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HUMANITARIAN JOURNALISM: ESCAPE ROUTE FOR COVERING THE MIGRATION ISSUE

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Abstract: This research arises from the realization of the urgency of a journalistic practice capable of reducing the invisibility of populations that face forced migration, one of the faces of the humanitarian crisis. Thus, its objective is to identify how humanitarian journalism can contribute to removing the suffering of refugees and migrants from the media, political and social oblivion. As a methodological procedure, a quantitative analysis of the articles published in the portals of El País Brasil and BBC Brasil was adopted. Thirty-nine articles from the international editorship of the online versions of these two vehicles were collected and analyzed, which allowed us to observe a reduced number of news and reports, contrasting with the magnitude and social relevance of the problem.

Keywords: Humanitarian journalism. Humanitarian crises. Forced migrations. Refugees.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

According to the United Nations (UN), the world is facing the biggest humanitarian crisis since its creation in 1945, a direct result of the lack of interest of governments and society in solving the problem. The South Korean, eighth UN Secretary, Ban Ki-moon, dedicated efforts, between 2007 and 2017, to warn about the need to face this "biggest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War" (VICTOR, 2016), referring to migration as a consequence of it.

In 2019, the International Displacement Monitoring Center, one of the largest references on the subject of migration and database, identified approximately 33.4 million new displacements associated with conflicts, violence and disasters (IDMC, 2019), thus raising the total number of forced migrations, from 68.5 million in 2016 to 70.8 million in 2019 (UNHCR, 2019)¹.

The work of communicators, in this context, is extremely important to give visibility to the problem and to give voice to these people. Along these lines, Traquina (2005) understands journalism as an intrinsic relationship with the social context in which it is a part. In all this context, humanitarian journalism, despite not being an editorial, but a practice, becomes an urgent approach in current times (VICTOR, 2018)².

according to Victor Thus, (2018),humanitarian journalism is seen as an escape route for the coverage of emergencies and humanitarian crises and an alternative to the action that has been historically and culturally reproduced in the Western press. This, in turn, is based on the so-called "newsworthiness" and based on theories of newsmaking e gatekeeping, that concern why (and how) certain themes and/or subjects become news for the media that will address them and achieve news status. In this sense, a newsworthiness criterion motivates the choice of a fact to become news (SILVA, 2014).

Faced with the need to cover the facts related to human suffering, humanitarian journalism becomes a way of alerting to the weaknesses that affect the practice of journalism as a whole and proposes to point the way to the coverage of humanitarian issues and the confrontation of problems that are not always guidelines in traditional journalism. When they are, their approach in the press still falls short of their social and political relevance.

With the objective of identifying how humanitarian journalism can contribute to removing the suffering of refugees and migrants from the media, political and social oblivion, in the context of forced migration, this research uses a quantitative analysis of

1 Available on the website:<https://www.acnur.org/portugues/dados-sobre-refugio/>. Accessed on: 4/30/2020

² Available on the website:<http://portal.metodista.br/poscom/noticias/2018/jornalismo-humanitario-e-pratica-urgente-em-tempos-atuais-diz-cilene-victor>.Accessed on: 5/24/2020

the articles published in the portals of El País Brasil and BBC. Brazil. The analysis considered the period from December 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. This time interval included the news production, which began in the period covering the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration (Global Compact for Migration), event that resulted in the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration)³, and the subsequent six months. By analyzing the news published before, during and after the adoption of the Global Compact, we seek to show how much the two vehicles gave visibility to the migratory issue beyond the factual.

Based on the aforementioned means, it appears that the number of articles was reduced when compared to the proportion of the problem and that, when covered, it was factually and based mostly on news agencies. This finding was made through quantitative research, in which 39 articles from the two portals were analyzed in the period under study. Thus, the corpus of this study consists of articles published in the international section of the online versions of the BBC Brasil and El País Brasil portals, specifically on the theme of migration, the central problem of the research.

