



**IMHA**



**Press Release – for immediate release**

**14 March 2015**

Three leading international seafarers' welfare organisations, the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), the International Maritime Health Association (IMHA), and the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), are today calling on EU governments to recognise the key role of seafarers in the rescue of migrants at sea. They have sent a letter to all heads of governments urgently requesting that more resources are mobilised for search and rescue in the Mediterranean.

In the last seventeen months over 5,000 migrants have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Fortunately, merchant seafarers are responsible for saving tens of thousands of more lives. In 2014 seafarers aboard 800 merchant ships rescued 40,000 migrants. Their role in the large scale rescue of migrants should be recognised and commended.

However, EU governments are still relying on the kindness of seafarers and the legal obligations upon them to cope with a human tragedy of an unprecedented scale instead of committing sufficient resources to save migrants' lives. Merchant ships and crews are not equipped or trained to deal with large scale rescues.

Seafarers are often risking their own safety and security in these large scale rescues. They are also facing situations such as recovering bodies and dealing with sick or injured men, women, and children that may have an effect on them for which they may need counselling or other forms of support. Seafarers are no substitute for professionally trained search and rescue personnel and they must not be used by EU governments as an expedient way of ignoring a difficult problem on the doorstep of Europe.

The three organisations have called for the EU governments to take urgent action to commit more resources to saving lives in the Mediterranean and not to place merchant seafarers in an unenviable situation.

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A copy of the letter can be downloaded from [here](#).

Notes to editors

The International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) is a free association of 28 Christian not-for-profit organisations working for the welfare of seafarers. [www.icma.as](http://www.icma.as)

The International Maritime Health Association (IMHA) is the sole international association concerned exclusively with Maritime Health [www.imha.net](http://www.imha.net)

The International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) promotes the welfare of seafarers world. [www.seafarerswelfare.org](http://www.seafarerswelfare.org)

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