

SEAFARERS' BULLETIN



INTERNATIONAL
TRANSPORT
WORKERS'
FEDERATION



WORKING FOR WELLBEING

IN THIS ISSUE:

**NEW PROTECTIONS IF YOU ARE ACCUSED
OF A MARITIME CRIME**

PROTECT YOURSELF AS ABANDONMENT SOARS

YOUR 12-PAGE PULLOUT GUIDE TO GETTING HELP



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The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing more than 16.5 million transport workers from more than 730 affiliated unions in more than 150 countries, including more than 1 million seafarers from 219 affiliated unions. It is organised in eight industrial sections: seafarers, fishers, inland navigation, dockers, railways, road transport, civil aviation and tourism services. It represents transport workers at the world level and promotes their interests through global campaigning and solidarity. The ITF has more than 130 inspectors, contacts and network coordinators in 109 ports worldwide.

ITF SEAFARERS' BULLETIN no.40/2026

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Web: www.itfseafarers.org Email: seafsupport@itf.org.uk Tel: +44 (20) 7403 2733

Cover photo: Astrid Suci Syifa, a cadet from Buana Bahari Maritime Vocational High School, Cirebon, Indonesia.



“Seafarers’ Bulletin shows how the ITF is driving change globally in the industry, through work on maritime education, partnering with governments, and opening up conversations with seafarers on ships, in ports, and with their families.”

Dear friends,

The pressures of life at sea can have enormous impacts on the mental wellbeing of the world’s seafarers. *Seafarers’ Bulletin* shows how the ITF is driving change globally in the industry, through work on maritime education, partnering with governments, and opening up conversations with seafarers on ships, in ports, and with their families.

The continuing rise in the number of seafarers being accused of crimes without evidence has led to important new protections against criminalisation and unfair treatment. We set out your new rights if you are accused of a crime, and illustrate how we are working with the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Maritime Organization to tackle this issue.

This year we’ve been deeply troubled to see another record number of abandonments. Read how to protect yourself from being abandoned, why you must act quickly, and where to turn for help.

We also share the ITF’s exposé of a global scam involving fake union the ‘International Seafarers’ Union’ and a for-profit company called ‘Lanibra’ to make money at the direct expense of seafarers’ rights, safety and wages.

The stories from some of our inspectors about the cases they handled in 2025 are often harrowing. These cases illustrate both the callousness with which seafarers are treated and the power to resolve them through persistent, coordinated efforts between inspectors, unions and port authorities.

Seafarers’ Bulletin introduces the two newest ITF inspectors, shines a spotlight on our team of inspectors in Australia, and shares updates on the activities of our expanding Flag of Convenience networks, which help you where there are no inspectors.

You will find all the essential information you need – how to contact an ITF inspector and how they can help you, together with advice on contracts, your legal rights and avoiding scams – in the 12-page pullout section.

In solidarity,

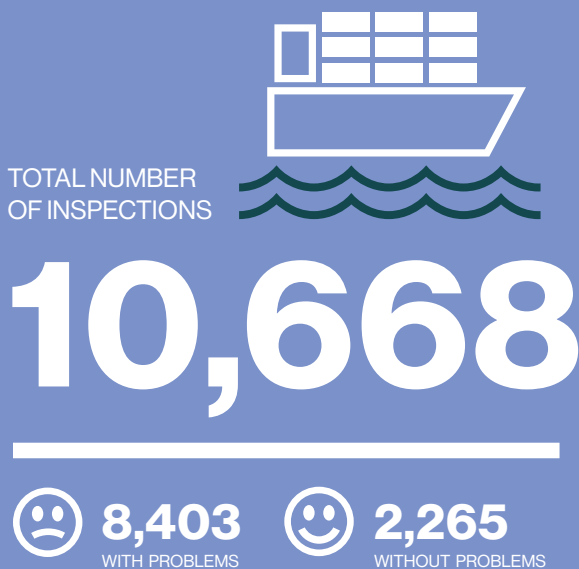
Stephen Cotton
ITF General Secretary

The ITF FOC campaign in numbers

As at 31 December 2025

ITF INSPECTIONS

Total number of vessels inspected broken down into number without problems and number with problems.



TOP 5 PROBLEMS

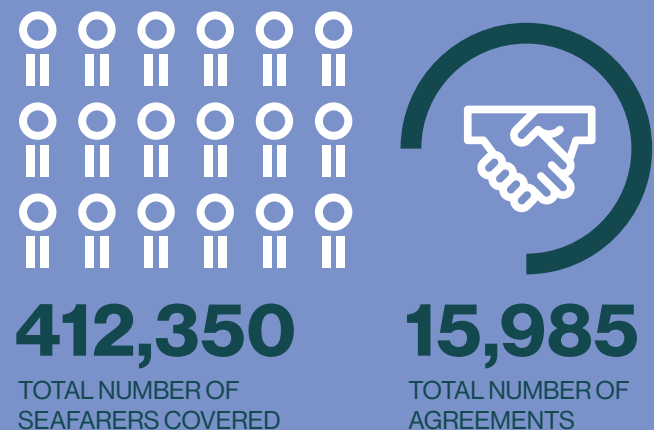
by type found during ITF inspections



TOTAL OWED WAGES RECOVERED



VESSELS AND SEAFARERS COVERED BY ITF AGREEMENTS





Dr Syed Asif Altaf (second from right) from the ITF at the signing of a mental health training agreement with Pertamina Shipping in Indonesia.

ITF drives sustainable change in maritime's approach to seafarer mental wellbeing

In response to the growing mental health crisis in the maritime industry, the ITF is enhancing its work to bring sustainable change to improve seafarer wellbeing across the industry – through working directly with governments and employers, providing training, and by opening up the conversation with seafarers, their families, and the people on the ground who can help them. This move draws on the success in getting stress management built into maritime health and wellbeing education around the world. **Dr Syed Asif Altaf**, ITF Global Wellbeing Programme Coordinator, explains.

Seafarers' mental health worsening

Seafaring is one of the most challenging and hazardous professions. Seafarers face long periods of isolation and being away from their families, working in different time zones on a continuous basis, facing demanding workloads, and significant risks to their health and safety. There is clear evidence that many seafarers, particularly cadets and trainees, suffer from mental ill health.

Shockingly, seafarer deaths from suicide now outnumber those from accidents, as the June 2025 Crew Claims report by Norwegian P&I firm, Gard, revealed. It also found that while illness is the leading cause of death, and accounts for 83% of crew fatalities registered in 2024, stress causes or aggravates 80% of the most common illnesses among crew.



Mental health training underway in Indonesia.

The ITF represents seafarers' interests at international maritime discussions, and advocates for the industry to do more for seafarers' mental wellbeing. We welcome the fact that from 1 January 2026, new training on preventing and responding to violence, harassment, bullying, and sexual assault on ships (including stress management and wellbeing) has been made mandatory and will be a STCW competency standard for all seafarers. In addition, shipowners will be required to implement 'gap training' for existing crew.

The International Maritime Organization has recognised that psychological safety, mental health and wellbeing are issues of serious concern, and these issues are also included in the current review of the STCW convention. The ITF is part of the review's technical team.

We've also been arguing for a comprehensive system for monitoring how many seafarer deaths arise from health-related issues, suicides, incidents involving persons overboard, or other causes. This knowledge is crucial to shaping and monitoring effective safety policies for seafarers and identifying the need for preventive measures. We are pleased that, thanks to an amendment to the MLC, since the end of 2024 all deaths of seafarers employed, engaged, or working on board ships must be investigated, recorded, and reported annually to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) Director-General for inclusion in a global register.

Helping seafarers manage stress and build resilience

First postings on ships can be fraught with challenges: cadets and trainees may find it difficult to adjust to the unique environment and pressures of working at sea away from friends and family. On top of that, they're thrown into a multicultural work force where language and cultural differences can make it challenging to fit in.

We need to prepare cadets and trainees for the psychological challenges of these unique pressures. That's why in 2020, following the recommendations of a survey by the ITF Seafarers' Trust and Yale University, we began a major programme to build mental health and wellbeing into maritime education.

We ran 'train the trainers' (TOT) sessions so that maritime faculty members better understand the pressures faced by seafarers and how to build resilience to help them manage stress. In turn, they built these topics into the basic training delivered to their cadets and trainees.

Thanks to this initiative, maritime training institutions in Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Egypt, Honduras, Malaysia, Panama, Sri Lanka and South Africa are all now teaching mental health awareness and stress management. And, as a result of a TOT session at the end of 2024 for 23 faculty members, the same is happening in 10 maritime universities across seven countries located on or near the Black Sea – Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine.