The material was collected through the search tool of both sites, using the keywords "migrant", "migration", "refuge", "refugee", which cover the topic in a generic way. In order to remain faithful to the original meaning of the theme, articles that do not belong to the international section and those that do not refer to the migratory issue were discarded. To better visualize the survey, four graphs were made, making it possible to compare the numbers of articles, per vehicle, during the period in question. The total number of articles, monthly publications, content from news agencies and subscribed and, finally, factual and non-factual articles were quantified, in such a way that the two news portals can be compared.

In addition to theoretical support to support the analysis of humanitarian journalism, since the present research intends to open a discussion on the journalistic coverage of the migratory issue as a reflection of a humanitarian crisis, a brief understanding of how humanitarian journalism emerged is essential. The analysis of the results, presented below, aims to open the discussion on the coverage of the migration issue through the lens of humanitarian journalism. It is not secondary to point out the importance of studying this topic, especially in the third decade of the 21st century and when considering the number of forced migrants. Likewise, it is worth noting that the researcher, a Congolese immigrant, in addition to intending to deepen the theme for future research, lives in the researched reality, keeping due distances and neutrality, highlighting the importance of this scientific exercise.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The field of humanitarian journalism emerged from the need to improve coverage of humanitarian crises and emergencies, causes of displacement and migration since the end of the last century and extending to the current decade (SANCHES, 2019). The term "humanitarian crisis and emergency", a prominent agenda in humanitarian journalism, refers to situations of human conflicts, risk situations, tragedies and the incidence of migration, which the UN defines as:

> An event or series of events that poses a threat to the health, safety, security and well-being of a community or large group of people

³ The "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration" is a comprehensive document to better manage international migration, face its challenges and strengthen the rights of migrants, contributing to sustainable development, according to the UN.

over a wide area: armed conflict, epidemic, famine, natural disasters and other major emergencies that can cause a humanitarian crisis to extend beyond an agency's capacity. A humanitarian emergency is a large-scale crisis that destroys the lives of individuals and communities and strains their ability to deal with the problem (UN, 2019)⁴.

Researchers in the field divide humanitarian journalism into two broad approaches: "traditional' reporting on humanitarian crises and issues and advocacy journalism aimed at improving humanitarian outcomes" (BUNCE; SCOTT; WRIGHT, 2018).5 They emphasize that "traditional journalism" has long helped raise awareness and find funds for humanitarian crises, as well as providing early emergency alerts and monitoring the treatment of citizens, while aid agencies and humanitarian activists often provided journalistic content. Very broadly, this journalistic practice can be defined as "the production of factual accounts of crises and issues that affect human well-being" (BUNCE; SCOTT; WRIGHT, 2018)6.

Researchers Martin Scott, Kate Wright and Mel Bunce present in a report some of the findings of a four-year global research project on the state of humanitarian journalism around the world. In the document: "*The State of Humanitarian Journalism*⁷, published in 2018, they highlight the content of international reports on humanitarian crises. Scott, from the Center for Media and International Development, School of International Development (DEV) at East Angila University, supports the understanding of humanitarian journalism as "journalism that covers humanitarian crises and their actors; news that adopts humanitarian ethics; and news as humanitarian practices" (SCOTT, 2017, p. 72).

Mel Brunce and Kate Wright, in turn, find the foundation of the concept of humanitarian journalism in the union of good journalistic practices with the principles of humanitarianism, here understood according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, one of the world's important organizations, humanitarian as "the independent, neutral and impartial provision of assistance to victims of armed conflict and natural disasters" (ICRC Handbook for Trainers, 2020)8. Based on this notion of humanitarianism, humanitarian journalism enhances the professionals' own perception of the social purpose of their work, investigating "how the media report on humanitarian crises, what shapes their coverage and what influence it has" (Humanitarian Journalism, 2018)⁹.

This way, humanitarian journalism is understood in a broader understanding of humanitarianism as "an ethic of kindness, benevolence and sympathy, extended universally and impartially to all human beings" (SCOTT, 2019), thus moving away from the approach of authors that reduce this field of journalism to "humanitarian disaster coverage" (COOPER; COTTLE, 2014) or

⁴ Available on the website:<https://news.un.org/pt/search/crises> Accessed on: 5/20/2020.

