



Security Council

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Letter dated 23 July 2019 from the Chargé d' affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instruction from my Government, I would like to present a factual report regarding the seizure of the British-flagged tanker *Stena Impero* in the Strait of Hormuz.

According to the records of the smart maps as well as the port and the tanker navigation systems, *Stena Impero* indisputably violated rules and regulations governing international navigation and hindered navigation order. It damaged private properties, injured individuals and polluted and damaged the marine environment in the Hormuz Strait. It has also disregarded warnings by the authorities of the Ports and Maritime Organization of Hormozgan Province of Iran, upon whose request the seizure was carried out and, as a result, the tanker was seized by the Iranian Coastal Guard on Friday, 19 July 2019.

Moreover, according to the Ports and Maritime Organization report dated 20 July 2019, which is based on the field report of the Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz, the tanker, with 23 seafarers on board, while it was entering the Strait of Hormuz in the traffic separation scheme lane, collided with an Iranian fishing vessel on 19 July 2019, at 1900 local time. As a result of that collision, the Iranian vessel suffered serious physical damage and some of the injured crew and fishermen are still in critical condition. Subsequently, the tanker disregarded the warnings by the Iranian coastal authorities, switched off its Automatic Identification System at 2059 local time and, in a dangerous operation, entered the Strait of Hormuz from the exit lane.

Since the British-flagged tanker was violating rules governing international navigation, including safety and security of navigation, and disregarding the warnings by the traffic control authorities, in order to prevent further incidents and preserve law and order, the maritime forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran intervened and took the tanker into the Bandar Abbas port for further investigation.

Iranian judicial authorities were simultaneously involved. Following preliminary investigations, an executive order was issued by the Bandar Abbas Prosecution Office comprised of a preliminary order of seizure of the tanker for a comprehensive investigation on the inflicted damages to the Iranian individuals and the fishing vessel, the scope of the pollution of and damage to the marine environment by the *Stena Impero*, the gravity of dangerous navigation by the tanker as well as review of the specialized navigation maps. Those investigations are currently proceeding.



In the light of the above, the unsubstantiated claims contained in the letter dated 20 July 2019 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United Kingdom to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2019/589) are rejected.

Seizing this opportunity, I would like to stress that while there are deliberate provocative attempts by certain circles inside and outside of the region hindering maritime navigation in the Persian Gulf, all measures by the Iranian forces therein are and have always been solely aimed at enforcing related laws and regulations in support of, inter alia, preserving law and order, protecting the marine environment, safety and security of maritime navigation and ensuring the flow of energy.

The living example, as a routine marine policing matter, is the case of oil tanker MT *Riah*, which, on 14 July 2019, issued a distress call and was towed by the Iranian forces to Iranian waters, where it was found out that the tanker was smuggling 1 million litres of Iran-origin fuel and thereby was seized with the order from the court.

Having the longest coast in the Strait of Hormuz, the Islamic Republic of Iran has historically assumed the responsibility for securing traffic order and providing navigation security therein. Iran has recognized the principle of "innocent passage" for the Strait of Hormuz and accordingly continues securing international navigation in conformity with the principle of free international navigation. Likewise, we call on others to act responsibly so as to prevent endangering the safety, security and stability in such a volatile region as the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eshagh Al Habib
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
