

**SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE  
OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY**

**Statement  
to the  
Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea  
United Nations, New York  
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by

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Mr. President,

I am grateful to you and to the Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for your warm welcome and for giving me the opportunity to speak at this year's meeting. I speak on behalf of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and New Jersey, which this year is celebrating its 175<sup>th</sup> year of service to the world's merchant mariners - irrespective of their race, religion, nationality, gender or beliefs.

I will speak to you today on a topic that has brought more public attention to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea than any other: piracy.

In 2008 at least 293 pirate attacks occurred world wide; 49 vessels were hijacked, 46 other vessels were fired upon, 889 seafarers were taken hostage, 32 seafarers were injured, 11 seafarers were killed and 21 seafarers are missing and presumed dead. 111 of the 2008 pirate attacks occurred off the coast of Somalia. This dramatic increase in the incidents of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia - including hijacking vessels carrying World Food Program Aid to Somalia, the M/V Faina with its cargo of 33 T-72 tanks and other weapons, and the M/T Sirius Star loaded with \$100,000,000 cargo of crude oil – prompted an extraordinary international response.

The United Nations Security Council adopted five resolutions addressing piracy off the coast of Somalia. The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, comprised of twenty-four nations, several international organizations and maritime industry representatives, was established to facilitate and coordinate efforts implementing Security Council Resolution 1851. A coalition of maritime industry organizations developed Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Off the Coast of Somalia. More than 25 countries

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have sent naval units to waters off Somalia to support anti-piracy measures. The International Maritime Organization recently updated its guidelines for flag states and ship operators on preventing and suppressing acts of piracy. These are just a few of the responses to Somali pirates. Almost every day, somewhere in the world, there is a seminar, conference, or other discussion about piracy. Just yesterday I attended one such seminar at the United States Merchant Marine Academy.

Almost all piracy discussions and measures focus on preventing and suppressing acts of piracy, such as use of force, arming merchant ships, and prosecuting pirates. These are very important topics that we need to address. But, I would like to bring to your attention to a missing piece of the piracy discussions, which is: what happens to merchant mariners who survive pirate attacks?

Since 2003, pirates have kidnapped or taken hostage more than 2,800 merchant mariners, and they have robbed or attacked many more.

What happened to the seafarers after their release or after the attack?

Do they continue their seafaring careers?

Are they fit to work on ships?

Do they need continuing medical attention?

Do they receive medical attention?

Where do they get help to deal with the aftermath of surviving a piracy incident?

The answer to all of these questions is the same: I don't know - nor does anyone know.

I do know that some shipping companies and some governments have gained a lot of experience in providing for survivors of pirate attacks, but no best practices for mariners' care have emerged. Nor has anyone conducted clinical studies on the possible short and long-term traumatic effects of piracy on merchant mariners after experiencing an attack.

Many jurisdictions have resource centers and services to help victims of crimes repair the damage to their lives and property. Such centers do not have the capacity to deal with piracy issues because piracy, by its very nature, occurs outside of most centers' jurisdictions. A great need exists to establish a resource center for piracy survivors to assist merchant mariners, their families, and ship operators find the help they need after a pirate incident.

Mr. President, although general press coverage of piracy has diminished since last month's Maersk Alabama incident, the piracy threat continues unabated. So far this year Somali pirates have attacked at least 146 merchant vessels, 30 of which were hijacked – already surpassing the 111 attacks in the same region last year.

Nations, international organizations and the maritime industry must persist in their efforts to prevent and suppress acts of piracy. In addition, I ask that merchant mariners and their families receive the same level of care by:

1. Studying the effects of piracy on survivors. Many studies have looked into the effect of traumatic events on police, firefighters, military and others. Little literature exists on the psychological effects of being taken hostage, and no research has been published on the specific effects of piracy. There is a great need to complete a clinical study of the psychological impact of pirate attacks on seafarers that takes into

account the unique nature of seafaring, including its multicultural nature. The results of such a study will help determine how best to care for seafarers who have survived a pirate attack.

2. Creating guidelines on caring for seafarers after a pirate attack. IMO and industry guidelines exist for preventing and suppressing pirate attacks. There are no guidelines for caring for seafarers who have survived a pirate attack other than guidance for debriefing seafarers for military or prosecutorial purposes. Some shipping companies have provided an extensive array services and care for their crews following a piracy incident. The lessons learned from shipping companies caring for their crewmembers who survived a pirate attack as well as the results of clinical studies should be consolidated into international guidelines.
3. Creating a piracy survivors resource center. Many jurisdictions have a tremendous range of services and resources to help crime survivors and their loved ones repair the damage to their lives and property. Many Web sites provide comprehensive resource information and a wealth of practical information for crimes survivors. Although the resources address almost all kinds of crime, none focus on piracy survivors. The establishment of a resource center for piracy survivors would assist seafarers and ship owners alike in finding the help needed after an attack.

We depend upon merchant mariners for their contributions to our development and prosperity. We owe them the assurance that we will do everything we can to protect them from piracy – before, during, and long after an attack.

Mr. President, before I conclude, I wish to ask one more thing of you and my fellow delegates:

As we sit in this hall of the United Nations and after we leave this place, please keep in your thoughts the 188 merchant mariners from 12 merchant ships who are, at this very moment, being held hostage by pirates in Somalia.