



HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA

# Annual Report

2022/23



Human rights apply  
at sea, as they do  
on land.

## About Human Rights at Sea


Human Rights at Sea is a dedicated nonprofit organisation with a profound mission: to end human rights abuses at sea. We were established in 2014 to address the often-overlooked issue of human rights abuses at sea; we work tirelessly to ensure that everyone who works, lives and travels the world's oceans is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

Human Rights at Sea's vision is simple. We want to end human rights abuses at sea. Though the journey ahead may be challenging, we believe the sea should not be a lawless place, and those who commit human rights violations must be held accountable. With your support, we will work every day to make this vision a reality.

Through a programmatic approach, our charity has implemented five impactful programs, each with a well-defined mission, clear targets, and strategic work packages.

This year, we proudly launched two new initiatives, Equality at Sea and Slavery at Sea, which further complement our existing programmes.

In our quest to make a difference, we strive to deliver on our mission and raise awareness of human rights abuses at sea, inspiring change and sharing knowledge with the public, the maritime environment and beyond.



“It is right that  
people at sea  
should benefit  
from the protection  
of human rights  
law just as much  
as those on land.”

Baroness Anelay of St Johns.

Photo Credit: Shutterstock

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# Our Mission

**We exist to prevent, detect, and remedy human rights abuses at sea. We raise public awareness of abuses at sea, and support people at sea to understand their rights.**

# Our Vision

**Our vision is simple. We want an end to human rights abuses at sea.**



# Our Values

## Transparency



We are open and honest.

## Clarity



We are clear and unambiguous.

## Accountability



Victims are at the heart of everything we do.

# Guiding with clear vision Igniting achievement

The past year has seen Human Rights at Sea continue to deliver a significant impact with limited resources.

This year saw us obtain UN Consultative Status. This status recognises our expertise and impact and allows us to participate in UN proceedings. It is a significant achievement, and on behalf of the Trustees, I want to thank our staff team for their hard work and dedication.

I am truly enthused by the work that the NGO does. From the investigative work to the international advocacy we do at UN level, our staff team deliver high-impact, high-quality work.

I also want to acknowledge and thank our Advisory Board. This group of highly committed, inspirational thought leaders support our work in a variety of ways. The value they add to our organisation is significant.

There remains much to do. We are, unfortunately, a long way from making our vision of 'human rights apply at sea as they do on land' a reality. But along with a growing network of supportive partners, we are making progress. I especially look forward to our innovative Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea becoming an adopted resolution at the Human Rights Council. This will be a transformative change in the field of international human rights.

Finally, I want to thank our supporters, partners, and donors, all of whom make our work possible.



**Matthew Vickers**

Chair of Trustees

# Leading with Vision, Inspiring Success

On behalf of the Senior Leadership Team, I am delighted to provide a brief insight into what has been an exciting, impactful, demanding, and sometimes frustrating year of continuous work driving forward our vision to end human rights abuse at sea.

This 9th annual report is but a refined snapshot reflecting significant and often herculean selfless efforts by many people, both internal and external to our organisation, who intimately support our daily efforts to better influence, innovate and ultimately achieve justice for abuse victims and their dependents. Our impact speaks for itself.

Frustratingly, we have seen many funding sources dry up. As a result, we have had to innovate to both thrive and survive. While the funding issue is a constant challenge to deal with for any NGO, I would counter that without such adversity, we would not have the keen edge or unity of staff effort that we must foster to succeed where others fail.

I remain humbled by the dedication of my own Senior Leadership Team, who often go above and beyond without being asked to, and which results in consistently high outputs constantly proving not just the ongoing urgent need for Human Rights at Sea but also assuring our reputation for high-quality work and trusted influence.

