bodies increasingly recognise that climate change generates foreseeable and serious risks to human health. For instance, the ICJ’s Climate Opinion emphasizes that “climate change. . .threatens the ability of individuals to enjoy the right to health”. Yet much of the existing jurisprudence does not distinguish between land-based and maritime contexts, leaving the specific implications for the protection of health at sea relatively underexplored. Climate change intensifies the risks faced by people at sea through stronger storms, rising sea temperatures, and more volatile ocean conditions, thereby directly affecting physical and mental health at sea. This paper seeks to conceptualise people at sea as an emerging climate-vulnerable group whose right to health is disproportionately threatened by climate change. Climate change does not affect all populations equally. People at sea remain an easily overlooked group whose right to health warrants more robust protection in current climate law. However, recent practice provides valuable guidance. For example, although the Human Rights Council’s Resolution 29/15 does not directly mention people at sea, it explicitly refers to “people whose situation is most vulnerable to climate change”. Similarly, the *IACtHR* has recognised the disproportionate vulnerability of certain individuals and groups to the impacts of climate change. This paper further draws on recent climate jurisprudence that directly engages with the scope of the right to health. In *KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland*, the ECtHR confirmed that insufficient climate action may engage Convention rights where climate impacts seriously affect health and living conditions. Notably, in *IACtHR Opinion OC-32/25*, the Court declared States specific duties to protect the right to health in the context of climate emergency, highlighting that “States must allocate the maximum available resources to protect persons and groups who . . .are exposed to the most severe impacts of climate change”. Such decisions contribute to clarifying the material scope of States’ obligations regarding the protection of health at sea in climate crisis. Taken together, current jurisprudence sheds light on the reframing of “protection of health at sea” in the climate crisis, and the scope of such protection. Recognizing the specific vulnerabilities of people at sea is therefore essential for the coherent development of climate and human rights law.

**Keywords** Right to health; people at sea; climate litigation.

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# THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE RIGHT TO BE RESCUED AT SEA AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW: AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF VULNERABILITY IN MARITIME CONFLICT AND CRISIS SETTINGS

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This paper examines the fragmented legal recognition of the right to be rescued at sea and its intersection with the right to health, with particular attention to the impact of conflict and crisis on vulnerable individuals. While the law of the sea imposes obligations on states and authorities to provide assistance, it does not expressly confer an individual right to be rescued. Conceptually, the right to be rescued may be linked to the right to life, as both aim to safeguard life as a fundamental social value (Trevisanut, 2014; Papachristodoulou, 2022). The absence of autonomous recognition renders its substantive content indeterminate; however, when analysed through a human rights framework sensitive to intersectional vulnerability, the right to health may be perceived as enshrined within the normative scope of rescue obligations (McAdam, 2024). The paper further argues that situations of conflict and crisis necessitate examining this nexus through the lens of vulnerability (Campàs Velasco, 2022), which manifests along three interrelated dimensions: the maritime context of rights holders; the effects of crisis on the protection of human rights; and the intersection of multiple vulnerability grounds, including gender, race or ethnicity, age, and disability. Considered dynamically, these factors generate a specific form of vulnerability that highlights the interdependence of the right to health and the right to be rescued, supporting the articulation of a *sui generis* intersectional legal perspective.

**Keywords** Conflict and crisis; the right to be rescued at sea; the right to health; vulnerability; intersectionality.

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# THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF MARINERS

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Despite the legal protections afforded by the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, ensuring the right to health of seafarers remains particularly difficult in situations of armed conflict. Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, mariners operating in the Black Sea region and beyond have been exposed to heightened security risks, operational disruptions, and prolonged uncertainty, adversely affecting both their physical safety and mental well-being. This abstract assesses the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on mariners' health through a secondary analysis of existing empirical research, drawing on mixed-methods studies based on qualitative interviews with seafarers and maritime stakeholders and quantitative survey data collected from seafarers operating in conflict-affected areas. The analysed studies consistently report elevated levels of stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and fatigue among mariners, particularly linked to exposure to conflict-related risks, restricted communication with families, and limited access to welfare and medical services. These findings reveal a persistent gap between normative legal protections and the lived realities of mariners in conflict zones, underscoring the need for conflict-sensitive, health-focused approaches to seafarer protection and for the strengthened realization of human rights at sea.

**Keywords** Conflict; mariners; right to health; mental health; maritime labour law.

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