

A new paradigm for humanitarian intervention

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Introduction...

I have been working on humanitarian practices at Europe's borders since 2012. Initial work on the humanitarian logics present in border policing has grown as humanitarian actions have increased to include looking at the work of non-state humanitarian actors engaged in what I call humanitarian borderwork. I have undertaken fieldwork in Italy and Greece and with humanitarian organisations at their HQs and offices across Europe. I am an academic associate member of MSF-Holland.

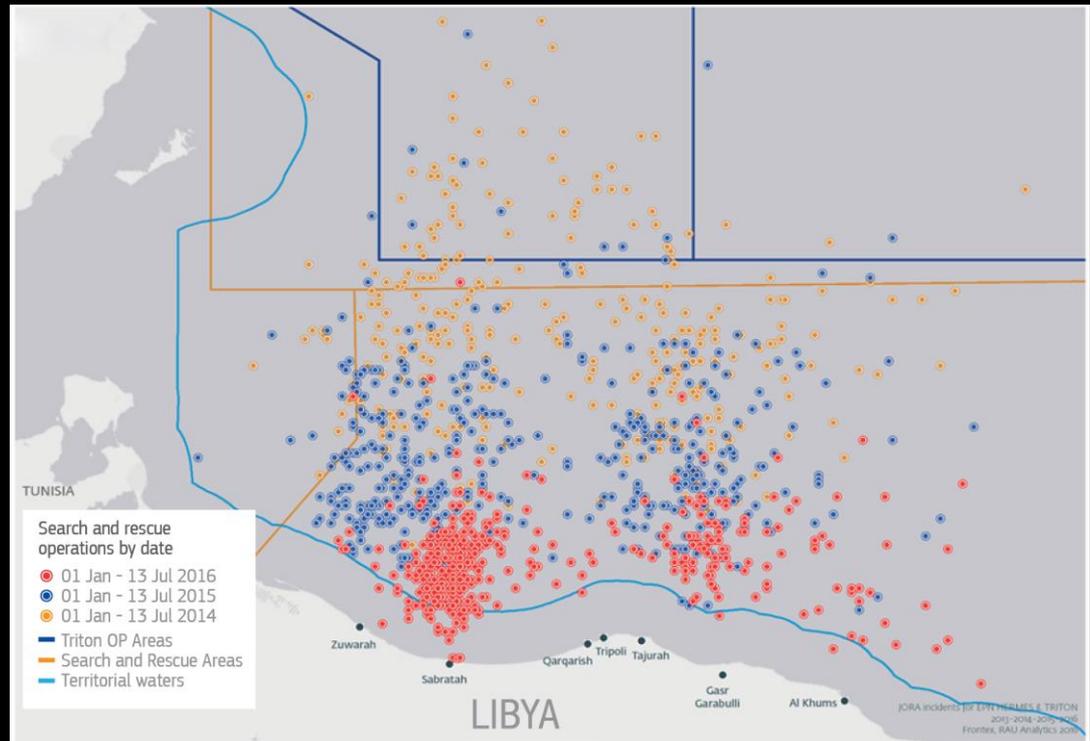
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Outline

- Where are we today concerning humanitarian intervention at Europe's borders?
- What is humanitarianism?
- Genealogy of humanitarian intervention at Europe's borders.
- The different actors and making sense of the field of humanitarian intervention.
- Controversies and conflicts.

Where are we today?

- Humanitarian rescue seems to be routine now in the Mediterranean, 9,000 rescued in 2017.
- IOM's Missing Migrants project puts the number of dead in the Mediterranean at over 14,000 since 2014.
- Rescues increasingly being carried out by non-state actors.
- The EU and member states continue to have ambivalent and contradictory attitudes to SAR operations and humanitarian efforts to help migrants generally.





What is humanitarianism?

The relief of suffering and the maintenance of human dignity. Concerned with human lives, saving lives. Biopolitical. Traditionally thought to respond to emergency often involving refugees and displaced populations. Humanitarianism is seen as different from human rights and developmental work.

A genealogy of humanitarianism



Polly Pallister-Wilkins, 2015

- Rescues and care giving at Europe's borders is not new.
- It is not limited to this 'crisis'. What is this crisis? Refugee crisis or political crisis?
- Earlier examples from the 1990s include rescues in the Adriatic and Strait of Sicily.
- Historically rescues carried out without 'fanfare' as everyday work of coastguard, fishermen and commercial vessels.
- The specificities of the Mediterranean (as a sea) shapes rescue in the past and present making it different from land-based 'humanitarian' interventions.
- Intimately linked to the increasingly exclusive nature of Europe's borders.
- What William Walters (2011) has called the 'humanitarian border', where as the risks of border crossing grow the need for saving lives also grows.

A complex picture of (humanitarian) intervention

- There are many actors involved in humanitarian intervention in the Med and Europe more broadly.
- Saving lives is the first priority but beyond this differences emerge.
- Saving lives and controlling the border are two concomitant logics that exist for policing agents.



Controlling the borders and caring for migrants



Polly Pallister-Wilkins, 2016

- In response to Europe's borders being places of control further needs arise relating to them also becoming places of care.
- This causes tensions and contradictions for both police/state authorities who need to protect the borders and human life and humanitarian actors who need to maintain independence from states.
- Underlying causes remain unaddressed.

Exclusionary/Inclusionary humanitarianism

- Humanitarianism enhances and legitimises policies and practices aimed at preventing migrants from journeying to Europe, thus excluding them from rights they would enjoy there.
 - Humanitarianism can enhance SAR operations and prompt relocation mechanisms, thus allowing migrants to reach European soil.
 - The admission of people at risk of death and other particularly vulnerable persons to EU territory is left to the arbitrariness of fate, as well as administrative decisions, while the legal status of the persons allowed to disembark on EU territory is often characterized by irregularity and deportability.
- Paolo Cuttitta, 2017

Controversies and Conflicts

- As rescue becomes routine:
 - Ferry service
 - Colluding with smugglers
 - Attempts to criminalise rescue
 - Rescue itself being dangerous
 - Renewed attempts at externalisation in Libya and elsewhere
- Humanitarians struggle with mobility of migrants:
 - Times and spaces of care
 - Ethics of care
 - A return to camps?



Polly Pallister-Wilkins, 2016

Thank you

Questions and discussion