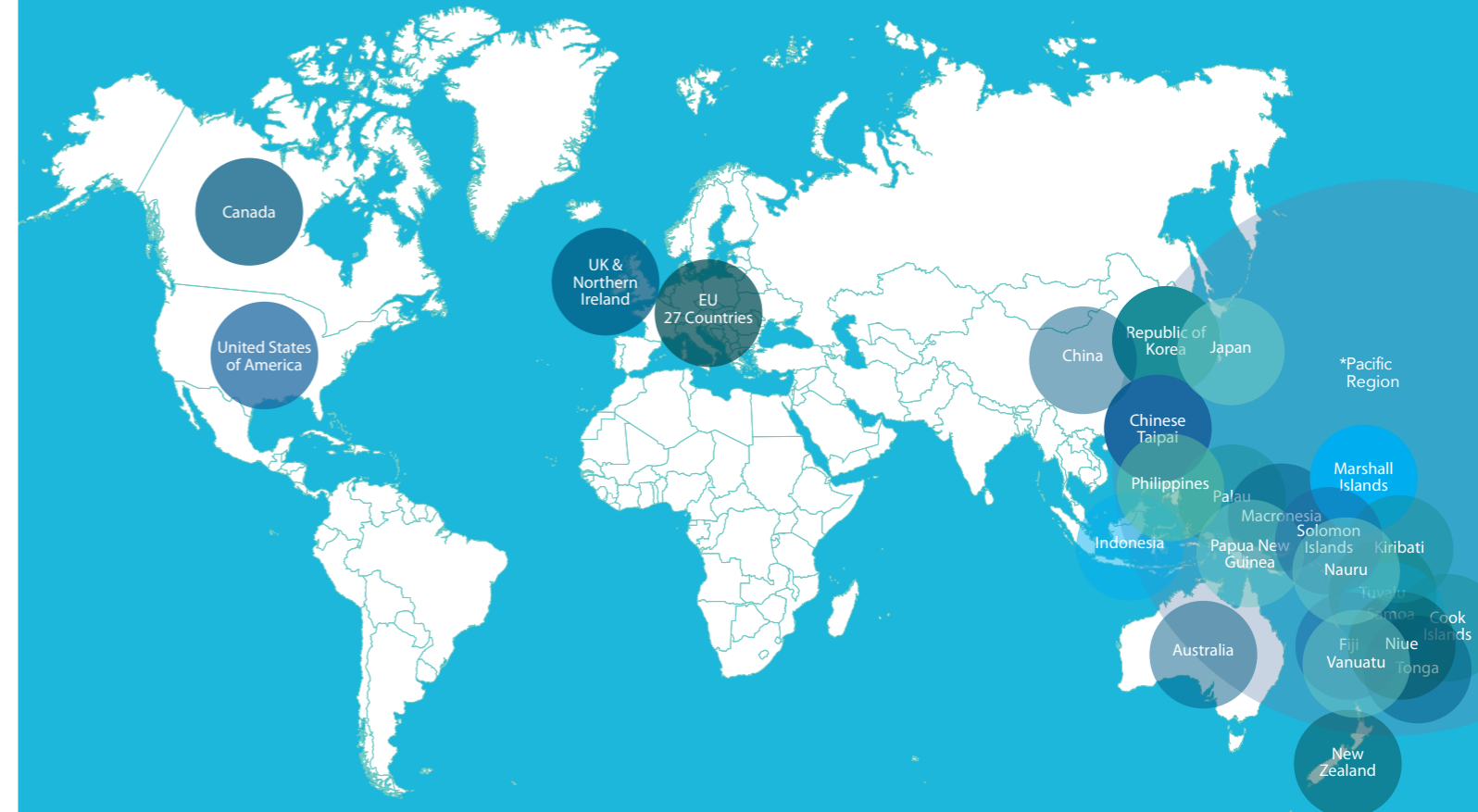
I would like to sincerely thank our Patron, Lord Teverson, for his constant support and belief in our cause. Our Trustees, both past and present, for backing us. Our trusted consultants, supporters, friends and families, and those kind people generously give their time, expertise and energy without thought of reward. And to our funders, a huge debt of thanks for trusting us to deliver against a tough assignment.



**David Hammond Esq.**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Impact

We have impacted several states



\*Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Members (26 Member States)

Since 2014 we have:



During 2022/23 we have published:





## Empowering Youth Voices for a Safer Future at Sea

Yrhen Bernard Sabanal Balinis, a member of the Human Rights at Sea Advisory Board writes:

*"To be seen and heard is something that is yearned by many if not all.*

*For the youth in the maritime industry, this need for recognition is especially important.*

*They often find themselves vulnerable to unscrupulous dealings due to their novice status in the industry and the desire for validation from their peers.*

*In the face of catastrophic events at sea, having someone to turn to becomes imperative.*

*Ideally, we should all be able to reach out to our comrades and families ashore; practicality often gets in the way, and conflicts can emerge.*

*This is where organisations like Human Rights at Sea play a crucial role.*

*Human Rights at Sea, as its name implies, is committed to upholding the rights of all individuals at sea, not just seafarers and its mission is especially vital for the youth in the maritime industry.*

