

ASCOMARE STATEMENT ON ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA'S LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE TO PROHIBIT ARMS TRANSFERS TO ISRAEL

The [*Associazione di Consulenza in Diritto del Mare \(ASCOMARE\)*](#) commends the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for its timely and principled decision to adopt national legislation ([Marine Notice 2025-001](#)) prohibiting the transfer of weapons and related equipment to Israel for use in the commission of crimes against humanity in Palestine. This legislative action responds directly to the concerns raised by [Palestinian and Caribbean civil society](#) regarding the operations of the *HC Opal*—which, according to [available information](#), deactivated its tracking system shortly after the issuance of the Marine Notice, in a manner inconsistent with applicable International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations—and reflects a proactive exercise of the State's responsibilities under international law.

This measure underscores the flag State's due diligence obligations and is aligned with the conclusions of the [ASCOMARE Expert Group's Legal Opinion, issued on 11 March 2025](#) at the request of the Palestinian BDS National Committee. It affirms the imperative for States to uphold their international commitments by preventing complicity in grave breaches of international law.

ASCOMARE urgently calls on all States to act decisively:

- **Flag States** must ensure that vessels flying their flag are not used to transport arms or equipment destined for the commission of international crimes.
- **Coastal States** must prevent the passage of such vessels through their territorial seas.
- **Port States** must deny docking access to vessels engaged in such transfers, consistent with the position adopted by the Hague Group in the [joint statement of 31 January 2025, issued by Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa](#).

This duty arises not only under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, but also under the Arms Trade Treaty, customary international law, and peremptory norms (*jus cogens*), including the obligation to prevent genocide and apartheid and to uphold the core principles of the United Nations Charter.

State inaction in the face of such risks may give rise to international legal responsibility and expose States to potential litigation before international courts and tribunals. The legal consequences of failing to prevent arms transfers that facilitate atrocities are grave—both morally and juridically.

The time to act is now. Upholding international law demands no less.

Lecce, 03 June 2025