

# A Different Perspective to Stowaways on Board

For the last few years, the stowaway problem has come to forefront among the other problems encountered for Turkish vessels, especially for those voyaging to European countries. Increasing stowaway incidents and how such stowaways should be treated on board together with the procedures required to be followed, are described in detail in IMO RESOLUTION A.871(20) and various publications have been circulated by Turkish Shipowners Association and Maritime Chamber of Commerce similarly in our country.



As a result of increasing incidents, both the shipowners and the P&I insurers have gained great experience, since the risk falls under P&I insurance coverage.

If the ship crew complies with the instructions of the operating companies and implements the directives and regulations, the stowaway problem can be solved with minimum distress. However, one issue that is concerned by the ship crew but not emphasized much is the communication between the ship crew and the stowaways.

Despite all security measures, stowaways can still manage to get on board somehow. When the voyage begins, especially on a long voyage, they came out from their hiding place and demand food and clothing from the ship crew. In some cases it is also known that during the shipment to the first port, they were occasionally employed as crew member. The risks that may occur due to this situation would be much greater than anticipated. Most of them are well aware of their legal rights and what they should do in order to be accepted as refugees in the country they plan to reach. It should never be forgotten that they are adamant to endanger their lives to seek asylum in the country they are aiming to go.



**Halil Solak**

Assistant Technical Manager

+90 216 545 0300 (D.236)

+90 533 200 2818

halil.solak@turkpandi.com

Halil graduated from Darussafaka High School in 1995 and Maritime Academy of Istanbul Technical University in 1999. He started his marine career at Zodiac Shipping, London. He completed his MBA degree in Risk Management and Insurance at Georgia State University in USA. Before joining Türk P&I as Assistant Manager, he worked as hull and cargo underwriter for Zurich insurance company and later spent 9 years at Omni Broker House as insurance and reinsurance broker. He presented seminars in Risk Management and Marine Insurance, including Exposing and his articles are published in local and international media.



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During the voyage, the ship crew should keep the communication with the stowaways as short as possible at a formal level and avoid being very close to them. It is a known fact that stowaways try to be sincere with the ship crew in order to ensure provision of their demands, to speak to the conscience of the staff by exaggerating their bad situation in the countries when they come from and try to create a humane sentiment in this way.

In an exemplary case, the one of the ship crew members, who was influenced by the stories of the stowaways detected on board, did not make the ship operation aware of the issue, relying on the promises made by the stowaways. The master and crew approached the matter completely conscientiously and thought that they were doing a favor to the people in distress and left the stowaways safely to the sea at a distance close to the port of destination in line with the stowaways' request.

However, in this case, it should be remembered that the stowaways may surrender to the official authorities as soon as they go ashore, and declare that they are forced by ship crew to leave the vessel, and that they may even declare that they want to stay as refugees considering the difficulties they have experienced.

Similar examples have been experienced and the subject was considered by the authorities as human smuggling, so that the stowaways became victims and the master and ship crew, who thought they were doing a favor, had been convicted and arrested by the authorities.

However, if the shipowner had been informed about the stowaways at the beginning of the incident, the P&I insurer would step in and inform the relevant authorities and the P&I representative would help them at the port of destination and the issue would be solved without any problems.

The possibility of minor incidents to become big ones should always be taken into account, and it should be encouraged to report any unusual circumstances to the entity, irrespective of their importance, during both in-company training and notifications and visits to the ship.

