



**CSDM**  
Centre Suisse pour la Défense  
des Droits des Migrants



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7th September 2020

**For the attention of:**

- (i) Mr. Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and
- (ii) Mr. Felipe González Morales, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

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**UPDATE: URGENT APPEAL**

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Dear UN Special Rapporteurs,

**RE: Serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation on Board the Maersk Etienne - three migrants jump overboard.**

This is an update to our Urgent Appeal of Friday 4 September 2020 concerning the 27 migrants on board the Maersk Tanker 'Etienne'.

Yesterday, on Sunday 6th September 2020, it was confirmed that 3 of the 27 migrants on board the *Etienne* jumped overboard into the Mediterranean Sea. Upon jumping,

the migrants were then rescued by the crew of the *Etienne* to prevent them from drowning. These desperate acts of self-harm by the migrants demonstrate clearly that their **continued retention on board the Maersk Etienne puts their lives in imminent danger**. The ICS, UNHCR and IOM have today issued an urgent call for the immediate and safe disembarkation of the *Etienne* stressing the fact that time now is running out for all concerned.<sup>1</sup>

According to an official of the Danish Shipping industry who represents *Maersk Tankers*<sup>2</sup> and with whom undersigned organisations have spoken today, the desperate act by the three migrants could have been life-threatening: due to the height of the tanker's deck to the water, the fall "might easily have resulted in a broken neck or back". This act of deliberate self-harm on the part of the migrants demonstrates the full extent of their psychological distress, caused by the prolonged and seemingly indefinite confinement on the tanker. As set out in the original correspondence, the migrants on board the *Etienne* have been prevented from disembarking since 5th August 2020, a consecutive period of 33 days now. This is the longest period of time a vessel carrying rescued migrants has been refused permission to disembark in recent history.

**There are no doctors on board the Maersk Etienne and therefore there are no possibilities of providing psychological support or any other type of medical assistance to the migrants as a means of preventing further desperate acts.** Furthermore, according to the official of Danish Shipping, the other migrants on board the *Etienne* were (further) shocked by the tripple suicide attempt of Sunday morning. The crew of the *Etienne* has taken care to talk to the migrants and explain the grave risks involved in such acts, but the crew has not been able to do more than that given that they are not mental health professionals.

According to *Maersk*, the situation on the *Etienne* is becoming increasingly tense and there is a risk of further self-harm amongst the migrants. There is also a risk to the crew itself as the migrants become more and more distressed.

It should be recalled that the *Etienne* is a chemical tanker and is not intended or outfitted to carry civilian passengers. The migrants are sleeping on mattresses on the deck of the ship and are exposed to the elements. Just to be able to get around safely on such a ship you need professional training and experience, something which the migrants do not have. The crew of the *Etienne* have done an admirable job of caring

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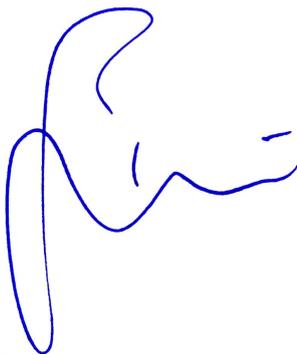
<sup>1</sup> ICS, UNHCR and IOM call on States to end humanitarian crisis onboard ship in the Mediterranean, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/9/5f55e7fe4/ics-unhcr-iom-call-states-end-humanitarian-crisis-onboard-ship-mediterranean.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ms Maria Skipper Schwenn, Executive Director, Security, Environment and Maritime Research, Danish Shipping, [mss@danishshipping.dk](mailto:mss@danishshipping.dk)

for the rescued migrants, and catering to their basic needs to the best of their abilities throughout the prolonged standoff, which is no fault of theirs. Now it is time for the relevant government authorities to take immediate action and fulfill their legal obligations (outlined in our prior submission) and immediately provide safe-haven for the migrants.

The above recent developments demonstrates that the situation on board the *Etienne* has deteriorated significantly and **the need for your urgent intervention with the Maltese authorities is critical.**

Yours Sincerely,



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