

Release innocent seafarers, end attacks on ships immediately: ICS



The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has called for an immediate end to attacks on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden that victimise innocent seafarers.

Marcus Hand | Nov 30, 2023

Some 25 seafarers from the Ray Car Carriers vessel Galaxy Leader remain held hostage 11 days after Houthi rebels stormed the NYK-chartered ship in a military style operation. Two other Israeli-linked vessels have also been attacked with the Eastern Pacific Shipping (EPS) managed CMA CGM Syri hit by a drone, and the Zodiac Maritime tanker Central Park rescued from a hijacking by the US Navy.

In addition, the UKMTO (United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations) said it has received multiple reports from Masters of small craft acting suspiciously in the Gulf of Aden.

Related: [Three Israeli-linked vessels attacked in a week](#)

Commenting on the recent attacks in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden ICS stated:

“In all cases, these vessels are conducting their right of freedom of navigation and innocent passage. The attacks are a flagrant breach of international law and maritime norms by paramilitary forces in Yemen.

Related: [Update: Houthi rebels seize car carrier with 25 crew on board](#)

“These attacks must stop immediately, and the innocent seafarers released.”

The shipowner organisation added, “The cost to the safety and well-being of the seafarers on board those ships while in the service of global trade being embroiled in these attacks should not be underestimated.”

Complicating the situation further the US Pentagon says that the five armed captured in the hijacking of the Central Park were likely Somali pirates, the scourge of the industry over a decade ago, although it does not rule out a link with Houthi rebels.

“We’re continuing to assess, but initial indications that these five individuals are Somali,” said Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Patrick Ryder.

While Yemini Houthi rebels have threatened to attack Israeli-linked shipping the number of reported incidents has seen other international shipping companies diverting vessels.

Maersk diverted the vessel Lisa coming from India to Salalah, Oman to discharge all cargo, while the Maersk Pangani coming from Cape Town will proceed to Mundra, India to discharge all Mundra and Jebel Ali cargo.

“This decision has been made with careful consideration of various factors, prioritising the safety of crew, the vessel, and your cargo,” Maersk said in a customer advisory.

The ICS said the industry had issued routing guidance for ships in the region, and it is strongly urged that any vessel transiting these waters conduct a thorough threat and risk assessment.

However, it noted such measures can only go so far to protect commercial ships and their crews and it called on maritime security in the region to be maximised.

“Furthermore, noting the complexity of the situation, ICS would call on those States that have influence in the region to use everything within their power to maintain freedom of navigation, and dissuade the antagonists from persisting in this aggressive and illegal action that disrupts trade, and victimises innocent seafarers,” ICS said.