



The Nautical Institute
202 Lambeth Road,
London SE1 7LQ
E: jl@nautinst.org
W: www.nautinst.org



THE HONOURABLE COMPANY
OF MASTER MARINERS
H.Q.S. "Wellington", Temple Stairs,
Victoria Embankment
London WC2R 2PN
E: clerk@hcomm.org.uk
W: www.hcomm.org.uk



TRINITY HOUSE

Trinity House,
Tower Hill, London
EC3N 4DH
E: Martin.Atherton@trinityhouse.co.uk
W: www.trinityhouse.co.uk

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Foreign Secretary

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport

06th April 2021

Dear Secretaries of State,

PLIGHT OF SEAFARERS TRAPPED BY THE COVID PANDEMIC

We are writing to you on behalf of international seafarers in our roles as leaders of The Honourable Company of Master Mariners, Trinity House and The Nautical Institute, 3 eminent British organisations dedicated to the professionalism of seafaring both in the UK and internationally.

No doubt you are aware from reporting that, due to Covid restrictions preventing normal crew rotations taking place, very large numbers of merchant seafarers, by some estimates around 300,000, from a wide variety of nations have been trapped, either afloat in ships or ashore in hostel or hotel accommodation, well away from their native countries. In some cases, these people have been away from their homes for up to 2 years and, currently, with no apparent hope of repatriation.

A good many shipping companies have made herculean and laudable efforts to effect repatriation but the stumbling block in numerous cases is the unwillingness of governments actively to find ways of allowing these people to travel, despite the readiness of companies to make the necessary arrangements. An excellent example is the group of Kiribatian seamen that, after much negotiation, were landed in the Philippines but their own government is refusing to let them return home. Their employers have now been forced to fly them to Hamburg, even further away from their Pacific island, so that they could receive adequate medical and welfare support.

For almost 200 hundred years since the Wilberforce-inspired abolition of slavery bill, Britain has maintained an enviable international record of standing up for human rights, no matter where they were being infringed. We are a maritime trading nation very heavily dependent on ships and the people who man them to ensure the free flow of our seaborne trade. We have an opportunity and a right to speak up, loudly and clearly to bring pressure to bear to resolve this pressing matter.

We would suggest that a multi-pronged approach through diplomatic channels and through Britain's membership of international bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation and the United Nations. There will be other avenues of which your officials will be aware. Current, lower-level negotiations have failed to resolve a situation that is threatening the welfare and health of so many people upon whom we depend. The moment is right for vigorous British government action at the very highest levels to cut through bureaucracy and stimulate an urgent and internationally agreed plan to remove the obstacles that are preventing these key workers from returning to their homes.

You and your officials will know best how this can be done but we would ask that, as a matter of priority, you initiate some action.

Yours faithfully,

Derek Chadburn

Captain Derek Chadburn
Master
The Honourable Company of Master Mariners

Ian Mc Naught

Captain Ian McNaught CVO MNM FNI
Deputy Master
Trinity House

John Lloyd

Captain John Lloyd CMMar FNI
Chief Executive
The Nautical Institute