Partnering with governments to have greater impact

We have significantly shifted direction in the past two years to work more closely with the governments of three of the major seafarer supply countries to address signs.

We have now signed partnership agreements with India, Indonesia, and the Philippines – which means they come to us for technical support for their maritime trainers, particularly on stress management, while partnerships also open up opportunities for influencing policy and practice.

Indonesia

The first agreement was signed with Indonesia in March 2024, and seafarers' mental health education is now mandatory in all the country's public and private maritime academies. By the end of 2025, the ITF and its affiliate the Indonesian Seafarers' Union (Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia – KPI) had conducted nine TOT sessions and trained more than 300 faculty members from every maritime institution.

Astrid Suci Syifa, a cadet from the Vocational High School of Buana Bahari Cirebon, said: "I learnt how to make decisions wisely and cope with my problems, knowing which are important and which are not. And Alhamdulillah [thanks to God] it is very useful for me when I am on board."

We've seen important spin-offs from this agreement:

- The training programme has been so successful that the government is interested in expanding it to all academies training workers across every transport sector.
- The ITF is part of a team with the Human Resources Development Centre of the Sea Transport Ministry that visits maritime institutions for regular monitoring and to provide ongoing technical assistance.
- Pertamina International Shipping, the national oil company, has signed an agreement with the ITF to provide technical support to its training centre inspectors, and to provide first responder and peer support training to its senior officers and senior ratings.
- Pertamina invited the ITF to provide technical support to develop a wellbeing programme for its entire fleet and its crews' families. We have already conducted five training sessions with all the company's instructors and 150 senior officers and senior ratings.



India

Since the agreement was signed with the Indian government in January 2025, stress management is being built into national maritime curriculum, with 35 faculty members from 15 institutions trained already, and more in the pipeline for 2026. The government hopes this will build resilience and promote a healthy work environment for Indian seafarers globally, particularly early on in their careers.

Dr Kusum Kanwar, a faculty member from the Mumbai Maritime Training Institute, said: "The ITF's work... has been a game-changer for the MMTI. It is helping me better support the wellbeing of seafarers on the revalidation course! It has allowed me to create a more supportive learning environment and provide essential resources at pre-sea institutes and shipping companies."

Again, this agreement has led to other developments, such as:

- Unions, government officials, shipping companies and seafarers' families were brought together to discuss mental health, suicide and seafarers' death compensation at a landmark event in April 2025, led by India's Directorate General of Shipping (DG Shipping) and the ITF.
- DG Shipping set a new standard for India's shipping industry by committing to ensure compensation for all seafarer deaths onboard Indian-flagged ships, including suicides, under both new and existing agreements.
- Mental Health Awareness week in October provided an opportunity for the ITF, DG Shipping and the Port of Chennai to organise education sessions for seafarers, dockers and warehouse workers.



Philippines

In February 2025, an agreement was signed between the ITF and the Philippine government agency, Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), to incorporate a new module into all maritime training in the country. The first group of 35 faculty members from 15 maritime institutions took part in new TOT sessions in Manila in August 2025, and three more sessions will follow in 2026, covering all the country's major maritime education institutions.

Opening up the conversation

The ITF is taking conversations about stress and mental wellbeing out to seafarers, and involving their families and the people on the ground who can help them – maritime unions, ITF inspectors, welfare organisations and volunteers.

Following two successful pilots in 2025, the ITF is poised for the global rollout in October 2026 of its wellbeing campaign, giving seafarers a safe space to talk about their emotions. It has the potential to transform the culture of the maritime industry – one conversation, one ship visit, one family at a time.

During both pilots, seafarers opened up about the stress, exhaustion and loneliness they can feel because of the pressures of life on board. Many expressed relief at simply being asked how they were doing – something that often goes unnoticed in the day-to-day grind of maritime operations.

The first pilot was in Mumbai, India, in early April, where ITF inspectors, affiliates, and volunteers fanned out across ports, vessels and seafarer centres, creating opportunities for hundreds of candid conversations

with seafarers. They provided educational material on managing stress and sleep, and promoted the ITF Wellbeing App and local helplines.

- They brought together ship management firms, welfare groups and affiliated maritime unions to discuss the inclusion of suicide as a death benefit in collective bargaining agreements – a major step toward recognising the gravity of mental health challenges at sea.
- Family outreach events in Mumbai helped dismantle mental health stigma and gave families practical strategies to support their loved ones working at sea.
- More than 200 members of the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) were trained in how to recognise the signs of poor wellbeing, what to do and what support services are available.
- As part of a wider programme with the Norwegian Seafarers' Union, the ITF co-hosted with German union ver.di and Italian transport federation FIT-CISL a four-day seminar for 45 NUSI members working on cruise ships, including a day of interactive sessions on seafarer mental health and wellbeing.

The second pilot took place in late April during the ITF's West Coast Week of Action in Vancouver, Seattle, Tacoma, and Longview. Inspectors and volunteers brought the campaign to ship decks, mess rooms, and gangways, using printed materials, checklists, and one-on-one conversations, with support from NUSI and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. In many cases, inspectors were able to assist seafarers in their native languages, breaking down barriers that might otherwise prevent someone from seeking help. ■



The Eternity C sinks in the Red Sea.

Protect seafarers in Red Sea

A deadly Houthi attack on the Eternity C in the Red Sea underscores the urgent need to protect seafarers, argues **Steve Yandell**, ITF Assistant Coordinator, Seafarers' and Inland Navigation Section.

On 7 July 2025, Yemen's Houthi rebels attacked the cargo vessel Eternity C in the Red Sea. Ten of the 22 crew members were rescued before the ship sank but four seafarers were killed. Ten crew and one of the armed security team were captured and held hostage by the Houthis. In early December, the news came that nine Filipino seafarers were about to be released but

it was unclear whether the two non-Filipino captives would also be set free.

Days earlier, the Magic Seas had also been attacked but fortunately the crew was rescued before the vessel sank.

Both vessels were Greek-operated and flew Liberian flags. The Houthis stated they had been targeted because their owners did business with Israeli ports.

The strikes on the two vessels marked a revival of attacks on shipping by the Houthis, who hit more than 100 ships between November 2023 and December 2024 in what they said was solidarity with the Palestinians in the war in Gaza. On 23 January, 'in support' for the Gaza ceasefire agreement, the Houthis released the 25-strong Galaxy Leader crew they had held hostage for 14 months since seizing the Bahamas-flagged car carrier. ■

ITF urging protections for seafarers

In early July the ITF urged shipowners at the International Bargaining Forum (where shipowners and trade unions negotiate collective bargaining agreements) that the Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman and Israeli ports be designated as Warlike Operations Areas (WOAs). Major maritime insurers have already classified these waters as war-risk zones.

This would give any seafarer covered by an ITF agreement (nearly 360,000 seafarers on flag of convenience vessels worldwide) the right to refuse

to sail in these zones, without repercussions, and to request repatriation at the employer's expense.

It also means that seafarers who choose to work in a WOA and who are covered by an ITF agreement are entitled to double their basic pay, along with double compensation for death or disability.

However, the best way to protect seafarers is for shipping companies to divert their ships and for flag states to instruct them to do so. There should also be an enhanced naval service to protect any ships that do sail in these areas. Seafarers' lives must come first. ■

The scandal of abandonment

Cases of abandonment continue to soar. *Seafarers' Bulletin* shares the latest facts, offers advice on how to protect yourself against being abandoned, and highlights just one of the many terrible cases its inspectors and affiliated unions assist with each year.

Record number of seafarers abandoned

A total of 409 vessels and 4,595 seafarers were abandoned in 2025, a shocking new high to shame the maritime industry. The previous record was in 2024, when 312 vessels and 3,133 seafarers were abandoned.

Indian crew are again the most abandoned nationality, with 1,125 Indian seafarers stranded on ships – up from 899 in 2024.

The Arab World region dominates, with 152 abandonments, 54 of them in the UAE. The UAE came second only to the 61 cases recorded in Türkiye.

The ITF reported 400 of the 409 abandonments to the International Labour Organization (ILO)/International Maritime Organization (IMO) database on reported incidents of abandonment. The ITF actively engages with shipowners to address the issue, and works for greater protections for seafarers at the ILO and IMO. ■



Indian crew are again the most abandoned nationality, with 1,125 Indian seafarers stranded on ships – up from 899 in 2024.

How to protect yourself

If you are abandoned, the ITF or one of our affiliated unions will do all we can to assist you. But there are crucial ways you can protect yourself against being abandoned.