*We are the future of this sector, and our well-being and rights must be protected.*

*Together, in collaboration with Human Rights at Sea, we can navigate toward a future where abuses that occur out of sight and out of mind become a thing of the past.*

*HRAS serves as a vital ally for those entering the maritime field, ensuring that our rights are respected, and their well-being is safeguarded. This partnership paves the way for a safer and more equitable maritime industry."*



# Raising Awareness For people at sea

Elevating the voices of people at sea is a vital step in creating a more just, equitable, and humane maritime environment. Raising awareness is a catalyst for change, driving the development of impactful programmes, policies, and initiatives prioritising the well-being and rights of those living, working and moving on our world's oceans and seas.

## Educating the Future



This year, we successfully delivered the first European and International Human Rights at Sea course at The University of Milano-Bicocca, a momentous achievement for our charity.

This comprehensive course encompasses twelve key topics, including human rights enforcement, protection of human rights in the fisheries sector, slavery, torture, and inhumane treatment of people at sea and reflects a commitment to equipping future lawyers with the knowledge and expertise needed to champion human rights protection at sea.

Being able to deliver this course for the first time represents a beacon of hope in the quest for justice and human rights protections in maritime settings. It lays a strong foundation for future legal professionals to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those who work at sea and ensures that the principles of dignity and fairness are upheld in every corner of the maritime industry. This initiative exemplified our commitment to a brighter and more humane future at sea.

## Spreading the Word



In 2022-23, we proudly participated in podcasts such as "The Future of Safety at Sea", "Oxford University" and "NATO Operational Maritime Law". This has continued to be a powerful tool for advancing our mission of addressing human rights abuses at sea. It has allowed us to connect with new listeners, inspire awareness, and foster positive change.

Podcasts continue to be a valuable medium for advocacy and education, and our engagement exemplifies the impact that effective communication can have in driving positive change.

## Death at Sea

In 2021, after a year-long investigation into the suspicious death of Eritara Aati Kaierua, a Kiribati fisheries observer, Human Rights at Sea published an independent review exploring the case in detail to drive forward the case and help achieve justice for Eritara's family.



Our report gained wide media attention, and in 2022, filmmaker Sara Pipernos approached our charity to collaborate on bringing the case to life.

The collaborative efforts between Human Rights at Sea and filmmakers to create "Death at Sea" represent a significant milestone in advocating for justice and raising awareness about the critical issue of fisheries observer safety, as well as honouring the memory of Eritara and others who have suffered.

"Death at Sea" is set to be released in 2024.

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

With special thanks to



# Law Reform and Policy

Our Law Reform and Policy programme is dedicated to advocating for the protection of human rights at sea through legal and policy initiatives. Our ultimate goal is to prevent and end human rights abuses at sea by advocating for changes in laws and policies where necessary.

## How are we helping?

- We draft legislation and advocate for its implementation at national and international level.
- We work with States to strengthen seafarer welfare provisions.
- We work with national and international bodies to develop and strengthen the policy.
- We support the development of new case law.

## The Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea

The Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea is a soft-law document representing a pivotal effort to confirm that the principles of human rights are applied and ensure that abuses at sea are detected, remedied and ultimately ended.

The Declaration was formally launched in March 2022, which saw our project team head to Geneva and London to present it to policymakers and political figures, underscoring its significance on the international stage.

This year, the Declaration continued to gain wide-ranging support.

We joined forces with the Ukrainian International Law Association in a legal briefing aimed at understanding why the Declaration is crucial in diverse maritime contexts and highlighting its potential to benefit stakeholders, including those in Ukraine.

With support from the leading maritime law firm, HFW, this year, we have translated it into multiple languages, including Ukrainian, Norwegian and Russian, ensuring that the Declaration reaches a global audience that can engage and support its principles.

