



REPUBLIC OF VANUATU
OFFICE OF THE
MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

VANUATU INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING REGISTRY

Circular #36

**Prohibition on Calls to Iranian Ports and Mandatory Compliance
with United States Sanctions, Restrictions and Maritime Measures**

To	All Vanuatu-flagged vessels; owners, operators, managers, ISM managers, masters, charterers, agents and Recognized Organizations
Date	15 July 2026
Effective	Immediately
Reference	VISR sanctions compliance framework; applicable U.S. sanctions, restrictions, advisories, maritime security measures and related requirements concerning Iran
Contact	admin@register-vu.com technical@register-vu.com

1. Purpose

The Office of the Maritime Administrator issues this Circular to all Vanuatu-flagged vessels and all parties involved in their ownership, operation, management, chartering, certification and representation.

In light of current sanctions, restrictions, maritime security risks and measures imposed, maintained or announced by the United States in relation to Iran, all Vanuatu-flagged vessels are prohibited from calling at any Iranian port, terminal, anchorage, offshore facility, loading area, discharge area, shipyard or place within Iranian waters or under Iranian port control, unless expressly authorized in writing by the Maritime Administrator and not prohibited by applicable sanctions or maritime measures.

This Circular is issued to protect the Vanuatu flag, vessel crews, owners and managers, and to prevent exposure to sanctions, interdiction, detention, insurance, banking, commercial and reputational risk.

2. Immediate Prohibition

With immediate effect, no Vanuatu-flagged vessel shall, directly or indirectly:

1. call at, enter, load, discharge, bunker, repair, transship, supply, or conduct any commercial operation at any Iranian port, terminal, anchorage, offshore facility, oil or gas terminal, loading area, discharge area, shipyard or place of maritime operation;
2. carry cargo to or from Iran, or cargo owned, controlled, supplied, financed, insured, sold, purchased or otherwise connected to any sanctioned person, vessel, port, terminal, facility, network or entity;
3. conduct ship-to-ship transfer operations involving Iranian ports, Iranian waters, Iranian-origin cargo, Iranian-controlled cargo, Iranian counterparties, or any sanctioned person, entity, vessel, port, terminal or facility;
4. enter into any charterparty, voyage order, fixture, contract or service arrangement requiring or facilitating Iran-related activity;
5. assist, disguise, conceal or participate in any voyage, cargo movement, AIS manipulation, false documentation, ownership concealment, routing change or other practice intended to evade sanctions, restrictions, blockade-related measures, interdiction measures, port restrictions or maritime security requirements.

This prohibition applies regardless of whether the relevant instruction is issued by the owner, operator, manager, charterer, sub-charterer, broker, cargo interest, agent or any other third party.

3. Mandatory Compliance with United States Measures

All Vanuatu-flagged vessels and all owners, operators, managers, ISM managers, masters, charterers and agents must comply strictly with all applicable United States sanctions, restrictions, advisories, designations, maritime security measures, interdiction measures, blockade or blockade-related requirements, port restrictions, general license conditions, reporting requirements and any other measure imposed, administered, maintained or enforced by competent United States authorities in relation to Iran.

For the purposes of this Circular, U.S. Measures include measures issued, administered or enforced by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, including OFAC, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, or any competent U.S.-led maritime security, interdiction, advisory or coordination authority.

Owners, operators, managers, masters and charterers shall not rely on informal advice, commercial assurances or third-party representations where sanctions, interdiction, port restriction, blockade-related or maritime security risk may exist.

4. Enhanced Screening and Mandatory Notification

All owners, operators, ISM managers and masters of Vanuatu-flagged vessels must conduct enhanced sanctions and compliance screening before accepting any voyage order, charter instruction, cargo, cargo interest, port call, ship-to-ship transfer, bunkering operation, service arrangement or counterparty connected with Iran or any high-risk area where Iran-related sanctions or maritime security risk may exist.

Any Vanuatu-flagged vessel, owner, operator, manager, master, charterer, broker or agent that receives any instruction or request involving Iran, Iranian ports, Iranian cargo, Iranian counterparties, Iran-related ship-to-ship activity, suspicious AIS activity, or communications from U.S. or other competent authorities concerning Iran-related sanctions or maritime measures must notify the Maritime Administrator immediately at admin@register-vu.com and technical@register-vu.com.

