

PUBLIC

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UA 244/08 Health concern/Kidnapping

SOMALIA **More than 130 hostages**

More than 130 people – crew members of at least nine ships – are being held hostage by pirates close to the coastal town of Eyl in the region of Puntland, northeastern Somalia. A number of the hostages are reported to have been injured during gun battles as the ships were seized and have not had access to medical care. According to the East African Seafarers' Assistance Programme, there is insufficient food and water for the large number detained.

On 29 August, a Malaysian tanker with 36 Malaysian and five Filipino crew on board was hijacked by Somali pirates. During the hijacking, one crew member is believed to have been killed, and an unknown number of others wounded. On 3 September, one French and one Egyptian vessel were boarded by pirates.

This followed the earlier hijacking of four ships registered as Malaysian, Iranian, Nigerian and Thai, and two registered as Panamanian. The crews of all nine of these ships are all currently detained by Somali pirates who have demanded millions of US dollars in ransom.

The Puntland Government has faced repeated allegations that senior government and security officials have supported the pirates and shared in ransom payments. On 4 September, the Puntland Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Ahmed Saed Nur, admitted that some of the Puntland police are involved in piracy "because they can make a hell of a lot of money."

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia has said that the issue of piracy "needs to be addressed very strongly by the government of Puntland" and that piracy is increasing the cost of delivering humanitarian aid to Somalia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pirates from Somalia have hijacked at least 30 ships in the Puntland region of Somalia so far this year. In June 2008, the UN Security Council voted to allow international navies to enter Somali waters to combat the problem, with the consent of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. Canadian navy vessels are currently providing security escorts to UN World Food Program vessels bringing aid to the country.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

To the Puntland and Transitional Federal Government authorities, in English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to take action to ensure the safe release of more than 130 individuals currently detained by Somali pirates in Puntland, Somalia;
- urging the authorities to use their influence to ensure that detainees are given immediate and regular access to all necessary medical care, and to adequate supplies water and food.

APPEALS TO:

President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed
President of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia

Email: adam_somalia@yahoo.ca

Salutation: Dear President

President Mohamud Muse Hersi
President of Puntland

Email: puntlandstate@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear President

Ahmed Saed Nur
Minister of Fisheries
Puntland State Government

Email: amsaed77@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear Minister

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 October 2008.