**Mediterranean migrations: NGO as the voice of the voiceless?**

*Daniela La Foresta*

The Mediterranean Sea has always represented a unique melting pot of cultures and peoples, holding a strategic position: since the mid-1990s it has been the preferred route for migrants to reach the European continent. Adverse weather conditions overcrowded and illegal boats, as well as the difficult management of the emergency by the EU, make the Mediterranean one of the most dangerous routes, with reports of migrant accidents being an every-day occurrence.

Since 2014, approximately 29,000 migrants have gone missing or died in the Mediterranean, with the highest number of fatalities recorded in 2016 and in the central route (UNHCR, 2022). The complexity of the situation indicates how it cannot be solved solely by the countries most affected by the phenomenon: indeed, cooperation and coordination with states, NGOs, and other maritime agencies are necessary. NGOs play a central role in the management of the situation, with the Council of Europe calling on states to cooperate constructively with NGOs to ensure effective protection of human rights. Approximately 38 NGO ships conducted SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea between 2016 and 2022 (FRA).

This research aims to analyse the pre-eminent role assumed by NGOs in operations in the Mediterranean Sea, whose interventions have often been criticised and considered "an incentive for smugglers to arrange departures" (Italian Senate, 2017). More specifically, among the operations carried out by NGOs, particular importance is attributed to communication strategies: through them organisations can spread their values and promote their actions, while raising public awareness. Thus, the focus is on the core communication tactics used and on the most effective strategies to achieve their goals.