Try to avoid the risk in the first place. Before you sign anything, check all the available information you can about a vessel. Use websites that show the position and destination details of vessels. And use the ILO database, which lists all abandoned vessels: <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/seafarers/seafarersbrowse.home>. (Search by IMO number in case the vessel name has changed.)

Be vigilant on board. The non-payment of wages for weeks is a warning sign that an employer may be about to abandon the vessel and crew. The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) requires that seafarers are paid at least monthly, so if you go more than a month without being paid in full, this is a breach of the MLC.

Act swiftly. If you think you are in danger of abandonment, DO NOT WAIT to make your complaint or you may lose out financially. Contact your shipowner – if they do not respond, contact the insurance company. The insurance will cover you for up to four months' outstanding wages and entitlements in line with your employment agreement or CBA, as well as reasonable expenses (e.g., for repatriation, accommodation, essential supplies) from the moment of abandonment to when you get home.

Speak out. If the owner or insurer don't help, reach out to the ITF – you can speak to us completely confidentially. But remember – we have no power to help you if you do not contact us in the first place.

Email us at abandonment@itf.org.uk.

Keep up to date about protections for abandoned seafarers contained in amendments to the MLC – download the free app of MLC Frequently Asked Questions at <https://faqmlc.ilo.org/>.

Abandonment in 2025 – the facts

IN 2025:
409 ABANDONMENTS WERE REPORTED
UP BY 98 (31%) ON 2024



409 abandonments reported,
The ITF reported **400** of these

Owed wages from the **410 cases**
is more than **USD 25.8 million**

We have so far recovered more than
USD 16.5 million
from these vessels

4,595 seafarers on abandoned vessels
complained to the ITF, up by 1,462 (46%) on
2024

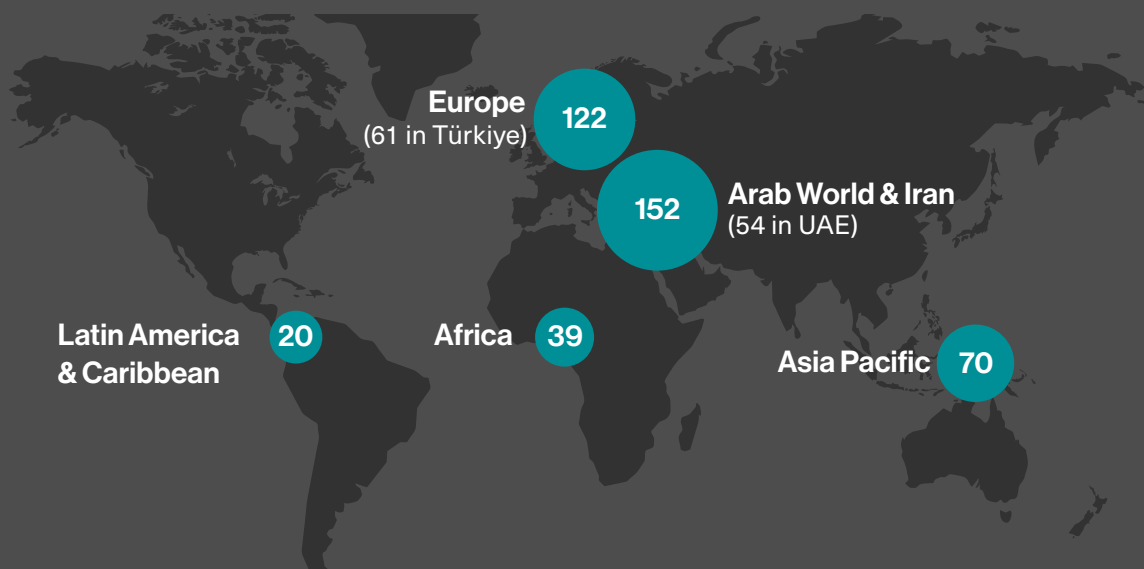
Of these, **1,125** were Indian crew,
making them the most abandoned nationality



THE 10 FLAGS WITH THE MOST ABANDONMENTS

Panama	68	Comoros	34	Cameroon	12
Unknown	46	Palau	21	Sierra Leone	11
Tanzania	41	Iran	18		
St Kitts & Nevis	40	Liberia	17		

ABANDONMENT BY REGION



UAE fails to assist abandoned seafarers

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a global hotspot for seafarer abandonment, with more seafarer abandonments taking place there than in any other country in the region. This case is a shocking indictment of its approach to the most basic human rights of seafarers.

Desperate seafarers abandoned on a sanctioned oil tanker in the Persian Gulf were out of fuel and were burning wood to cook what food they had left when they turned to the ITF for help.

The 19 seafarers, from India, Bangladesh and Ukraine, are aboard the Global Peace, anchored in Al Hamriyah, UAE. It has no known flag, but is owned by UAE-based Glory International FZ-LLC. The company has been under US sanctions since April. According to the crew, the vessel was shipping marine gas oil from Iraq to the UAE.

Their WhatsApp message in early September read: “We are out of MGO and we totally black [sic] out. We have provision but unable to do something because there is no fuel. We did not ate [sic] since last evening.”

The ITF urged the UAE to act on 29 August but – at the time of writing – they are still stranded. The seafarers subsequently started scavenging wood from the ship to burn in order to cook their remaining supplies. This is now a desperate situation.

Many of the crew have been aboard for 15 months. The vessel is believed to have no insurance, while seafarers’ contracts seen by the ITF refer to fictitious ITF collective bargaining agreements.

This case of abandonment exemplifies the lengths that criminal outfits like Glory International will go to in order to secure their illegal profits, with seafarers nothing more to them than expendable assets.

As it massively expands its maritime industry, the UAE needs to fulfil the commitment it made to protecting seafarers in the historic memorandum of understanding signed with the ITF in May 2018. It must protect seafarers’ human rights from criminal abuse in its waters, and it must ratify the MLC. ■



“We are out of MGO and we totally black [sic] out. We have provision but unable to do something because there is no fuel. We did not ate [sic] since last evening.”

4,595

SEAFARERS ABANDONED IN 2025

are you at risk in 2026?

Are you abandoned?

- Are you owed two or more months’ wages?
- Are you no longer receiving sufficient or regular food, water and fuel?
- Are you over contract and your owner is ignoring your request for repatriation?

If you are suffering any of these, you may be abandoned. For free, confidential assistance, email us at abandonment@itf.org.uk.

You can view the ITF’s list of current abandonment cases at <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/directories/abandonment-list>.

Stories from the frontline

In these pages, ITF inspectors share some of the harrowing cases they have handled in 2025. It is only through the bravery of seafarers contacting the ITF that our inspectors can step in.

Medevacked seafarer with cancer denied financial rights

Sören Wichmann, ITF Inspector in Germany, describes how a seafarer became ill and was medevacked while his rights to medical financial assistance under a new CBA were ignored.

Simon* was working aboard the Liberia-flagged Delight C container ship when it was denied entry to several North Sea and Baltic Sea ports because it did not have an agreement. Eventually, local unions and workers' councils in Sweden, Denmark and Germany negotiated a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the shipowner.

During these delays, Simon experienced strong abdominal pain. He had to wait until the vessel called at Hamburg in July before he could visit a

doctor, who said that he might be suffering from cancer and needed medical repatriation.

The local seamen's club accommodated him in a German Seamen's Mission hotel until he was medevacked at the beginning of August. In the meantime, Simon and the Mission chaplains contacted the ITF for help in claiming the medical financial assistance the seafarer was due under the CBA. For months we battled with the P&I, the owner and the manning agent to get 130 days of sick pay, the recovery of his medical costs, compensation, and the USD10,000 in wages Simon was owed as the shipowner was not paying him in accordance with the agreement. Without a CBA, he would be close to getting nothing.

After more than four months, Simon's family was struggling to pay their bills. The ITF Seafarers' Trust stepped in to provide money to cover the costs of Simon's treatment until he received what he was owed. Finally, in December, after settlement negotiations and legal support from the ITF, Simon received close to USD70,000. ■

**Not his real name*

Seafarers caught up in commercial dispute

A commercial dispute between charterer and owner left a vessel sailing without valid MLC coverage for over a year – and the crew were left high and dry for months. **Hakimah Saiful Bahri**, ITF Inspector in Malaysia, praises the concerted multi-agency effort that resolved this complex case.

In March, management company Yonghuan Shipping (Shanghai) Co Ltd abruptly withdrew from operations for the Singapore-flagged Bravely Loyalty, despite a valid bareboat charter being in place until August.