<p><b>Academic and Expert Recognition:</b></p> <p>The Declaration has gained recognition and traction in academic circles and among expert panels worldwide. Its inclusion in academic papers and discussions reflects its relevance and impact in addressing maritime human rights issues.</p>	<p><b>Collaboration with Stakeholders in Ukraine:</b></p> <p>Demonstrating the global reach and applicability of the Declaration. Discussing its development and adoption in Ukraine highlights its potential to benefit maritime stakeholders in various regions.</p>	<p><b>Translation and Accessibility:</b></p> <p>Translating the Declaration into multiple languages, including Ukrainian, Russian, and several others, enhances its accessibility to a wider audience. This effort ensures that individuals and states around the world can engage with and support the Declaration.</p>
<p><b>Submission to UN Human Rights Council:</b></p> <p>The intention to formally submit the Declaration to the UN Human Rights Council for adoption is a significant step. This move could lead to the international recognition and endorsement of the Declaration's principles and objectives.</p>	<p><b>Global Advocacy for Human Rights:</b></p> <p>By working with individual states and international organisations like the United Nations, Human Rights at Sea actively promotes human rights in the maritime industry. The Declaration serves as a valuable tool for advancing human rights awareness and protection worldwide.</p>	<p><b>Long-Term Impact:</b></p> <p>Adopting the Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea has the potential for a lasting impact. It can contribute to a global maritime environment where human rights are respected, upheld, and safeguarded for all individuals at sea.</p>

**"The Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea is an important soft law document that will enable Ukraine to be one of the first countries to develop legal instruments to support of post-war reparations. You can rely on my support in the development of 'Geneva Declaration of Human Rights at Sea'."**

Member of The Ukrainian Parliament - Serhii Hryvko



## Four Fundamental Principles

1

Human rights are universal; they apply at sea as they do on land.

2

All persons at sea, without any distinction, are entitled to their human rights.

3

There are no maritime specific reasons for denying human rights at sea.

4

All human rights established under both treaty and customary international law must be respected at sea.

## Impact Snapshot

30m

the number of lives the adoption of the Declaration by the UN will impact.

300+

stakeholders engaged with.

13

translations including Ukranian, Arabic and Norweigan.



# Global Recognition, Influence and Collaboration

## ECOSOC Status

In December 2022, our charity proudly received ECOSOC (United Nations Economic and Social Council) status, granting us the ability to work with UN-specialised agencies and specifically contribute to human rights.

ECOSOC status has been pivotal for Human Rights at Sea because it confers international recognition, grants access to influential platforms, fosters collaborative opportunities, and empowers us to influence global policies and initiatives. These benefits significantly amplify our capacity to address critical issues and advance our mission of ending human rights abuses at sea.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

## UN Business and Human Rights Review

In 2022, we continued our mission to combat "sea blindness," where the risks and abuses at sea often remain unseen and therefore unaddressed. Transparency is the cornerstone of our progress.

In response, we published a comprehensive review of the maritime sector's journey in implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), in October 2022.

The UNGPs have been guiding principles for over a decade, yet full integration across global supply chains remains a work in progress. The report underscores the imperative for increased investment and development to demonstrate their lasting impact, particularly in the maritime sector.

Aligning with the UNGPs is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic step towards shaping a brighter future for the maritime sector and, most importantly, protecting human rights at sea.

We remain committed to advancing human rights in the maritime sector, and we thank all those who have joined us on this important journey.

# Maritime Levy Campaign

Seafarers work in demanding and sometimes hazardous conditions and often remain out of sight and out of mind due to their remote work environments. Welfare organisations provide essential support to seafarers, offering comforts and services that are often taken for granted on land.

The Maritime Levy Campaign is a comprehensive initiative to advocate for the welfare and rights of seafarers, who play a vital role in our global trade by moving 90% of the world's goods.

This campaign addresses the challenging and often overlooked conditions that seafarers face and advocates for sustainable support mechanisms.

In 2021-2022, our efforts in New Zealand successfully brought about legislative changes. These changes enable port welfare facilities to access sustainable funding from levies collected from visiting vessels, ensuring that thousands of crew members passing through New Zealand's ports can access well-funded welfare facilities.

Our efforts have continued, and in 2022-23, we actively engaged in providing a consultative advisory opinion to Maritime New Zealand, offering expert guidance and recommendations on the core structure and essential requirements for an upcoming state-led policy review.

Our collaboration with the New Zealand Government and Maritime New Zealand represents a significant partnership to enhance seafarer welfare and set an international precedent for legislative improvements.

**by 2024 130,000 seafarers will have access to sustainably funded welfare facilities because of our work**



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

# Tackling the Seafood Industry

## Challenging Voluntary Seafood Certifications, Standards, and Ratings.

Human rights abuses in the seafood industry have been a longstanding and concerning issue that has gained increasing attention in recent years. These abuses can occur at various stages of the seafood supply chain, from fishing vessels to processing plants and beyond.

