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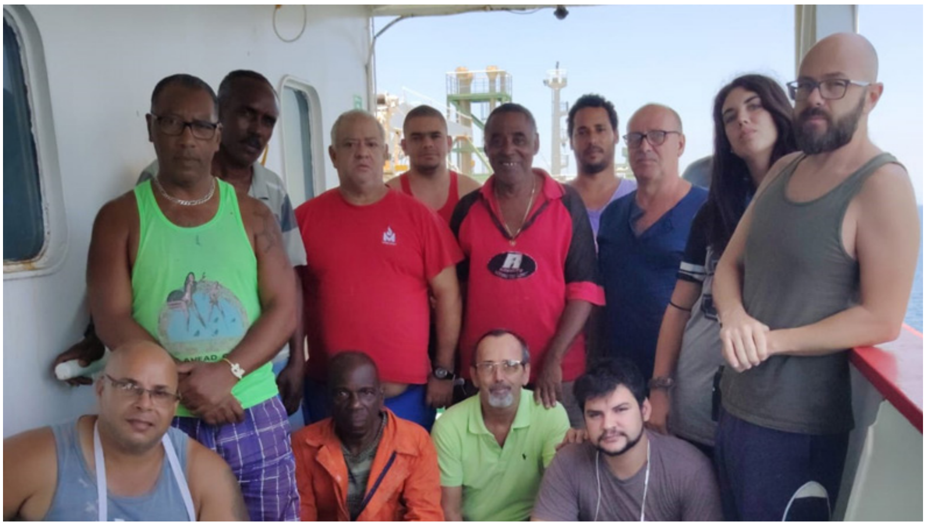
Seafarer abandonment cases at record high



CASES OF SEAFARER ABANDONMENT are at a record high, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

As of December 17, the total number of new cases reached 76, according to the International Maritime Organization. Not all are listed in a public database run jointly with the International Labour Organization.

Of the 76 cases, only 18 have been resolved. About 17 of the cases were related to the impact of Covid-19, further hampering the crew-change situation for seafarers, the IMO said.

In early November, there were 62 cases, involving 811 seafarers of varying nationalities. In addition, 243 seafarers were on a cruiseship that had been abandoned.

Last year, there were 40 cases, involving 474 abandoned seafarers. Only 10 cases were resolved, allowing 123 seafarers to be repatriated with full pay, while 97 were repatriated without wages or paid only in part. As many as 254 individual seafarer cases remain unresolved.

Since 2017, when 55 cases were reported and catalogued, abandonment has been on the decline, until now.

"Abandonment is an insidious and ongoing issue in the sector, trapping crew in unacceptable conditions on board, leading to loss of income and in some cases, resulting in indentured servitude," said Human Rights at Sea founder David Hammond.

"This is a reflection of market conditions and often tight business margins which can place owners into debt and needing to offload liabilities."

He described 2020 as a “seminal year for finally embedding the issue of the protection of seafarers’ fundamental human rights, not just labour rights” into the maritime industry’s awareness.

“This has been the core of our work for the past seven years and we are relieved to see the emerging realisation that human rights apply at sea, as they do on land,” he said. “Amongst other issues raised by the pandemic, abandonment needs to be consistently addressed by flag, coastal and port states and not simply reported against, but swiftly acted upon.”

A report by Human Rights at Sea cited India and the United Arab Emirates as being of particular, pressing concern.

According to the ILO/IMO database, the UAE has the worst record for abandonment cases, potentially linked to the fact that it has not ratified the Maritime Labour Convention. China, Taiwan, Turkey and Italy were next.

Liberia, Malta and Panama were the flag states with the most cases, the data showed. Several of the cases have been resolved, however.

“We continue to work with the ILO, member states and industry and trade union partners to try to resolve these cases, based on our collective responsibility and human duty,” the IMO said in a statement marking the United Nations’ Human Rights Day on December 10. “While the causes of abandonment are many, they all have a dramatic human impact that must be addressed.”

In 2006, the ILO adopted the Maritime Labour Convention, widely known as the “seafarers’ bill of rights”. It has been ratified by at least 97 member states.