It was discovered that, unbeknown to the master, owner (Golden Pacific Shipping & Holdings Pte Ltd) or the flag state Singapore, the MLC Financial Security Certificates (which cover shipowners' liabilities towards crew welfare and contracts and abandonment entitlements) had been terminated in April 2024.

The Bravely Loyalty was denied entry for a crew change at Khor Fakkan, UAE, in April due to expired statutory certificates, class certificates, and insurance coverage. Yonghuan instructed the master to sail to Malaysia, where a Warrant of Arrest was triggered using Malaysia's jurisdiction as a 'port of convenience' to activate a maritime lien (which allows a claim against a ship for services rendered or damages caused). The crew – who had not been paid since January 2025 – were now pawns in the commercial dispute between the charterer and the shipowner.

They remained stranded onboard in Penang without salary, fresh water or provisions for seven months. A lawyer appointed by Yonghuan on the crew's behalf made no progress. When conditions became unbearable in July, the seafarers reached out to the ITF.

Upon inspection on 23 July, we also discovered:

- Double bookkeeping in crew contracts – one MLC-compliant version for the authorities and another showing lower actual wages with manipulated salary variations.

- Unsafe manning (only one certified AB onboard instead of the required three).
- Coercion and duress, with evidence that crew were pressured to sign legal papers and undertakings.

After the ITF's intervention, the Marine Department Malaysia organised a multi-agency meeting on 31 July, bringing together representatives from the Marine Department, ITF, Flag State, Immigration Department, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, port officials, agents, and the shipowner's and charterer's lawyers, together with all crew members.

The crew stated they did not recognise Yonghuan's appointed lawyer and chose to deal directly with the owner, agreeing to a 3.5-month wage settlement, with repatriation costs also covered by the shipowner.

All 12 crew members signed off and were repatriated on 22 August 2025. ■

Double bookkeeping unearthed on Kostas and Talos

Inspections revealed double bookkeeping on two sister vessels, reports Luka Simić, ITF Inspector in Rijeka.

A routine inspection of the then Sierra Leone-flagged Kostas in Rijeka found that the master had forgotten to separate the wage summary, which is regularly sent to the company for salary processing. This document provided evidence of double bookkeeping – maintaining parallel accounts for wage payments. It showed the crew's actual salaries were almost half of those listed in their contracts.

We immediately notified Port State Control (PSC), and told the master that the problem must be resolved by the next day. The company, MN Shipping, confirmed our findings in a phone call and agreed to pay the wage differences. The following day the crew received their total owed wages – USD18,413.

The Kostas departed and the Talos, its Barbados-flagged sister ship, arrived. The crew had heard the Kostas news and immediately submitted a complaint

to the ITF and PSC over double bookkeeping and safety irregularities on board.

Our joint inspection discovered that the master had replaced the crew's employment contracts to hide double bookkeeping, although some seafarers had hidden copies of the originals. Other serious problems concerning the master emerged, including prohibiting shore leave for certain nationalities.

The full PSC inspection uncovered 23 serious deficiencies, 15 of which constituted grounds for detaining the ship. Five were MLC violations, including failure to pay full wages, lack of hot water on board, and a non-functional heating and ventilation system. ■



With our help, the Talos crew was paid a total of USD14,700 in unpaid wages.



ITF Inspector Youngin Kim explains the situation to seafarers.

ITF and PSC tackle welfare deficiencies on Sea Moon

The Sea Moon case illustrates how swift action through crew complaints, onsite inspection, ITF/PSC cooperation, and robust PSC enforcement can ensure the protection of seafarers' rights under the MLC, says **Youngin Kim**, ITF South Korea Inspector.

Following a complaint by the crew via mobile messenger, I immediately visited the Comoros-flagged Sea Moon on 11 September when it called at the Port of Busan. I discovered unpaid wages, overdue crew changes, and shortages of food and fresh water, so immediately informed the PSC. The PSC joined me onboard and carried out their own inspection.

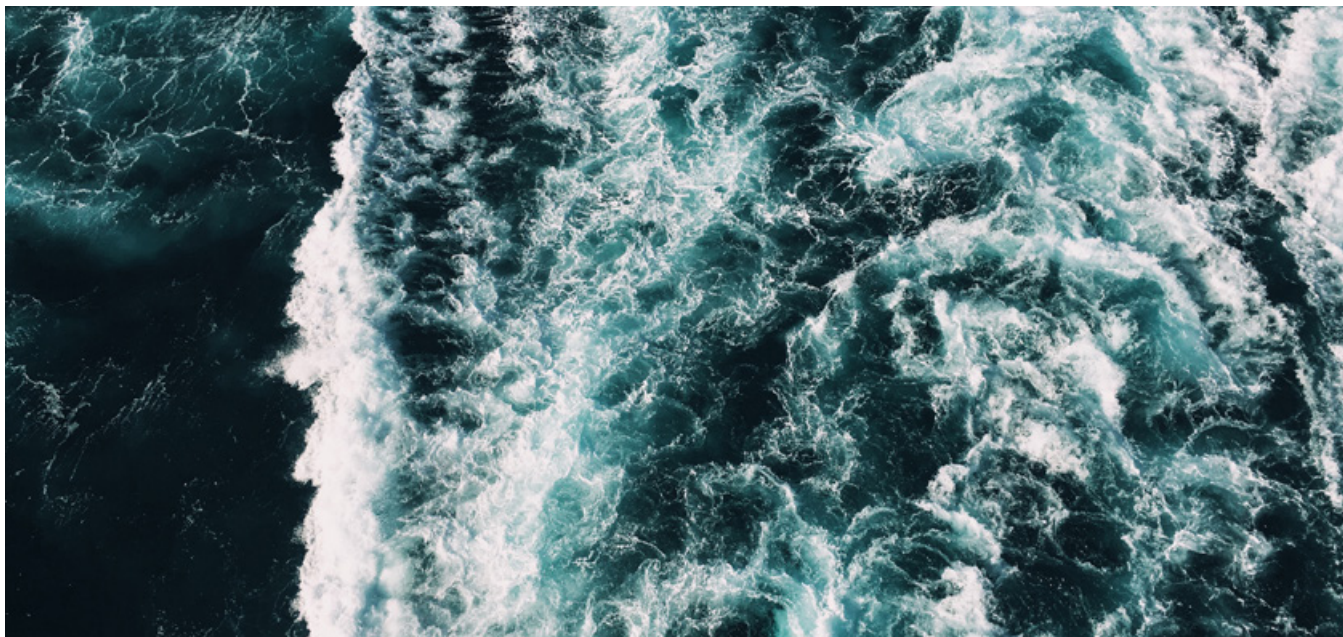
The PSC inspection revealed 21 major deficiencies, including non-payment of wages for



four months to 18 foreign seafarers (from Syria, India, Ukraine and Myanmar), and malfunctions in navigation, firefighting, lifesaving, and anti-pollution equipment.

Thanks to joint pressure from the ITF and the port authorities, the shipowner, Capital Sea Fleet Inc, paid total outstanding wages of USD142,666, arranged overdue crew changes, and urgently supplied food and fresh water. Eleven crew members were successfully repatriated.

The Sea Moon was cleared after repairs and corrective measures were completed and departed Busan on 10 October with seven of the crew who chose to remain on board. ■



Captain feared for life on abandoned vessel

A courageous Syrian master turned for help to **Paola Cervetto**, ITF Genoa Inspector after a year without pay. His painful fight for justice left him humiliated and fearful for his life, so Paola has respected his wish not to share the name of the vessel or its Turkish owner.

In early May, Captain Haisam Ibrahim Mahmoud sent a harrowing message to me. He had been on board for 12 months with no pay, his contract had expired six months earlier, and the shipowner had no intention of repatriating him. The experience was painful and humiliating.

He said the vessel had no valid certificates, the P&I had expired, it was no longer covered by the Comoros flag, and was sailing only with an expired provisional certificate issued by the Tanzanian registry. Safety equipment had expired, and food, water and medicines were starting to run out.

The captain was fighting alone, as the six other Syrian crew members were relatives of the Turkish shipowner.

He filed a complaint with the Yemeni authorities: "I received no responses to my messages to the company, the flag, the P&I, the Yemeni authorities or the Turkish Ministry of Transport. Their indifference to the captain's plight made me feel frustrated, angry and sad."

The vessel sailed from the Gulf of Aden, arriving in Oman in June. Over the next two months, the port master did all he could to help. He agreed to bring the captain's unpaid wages on board, because it can be difficult for Syrian seafarers to receive their salaries from their banks. From then on the captain feared being killed by the other seafarers, and even locked himself in his cabin to escape their aggression.

My concerns for his safety grew, as his voice messages, photos and other communications didn't seem as if they were really from him. Eventually, I asked him for a selfie and to my huge relief it was the captain.