We recognised the increasing demand from consumers for transparency and assurance regarding the ethical and human rights aspects of seafood consumption.

Seafood certifications harness the power of consumer demand, market influence, supply chain dynamics, and global standards and are equipped to drive swift and impactful change in the supply chain. They could provide consumers with the means to make informed choices and create incentives for industry players to adopt and maintain sustainable human rights practices.

In February 2023, after three years of investigation, we took significant steps to tackle the seafood industry and ensure that it is not only environmental and sustainability goals being upheld.

Our report "Does it Do What it Says on the Tin?" was our first independent review of voluntary international certifications, standards and ratings across the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and in March 2023, we launched a dedicated webpage to ensure this data is publicly available.

So far, our charity has welcomed the positive engagement of certifiers, including the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Consumer Goods Forum and the Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative.

We will continue to engage among governments, industry stakeholders, NGOs, and consumers to promote transparency, accountability, and improvements in the certification processes within the seafood industry.

This ongoing project emphasises the importance of ongoing assessments and reporting to address consumer concerns and drive positive changes in the industry, where social responsibility and human rights are as essential as ecological sustainability.

*„Once we had established that we shared a compelling and common objective to safeguard workers and local communities, the dialogue around this benchmark was very positive and constructive. We worked closely with HRAS and will continue to do so in the future to achieve these objectives and look forward to the many opportunities this will present.“*  
- Chris Ninnas, ASC CEO



- Forced labour
- Human trafficking
- Child labour
- Poor living conditions
- Unsafe working conditions
- Lack of legal protections
- Inadequate wages
- Environmental exploitation

There is no way of knowing if the seafood you eat has not been caught by a slave.



Photo Credit: David Hammond

# Ukraine

When the war erupted in Ukraine, Human Rights at Sea took immediate action by launching an emergency appeal. Our goal was to ensure that seafarers, often overlooked during times of conflict, were not forgotten amidst the chaos of war. We also sought to hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable and provide essential aid to the victims.

The conflict in Ukraine had severe repercussions for coastal communities along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The maritime routes became treacherous, with ships facing the risk of sea mines and seafarers finding themselves in danger of death or wrongful detention.

In response to this crisis, we hired a representative in Ukraine and worked discreetly with local shipping and welfare partners. We also collaborated with stakeholders in the UK and Ukraine to discuss the development and adoption of the Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea.

Our efforts have played a vital role in supporting seafarers and coastal communities affected by the conflict. We have also contributed to broader conversations about safeguarding human rights at sea.

As unwavering human rights defenders, we remain committed to pursuing justice and the well-being of those impacted by the conflict, and our support for victims of human rights abuses extends into the post-war period and beyond.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

# Access to Justice

Accessing justice for people who work, live, or travel across seas and oceans is challenging. Unlike on land, there's no single set of laws that apply to all maritime activities.

Instead, different legal systems are used in different parts of the same journey, which can be confusing and make it tough for people to know what they should do and what their rights are.

Solving legal issues related to the sea can be very expensive and take a long time, which makes it hard for individuals to seek justice.

The feeling of isolation that often comes with working or living at sea can also make it tricky to find legal help and support when needed.

All of these factors combined make it difficult for people living, working and transiting across our seas and oceans to access the justice they deserve.

## How are we helping?

- We support individuals to secure access to justice.
- We investigate allegations of abuse and hold perpetrators and States to account for their actions or failings.
- We support victims of abuse to understand their rights and what to do when they are violated.
- We use our platform to support victims of abuse and their families and make sure their voices are heard.
- We develop innovative ways for victims to obtain justice.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock



Photo Credit: Canva

# Slavery at Sea a contemporary challenge

While the abolition of traditional slavery is celebrated as a historic triumph for human rights, a more insidious form of exploitation lingers in the maritime sector.

Modern slavery is characterised by forced labour, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation, is a grave concern that demands global attention and immediate action to be implemented internationally.

Slavery at sea is a particularly troubling problem because it occurs in an environment where oversight and visibility are limited. Fishing vessels can operate far from shore, making it difficult for authorities to monitor their activities. This geographical isolation contributes to exploiting vulnerable workers who often struggle in obscurity.

By shining a light on the issue, we hope to catalyse changes in practice, policy, and perception that will ultimately lead to a maritime sector that respects and protects the rights of all individuals at sea.

