

Unfair treatment of seafarers growing, says IMO secretary general



IMO secretary general Arsenio Dominguez called for the release of the crews of Galaxy Leader and MSC Aries in his opening remarks to the IMO Legal Committee meeting.

Gary Howard | Apr 23, 2024

Dominguez said there was a particularly worrying geopolitical context in which recent distressing events have taken place, and that safety and wellbeing of seafarers must remain of utmost importance.

He reiterated his call for the immediate release of the crew of Galaxy Leader, a car carrier seized by Houthis in November 2023. Noting the recent letter from the shipping industry to the UN secretary general, Dominguez added his voice to

those appealing for the release of container ship MSC Aries and its crew after the ship was seized by Iranian authorities earlier in April.

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Dominguez said he was in a constant search for solutions, continuing conversations with the UN and other stakeholders.

“The plight of the seafarers affected by these incidents must not be forgotten and it is incumbent upon us to pursue every available avenue to secure their safe return to their loved ones and their livelihoods.

Related: [Industry appeals to UN over MSC Aries seizure](#)

“International shipping must not be targeted and used as a means of exerting pressure in geopolitical crises. And I call on you here to continue your efforts to return to normalcy and for ships and seafarers to continue doing their work without threats and interruptions,” said Dominguez.

On the topic of detainment of seafarers suspected of committing crimes, Dominguez said cases of unfair treatment of seafarers were regrettably growing. “This poses a threat to the future sustainability of merchant shipping. It negatively affects the morale of seafarers and recruitment of qualified young people into the seafaring profession.”

The Legal Committee is set to finalise guidelines on the fair treatment of detained seafarers which will be considered and refined by an IMO-ILO working group.

The 111th meeting of the IMO Legal Committee (LEG 111) opened on April 22 and runs through April 26, 2024.

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