In August, Captain Mahmoud was finally able to disembark, thanks to the port master's intervention. Once he was safely home, the captain sent me this message:



"I had no way out of these challenges. After careful consideration, I... contacted Ms Paola... seeking assistance in securing my rights, salary, and protection from the danger I faced. Thanks to [her], I was able to recover my wages and, most importantly, escape with my life and return safely to Syria. I will never forget the humanitarian stance and the tremendous efforts put forth by the ITF and Ms Paola."

Crew abandoned on sanctioned Sondos

The risks and complications facing crew serving aboard a ship under US sanctions are highlighted in a case recently handled by **Markus Wichmann**, ITF Hamburg Inspector.

A seafarer from the Sondos contacted the ITF on 3 September to report that he had not been paid for over six months, the rest of the crew were owed three months' wages, supplies of water and provisions were running low, and all 13 seafarers, from Myanmar and India, were waiting to be repatriated. The vessel was at anchorage in the Port of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

The USA had imposed sanctions on the tanker on 21 August as property in which sanctioned company Ozarka Shipping had a stake. Even before then, Ozarka Shipping had already failed to pay parts of the salaries.

Several months of daily – and often fruitless – contact with the responsible institutions ensued. The so-called P&I club failed to answer my countless enquiries. The Antigua & Barbuda flag state response did not bode well: "... In strict compliance with our sanctions framework, the Sondos remains scheduled for deletion from our register on September 27, 2025.

This action, while necessary, does reduce the Registry's direct leverage over the vessel." However, the flag state continued its efforts to clarify the case.

The last message we received from the ship management company (via the flag state) before the vessel was sold exemplifies its irresponsible, inhumane attitude. It claimed that provisions had already been delivered, and that it had never heard about the outstanding salary complaints. It demanded that the ITF provide proof – which was not difficult to do.

My deepest respect goes to the crew, who, despite utter hopelessness and mental health issues, always found a way to stand together and fight for their rights. They didn't fall for the company's empty promises of repatriation and pay if they kept on sailing, to Kenya... Iran... and so on.

They fought on until on 13 November the Designated Person Ashore arrived with a relief crew, paid the outstanding wages of over USD170,000 in cash, and gave the crew their flight tickets.

On 15 November, I received this message from Rose Win, wife of the Sondos engineer, saying of the abandoned crew that, "despite their loyalty and commitment to their duties, they were left stranded, unheard, and forgotten by those responsible for their welfare... In their darkest moment, the crews reached out to Markus from the ITF. His guidance finally brought a ray of hope." ■



Ordeal over: seafarers' owed wages are counted before they leave the ship to head home.





Sailing into a sea of opportunities for Filipino seafarers

Meet **Conrado F Oca**, President of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) since 2010. He shares the union's achievements and his ambitions for Filipino seafarers and their families with the *Seafarers' Bulletin*.

As a medical doctor, I was passionate about the health and wellbeing of Filipino families and communities. I came from a family of merchant marine officers and saw how important it is for seafarers to ensure that their families are safe and healthy while they are onboard. I therefore welcomed the opportunity to lead AMOSUP, which has 113,000 seafarers as members – 109,009 men and 4,542 women, and 37,470 youth members.

Today, one of my top priorities is to continue expanding AMOSUP's services to deliver our professional, compassionate and holistic healthcare and welfare to more seafarer families across the country, building on the vision of Captain Gregorio S Oca, who founded AMOSUP 65 years ago.

Driving better health, education and training

AMOSUP has achieved so much that we are proud of – this is just a snapshot. The success of our TeleHealth service for seafarers on board, which means that they can consult our doctors by phone or email on emergency medical issues, and officers can receive help in diagnosing or treating sick or injured crew. Our TeleMental Health Helpline, which provides a 24/7 service for seafarers who need assessment and support on mental health issues and problems from our qualified and trained psychometricians. The establishment of six healthcare facilities, and five sailors' homes, which provide low-cost accommodation and hospitality services to Filipino seafarers.

The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), the education and training institution we support, runs two fully dedicated training ships and the MAAP Innovation Laboratory, which advances maritime technology through simulation and training.

We continue to establish and strengthen partnerships and agreements with our social partners and other stakeholders to provide opportunities for our seafarers. Our effective collaboration with the ITF gives Filipino seafarers a voice internationally and means that we can contribute our experience and knowledge to the welfare and rights of seafarers worldwide. And Filipino seafarers benefit from ITF initiatives in our country, such as the annual cruise seminar in Cebu.

Winning the Magna Carta legislation

The signing into law on 23 September 2024 of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers was an important victory for all Filipino seafarers serving onboard both domestic and international vessels. Through seeking to ensure that the Philippines complies with the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, it offers stronger protections for Filipino maritime workers throughout their employment. The Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Magna Carta were signed on 8 January 2025, and AMOSUP continues to work closely with the government and maritime stakeholders to ensure that Filipino seafarers fully benefit from it. ■

Protecting seafarers from criminalisation and unfair treatment

This feature sets out important new protections for seafarers accused of a maritime crime, and describes how the ITF is tackling criminalisation and unfair treatment.

Accused of a crime? Know your new rights!

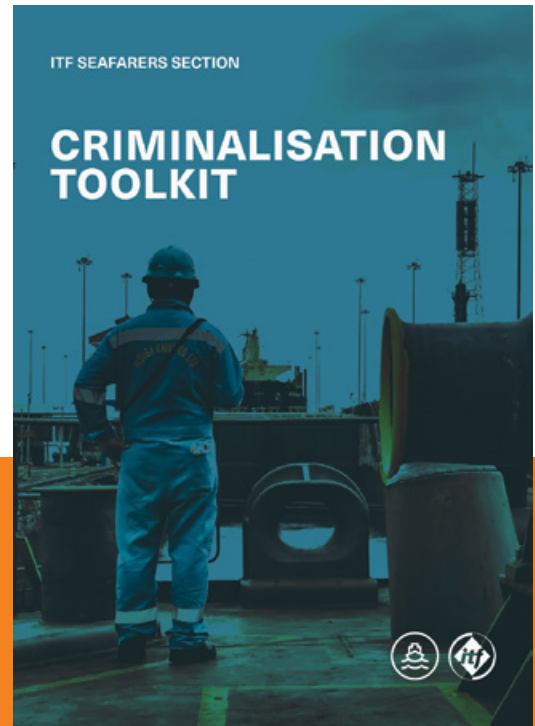
The rise in seafarers facing unfair treatment and criminalisation has led to important new protections if you are accused of a crime, says **Jonathan Warring**, ITF Head of Legal. He sets out these rights and shares two harrowing cases of seafarers caught up in situations beyond their control.

Seafarers are recognised as a special category of worker needing special protection because of the global nature of shipping and the different jurisdictions they operate in.

Following the rise in cases of seafarers facing unfair treatment and criminalisation, in June 2025, the ILO/IMO published new Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers Detained in Connection with Alleged Crimes. These have been incorporated into the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) guidelines but are not mandatory until they come into force in December 2027.

The Guidelines outline clear expectations – such as protection from arbitrary detention, maintenance of wages and medical care, and timely legal processes – to ensure that seafarers are treated fairly during investigations and proceedings by public authorities, and that detention on suspicion of committing or having committed a crime is for no longer than necessary.

They should be applied where seafarers may be investigated or detained in a jurisdiction other than that of the seafarers' nationality on suspicion of criminal activity during the course of their employment on board a ship.



They require states investigating crimes to be mindful that seafarers may unknowingly become implicated in criminal activities. States should therefore exercise due caution to avoid criminalisation of seafarers, unless evidence to the contrary exists.

The Guidelines are intended to reinforce existing human rights, including the principle of presumption of innocence until proven guilty by a proper legal process.

They aim to ensure that:

- no seafarer is subject to arbitrary detention;
- no seafarer is deprived of their liberty, except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as established by law;
- no seafarer, in particular the Master, is detained on suspicion of committing an alleged crime solely because of their status on board the ship.

The ITF and its affiliated trade unions participated in the ILO/IMO meeting in November 2024 to agree the new Guidelines, and are now working together to encourage countries to implement them. ■

Download the Guidelines at <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/guidelines-fair-treatment-seafarers-detained-connection-alleged-crimes>.

If you are at risk of being criminalised, download the ITF toolkit at <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/resources/criminalisation-toolkit>.



Ferry captain and crew unfairly detained over fatal accident

Three seafarers have been unfairly detained in relation to a fatal accident on the Lastovo ferry – they face 15 years in prison if convicted. Yet, two earlier independent investigations concluded that the company management was to blame.