⁵ Available on the website: https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-821 Accessed on: 5/24/2020.

⁶ Free translation. Original text: "*as the production of factual accounts about crises and issues that affect human welfar*". Available on the website: <<u>https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-821></u> Accessed on: 5/24/2020.

⁷ Available on the website: http://humanitarian-journalism.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/7_Humanitarian-News-Report. pdf>.Accessed on: 5/24/2020.

⁸ Available on the website:</https://www.icrc.org/pt/doc/assets/files/other/icrc-002-0698.pdf>. Acesso em: 24/5/2020.
9 Free translation. Original text: "howthe news media report on humanitarian crises, what shapes their coverage and what influence it has". Available on the website: Accessed on: 05/25/2020">05/25/2020.

coverage of important issues involving humanitarian organizations and humanitarian events (POWERS, 2012).

Humanitarian journalism, reinforce researchers in the field, "plays a crucial role in the way citizens, humanitarian workers and international organizations around the world respond to emergencies and human suffering".¹⁰, taking into account the principles of independence and neutrality, at the same time that it strengthens a more active role of the media to equalize conflicts, giving space for discussions about possible solutions or a voice for what they did not have until then (BUNCE; SCOTT, WRIGHT, 2019). The studies they conducted, as Sanches (2019, p. 108) notes, in addition to thinking about humanitarian journalism, also reveal that a small number of "high-profile" crises occupy the vast majority of news coverage, leaving others marginalized and hidden. This means that the amount of traditional news coverage does not correlate with the severity of a crisis or with the people affected, but with the geopolitical sense and cultural proximity of the audience.

In addition, they mentioned that there are very few studies on the production of news organizations and even fewer journalists who produce humanitarian journalism, so that their practice focuses on news organizations based in the Global North/West (BUNCE; SCOTT, WRIGHT, 2019). Such reading corroborates, at certain points, the denunciation of the "One World and Many Voices" Report, also known as the MacBride report, which found the flow of information that was concentrated in the North/South and West/East directions, creating inequality. in journalistic coverage.

Communication theorists and researchers

of the Humanitarian Journalism argue that this type of coverage of humanitarian crises prevents an empathic and equal encounter between the public and those affected by the crises, generating distant suffering (BUNCE; SCOTT, WRIGHT, 2019). It is in this sense that these authors also emphasize the role of international journalism by focusing on establishing which issues and crises receive the most and least coverage, in order to highlight the failures of the media (Idem). This failure in the coverage of crises in the international editor can still be understood with the disappearance of the figure of the international correspondent, leaving room for another way of doing international journalism in the post-industrial period (Silva 2011). This observation further confirms the report of the CARE International, one of the main humanitarian organizations today, formed by a global confederation with 14 members, which publishes each year the report that shows the indifference of the media in the face of certain humanitarian crises.

In 2019, the report¹¹ "Suffering in Silence" highlighted 10 crises most underreported by the media, and most were in Africa. It is worth noting that crises that do not find an audience in the media suffer from the lack of support in raising funds to help the people involved. From the name of this report "suffering in silence", which is not a concept per se, but a metaphor that helps to explain how much journalism ends up collaborating to underreport humanitarian issues, such as mass migrations, we can add the "fatigue of compassion," transported from healthcare to journalism by Susan D. Moller, director of the Journalism Program and Associate Professor of American Studies at Brandeis University.

¹⁰ Free translation. Original text: "plays a crucial role in how citizens, aid workers and international organisations around the world respond to emergencies and human suffering." Available on the website: http://humanitarian-journalism.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/7_Humanitarian-News-Report.pdf>. Accessed on: 05/25/2020.

¹¹ Available on the website:<https://care.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/01202020_Report_Suffering-In-Silence-2019_webversion-compressed.pdf>.Accessed on: 05/20/2020.

Humanitarian journalism also made use of this concept to bring the idea of the existence of important elements to explain the reasons that lead the crises to be neglected by the press, especially those that last in time or that always affect the same profile of people, countries and regions (MOLLER, 2016).

