

## MSC Aries crew to be released soon

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Iran will release the crew of the 15,000 teu *MSC Aries* containership soon, the country's foreign minister said over the weekend.

The Israeli-linked ship with 25 crew onboard was hijacked on April 13 by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, just ahead of Tehran launching a missile volley at Israel.

The vessel is currently anchored near three other ships Iran has seized in recent months.

The world's leading shipping associations highlighted the inequality seafarers face as hostages in a recent open letter to the United Nations secretary-general, Antonio Guterres.

"The world would be outraged if four airliners were seized and held hostage with innocent souls onboard. Regrettably, there does not seem to be the same response or concern for the four commercial vessels and their crews being held hostage," stated the open letter sent by 16 shipping organisations.

An NYK-operated car carrier, the *Galaxy Leader*, remains in Yemeni waters, having been hijacked six months ago by the Houthis, while off the Horn of Africa, Somali pirates have resumed their ransom tactics, abducting two ships in recent months.

"Innocent seafarers have been killed, seafarers are being held hostage. This would be unacceptable on land, and it is unacceptable at sea," the letter to the UN boss warned, demanding the UN body create an enhanced coordinated military presence, missions and patrols in the region and that all efforts possible are brought to bear to release the many seafarers currently being held hostage in the Middle East.