No vessel may proceed with any such voyage, cargo, port call, ship-to-ship transfer or related activity unless written authorization is issued by the Maritime Administrator.

5. Prohibited Deceptive Practices

The following practices are strictly prohibited for Vanuatu-flagged vessels:

1. disabling, manipulating, falsifying or intermittently using AIS in connection with Iran-related activity;
2. changing vessel name, ownership, manager, technical operator, flag, class or documentation to conceal Iran-related activity;
3. using false cargo documents, bills of lading, origin documents, destination documents, port records or charter documentation;
4. using shell companies, nominee owners, disguised cargo descriptions, blending, transshipment or payment structures to circumvent sanctions or restrictions;
5. dealing with any sanctioned or restricted person, entity, vessel, terminal, port, bank, insurer, trader, cargo interest or intermediary.

6. Emergency, Distress and Force Majeure

This Circular does not prevent a Vanuatu-flagged vessel from taking action strictly necessary to preserve life, protect the vessel, respond to distress, avoid imminent danger, comply with lawful directions from competent maritime rescue or security authorities, or address a genuine force majeure situation.

Where a vessel enters or approaches Iranian waters, an Iranian port, or an Iran-related restricted area due to distress, force majeure, casualty, emergency, safety of life, medical evacuation or lawful compulsion, the master and owner must notify the Maritime Administrator immediately and provide full details, including position, voyage records, AIS records, communications with authorities, cargo details, and steps taken to avoid commercial operations.

No commercial loading, discharge, transshipment, bunkering, repair, supply or cargo operation may be conducted under the cover of emergency unless expressly authorized by the Maritime Administrator or required for safety of life or vessel preservation.

7. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Compliance with this Circular is mandatory. The Administration will apply a strict zero-tolerance approach to sanctions evasion, deceptive shipping practices, unauthorized Iranian port calls and any conduct that exposes the Vanuatu flag to sanctions, detention, interdiction, insurance, banking, commercial or reputational risk.

Any Vanuatu-flagged vessel found to be in breach of this Circular, or found to have attempted to evade sanctions, restrictions, maritime security measures, interdiction measures or blockade-related requirements, shall be subject to immediate administrative action, including suspension and deletion/deregistration from the Vanuatu International Shipping Registry without further notice.

Additional action may include cancellation of certificates, withdrawal of permissions or authorizations, notification to Recognized Organizations, insurers, port States, PSC authorities, banks and relevant governmental authorities, referral to sanctions or law-enforcement authorities, imposition of penalties, costs and investigation fees, and refusal of future registration applications connected with the same owner, manager, operator, charterer, beneficial owner or related party.

8. Recognized Organizations

All Recognized Organizations authorized by the Vanuatu Administration must notify the Maritime Administrator immediately if they become aware that any Vanuatu-flagged vessel under their class or statutory certification intends to call, has called, or may be connected with Iran-related activity, sanctioned cargo, sanctioned parties or prohibited maritime operations.

Recognized Organizations shall not issue, endorse, validate or amend certificates in a manner that may facilitate prohibited activity under this Circular.

9. Effective Date and Duration

This Circular enters into force immediately upon issuance and remains in effect until amended, suspended or withdrawn by the Maritime Administrator.

The prohibition on Iranian port calls and Iran-related maritime activity shall remain in force for so long as the relevant U.S. sanctions, restrictions, maritime security measures, blockade-related requirements, interdiction measures, port restrictions or related measures remain in effect, and until the Maritime Administrator issues written notice otherwise.

All owners, operators, managers, masters, charterers, agents and Recognized Organizations must circulate this Circular immediately to all relevant operational, compliance, chartering, legal, crewing, technical and commercial departments. Failure to receive or internally circulate this Circular shall not excuse non-compliance.

For the Maritime Administrator of the Republic of Vanuatu



Saade Makhoul
President & CEO

Vanuatu Logistics and Administrative Services Ltd
Maritime Administrator of the Republic of Vanuatu