



To:  
Minister of Justice and Public Security  
Minister of Trade, Industries and Fisheries  
Minister of Health and Care Services  
Norwegian Institute of Public Health

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Ref:

Dear Ministers

RE: SEAFARERS MUST BE EXEMPT FROM QUARANTINE HOTEL REQUIREMENT

The Norwegian Maritime Officers Association, the Norwegian Union of Marine Engineers, the Norwegian Seafarers Union (hereinafter Norwegian Maritime Unions) and their international umbrella organisation, the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) representing around 20 million transport workers globally, strongly urges the Norwegian Government to re-evaluate its decision mandating seafarers to stay in a quarantine hotel when arriving to Norway from countries outside of EEA/Schengen and the UK.

It was with disappointment and concern to the Norwegian Maritime Unions and the ITF that on 7 May 2021, the Norwegian Government amended the regulations concerning quarantine when arriving to Norway without consulting or warning the social partners. The decision came into effect Sunday 9 May and effectively mandates all overseas travellers, including seafarers that arrive from outside of the EEA/Schengen and the UK to stay at a quarantine hotel. This decision does not reflect the special nature of seafarers' profession and their necessity to travel to and from the ship when signing on and off.

Seafarers are a limited and specific group that differ from other international travellers. An exemption for seafarers is therefore easy to define. The Norwegian Government agreed to exempt all Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel and their spouses, partners and children and military personnel stationed abroad on behalf of the Norwegian Defence Security Department. It is therefore unreasonable and unjust that seafarers are not given the same exemptions as these groups.

The International Labour Organisation Maritime Labour Convention 2006, which Norway has ratified and implemented, clearly identifies seafarers as a group of workers that needs special protection because of the global nature of shipping. Throughout the pandemic the Norwegian Government has acknowledged this and provided seafarers with exemptions to some of the restrictions in order to accommodate their special needs and ensure seafarers' right to crew change is protected.

A year ago at the United Nations General Assembly the Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg encouraged all Member States to declare seafarers as key workers and implement IMO Recommended Framework of Protocols for ensuring safe crew change and travel during the coronavirus (Covid-19)

pandemic. The framework protocols calls on Member States to refrain from mandating seafarers to stay in quarantine hotels as this could increase the risk of infection for seafarers. Especially since seafarers have continued to perform their duties and deliver needed goods to world communities while being forced to forfeit shore leave for weeks and even months at a time to limit the risk of infection on board.

Despite the Norwegian Health Department's consideration and recommendation about the use of quarantine hotels for travellers from countries outside of EEA/Schengen includes the continued exemption for seafarers, the Norwegian Government decided not to give an exemption. It is extremely disappointing and reprehensible that a proud maritime nation like Norway is not adhering to its international responsibilities by ensuring crew change.

The Norwegian Maritime Unions and the ITF reiterate our urgent request for the Norwegian Government to reconsider its decision and uphold their international commitment and obligation to seafarers.

Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association  
Hans Sande, Administrative Director

Norwegian Union of Marine Engineers  
Hege-Merethe Bengtsson, General Secretary

Norwegian Seafarers' Union  
Johnny Hansen, President

International Transport Workers Federation  
Jacqueline Smith, ITF Maritime Coordinator