Three seafarers were killed and another was seriously injured when the loading ramp on the 55-year-old ferry collapsed in the port of Mali Lošinj, Croatia, on 11 August 2024.

In February 2025, the Rijeka County State Attorney's Office launched an investigation against the Lastovo's captain, first officer and the lead deckhand. On 26 September, all three were charged with committing an act of serious criminal negligence against public safety.

Two reports on the accident were published in February.

The Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure concluded that the safety management system at Jadrolinija was not fully established, and that the ship's captain violated the provisions of the safety management rules. It proposed the initiation of misdemeanour proceedings against the company, its former CEO and the ship's captain.

The National Investigation Agency found that Jadrolinija's safety procedures were deficient in the lead-up to the accident and that the company had not properly trained the crew to manage a known fault in the ramp's hydraulic system.

The board of Jadrolinija was dismissed following the reports. In December, the three seafarers were still awaiting trial. ■

Concern mounts for imprisoned chief mate

There was huge relief when Captain **Marko Bekavac** was able to return home to Croatia in August after nearly two years in detention in Türkiye. But Chief Mate **Ali Albokhari** remains in prison, awaiting an appeal.

When drugs were found aboard the Phoenician M in Ereğli, Türkiye, in October 2023, the captain, chief mate and eight other crew members were immediately remanded in prison. Some of the crew had no cargo loading responsibilities, and there was no clear evidence against any of the men.

In fact, the captain had requested additional security at the previous port and had assisted local authorities when drugs were found prior to departure. He also informed the Turkish authorities of the issues before arrival in Ereğli.

Yet, on 20 September 2024, Captain Bekavac and Chief Mate Albokhari were found guilty and handed 30-year sentences. All charges against the other crew members were dropped. In January 2025 the court of appeal approved the sentences. The men's lawyers appealed against this decision to a higher appeals court.

We are following the legal process closely through their lawyers and are in contact with their families. We are extremely concerned for Chief Mate Albokhari, and continue to call for his immediate release. ■

Tackling criminalisation and unfair treatment

As part of the ITF's expanded work to tackle criminalisation and unfair treatment, we are working with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) where this can add weight to the lobbying process. This can be through involvement in specific cases, or in encouraging implementation of both sets of Fair Treatment Guidelines. **Steve Yandell**, Assistant Coordinator, Seafarers' and Inland Navigation Sections.

Industry Standing Forum

Early in 2025 the ITF and ICS established the Industry Standing Forum on criminalisation and unfair treatment so that we can make joint representations on specific cases.

The Standing Forum meets regularly to discuss cases as they arise. It also has representation from the International Association of Ports and Harbors, and the ILO and IMO will attend as Observers to provide guidance on both specific cases and the Forum's actions.

IMO symposium

A major symposium – an ITF and ICS initiative, organised with the ILO and IMO – was held at the IMO on 16 June

2025. It urged the maritime industry to act together to end the worsening crisis of seafarer criminalisation and unfair treatment.

This united effort from industry and regulators aimed to convey to national governments that fair treatment should be afforded to seafarers in line with both the Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of a Maritime Accident, and the recently adopted Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes.

The ITF arranged for Mithun Deshpande, a member of the Maritime Union of India, to address the symposium about his experience in detention.

Mithun was on the Riah and about to take over command when it was impounded by the Iranian authorities in July 2019. The ship was travelling from Sohar, Oman, to Sharjah, UAE, carrying diesel oil loaded from a supply vessel. Mithun and three other seafarers were accused of smuggling diesel oil and spent more than four years in prison. The shipowner failed in its responsibility to support them, and the seafarers endured immense emotional and financial distress.

Mithun powerfully conveyed to the audience of governments and industry representatives the real human consequences of seafarers being unfairly treated as a result of their occupation.

The symposium gained widespread maritime media attention both in traditional and social media. ■

Seafarers' Bulletin shares developments in the ITF's Flags of Convenience campaign in 2025.

Three new flags added to FOC list

The ITF's addition of three ship registries to its longstanding list of 'Flags of Convenience' (FOCs) brings the total to a record 48 countries.

Dominica, The Gambia, and Niue are the latest flags to be added to the ITF's long-standing FOC list. The decision was made at a meeting of the ITF's Fair Practices Committee Steering Group, which brings together seafarer and docker unions.

The ITF defines an FOC ship as one flying the flag of a country other than its actual ownership.

From having zero tankers in 2023 to more than 35 by early 2025, the Gambia registry is strongly associated with the 'shadow fleet'. Research showed that 99% of its tankers were under sanctions or believed to be carrying sanctioned commodities.

The Niue registry opened in 2012, but ITF data shows that in 2025, where ownership of its 59 vessels can be confirmed, it is spread across several Asian states with the most, 16, in Singapore.

Of Dominica registry's 43 ships, 30 have ownership in other countries, including the UAE (7), India (7), Kazakhstan (3), Saudi Arabia (2), USA (2), Barbados (2) and Norway (2), in addition to Australia (1), Cyprus (1), Finland (1), Great Britain (1) and Guinea-Conakry (1).

The FOC system allows companies to register ships in low regulation countries to hide ownership, reduce tax obligations, employ cheap labour or skirt safety standards – with profound implications for seafarers working on those vessels. Flag registers should not be allowed to operate as businesses using lower standards than traditional national registers. ■

See the full list of FOCs at <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/issues/flags-of-convenience/current-registries-listed-focs>.



Seafarers on FOC ships to get pay boost

Seafarers working on FOC vessels will receive a two-year, 5% pay rise after tough but successful negotiations between the ITF and maritime employers in June 2025.

The pay award, announced on 3 June 2025, will be implemented through a 3.5% rise from 1 January 2026, and a further 1.5% rise from 1 January 2027.

The award was negotiated under the International Bargaining Forum (IBF), a unique global structure that generates the world's largest Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). It covers more than 11,000 vessels and 400,000 seafarers, and involves nearly 500 maritime employers alongside the ITF and its affiliated maritime trade unions. It also agreed to increase the death and disability benefits in the current version of the IBF Framework Agreement, in line with the pay rise. ■

Global scam threatens seafarers' rights and welfare

The ITF has exposed a sham operation combining a fake union and a for-profit company set up to make money off the backs of seafarers. ITF Maritime Operations Coordinator **John Canias** explains.

The 'International Seafarers' Union' (ISU) was established alongside a for-profit company named 'Lanibra' to sell cut-rate, sham labour agreements to rogue shipping companies looking to slash costs – at the direct expense of seafarers' rights, safety, and wages. ISU's co-founder is Branko Krznaric, who is also the Owner and Director of Lanibra. The sham operation is clearly in breach of international labour laws.

The ITF report "A sham trade union undermining the maritime industry" was launched on 15 May 2025. It reveals a disturbing pattern of seafarer abandonment, wage theft and fundamental rights violations across multiple continents – all enabled by ISU-Lanibra's exploitative business model.

The ITF is urging shipping companies, investors and governments across the world to cut all ties with sham union ISU-Lanibra. It welcomed the move by Petrobras (the Brazilian Petroleum Corporation) to reject the approach by ISU to sell its fake union agreements for use on the Petrobras fleet of ships. Petrobras only accepts ITF or ITF-equivalent agreements in the interests of protecting its seafarers from substandard pay and conditions.

The leadership of ISU and Lanibra is indistinguishable. The same people running the private company, who act as agents to shipowners, offering services to sideline genuine trade unions, also set up and run the sham union which claims to represent seafarers but is signing cut-price, substandard agreements. This is more than unethical, it's illegal.

The ITF is preparing legal advocacy to address these breaches and calls on authorities to investigate and deregister ISU-Lanibra for breaching both international and domestic labour laws. ■



Here are just some of the cases the ITF has uncovered – you can read many more at <https://isu.exposed>

- **In the UK**, two years after the notorious sacking scandal of March 2023, it was revealed that replacement agency workers were paid less than half the legal minimum wage on P&O Ferries. Shockingly, these wages and conditions were detailed in documents seen by the ITF that were prepared for Philcrew and signed by ISU in 2023.
- **In Brazil**, the Eleen Eva was abandoned with unpaid crew. ISU-Lanibra never responded to seafarers onboard; the ITF stepped in and recovered \$178,000 in stolen wages.
- **In Australia**, the Eleen Sofia was arrested by authorities after ITF inspectors found the crew with no food onboard.
- **In Thailand**, a seafarer sought assistance from ISU-Lanibra for unpaid wages, but his plea for help was ignored – until the ITF intervened and secured payment. ■

Know your wage entitlements in Australia

- Is your ship coming to Australia?
- Will you be loading cargo in one Australian port and discharging the same cargo in another Australian port?
- Do you qualify for Australian Seagoing Industry Award entitlements?