The original MLC did not make provision for financial security in the case of abandonment. Guidelines for liability and compensation were actually adopted in 2001 but only incorporated in revisions made in 2014, with entry into force three years later. It requires shipowners to have compulsory insurance to cover abandonment of seafarers, as well as claims for death or long-term disability.

The IMO’s senior legal officer Jan de Boer told Lloyd’s List that many areas needed improvement to help alleviate the plight of abandoned seafarers, including a more co-ordinated effort between different agencies.

In addition, guidance for Port State Control and Flag States needs to be updated, and will be discussed at the Sub-Committee on Implementation of IMO Instruments to be held in July, he said, adding that there also needs to be a more generic requirement for the standard of insurers under the MLC.

The practice that “some companies are using registries in non-MLC jurisdictions for substandard business.” also needs to be addressed, he said, adding that while the work needed is “ambitious, it is realistic.”.

A case of abandonment occurs when the shipowner fails to fulfil certain fundamental obligations to the seafarer, among other things, relating to timely repatriation or payment of outstanding remuneration or to the provision of basic necessities of life, such as adequate food, accommodation, and medical care. Abandonment will have occurred when the master of a ship has been left without any financial means in respect of ship operations.

The total number of cases that have been recorded in the ILO/IMO database since it was launched in 2004 reached 438, involving 5,767 seafarers, using data as of August 2020. Some cases took more than 32 months to resolve.

In one instance, a ship in Haiti has been sitting at port unresolved for five years, Mr de Boer said. The rudder is not working, putting the safety of the vessel and its 11 crew members at risk.

In other instances, vessels in Djibouti, one with a Greek owner who went bankrupt, had very ill crew on board who needed medical attention. Eventually the International Red Cross had to be called in to assist following failed attempts at repatriation.

WHAT TO WATCH

Sri Lanka eases crew-change ban

SRI LANKA has begun to allow crew changes through chartered flights as the country increases efforts to relieve seafarers stranded on ships.

The crew changes will be initiated through an offshore crew transit hub stationed in Sri Lankan territorial waters, which will provide temporary accommodations for seafarers during bulk crew-change operations, according to port agent GAC.

"The crew changes taking place through the Offshore Crew Transit Hub should be only on the basis of direct bulk crew changes facilitated via chartered flights from/to Mattala International Airport," the agents said.

However, foreign crew embarkation/disembarkation via commercial flights is still not permitted.

Crew disembarking from a vessel will be sent directly to the transit hub and, once the charter flights are available, will be transferred directly to the airport for repatriation.

Where required for seafarers returning to their home country, PCR tests will be conducted on board the transit hub, the agents noted.

"If any seafarer tests positive for Covid-19, provision for treatment should be made in the designated intermediate care facility."

Meanwhile, on-signers who arrive in the country by charter flight will be sent directly to the transit hub from the airport and then embarked to their vessels as per the schedule.

A PCR test should be done for every on-signer within 72 hours before boarding their flight and should be made available to the respective port health officer prior to landing in Sri Lanka.

France agrees limited reopening of border with UK

FRANCE has agreed to partly lift its blockade of UK ports as disruptions caused a queue of around 1,500 lorries waiting to leave the port of Dover.

France imposed a 48-hour travel ban to and from the UK on December 20 due to the emergence of a variant coronavirus strain which has seen infections rise across London and the southeast.

More than 40 countries have imposed travel bans on the UK since this past weekend.

Following talks between the two governments, France is expected to reopen its borders, according to French media reports. However, the limited move will apply only for French nationals, residents and professionals, including lorry drivers. Everyone seeking to enter the country will need to submit a negative coronavirus test.

France's ban has caused major disruptions to the UK's biggest ro-ro port, Dover, which connects with the European Union through ports such as Calais and can facilitate the transit of thousands of lorries between the UK and the European Union countries every day.

Dover has halted all traffic into the port until further notice, causing a long queue of truck drivers in Kent as they await entry to the port.

A Port of Dover spokesperson told Lloyd's List around 1,500 lorries were waiting to enter the port.

