

The duty to rescue is one of the oldest rules of the sea

Long before modern states or treaties, mariners understood that anyone in distress at sea must be helped, regardless of who they are.

Rules of sea travel were codified by the *Roman Empire and medieval European agreements* protected the shipwrecked.

The Titanic disaster in 1912 prompted the creation of the first International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (1914), building upon a century of legal developments during which sea travel became more important and more dangerous.

**The duty applies to both
states and individual shipmasters**

Coastal states must organize
Search and Rescue systems,

and shipmasters must respond when they
encounter distress.

The duty to rescue underpins trust in the maritime system

The safety of global shipping depends on the expectation that help will come when lives are at risk.

International agreements like the **SOLAS and SAR Conventions** establish the frameworks for rescue, search-and-rescue regions, and ensure that saving a life is the absolute priority, transcending all other maritime concerns.

An aerial photograph of a large crowd of people gathered on a beach. The image is dark and has a teal overlay. A teal rectangular box is positioned in the center, containing the text "This duty remains essential".

This duty remains essential

Regardless of contemporary political debates,
the obligation to rescue at sea remains unchanged.

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