

EN

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Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.5.2026)

1. The Commission strongly supports action to safeguard seafarers lives in high-risk zones. Under global frameworks, overseen by the Warlike Operations Area Committee (shipowners and unions) the Southern Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Persian Gulf are already designated as Warlike Operations Areas, triggering critical protections:

- Right to refuse deployment without penalty, with repatriation at the shipowner's cost plus two months' basic wage compensation.
- 100% wage bonus for time spent in the zone (minimum five days).
- Double compensation for death/disability.

The Commission supports the International Maritime Organization Council decision to aim at establishing a mechanism for the safe evacuation of seafarers from the Persian Gulf and the assessment by the same decision that aiming to cross the Strait of Hormuz at a moment when it is declared closed is dangerous and puts seafarers' lives at risk.

2. The latest European Council (19 March 2026) recalled the need to safeguard regional airspace and ensure maritime security and respect for the freedom of navigation.

In the Red Sea, the EU is maintaining its maritime engagement with the Operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES. Since its launch, this naval operation has supported over 1 770 merchant vessels and has directly protected more than 630 of them which also resulted in the protection of the seafarers working onboard. Moreover, it neutralized 25 missiles and drones threatening merchant vessels and saved 128 seafarers.

The Member States have agreed to maintain the operation ASPIDES in the Red Sea to protect the freedom of navigation and the close protection of merchant vessels against the Houthi threat. The mandate of the Operation ASPIDES is valid until 28 February 2027.