

ПРОФЕСІЙНА СПІЛКА РОБІТНИКІВ
МОРСЬКОГО ТРАНСПОРТУ УКРАЇНИ

MARINE TRANSPORT WORKERS'
TRADE UNION OF UKRAINE



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Odesa, Ukraine

№ 01-030

Ref: Safety of Seafarers in the Strait of Hormuz and Affected Middle East Ports

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

MTWTU expresses its deep concern regarding the rapidly escalating military situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the surrounding region, including the ports and territorial waters of Iran, Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, and Lebanon, which have been directly affected by the renewed active phase of the conflict between Israel and Iran.

Recent missile and drone attacks, as well as reported strikes affecting port infrastructure and commercial shipping, have created a serious and immediate threat to the safety of merchant vessels, including cargo and passenger ships, and to the lives of seafarers serving on board of these ships in the region. Notably, at least three tankers were struck near the Strait of Hormuz, including one off the coast of Oman that was set ablaze, and Iranian warnings via VHF radio effectively closed the strait to maritime traffic.

According to the current IBF List of Warlike and High-Risk Areas (as of 19 March 2024 and extended until 23 March 2026), the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf, and the territorial waters and ports of the states presently affected are not designated as IBF Warlike Operations Areas or High-Risk Areas. At the same time, the objective security situation in the region demonstrates characteristics of active hostilities, including attacks impacting maritime navigation and port facilities.

We fully align ourselves with the recent statement issued by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), together with the European Shipowners (ECSA) and the Asian Shipowners' Association, which emphasised that the foremost concern must be the wellbeing and safety of seafarers who have found themselves in a highly volatile and unpredictable situation through no fault of their own. We strongly support the call that all parties must take every necessary step to safeguard seafarers and ensure that ship operators conduct thorough risk assessments and strictly follow the latest Best Management Practices (BMP) and official maritime security guidance.

In this context, MTWTU respectfully requests the following:

- That shipowners and operators refrain from sending vessels with Ukrainian seafarers on board to ports or territorial waters in Iran, Israel, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, or the Strait of Hormuz and adjacent Persian Gulf areas while active hostilities and missile/drone attacks continue.
- That, irrespective of the current IBF designation status, the fundamental right of seafarers not to proceed into an area of active armed conflict be fully respected.
- That where a company nevertheless decides to proceed to the affected region, seafarers are explicitly informed in advance and are guaranteed the right to exercise the relevant provisions of Article 17 of the IBF CBA, including the right to refuse to sail and to be repatriated at the company's cost, without prejudice to their contractual rights.



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- That for seafarers currently located in the ports or territorial waters of the affected states, all possible measures be taken immediately to ensure their safety and security, including enhanced security arrangements, continuous monitoring of official advisories, contingency planning, and, where necessary, prompt evacuation or repatriation. In addition, any information from shipowners or operators regarding vessels with Ukrainian seafarers currently present in these areas is welcome. MTWTU can use this information to monitor the situation, contact the seafarers' families if the seafarers are MTWTU members, detect whether any immediate assistance is required, and provide support for both the physical and mental wellbeing of the seafarers. We are also deeply concerned about the stress and anxiety experienced by their relatives and will ensure that family communications are handled sensitively to address their concerns and maintain their confidence in the seafarers' safety.

The safety of seafarers must remain the paramount consideration. Commercial imperatives cannot prevail over the protection of human life. Ukrainian seafarers, like their colleagues of all nationalities, must not be placed in situations of foreseeable and avoidable danger.

We respectfully request that ITF, IMEC, ICS, and IMO give urgent consideration to the present situation and assess whether temporary or updated risk designations and additional protective measures under the IBF framework are warranted.

Yours faithfully,

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