Oversight of fishing vessels lacking, new analysis shows

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The researchers add that since 2010, at least seven fisheries observers have disappeared while monitoring fisheries under the authority of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). Notably, very little information is available regarding the circumstances.

This first-ever examination of observer-related policies for the 17 RFMOs, which are the main institutions in charge of high seas fisheries, uncovered several important gaps and shortcomings:

- No RFMOs include regulations to sufficiently protect fisheries observer rights and safety.
- Only four of 17 RFMOs, which manage high seas fisheries, have a policy in place on what to do if a human observer disappears or dies.
- Only three RFMOs mandate 100-percent observer coverage on fishing vessels under their authority.

To address these shortcomings, the authors advocate for 100-percent observer coverage achieved using a complementary approach of remote electronic monitoring and human observers. They also call for RFMOs to be publicly transparent about what the monitoring reveals, including violations, and, especially, if observers are harmed or disappear.

"Requiring full observer coverage and protecting the safety and rights of human observers will lead to stronger environmental and animal protection on the high seas," says Jacquet.
