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Circular letter No.4865

17 April 2024

To: All IMO Member States  
Intergovernmental organizations  
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Government of Israel**

The Government of Israel sent the attached communication, dated 16 April 2024, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

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The Ambassador's Office  
Embassy of Israel  
London



לשכת השגריר  
שגרירות ישראל  
לונדון

Secretary-General  
International Maritime Organization,  
4 Albert Embankment,  
London, SE1 7SR

16 April 2024

Regarding: Iran's Revolutionary Guards attack on MSC ARIES

Your Excellency,

I am writing to bring to your attention the dangerous escalation in maritime safety with the attack and hijacking of a commercial vessel by the Islamic Republic of Iran, near the Strait of Hormuz.

On 13 April 2024 Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy seized MSC Aries (Mediterranean Shipping Company) sailing under the flag of Portugal and managed by the London-based company Zodiac Maritime Limited. Commandos from the IRGC used a helicopter to board and seize the vessel, and forced it to sail toward the territorial waters of Iran where it is currently being held. The vessel takeover included the kidnapping of 25 crew members on board, who are being held as hostages by Iran, including citizens of India, Philippines, Russia, Pakistan and Estonia.

Iran publicly stated that its reason for the hijacking of MSC Aries was that the vessel had links to Israel.

This event is the latest in a series of illegal and unjustified attacks carried out by Iran on commercial shipping in the Straits of Hormuz. These Iranian attacks destabilise one of the most important trading routes, where 20 percent of the world's daily consumption of oil pass through. Since July 2019, following the attack on the vessel "Mercer Street" by UAVs launched from Iran, murdering two crew members, Iran has conducted or aided a series of seizures and attacks on vessels and acted to destabilize the region.

Iran stands behind the maritime attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea. Iran's years-long support for the Houthis includes supplying weapons and training. This backing has emboldened the Houthis to launch attacks on commercial ships, disrupting vital maritime routes in the Red Sea and the Arabian Peninsula.

The IMO has an important role to play in maintaining global maritime security and safety, including the protection of all seafarers. Therefore, we urge you to condemn Iran's blatant violation of international law and its commitments as an IMO member. It is equally important to call for the

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immediate release of the hostage crew of MSC Aries, as well as for an end to Iran's dangerous and disruptive actions that threaten the safety of international seas.

To prevent further endangerment of seafarers and a potential escalation into a wider conflict, we urge the IMO to submit a comprehensive report to the UN Security Council that will present the recent attack and Iran's ongoing activities in undermining maritime security, both regionally and internationally.

The Government of Israel kindly requests this matter be brought to the attention of the Members of the Organization by means of circular letter.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

*Tzipi Hotovely*  
Tzipi Hotovely

Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's  
**Permanent Representative to the IMO**

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