

Casualties

Dozens of seafarers killed in Middle East crisis, says Iran

Grim toll of more than 100 days of war



An Iranian woman walks past an anti-US mural on a street this week. Photo: Scanpix

Paul Peachey

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The war in the Middle East has destroyed more than 250 vessels and killed 54 seafarers, according to Iran.

It said seven other seafarers are missing and 66 have been injured since the US and Israel launched attacks against the regime on 28 February.

The death toll has increased sharply since April, when Iran reported that 20 seafarers had been killed and nearly 150 vessels sunk, most of them fishing vessels. Ships damaged included a sanctioned VLCC and several bulkers.



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The latest data does not identify vessels or incidents. Previous figures issued by Iran were limited to victims from attacks on its domestic fleet.

The International Maritime Organization has compiled its own data, which included 12 seafarers and one dock worker killed from Iranian attacks on shipping in and around the Strait of Hormuz and the Middle East Gulf.

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Iran said the attacks had affected port operations, search and rescue response and traffic systems.

“Such impacts concern the very systems required to protect life at sea, preserve safe navigation, support emergency response,” it said in a paper to the IMO.

It claimed that the incidents had affected 360 vessels, with 253 sunk or destroyed. The issue is set to be discussed on Wednesday at the IMO's technical cooperation committee.

Thousands of seafarers remain stuck in the Middle East Gulf despite a slight uptick in ships leaving through the Strait of Hormuz.

IMO secretary general Arsenio Dominguez said on Tuesday that there are no "credible security guarantees" despite some vessels passing through the waterway with security assistance and air cover from the US.

Dominguez said there were well-established risks that had resulted in seafarers being killed, injured or detained.

"Under such circumstances, safe passage cannot be considered to exist ... no commercial or operational consideration can justify exposing seafarers to such levels of danger," he said.

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