

'Fire at Sea' Nominated for an Oscar

Kayla Pantano (January 24, 2017)



Gianfranco Rosi's 2016 Italian documentary film, which highlights the harsh realities of the migrant crisis in Lampedusa, will compete against the 4 other nominations in its category at the 89th Academy Awards on February 26.

[Gianfranco Rosi](#) [2]'s [Fire at Sea](#) [3] (Fuocoammare) is among the five films nominated for the Best Documentary Feature at the [Oscars](#) [4]. It was also selected as the Italian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film but it was not nominated.

Its rivals for the best doc award include the highly regarded [O.J.: Made in America](#) [5] directed by Ezra Edelman and the equally celebrated [Lam Not Your Negro](#) [6] by Raoul Peck, [13th](#) [7] by Ava DuVernay, and [Life, Animated](#) [8] by Roger Ross Williams.



Shot on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa during the European migrant crisis, *Fire at Sea* sets the migrants' dangerous Mediterranean crossing against a background of the ordinary life of the islanders. The film is presented without narration and beautifully composed, unlike many shaky documentaries, and provides an inside look at both the refugees and the people trying to help them.

Throughout the film Risi follows a twelve-year-old resident from a fishing family, Samuele, and a doctor who gives both hope and bad news to the endless stream of refugees. Authentic to the core, he does not skimp out on any details, featuring helicopter rescues and people being pulled from the water either dead or in poor physical condition.

Last February, the documentary won the [Golden Bear](#) [9] at the 66th [Berlin International Film Festival](#) [10]. In his acceptance speech, Risi stated that he hoped to heighten awareness of the migrant situation saying, "It's not acceptable that people die crossing the sea to escape from tragedies."

Meryl Streep, President of the [Jury](#) [11] in Berlin, described the film as "a daring hybrid of captured footage and deliberate storytelling that allows us to consider what documentary can do."

Since 2014, thousands of migrants have been trying to cross the Central Mediterranean to Italy in an effort to escape poverty-stricken homelands or war-torn countries. Lampedusa in particular receives enormous numbers of Africans and Middle-Easterners transported by smugglers along the coast of Libya. However, the journeys are dangerous and many risk their lives on unsafe boats. From January to April 2015, about 1,600 migrants died traveling from Libya to Lampedusa, making it the deadliest migrant route in the world.

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