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Circular Letter No.4820
30 November 2023

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

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

The Government of the State of Israel has sent the attached communication, dated 29 November 2023, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

ANNEX

The Ambassador's Office

Embassy of Israel

London



לשכת השגרירה

שגרירות ישראל

לונדון

Secretary-General,
International Maritime Organization (IMO),
4 Albert Embankment,
London,
United Kingdom, SE1 7SR

29th November 2023

Your Excellency,

I am writing to bring to your attention the dangerous escalation in maritime safety and the attacks against commercial vessels by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its proxy, the Houthis in Yemen.

On 19th November 2023, the Houthis seized the "Galaxy Leader" vessel off the coast of Yemen. This Bahamas-flagged vessel - with 25 crew members of various nationalities, including Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Filipino and Mexican - is still in the hands of the Iranian-sponsored terror organisation, and its crew are still in danger.

On 24th November 2023, another commercial cargo ship, the Malta-flagged vessel "CMA CGM Symi", was attacked by an Iranian Shaheed-136 drone carrying bombs. The ship's crew is also from a variety of nationals including Romania, India, Philippines, Russia and Turkey.

On 26th November 2023, a US ship thwarted another attempted seizure by armed individuals of a Liberian-flagged commercial vessel, the "M/V Central Park", in the Gulf of Aden. Two ballistic missiles were also fired from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen toward the US ship as it was responding to the maritime attack.

These actions are clear violations of International Maritime Law and of the IMO Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

The attacks have serious consequences for maritime safety and regional security. We are witnessing deliberate contraventions by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which constantly disregards international norms. These attacks heighten the risk to shipping in the Red Sea, which is one of the most important international maritime routes with more than 2,000 ships transiting it every month.

In addition, on at least three occasions in the past month (October 19th, November 1st, November 14th), the Houthis have fired long-distance missiles towards Israel. In one of the attacks, a missile hit a school in the southern Israeli city of Eilat, causing damage and injury. The other missiles were successfully intercepted.

Nothing less than the freedom of maritime movement and security is at stake. It is imperative that the IMO strongly condemns these attacks and condemns Iran for pursuing this dangerous path that, if not addressed immediately, may lead to a world-wide maritime crisis.

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

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tzipora Hotovely in blue ink.

Tzipora Hotovely

Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St. James's