

SCA's Rabie claims all Ever Given crew bar the captain are "free to leave"

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Ossama Rabie, chairman of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA), said on Monday April 26th that he hoped talks with the owner of ULCV **Ever Given** (IMO 9811000), Shoei Kisen, and its P&I insurer UK Club, would soon result in some kind of agreement.

The vessel and its cargo are being held in Great Bitter Lake until SCA's made a \$916m claim against Japan-based Shoei Kisen is resolved.

However, perhaps mindful of international publicity that has seen allegations that the crew of the vessel were being "held hostage", Rabie insisted that all 25 crew except the Captain were free to leave.

Only two crew members have left the ship since it dropped anchor in the lake on March 29th. There are 23 crew, all Indian nationals, who remain on board, while two new crew have arrived to replace the two who departed for personal reasons. SCA Chairman Osama Rabie said the crew were not detained and were free to leave or be replaced, as long as the captain stays on board as the guardian of the vessel and its cargo.

Both UK Club and technical manager Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement have expressed their disappointment that the ship was being held, this being an atypical response to such a situation. UK Club has filed an appeal at an Egyptian court against its detention, citing a lack of supporting evidence for the SCA's claim.

Attempts by charterer Evergreen, based in Taiwan, to get the cargo treated as a separate matter have not succeeded as yet, which means that the cargo too is stuck in great Bitter Lake.

Rabie said that "the SCA is dealing with all the specific requirements of the negotiation with complete flexibility, in full respect for international norms in these sorts of situations". 2018-built, Panama-flagged, 219,079 gt Ever Given is owned by

Luster Maritime/Higaki Sangyo care of Shoei Kisen KK of Imabari-shi, Ehime-ken, Japan. It is entered with UK Club on behalf of Luster Maritime SA