The port would be able to clear the lorries quickly once movement was allowed again, the spokesperson said.

Lorries were also reported to be backed up in Calais and other French ports.

"No driver wants to deliver to the UK now, so the UK is going to see its freight supply dry up," France's FNTR national road haulage federation said.

Two UK-based ferry operators conduct 60 crossings from the port each day and each trip can accommodate 150 lorries, the Dover spokesperson added.

The European Commission recommended on Tuesday that while precautionary measures should be taken and non-essential travel form the UK should be discouraged, essential travel and transit of passengers should be facilitated.

"Flight and train bans should be discontinued given the need to ensure essential travel and avoid supply chain disruptions," it said in its recommendations.

EU ambassadors are scheduled to meet to discuss the matter further.

The commission said EU member states should take co-ordinated action on this issue.

Commissioner for Transport Adina Valean said the EU had to maintain supply chains intact.

"Within the EU, it is crucial that transport workers are exempted from any restrictive measures, [such] as quarantine and testing," she said.

ANALYSIS

Capesize market moves out of depression

THE capesize market has moved out of its depressive state, soaring by 50% since a six-month low on December 9.

The renewed strength could be attributed to an active week from Brazil, where the country's largest mining giant Vale made a reappearance, lifting "a clutch of vessels", the Baltic Exchange said in a note.

The average weighted time charter on the Baltic Exchange was at $15,469 per day at the close on Tuesday, having gained every day since the $10,295 level on December 9.

US-based Breakwave Advisors said "a counter seasonal rally has developed in the struggling capesize market", which was unexpected, given most market participants "had written off December as a dead month".

"The lack of interest from shipowners to ballast in the Atlantic given the relatively weaker rates versus the Pacific, has left the basin with the largest deficit of open ships since mid-summer," it said.

According to Oslo-based Cleaves Securities, only 40 capesizes were seen ballasting towards Brazil versus 60 recorded on average in the year-to-date, and 76 as of November 27, which helps explain the strong market in the Atlantic basin.

In the Pacific, 137 capes are in Australian loading areas versus an average year-to-date of 95, and up from 96 vessels in the prior week, it said, adding that a cyclone advisory last week could help to explain the uptick.

Pilbara Ports Authority, which encompasses Port Hedland, Dampier and Ashburton, said that it had cleared the anchorage of large vessels as the "low" weather front approached. It reopened for shipping activities a few days later.

In addition, high iron ore prices is stimulating miners to export as much material as possible, according to Arrow research, after a small landslide at one of Vale's sites deepened concerns over supply.

Meanwhile, Diana Shipping signed time charters for two capesizes in the past week.

The 2010-built, 177,773 dwt *New York* (IMO: 9405332) will be chartered to Hong Kong-based EGPN Bulk Carrier from December 27 at a gross rate of $14,000 per day, minus a 5% commission paid to third parties, for a period until at least April 2022 up to a maximum duration of June 2022. Employment is expected to generate about $6.57m for the minimum scheduled period.

It also entered into a time charter contract with Koch Shipping of Singapore for the 2005-built, 177,243 dwt *Baltimore* (IMO: 9331464) for a gross rate of $13,000 per day, minus commissions, for a minimum period until July 20, 2021, up to maximum duration until October 5, 2021. This employment is expected to generate about $2.73m in gross revenue for the minimum scheduled period.

Elsewhere in the markets, the Baltic Exchange said the C10 delivery will be changed from China-Japan range to a named port, Qingdao, in China, following feedback. The duration of the voyage will also be changed from 30-40 days to 35-45 days.

The approved recommendation will be implemented on January 1, 2021.

MARKETS

Boxships face 7% increase in International Group GXL rates

BOXSHIPS will now constitute a standalone category for purposes of the International Group's General Excess of Loss programme.

They will be priced at $0.4249 per gt, some 7% higher than they were under the broad heading of 'dry' last year.

Other dry ships ($0.4028 per gt), clean tankers ($0.2619), passenger vessels ($3.2624), chartered tankers ($0.2188) and chartered dries ($0.1068) face a 1.4% increase.