## How is our work helping?

- We highlight the problem and bring public and policymaker attention to the prevalence and impact of this terrible human rights abuse.
- We engage with states and encourage them to adopt ILO 188 and to adopt crew registration requirements.
- We highlight states who are not doing enough to detect, prosecute, and prevent this practice.
- We work with supply chain leaders to promote traceability and a 'net to plate' approach.
- We highlight companies and individuals who use slavery and human trafficking through investigative work.
- We highlight best practice in slavery prevention, detection, and prosecution.
- We support victims of slavery and trafficking to obtain justice.
- We will support other NGOs and CSOs who are working in this space.

# Anwar's story

**In the coastal town of Surabaya, Indonesia, Anwar\*, a 39-year-old man, was grappling with despair. Job opportunities were scarce, and hunger gnawed at him due to a lack of funds.**

With no other options, he turned to social media, where his desperate search for work on Facebook led him to a glimmer of hope. An advertisement for fishing crew positions at Jakarta's bustling Muara Baru fishing port promised free meals, shelter, loans, and attractive monthly salaries ranging from IDR 4-5 million.

The allure of these enticing offers proved irresistible, and Anwar submitted his application and was soon accepted.

He soon found himself on a nine-hour journey from Surabaya to Jakarta, filled with anticipation for the promising future ahead.

However, what awaited him in Jakarta was far from what he had envisioned.

Maruli\*, a 29-year-old facing a similar predicament in East Jakarta, shared a parallel tale. Having lost his job at a water refill agency, he was struggling to provide for his family. Much like Anwar, he scoured Facebook for employment opportunities. He stumbled upon a group that appeared to hold the keys to his financial salvation, offering crew positions with irresistible benefits.

Maruli reached out to the contact number listed on the Facebook page, and on a fateful day in April 2022, he set out from his hometown to make his way to Jakarta. It was there that Maruli crossed paths with Anwar, and their destinies became inexplicably intertwined.

Both of them found themselves in temporary accommodations, awaiting their fishing assignments. Yet, during this waiting period, their movements were restricted, their phone calls monitored, and even their weekly worship came under scrutiny.

It soon became evident that the promises of a better life were mere mirages, concealing a harsh reality.

The day eventually arrived when they were informed of their forthcoming fishing voyage at the Muara Baru port, scheduled for the end of May 2022. Before their departure, they were set to work on the ship, handling tasks such as preparing plywood tools, washing clothes, and loading supplies. It was a whirlwind of preparation, culminating in a surprising turn of events the day before their departure.

Maruli, Anwar, and their fellow crew members were handed a loan of IDR 6 million to send to their families. Yet, as the funds were distributed, Maruli received only a fraction of what was promised, and Anwar's share was even less.

The broker overseeing the process deducted the money, claiming it was to cover living expenses over the past month.

It was a shocking revelation, and Maruli explained, "Brokers took money to replace the transportation costs, buy the fishing rods, sponsors, people in charge, job provider services, and my living expenses for one month in a mess."



On 29th May, 2022, Anwar and Maruli boarded the KM Nudi III\* at Nizam Zachman Oceanic Port, setting sail for the fishing grounds in the vast Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka.

Most of the crew members had little to no prior experience at sea, and their journey began with a startling lack of medical checks, contracts, or transparency. When they dared to raise concerns with the Captain, they were met with insults.

Life on the fishing vessel turned out to be a stark contrast to the promises made during recruitment. Crew members survived on a sparse diet of fish and rice for breakfast and lunch, leading to various health issues due to malnutrition. Clean water was a luxury, and their makeshift beds offered little

comfort. Drinking water was often contaminated, with rusty hatch pipes turning it yellow.

While the crew was forced to drink polluted water, the skipper enjoyed access to clean reserves. The crew's catch was transferred to a collector ship to be sold on land, which also provided logistical support, including food, cigarettes, and coffee. While rice was provided free of charge, the crew had to purchase all other promised benefits at inflated prices.

Their ordeal continued, marked by intimidation, violence, and even death threats from the skipper and after eight gruelling months, they finally arrived on land only to be told that after the skipper's calculations, they would not be receiving any money for the work they had endured.

**Disclaimer:** Maruli, Anwar and KM Nudi III in this report are pseudonyms to protect their identity. Reports of victim complaints have been submitted to the National Fishers Center and have been referred to the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries on 7 February 2023.