The perception of journalism as а profession that "undernotifies" the facts and condemns them to oblivion is similar to a great conspiracy plan, something that testifies against the profession. This view supported by Brazilian professor and journalist Cilene Victor, a researcher in the field of humanitarian journalism, observes in the performance of journalism "a press with difficulties in dealing with the complexity and singularity of the crisis and its causes and consequences" (VICTOR, 2016, p. 52). Thus, when discussing the contribution of journalism in the search for solutions to face the humanitarian crisis and the reduction of human suffering, the author suggests ways for the performance of the press and the media as a "whole" and calls on the press to do part of a "world task force" to change reality (VICTOR, 2014). The role of communication, she says, "is to bring people, public opinion and society closer to the knowledge of the facts, such as the risks of disasters, climate change and the challenges of human development" (VICTOR, 2016, p. 50), which are among the causes of forced migrations. For Victor (2016), the complexity of the problem requires that journalism not only face the complexity of narratives but also:

> To adopt new approaches that, in turn, are already a major challenge for the model of journalism that is still practiced. Changing approaches means superimposing the human dimension of the facts to the fact itself; to challenge the weight of scheduling hot events on colder ones, such as the daily lives of refugees and those seeking help; humanize statistical data on populations affected by wars and disasters, which can be achieved with the humanization of

journalism as a whole, starting with the characters in the narratives themselves. Giving prominence to those at the center of this humanitarian crisis becomes an indispensable resource for the construction of a lucid, thinking, active and sensitive public opinion for the development of understanding and solidarity on a planetary scale (VICTOR, 2016, p. 53).

Thus, by highlighting the view of media coverage as a crucial point of tension, Scott (2008) also advocates for humanitarian journalism the deconstruction of sectarian precepts rooted in newsworthiness criteria, in order to grant space for the plurality of voice, contributing to the construction of a media representation closer to reality. In the light of humanitarian journalism theory and its concepts, it is understood that this approach seeks to dissolve the unease in the coverage of humanitarian crises, such as forced migration, acting to highlight international rescue efforts, while providing context about the causes of a crisis and operates to assist agency response teams and local victims.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISTIC COVERAGE OF THE MIGRATION ISSUE IN NUMBERS

After presenting the theoretical framework, it is now proposed to quantitatively approach the journalistic coverage of the migratory issue by the two vehicles.

BBC Brasil, aimed at Portuguese-speaking audiences, is a branch of BBC News, considered one of the largest news transmission vehicles in the world. It encompasses the department of journalism and media and produces news for both television and radio, and for the digital platforms of the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC), the UK's public radio and television corporation.

In order to extend the look at the journalistic coverage of the migratory issue, El País Brasil, also dedicated to the Portuguesespeaking public and a branch of El País (Spain), was included in this research because it is one of the most important vehicles in the international scope and that, therefore, it addresses the theme of this work. The quantitative analysis of the reports related to the migratory issue was carried out in the light of the theoretical-conceptual approaches of humanitarian journalism.

That said, there were many events on the migration issue between December 1, 2018 and June 31, 2019. However, only 39 articles were found that could be kept in the analysis. Although mass migration is considered one of the faces of the greatest humanitarian crisis of this century, according to the proportion of the problem presented, it was found that such facts had little impact on the vehicles studied during the selected period. As can be seen in the chart below, BBC Brasil's international section published more content related to the migratory issue than El País Brasil.

Furthermore, analyzing these publications, it is noted that there were months with more articles published than the others. The months of December 2018 and June 2019 were the ones that most disseminated content related to the migration issue in the international section, totaling, respectively, 7 and 5 articles for BBC Brasil. El País Brasil, in turn, published 3 articles in December 2018, 6 in April 2019, and 6 articles in June 2019, as shown in the chart below.