Persistent oil tankers ($0.5625) are rewarded for safety improvements with a reduction of 2.1%.

The hikes are made necessary by hardening in the wider reinsurance market, which has meant higher outlay for the purchase of the collective overspill layer, which covers claims over $2.1bn.

However, pricing on the first three layers — which provide cover for claims up to that point — has in effect been frozen, after the IG last year fixed them on a two-year basis for the first time ever.

That fortuitous step means that affiliate clubs will see only a limited jump in outlay, despite the depredations of the pandemic and the ongoing spate in major casualties, which pushed the level of pool claims to an all-time high in dollar terms by the halfway mark earlier this year.

According to the IG, while the overall structure of GXL is unchanged, its reinsurance commitment considered the fairness of cost allocation between different vessel types.

Fully cellular containerships now represent approximately 20% of the tonnage entered with group clubs and have generated a significant number of large claims in recent years, while oil tankers have an improved record.

As a result, the committee decided to separate FCCs from other dry vessels, while tankers have been repriced to reflect the better loss experience.

IN OTHER NEWS

Maersk urged to rethink Dutch crew lay-offs

MAERSK is facing a call to drop its threat of forced redundancy against 24 Dutch seafarers and offer them redeployment within the company instead.

The intervention by officers' union Nautilus International comes after the world's biggest boxship company recently sold its five remaining ships which sail under the Dutch flag, after which it said that that it would retain the masters and chief engineers, but that other crew members would lose their jobs.

A Maersk spokesperson said the company constantly reviews its policies in order to stay competitive, especially given the current uncertainty and volatility in global trade.

Ageing dredger sinks off Vietnam

SIERRA Leone-flagged dredger *Dong Yang* (IMO: 9010101) has sunk off the coast of Vietnam, with its 10 crew members having abandoned ship and awaiting rescue in a life raft.

According to Lloyd's List Intelligence the 1990-built, 1,500 dwt vessel sank on Monday night. The dredger had left My Thoi in Vietnam but its destination was unknown.

Lloyd's List Intelligence cited Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre Singapore as saying the crew managed to evacuate and climb into a life raft.

BW LPG takes major stake in Avance Gas

OSLO-listed BW LPG has bought into rival very large gas carrier owner Avance Gas, giving it a greater hold in the gas shipping market.

BW LPG, which owns and charters more than 45 VLGCs, acquired 5,900,000 Avance Gas shares on December 21, giving it a 9.14% stake. It did not own any Avance Gas shares previously.

BW LPG did not disclose how much the purchase cost.

Matson renews Hawaii fleet with new vessel from Nassco yard

MATSON has taken delivery of the 3,500 teu *Matsonia* (IMO 9814612), the second of two new Kanaloa

Class combination container ro-ro ships built by General Dynamics Nassco of San Diego, California.

Nassco president Dave Carver expressed pride in the work his firm has done on the two vessels, saying "we've reached a historical milestone by delivering the largest combination container roll on, roll off ships ever built in the US".

Matsoniaand the also 2020-built *Lurline* (IMO 9814600) feature a 3,500 teu containership design with four decks for automobiles, two decks for trailers and a stern quartering ramp, according to Nassco.

South Korean builders rack up LNG carrier orders

SOUTH Korean shipbuilders are winding up the year with a rush of liquefied natural gas carrier orders, with both Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering and rival group Samsung Heavy Industries winning orders for a total of five vessels.

KSOE said in a stock market announcement that it has received a Won607.2bn ($549m) order for three LNG carriers from an unidentified Panama-registered owner.

The ships will be built by its Hyundai Samho unit and are scheduled to be delivered by September 2024.

Classified notices follow

Port Of Workington Manager

Salary: £57,024 - £59,621

Cumbria County Council has an exciting opportunity for a Port Manager to provide leadership and operational management for the Council owned Port of Workington.

For those looking for a new position, Cumbria has so much to offer. The Port of Workington is strategically located at the mouth of the River Derwent, on the south side of the Solway Firth and at the edge of the beautiful Lake District National Park. There is no better place to work and live.

