



International Chamber of Shipping

Shaping the Future of Shipping

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Mr Kitack Lim
Secretary-General
International Maritime Organization
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7 September 2020

Dear Secretary-General,

I am writing to express ICS' profound concern about the ongoing plight of the Maersk Etienne, which remains off Malta unable to disembark the distressed persons rescued on 5 August.

The 27 rescued people, including one child and a pregnant woman, have been onboard the ship for nearly a month. The crew has provided them with water, food and blankets and given them the support they can. However, the crew is not trained to provide the medical treatment needed, nor to manage the prolonged situation with vulnerable people onboard. The ship is not a safe environment for the rescued people and is not sufficiently provisioned to ensure their safety and welfare onboard. Conversely, the ship's safety may be compromised by the rescued people on board unfamiliar with the merchant vessel and its operations. Photographs attached to this letter demonstrate the desperate conditions onboard the ship.

It is of great concern that ships are being directed to respond to SAR incidents by States, but are then becoming entangled in legal and diplomatic disputes that imperil the people onboard for extended periods of time.

The shipping industry takes its legal and humanitarian obligations to provide assistance to persons in distress at sea extremely seriously, and has worked with IMO to ensure that ships are as prepared as they can be when presented with the prospect of large-scale rescues at sea. However, merchant vessels are not designed nor equipped for this purpose. It is imperative therefore for States to play their part in facilitating the swift resolution of these distressing and dangerous situations by ensuring that arrangements are in place for those rescued to be disembarked to a place of safety as soon as possible. A breakdown in the balance of trust between States and rescuing merchant vessels in such SAR incidents is likely to be profound and its consequences tragic.

We call on IMO, as the specialised agency for the safety and security of shipping to send a clear message that States must ensure that SAR incidents are resolved in accordance with the letter and spirit of international law by providing a safe port of disembarkation for the rescued people and allowing the crew to proceed on their voyage unhindered and safely.

ICS remains at your disposal in resolving this critical issue to a satisfactory end.

Yours sincerely,

Guy Platten
Secretary General