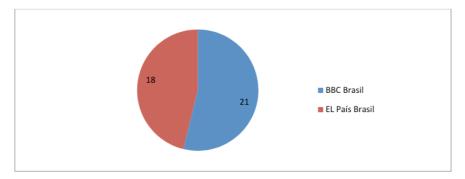
When considering the quantity and production of articles, it is noticed that, of the total number published per vehicle, there was a significant (talking) expression of articles from news agencies on the BBC Brasil portal. Of the 21 articles raised in the international section of BBC Brasil, 13 came from news agencies and only 8 with the signatures of correspondents or special envoys. On the other hand, a different result was found with El País Brasil: all 18 articles were signed by correspondents or special envoys, that is, it was possible to identify the name of the person who produced the article and the place where it was written, or also contributed to the writing.

From the first three graphs, it is possible to observe the total number of articles per vehicle, the number of publications per month and the volume of articles signed and from the news agencies. However, the number of factual and non-factual matters is lacking, as this separation also helps to understand the dynamics of coverage of the migration issue. For this purpose, after reading all the articles in the corpus, the amount of factual and nonfactual is presented, as shown in the following chart.

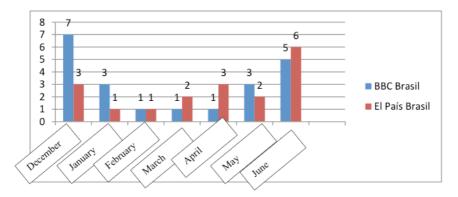
Deepening the analysis and bearing in mind the humanitarian journalism that permeates this research, it is worth noting that, as for the factual or non-factual articles from news agencies or unsigned, El País Brasil did not register any, since all 18 of its contents were produced by international correspondents or special envoys, as shown in Graph 3. However, it is noted that of the 13 BBC Brasil agencies' stories shown in Graph 3, six are non-factual and seven are factual.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

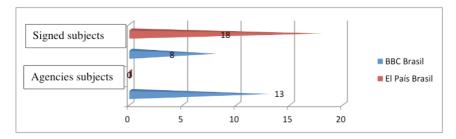
All the subjects of the 39 articles published in the international sections of BBC Brasil and El País Brasil became the agenda for having met some criteria of newsworthiness of journalism. As for the total number of articles published by the BBC Brasil (21) and El País Brasil (18) vehicles, it is noted that the total number of articles, as seen in Graph 1, is very low compared to the facts in the world about the migration issue, in addition to the complexity and urgency of this problem that affects millions of people every year, as recorded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



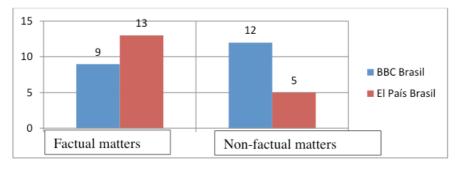
Graph 1. Total number of articles published in BBC Brasil and El País Brasil Source: prepared by the author

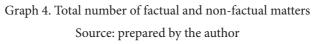


Graph 2. Total number of articles published per month Source: prepared by the author



Graph 3. Total number of articles signed and from the agencies Source: prepared by the author





The journalistic coverage of a humanitarian crisis expressed in a reduced number of articles corroborates a common discussion in humanitarian journalism, according to which a small number of crises occupy a large part of the news coverage, while others remain marginalized, despite their proportions. This thought, defended by Scott (2018), the main exponent of humanitarian journalism mentioned in the theoretical framework and discussed in this research, supports this reading. The smaller volume of articles and the attention given by the media studied to the migration issue are not closely correlated with the seriousness of the problem or the number of people affected.

This reading is also in line with the concept of "compassion fatigue", a concept explored by humanitarian journalism, underlined in the theoretical framework, which recalls the press mechanism of disorienting public opinion about the suffering of millions of refugees and migrants, since they are events that last over time. It contributes to explain the reasons that lead the migratory issue to be neglected in the media, translated by a reduced number of articles.

In fact, the Brazilian professor and researcher of humanitarian journalism, Cilene Victor, also featured in the theoretical framework, supports this reading: "In journalism, something that happens very often can become banal. As human suffering continues, it starts to be treated in the media as something normal, naturally acceptable" (VICTOR, 2018, p.105).