ITF inspectors in Australia receive hundreds of queries every year from seafarers who wish to know if they are entitled to Australian Seagoing Industry Award (Australian Award) wages. Here are the basics.

Qualifications for Australian Award wages

- All shipping in and out of Australia is governed under the Australian Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping 2012) Act.
- Foreign-flagged vessels that load Australian domestic cargo in one Australian port and discharge the same cargo in another Australian port are conducting coastal trading under the Act.
- To carry domestic cargo between ports in Australia the shipowner, operator, charterer or ship's agent must apply for and be granted a Temporary License before the coastal trading voyage commences.
- The first two voyages under the Coastal Trading Act are what is known as "Award Free" voyages, meaning that seafarers onboard are not entitled to

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announces the Australian strategic fleet.



Seagoing Industry Award payments for these two voyages. Entitlements apply on any subsequent voyage.

What to do if you think you are entitled to Australian Award wages

If you believe that your ship is engaged in Australian coastal trading, and your crew may be entitled to payments under the Seagoing Industry Award:

- Contact the ITF Australian Inspectorate at itffocaustralia@mua.org.au or the Australian ITF Coordinator at Bray_Ian@itf.org.uk.
- Provide your ship's name and IMO number, along with information regarding your vessel's Australian coastal trading activity.
- The Inspectorate will then work with you to establish if you have a claim.

Follow us on social media to keep up to date - <https://www.facebook.com/ITFFOCAustralia>
https://www.instagram.com/itf_foc_australia/ ■

Domestic maritime policies vital for national security

Domestic maritime policies are necessary for national security and supply chain resilience, says ITF Cabotage Task Force Chair **Chris Given**.

The findings of an ITF report on 'cabotage' (reserving a country's domestic maritime commerce for its own citizens) demonstrate that it is in the national interest for a country to transport goods and people without reliance on a non-national carrier or a non-national workforce. Cabotage policies also help ensure

the retention of a qualified workforce, and create thousands of direct and indirect jobs. A stronger national fleet capacity could have reduced supply chain disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The October 2025 report covered Australia, Brazil, Canada and the USA. It urges governments to ensure that critical cargoes such as fuel, food and medical supplies can be transported by national flag vessels, and that sufficient domestic tonnage and qualified labour is available for national flag ships to operate in a crisis.

Download Domestic Maritime Policies: a Focus on National Security at <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/resources/domestic-maritime-policies-focus-national-security>. ■

ITF inspectors ready to help

If you have a problem on board, ITF inspectors and contacts are here to help you. *Seafarers' Bulletin* introduces the two inspectors recruited in 2025, who take the total to 130. Meet the team of ITF inspectors in Australia, and find out what's been happening in the ITF's regional networks of union contacts.

Meet the newest inspectors



Mikael Gustafsson

Gothenburg

Sweden

Svenska Transportarbetarförbundet, STU

started work as a docker in the port of Gothenburg, before serving as a union official for dockworkers in southern and western Sweden, primarily negotiating CBAs and organising union members.



Patricia Kouame

Abidjan

Côte d'Ivoire

SYMICOM

trained as a deck officer (2009-2012) and served as general treasurer of her union. She has supported seafarers to recover unpaid wages and provided other assistance. She has worked at the Autonomous Port of Abidjan since 2018.

No inspector where you are? Get in touch with the ITF network

If you're in a port or country where there is no ITF inspector, you can turn to the local ITF network for help. The ITF's Flags of Convenience (FOC) networks consist of contacts – individuals nominated by their ITF affiliated unions and based in their offices – who ensure that shipowners are complying with their obligations to provide decent pay and onboard working and living conditions. The contacts work on a voluntary basis, and will do all they can to assist you. Here's an update on their activities throughout the year.



Latin America/Caribbean

This network was created in July 2024 in Panama City. Since then, many of our contacts, together with their unions, have actively participated in cases of abandonment and repatriation, demonstrating their commitment to solidarity and support for seafarers in very difficult situations.

The significant increase in cases of abandonment is very worrying. The majority of crews we are assisting are Venezuelan or Russian, but we have also assisted Filipino, Indian, Syrian, Egyptian, and Ukrainian seafarers.

The network is divided into two groups: one Spanish- and English-speaking, the other English speaking.

Contact the FOC Network Coordinator (Latin America/Caribbean):

Adán Suárez (Uruguay)

Email: suarez_adan@itf.org.uk

Contacts, Spanish- and English-speaking, in: Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela

Contacts, English-speaking, in: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago



Arab World and Iran

The region is seeing more and more abandonment cases. It can be particularly hard to assist seafarers abandoned where countries are in conflict or under sanctions, but the team's efforts have been extraordinary. Our contacts have continued to recover large sums of unpaid wages, and have helped to secure medical assistance and repatriation.

We have received an increasing number of requests for assistance from crew on vessels under the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions, where the flag state has cancelled its registry and therefore also the insurance for the vessel. This leaves seafarers totally exposed.

We have incorporated Syria into the Arab World network this year. This significant move means we can provide better support for seafarers in Syrian ports, and it will help us to work closely with Syrian seafarers to raise awareness of their rights, the ITF support available, and the MLC.

Contact the FOC Network Coordinator (Arab World and Iran):

Mohamed Arrachedi (Spain)

Email: arrachedi_mohamed@itf.org.uk

Contacts in: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. We also offer assistance in UAE, Qatar, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Africa

There is a surge of abandonments in Africa, so we need to work closely with the port state authorities, flag states and insurance companies to pursue seafarers' rights under the MLC 2006.

In 2025, the Africa FOC network expanded to three new countries – Congo-Brazzaville, Somalia and Tanzania – bringing the total to 16. We assisted 796 seafarers and recovered over USD4.6 million in owed wages. We persuaded some shipowners to sign ITF CBAs, and we hope that their example will convince other owners to do the same.

Contact the FOC Network Coordinator (Africa):

Lucien Razafindraibe (Kenya)

Email: razafindraibe_lucien@itf.org.uk

Contacts in: Benin, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo



Asia-Pacific

Our network continues to play a vital role in protecting the rights and welfare of seafarers across the region. In June, we conducted training in Manila, Philippines, which proved to be a great success in strengthening collaboration across the region and creating a more active and supportive network.

Since then, our contacts have been hands-on in assisting with cases in their countries. The number of seafarers and vessel abandonments in the region continues to rise, with the number of cases almost doubling in 2025 compared to 2024.

Contact the FOC Network Coordinator (Asia-Pacific):

Sandra Bernal (Australia)

Email: bernal_sandra@itf.org.uk

Contacts in: Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam.

Meet the Australia team



Ian Bray has over 40 years of service in the maritime industry, spanning 19 years as a seafarer, being an Assistant Secretary for the WA Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), an Assistant National Secretary of the MUA, and ITF National Coordinator for Australia. He has led campaigns to combat wage theft, improve safety standards, strengthen collective bargaining, and hold employers accountable for labour standards breaches. Ian's leadership has contributed to the recovery of millions of dollars in unpaid wages and entitlements across Australia.



Sandra Bernal is the Asia-Pacific Network Coordinator at the ITF, based in Sydney. Her work spans seafarers' welfare and labour rights. She supports crews facing abandonment and unpaid wages, while also working on collective bargaining agreements, unfair dismissals, and disputes between seafarers and employers. Sandra's work involves finding practical solutions in complex cases where legal, welfare, and human factors overlap. She speaks Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, and English.



Jesse Bray is the ITF Australia Research and Administration Officer, providing research, compliance analysis and administrative support to the Australian inspectorate. Jesse brings a strong analytical approach to her work, specialising in coastal trading compliance and wage recovery for seafarers. She works directly with shipping companies to assess compliance with regulations, conduct wage calculations, investigate potential breaches, and recover unpaid wages and entitlements for maritime workers.



Dan Crumlin is a lifelong maritime worker from a proud seafaring and waterfront family. He has been a seafarer and docker, and is a long-standing member of the MUA who has served in numerous representative roles. Since 2021, Dan has served as the ITF Inspector for New South Wales. He works with seafarers visiting Australian ports to ensure they are treated in accordance with international labour standards.



Brian Gallagher began his seafaring career in 1979 and spent more than 20 years at sea before joining the ITF in 2000. Brian was as an official relief officer with the MUA and a Queensland tug delegate for ten years, building a strong reputation as an advocate for maritime workers. Brian is deeply committed to protecting the safety, welfare, and rights of seafarers and has deep experience of helping workers in Australian ports.



