

**CASE:** GSAF 1984.03.17

**DATE:** March 17, 1984

**LOCATION:** Thirteen kilometers off the coast of Somalia.

**NAME:** Unknown

**DESCRIPTION:** Eleven males, six of whom were 14 to 15 years of age.

**NARRATIVE:** They stowed away on the Greek freighter *Garifalia* while she was docked in Mombasa. Hours after the freighter left port, the stowaways turned themselves over to Captain Antonis Plitzanopoulos, telling him that they wanted to find a chance to find better living conditions abroad. The Captain had them locked into a storeroom. Two days later, at gunpoint, he forced them to jump overboard.

Six of the 11 stowaways reached shore and were later taken to Mombasa.

In September 1985, Captain Plitzanopoulos was found guilty in Sept. 1985 of endangering lives and causing serious bodily injuries, and sentenced to 10 years, 10 months in jail. Nine crew members were found guilty of complicity and received jail terms ranging between 14 and 44 months.

On March 20, 1987, the appeals court overturned the verdict, freeing Plitzanopoulos on payment of a fine of \$8,900. The court decided he was guilty of a misdemeanor, not a felony, because the stowaways' deaths could not be proved. Five crew members' sentences were also reduced while the remaining four were acquitted.

**SOURCES:** Gary Hughes, Courier Mail, May 18, 1984, page 6; The Day, May 25, 1984; Associates Press September 2, 1985 and March 21, 1987

## 11 STOWAWAYS THROWN INTO SHARK-INFESTED SEA

LONDON. A Greek sea captain and 10 of his crew are now likely to be charged with manslaughter after police in East Africa said yesterday they had found no trace of 11 stowaways thrown overboard into shark-infested waters.

The seamen are already being held in custody in Piraeus on charges of abuse of authority, grievous bodily harm, illicit use of arms and breach of contract.

The 11 stowaways all Kenyan, boarded the 16,000-tonne Greek freighter *Garifaliac* in early March while it was docked in Mombassa. They were thrown overboard into shark infested waters off the coast wearing only life jackets despite protests from many of them they could not swim.

The incident came to light last week when four crewmen from the freighter who had not taken part reported Captain Antonis Plytzanopoulos, 43, to port authorities. The captain and 10 of his crew were formally charged in Piraeus on Tuesday.

The four seamen said the 11 stowaways turned themselves into Captain Plytzanopoulos a few hours after the freighter left Mombassa on March 15 bound for Karachi. They told him they wanted a chance to find better living conditions abroad. But the captain ordered them to be locked up in a storeroom until two days later, when the ship was about 13 km off the Somali coast.

The captain ordered rat poison gas to be pumped into the storeroom to force out the stowaways, who refused to leave after being told their fate by a friendly crew member. Up on deck the stowaways, six of who were aged 14 and 15, were strapped into life jackets at the point of a shotgun. The name of the ship had been erased from the lifejackets. When some of the stowaways protested they could not swim they were beaten with iron bars until they jumped overboard.

The crewmen who reported the incident said it took an hour and a half to get all 11 stowaways over the side into what was known to be shark-infested waters. Authorities in Kenya said there would be little hope of ever finding any trace of the stowaways.

After his arrest Captain Plytzanopoulos said he was forced to toss the stowaways overboard because two of them "mutinied" and his crew and ship were in danger. He claimed the ship was only about three kilometers off shore when the incident happened. The captain's behavior was described as "inhuman" by the Greek Minister of Merchant Marine, George Katisfaras. He expressed "profound grief, indignation and horror" at the "bestly deed".

"This inhuman behavior, this nightmarish emergence of a medieval concept of human life, was perpetrated by a group of men who have no right to call themselves Greeks or seamen," Katisfaras said.

Piraeus Public Prosecutor Andonis Roussos described the incident "'as one of the most abhorrent crimes in recent years".

**SOURCE:** Gary Hughes, Courier Mail, May 18, 1984, page 6

# Stowaways thrown in sea

**MOMBASA, Kenya (AP) —** One of four Tanzanian stowaways who drifted and swam to safety through shark-infested waters after being thrown off a Greek freighter says the captain was armed with a shotgun as he forced them overboard in pairs.

The captain and nine members of the Greek-flag freighter Garifalia have been jailed in Greece on charges of endangering lives and using offensive weapons.

The charges stem from a March 17 incident in which 11 stowaways were tossed overboard off the coast of Somalia. A warrant has been issued for the arrest of an 11th seaman. The Garifalia captain, Antonis Plitzanopoulos, has defended his action, saying the stowaways were threatening his crew.

The four stowaways who reached shore were brought to Mombasa, where they had boarded the Garifalia, aboard the Greek ship Rosa on Wednesday. With them were two other Tanzanians, who claimed to have been tossed off the Greek ship Dilatic after it sailed from Mozambique.

Police sources in Mombasa said the seven Garifalia stowaways still missing were believed to have drowned or been eaten by sharks.

Stowaway survivor Mohamed Salim, 23, was quoted by the Daily Nation in Nairobi as saying he and a friend, Ramadhan Juma Maharaji, 20, hid for two days on the ship.

He said when he and his friend came on deck they found that there were nine other stowaways locked in a storeroom. The next day a bosun came and "asked us whether we have worked as seamen before," Salim said.

The bosun then began taking the men to the captain in pairs, one pair each 15 minutes.

"The ship would then go slowly as they were being thrown overboard and then pick up speed so that those whose turn had not come could not see those thrown overboard," Salim said.

"The captain, who was supervising the exercise, was armed with a shotgun while other members of the crew were armed with weapons like iron bars and pieces of wood," he said.

*The Day, May 25, 1984, page 25*



The feighter *Nigaristan*, built in 1970 by Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd., Readhead Yard, South Shields, River Tyne, England, was renamed *Strathaird* during her short life. *Nigaristan* was launched on 4th June 1970. She had been completed only eighteen months before P&O General Cargo Division was formed; she was transferred to their management on 1st May 1972 and renamed *Strathaird* on 25th January 1975.

On 16th July 1979 she was sold out of the fleet to the Amaril Shipping Corporation of Greece and renamed *Garifalia C*. She was then sold to Seric Bay Shipping Co., Ltd of Greece becoming simply *Garifalia*, dropping the C in 1983.

She was renamed *Arctus* the following year and sold for the final time to Chinese ship breakers and sailed from Gabes in Tunisia bound for Zhanjiang on the 21st January 1986.