# Equal Rights are human rights

## Equality at Sea

This year, we proudly launched our Equality at Sea programme, which is rooted in the idea that all individuals who engage with the maritime environment—whether as seafarers, fishermen, coastal communities, or passengers, should be treated fairly, respectfully, and with dignity, regardless of their gender, nationality, race, or other characteristics.

## How are we helping?

We highlight the problem and bring public attention to the prevalence and impact of inequality at sea.

We provide information and guidance on obtaining justice for victims of discrimination and violence.

We engage with the maritime sector to understand what they are currently doing to eradicate violence against women from their locations, and we will work with them to improve their standards and practices.

Expose coastal, port and flag States, companies and individuals who do not protect individuals equally or adequately. We lobby for legislation similar to the USA Cruise Passenger Protection Act of 2013 to be implemented internationally.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

## Everyone has the right to be treated equally, and free from violence and harassment.

# 45%

of women working at sea reported sexual harassment

# 173

sexual assaults or rape cases occurred on one cruise line over five years

# 0

alleged perpetrators prosecuted in these cases

In December 2022, we proudly teamed with serving officer and advisory board member Commander Samantha Kinsey Briggs to examine how life in the British Armed Forces has evolved since the ban on gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people was lifted in 1999.

“Turning the Tide on LGBTQ+ Culture the Royal Navy since 2000” looked at lessons that can be learned from a cultural perspective and focuses on the culture within the Royal Navy and how it has developed over the last 22 years.

This year, we also continued to highlight women at sea and the challenges they face by working with organisations and individuals around the world - an essential step toward achieving gender equality in the maritime industry.

Both of these initiatives go into a wider piece of raising awareness, advocacy and policy changes that benefit not only the LGBTQ+ community and women but the entire maritime community.

By addressing gender disparities and creating inclusive environments, the industry can tap into a broader talent pool and foster innovation and sustainability.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock





## Reshma's story

**Reshma Nilofer Naha, India's first and only woman marine pilot, is not only breaking barriers in the maritime industry but also advocating for women's rights and gender equality in a traditionally male-dominated field.**



I have personally witnessed how women in maritime are often forced to choose between a career and having a child, which is incredibly unfair. Gender is not something we choose, and neither is the ability to produce the next generation of the workforce. When I or my female colleagues go on maternity leave, we are often tagged as “medically unfit” or forced to take sick leave, making it difficult to return to work where we left off. The lack of regulatory support for a smooth transition back to sea or a transition to shore often leads to a significant dropout rate post-maternity leave. Maternity discrimination is a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

Another important issue is how sexual harassment cases are handled. As a woman in this field, I have seen first-hand how these reports are often met with hostility and victim-blaming.

Many victims are victimised further and even fired from their jobs for reporting against a “senior management person” who has been with the company for many years. These cases are often handled behind closed doors, and the board of investigators usually consists entirely of men who may not fully understand the woman's perspective. It is crucial that we address these issues and create a safe and supportive workplace for all.

At every step, I have faced discouraging people, those who stereotype me at every opportunity. When I was given a lot of visibility for being a woman leader/pioneer in the maritime, I was met with jealous eyes more than encouragement and applause. I was initially questioned if I could become a pilot, then if I could get a partner, would my family ‘allow’ me to work this odd job with erratic schedules. Now, if I ever become a mother, would



*Many victims are victimised further and even fired from their jobs for reporting against a “senior management person” who has been with the company for many years.*

I be able to manage motherhood and work-life balance? I must keep defending and proving my ability and competence to people who still cannot accept women coming to a bridge and calling out commands. Advancing in my career, well, the options are few and far between.

At every stage, I've had to prove my worth as a woman in the maritime industry. Being a minority in this field, it feels like I'm constantly under the spotlight and any mistake on my part could reflect poorly on women in maritime as a whole. This puts immense pressure on me and often, I find myself seeking validation for my innovative ideas, even if they are solely for the betterment of the industry.

I've heard of rape and inappropriate behaviour onboard. This is still shocking, in addition to hearing from a section of our maritime community commenting on “provocative clothes and behaviour” as contributing factors to these heinous crimes. It is a shame, such a shame!

Since I started my journey in the maritime industry, I have been fortunate to have male mentors who have guided me and mentored me in times when I needed advice and knowledge sharing. I am grateful for the support I receive from my colleagues and immediate seniors. It is only because of some men who have sought to empower and liberate me that I have made it this far.