The ideal candidate will have extensive management experience in a Port (or similar) environment and have strong operational, health and safety and commercial acumen. The Port Manager has overall responsibility for the general management of the port operations and safety, working closely with the Place and Enterprise Team and Commercial Development Lead to maintain the working relationship with existing Port users and proactively attract business. We have ambitious plans for the Port of Workington to become a key centre for growth, technology and innovation within the UK's growing offshore and energy sector to help us achieve a Zero Carbon Cumbria.

The Port Manager reports directly to the Port Duty Holder – the Executive Director for Economy and Infrastructure.

If you are looking for a career that inspires and are ready for a diverse and challenging role, then come and join us here in Cumbria. Please contact Angela Jones, Executive Director Economy and Infrastructure on 07917882992 for more information.

To find out more about this the Port of Workington and about this fantastic opportunity, please watch this short recruitment video:
https://youtu.be/3rO6kc0xpDA

Interview Information

Closing date – 24 December 2020
Interview date – 7 January 2021

Due to the coronavirus, we are operating virtual interviews. This will preferably be undertaken using the Microsoft Teams software, which is currently free for new users, however if there are any issues with accessing this technology, we are happy to discuss alternative arrangements prior to the interviews.

Options will be discussed with candidates once they have been invited to the interview stage of the process, and if you have any concerns or adjustments are needed, we are happy to discuss.

What we can offer you
Cumbria County Council is a modern, vibrant place to work offering a range of staff benefits, including:
*Excellent training and development offers
*Flexible working opportunities
*Opportunity to join the Local Government Pension Scheme
*Various perks and discounts schemes, including money off your phone contract and local gyms
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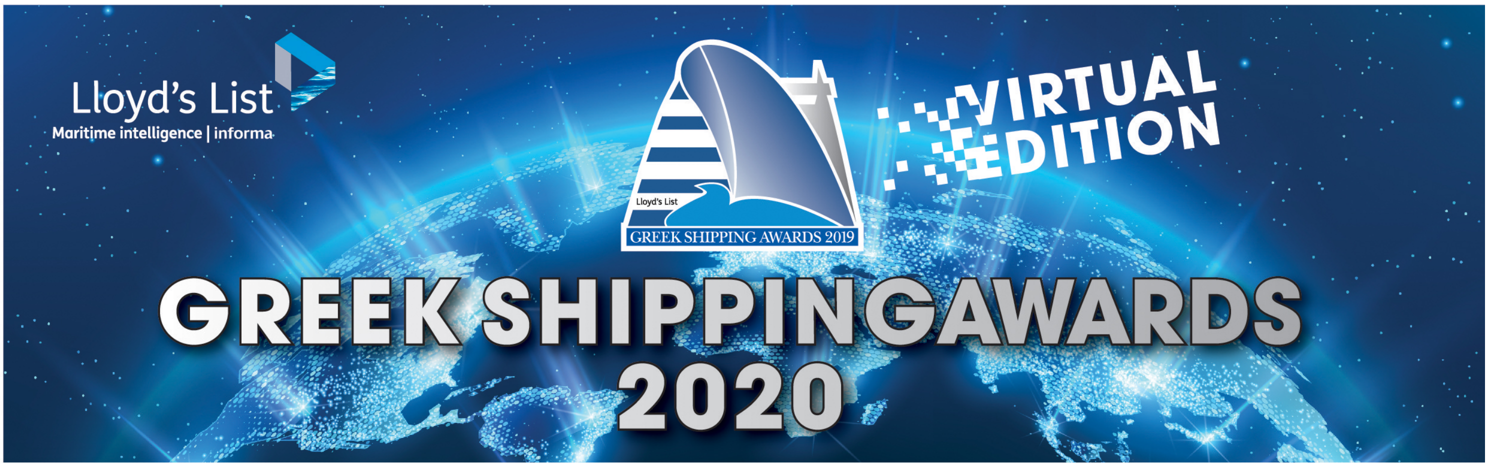

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Shipbroker of the Year **Seaborne Shipbrokers**

International Personality of the Year **Guy Platten**

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The Safety Award **Venlys Maritime Specialisation Services**

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