Still under analysis, it was highlighted that the months of December and June were the ones that had the most coverage of the migratory issue, with the largest number of articles. December 2018 was the month in which the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was adopted, which justifies the fact that the issue of migration has been on the rise. June, the month in which Refugee Day is celebrated, rescued the issue and highlighted it in the press, since, during this period, the UN and its agency dedicated to the issue, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, promote prominent actions in the media. This may explain the increase in the number of articles during that period and, consequently, the factual criterion that guides the press.

this, it is proved From that the newsworthiness criteria of these vehicles are supported by Western parameters that privilege hot topics, thus evidencing the gatekeeping theory, underlined in this research and which better explains this phenomenon. The high number of factual articles in El País Brasil helps to interpret this as shown in Graph 4. Of the 18 published articles, 13, that is, 72.2% are factual, while with BBC Brasil, 9 of the 21 articles are factual or that is, 42.8% as shown in graph 4. Furthermore, there was a high number of articles from the agencies among the contents of BBC Brasil, as shown in graph 3. Of the 21 articles, 13 came from news agencies, while the scenario presents itself differently in El País Brasil. In fact, all El País Brasil articles were produced by international correspondents or special envoys.

The frequent use of news agencies by BBC Brazil reinforces the role they play even today, as had already been highlighted, in 1980, in the report "A World and Many Voices", also known as the "McBride Report", mentioned in this research. In addition to the division of the world in terms of poverty and ideology, the four news agencies – the two main European ones, Agence France Presse (AFP) and the British Reuters, and the two American ones, the Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI) – they all belong to developed countries, with their own interests, and they concentrated a good part of the information destined for the world public (UNESCO, 1983).

This way, news agencies inform the world from a national perspective, that is, from the country they belong to, as Bomfim and Müller (2016) also observed. According to them, journalistic companies are characterized by national identities. This still recalls Valente's (2007) argument, for whom news agencies structure their interpretative horizons on a national basis. The author relates the problem to an action linked to the hypothetical definition of national interest that guides the production of news.

On the other hand, the fact that BBC Brasil resorts more to news agencies can be explained by the lack of financial conditions to maintain international correspondents or special envoys. The displacement of special envoys and the maintenance of international correspondents are costly for the media, as stated by Silva (2011), who addresses the transformation of the profession of international correspondents and the changes related to it due to the basic structural problem, imposing a reduction of costs.

In short, the reduced number of articles related to the migration issue is a warning sign for the journalistic approach that corroborates the underreporting of crises, as pointed out in the CARE report "Suffering in silence", recalled in this work. The lack of attention to this issue tends to favor forgetting the suffering of migrants, which happens in silence. In this sense, an approach to the issue of the press, in the light of humanitarian journalism and its theory, becomes a possibility to rescue the subject and approach it proportionally to its magnitude and humanitarian importance.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The migratory issue, as it was possible to verify in this research, did not receive attention from the studied press, not on a par with the scale of the current humanitarian crisis. The quantitative analysis to which this research was dedicated revealed a paradox in the journalistic coverage of the migration issue. Since the presentation of the results, a disproportionality was found in the journalistic coverage of this topic, which is configured as one of the faces of the greatest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the UN, in 1945. Through quantitative analysis, it was found that the migratory issue did not was treated in the international press to match the gravity, intensity and presence of the problem in these first decades of the 21st century.

However, in the course of the research, it was found that the migratory issue is a theme present in society, but its approach in the press still falls short of its social and political relevance. It is important to emphasize that the development of this research coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, a disease caused by the new coronavirus (SARS-COV-2), which brings the reflection that the coverage of the migratory issue tends to deal with another great challenge, which can make this issue even more invisible in the press. According to Victor (2018), humanitarian journalism can present itself as an escape route for merely factual coverage on this subject.

Studies in the field of humanitarian journalism are still in their infancy, but their practice can already be observed in some press vehicles or in the professional practice of some journalists. It is hoped that this research will contribute to future studies, deepen the coverage of humanitarian crises, including the migratory issue in the lens of humanitarian journalism.

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