# Charity Structure



## Trustees

Our dedicated trustees are essential for providing leadership, accountability, and strategic oversight to ensure the effective pursuit of our mission to end human rights abuses at sea.

- Matthew Vickers** (Chair of Trustees) CEO and Chief Ombudsman at Ombudsman Services
- Ruth Crowell** Chief Executive of the LBMA
- Helen Gripton** Human Rights and Social Impact Lead at BP
- Alexander Kemp** Solicitor and Partner at HFW
- Dr Aidan McQuade, OBE** Writer and Independent Human Rights Consultant
- Dr Natalie Klein** Professor at UNSW Sydney's Faculty of Law & Justice, Australia
- Mitra Motlaugh** EMEA lead for Social Impact Partnerships at Meta
- Marika McAdam** Independent Consultant and Advisor
- Richard Stavis** Managing Partner of Stavis Consulting, LLC
- Irini Papanicopoulou** British Academy Global Professor of International Law, SOAS
- Steven Haines** (Honorary Trustee) Professor of Public International Law in the University of Greenwich

**Patron: Lord Robin Teverson**

## Advisory Board

Our non-executive Advisory Board is essential for providing guidance, expertise, and influence to advance our mission and impact.

# Helping to Meet and Exceed Human Rights Standards

## Human Rights at Sea International

We operate a not-for-profit leading global consultancy focused on human rights in the maritime sector. Our mission is to help states, businesses, and non-profit organisations worldwide improve their human rights standards in the maritime environment.

### Our Services

We offer a range of services, including:

#### Compliance & Due Diligence

Ensuring adherence to human rights standards.

#### Risk Assessment & Audits

Identifying and mitigating human rights risks.

#### Policy Development & Auditing

Crafting policies and conducting audits.

#### Investigations & Reporting

Addressing human rights issues.

#### Legal Support

Providing legal expertise as required.

#### Business Partner Packages

Our annual support packages offer ongoing access to our services, giving your business peace of mind and legal compliance. We offer three levels of support, including:

#### Diagnostic

Assessing your current state and defining your goals.

#### Solution Design

Tailoring support to your needs, including policy creation.

#### Effective Implementation

Assisting with change execution and progress monitoring.

#### Training

We provide various training options, including human rights in business, maritime security, and one-on-one mentoring for senior management.

#### Discreet Advisory

Our confidential advisory services tackle complex human rights, criminal justice, and security challenges in the maritime sector, including state-level issues.

We are dedicated to promoting human rights and ethical practices in the maritime world, ensuring a transparent, responsible, and secure environment.



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



[enquiries@hrasi.org](mailto:enquiries@hrasi.org)

*"Whilst all vessels operating at SGSSI are strictly regulated, we sadly recognise that human rights violations are an endemic risk within the maritime world; therefore, we have chosen to work with HRAS as the leading experts in this area. This initial training was incredibly thought-provoking and has been a valuable first step in raising awareness as we develop our proactive approach to protecting seafarers in our waters."*

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands



# Who We Are

## Background

Human Rights at Sea was established in April 2014. It was founded as an initiative to explore issues of maritime human rights development, review associated policies and legislation, and to undertake independent investigations of abuses at sea. It rapidly grew beyond all expectations and for reasons of governance it became a registered charity under the UK Charity Commission in 2015.

Today, the charity is an established, regulated and independent registered non-profit organisation based on the south coast of the United Kingdom. It undertakes **R**esearch, **A**dvocacy, **I**nvestigation and **L**obbying specifically for human rights issues in the maritime environment, including contributing to support for the human element that underpins the global maritime and fishing industries.


The charity works internationally with all individuals, commercial and maritime community organisations that have similar objectives as ourselves, including all the principal maritime welfare organisations.


**UN ECOSOC. We are an organisation in special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 2022.**


## Our Mission


We exist to prevent, detect, and remedy human rights abuses at sea. We raise public awareness of abuses at sea, and support people at sea to understand their rights.

## Stay in Contact

 We welcome any questions, comments or suggestions. Please send your feedback to: Human Rights at Sea, VBS Langstone Technology Park, Langstone Road, Havant, PO9 1SA, UK.

 Email: [enquiries@humanrightsatsea.org](mailto:enquiries@humanrightsatsea.org)

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

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As an independent charity, Human Rights at Sea relies on public donations, commercial philanthropy and grant support to continue delivering its work globally.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA**



We rely on your donations to bring justice for victims at sea

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