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EUNAVFOR MED – OPERATION SOPHIA

Human rights implications of the fight against smugglers

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	4
1. Introduction	4
Chapter 2	8
2. Operation Sophia as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)	8
2.1. The legal framework of CSDP Operations under EU law	10
2.2. Practical application: the composition of Operation Sophia	11
2.3. Internal organisation, contributions and activities.....	13
2.4. Outlook: Move to phases two B and three	18
Chapter 3	19
3. Rules of international law applicable to the Operation	19
3.1. Extraterritorial application of human rights	19
3.2. Applicability of human rights to military operations	23
3.3. Substantive requirements: The principle of <i>non-refoulement</i>	24
3.4. Obligations arising from the EU's human rights regime.....	29
3.5. Standards established in the <i>Hirsi</i> judgement	32
3.6. Obligations under the law of the sea	36
3.6.1. Right of visit	37
3.6.2. Detention of smugglers.....	37
3.6.3. Outlook: Detention in Libyan territorial waters	41
3.6.4. Implementation of rescue duties.....	42
3.7. Adequacy of Operation Sophia as an answer to the Mediterranean crisis	45
Chapter 4	49
4. Individual legal protection	49
4.1. Preliminary reflections on "the right to have rights"	49
4.2. Allocation of responsibility	50
4.3. Lack of jurisdictional competence in CFSP	52
4.4. Difficulties with national procedures	54
4.5. Prospects through the EU's accession to the ECHR	54
Chapter 5	56
5. Conclusion	56
Bibliography	59

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Abstract: The present thesis deals with the EUNAVFOR MED military operation of the EU that was launched in June 2015 in reaction to two tragic shipwrecks on the Mediterranean. Its aim is to prevent the further loss of life at sea by fighting the business of human smugglers. Against this background, the thesis analyses the human rights implications resulting from the Operation's conduct in view of its adequacy as an answer to the humanitarian crisis on the Mediterranean. The thesis comes to the conclusion that a number of human rights issues are at stake, especially because the Operation lacks safeguards that could assure compliance with those standards. It suggests that the EU should alter the mandate in order to align it with its self-stated aim of international promotion of human rights that could be impeded by a loss of credibility resulting from the application of different standards to internal and external measures.