Jack McCabe began his career as a seafarer in 1980, working across a wide variety of vessel types. In 2015, he became an organiser with the MUA. He joined the ITF inspectorate in 2023 and now supports international seafarers visiting Australian ports. Jack services the Pilbara region from Port Hedland, where he plays a vital role reaching seafarers on vessels that are often difficult to access.



Matt Purcell has three decades' experience of protecting seafarers' rights, starting on the Melbourne waterfront. In 1996, Matt became a part-time ITF Inspector, before becoming full-time in 1999, and being appointed ITF Assistant Coordinator for Australia in 2005. Matt has worked on cases of vessel abandonment, stolen wages, bullying and harassment, and has been instrumental in securing ITF agreements for vessels operating on the Australian coast.

New training programmes will equip seafarers to lead maritime decarbonisation

A new fuels demonstration underway in Singapore.

Kulsoom Jafri, ITF Lead Campaigner for Seafarers and Inland Navigation, reports on the ITF's drive to put seafarers at the heart of a greener maritime future.

The launch of the Maritime Just Transition Task Force (MJTTF)'s interim training frameworks is critically important for seafarers, as it directly addresses their central role and future employability in the industry's decarbonisation.

This proactive initiative, released on 17 September 2025, will facilitate the development of training programmes for seafarers to ensure that they are empowered to operate the new technologies and alternative-fuel vessels that will define shipping's future.

For individual seafarers, the framework provides a clear and standardised pathway for skills development. It identifies the specific new competencies required for roles like ratings and officers, moving beyond theoretical discussions to offer practical guidance for training providers and governments. This clarity is vital, giving seafarers the confidence that investing in their

own upskilling will lead to recognised and relevant qualifications, safeguarding their careers.

Ultimately, this is about a just transition – ensuring that the shift to a greener industry is fair and inclusive. By focusing on safety and competency from the outset, the MJTTF prioritises seafarers' wellbeing, mitigating the risks associated with new fuels like ammonia, methanol and hydrogen.

This forward-looking approach guarantees that the people who have always been the backbone of global trade are equipped not just to participate in a zero-carbon future, but also to lead it, transforming a potential threat to their livelihoods into an opportunity for career advancement.

The MJTTF is led by the International Chamber of Shipping, the ITF, and the United Nations Global Compact. It was founded in collaboration with the International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization. ■

All the interim training frameworks material is accessible at mjtff.org.

Agreement on decarbonising shipping vital

The ITF is urging governments to reach agreement on a fair path to decarbonising shipping – one that puts seafarers at its core – following the decision by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on 17 October 2025 to postpone the vote on its Net-Zero Framework for one year.

The framework was expected to outline measures for implementing the IMO's 2023 greenhouse gas (GHG) strategy, including timelines and obligations for those in the industry.

Seafarers and the industry are already moving ahead, operating new and cleaner vessels and developing the skills that will power the maritime transition. This work cannot and will not stop.

Governments need to rebuild consensus at the IMO, to ensure a just transition in shipping – one that prioritises safety, skills, and decent work as the industry shifts to new fuels and technologies. ■



Winning key worker status will boost seafarer rights

Key workers: securing a new status for seafarers at the ILO.

Seafarers will benefit from enhanced rights under the Maritime Labour Convention thanks to the official recognition by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that they are key workers, writes **Mark Dickinson**, ITF Seafarers' Section Vice-Chair.

The ITF and its affiliated unions have called for seafarers to be recognised as key workers since the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020, to avoid a repetition of how seafarers were treated then.

We led the Seafarers' Group in intense negotiations with the ILO, governments and shipowners to achieve this landmark win against fierce opposition, at the Special Tripartite Committee (STC) meeting in April 2025 in Geneva. (The STC reviews any proposed amendments to the MLC standards.)

Disappointingly, after more than 65 countries recognised seafarers as key workers during the pandemic, we found governments trying to reverse their position. It was only through exhausting and extended sessions that we managed to have the amendment endorsed.

Seafarers are now recognised as key workers in the MLC guidelines, but the mandatory amendments will not come into force until December 2027.

This new status as key workers seeks to ensure that seafarers receive better protection, easier access to medical care and travel, and stronger support at all times. It is a major step forward in efforts to guarantee seafarers fulfilling careers in which their rights are protected and respected.

Among the seven amendments endorsed by the meeting:

- We secured strong commitments from governments on the treatment of seafarers on shore leave, repatriation and access to medical care.
- Commitments on preventing and eliminating violence and harassment have been strengthened by new MLC provisions that will seek to eradicate unacceptable behaviour.
- We secured a commitment to further action on hours of work and rest to address the lack of enforcement of the existing regulations and exemptions, and to review the current rest and work hour limits to reduce fatigue, in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization.
- The new guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers have been incorporated into the MLC guidelines and will come into force in December 2027. (Read more on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers on page 19.) ■



Ground-breaking: fashion retailer ASOS and the ITF join forces to protect rights.

ASOS to protect supply chain human rights

An agreement between the ITF and fashion retailer ASOS marks a significant and positive step for the rights of seafarers, writes **Kulsoom Jafri**, ITF Lead Campaigner for Seafarers and Inland Navigation.

The legally-binding agreement, signed on 8 September 2025, will protect transport workers' rights and enhance the safety, resilience and sustainability of the company's supply chains.

For too long, seafarers have been caught in a complex web of subcontracting, where brands at the top of supply chains have claimed no direct responsibility for their welfare. This has led to issues like abandonment, unpaid wages, and substandard living conditions on vessels. For seafarers, this agreement means that

ASOS will ensure that the ships carrying its goods stick to fundamental labour standards.

The agreement provides seafarers with a powerful new layer of protection – the right to collective bargaining, safe working environments, and fair treatment is now a contractual obligation for ASOS and its partners.

ASOS and the ITF will also work together on climate change and gender equality – key issues affecting transport and logistics workers in both directly operated and subcontracted transport operations in ASOS' global supply chain.

This move builds on ITF human rights agreements signed with TFG (owner of leading retail brands) in March 2023 and fashion retailer New Look in August 2025. The ITF will continue to replicate this model with other cargo owners, creating a powerful system of enforcement where seafarers' rights are protected by pressure from both the top of the supply chain and unions from below. ■

Read the ITF's Maritime Human Rights and Due Diligence Guidance which underpins these agreements at www.itfglobal.org/hrdd.



Win: FNV Havens lashers' successful strike action.

Seafarers' Bulletin shares two examples of how dockers and their ITF-affiliated unions have achieved victory in 2025.

Big win for Rotterdam dockworkers

Strike action by dockers from the ITF-affiliated FNV Havens has won a new agreement guaranteeing the safety, health and pay of lashers now and in the future, writes **Steve Biggs**, ITF Senior Assistant, Dockers' Section.

The biggest action ever seen in Europe's busiest and largest port brought the Port of Rotterdam to a standstill during the week of 6 October. In the Port of Rotterdam, a container is handled every three seconds, so some 25,000 containers could not be loaded or unloaded on each strike day.

After 10 port companies sought to ban the strike, the Dutch courts ruled that lashers were to return to work for four days while negotiations for an agreement were renewed. If no agreement was reached during these four days, the lashers could go back on strike.

On 17 October, FNV members approved the agreement with employers, International Lashing Service BV and Matrans Marine Services BV, bringing the strike to a successful end. They won a 17 to 21% pay rise over the next three years, plus agreements on safe work and making the tough, physical job of lashing more attractive for young people.

We all depend on the work done by lashers to keep the world's supply chains moving. It is only right that companies ensure that lashers' work is balanced so that they receive the wages they deserve and can retire in good health. ■

Union campaign wins agreement for Liberia dockers

It took persistent union efforts and strike action to get APM-Terminals Liberia to conclude CBA negotiations, says **Enrico Tortolano**, ITF Dockers' Section Coordinator.

The main issues at the heart of the talks were the company's attempts to reduce salaries, lower allowances for transport, food and education, and weaken the dockers' pensions.

The Dock Workers Union of Liberia (DOWUL) made its initial submission at the end of January 2025, but the company did not even respond for nearly three months. The process included multiple submissions and reminders from the union, and interventions from other stakeholders.

The official launch of negotiations by the Minister of Labour took place on 20 June, but ongoing disagreements and delays led the DOWUL to initiate a 24-hour strike on 6 October. This attracted significant attention from the National Port Authority and the Liberian government, and resulted in the eventual signing of the CBA by DOWUL and management on 17 October.

We applaud the DOWUL's determination. The union achieved over 85% of its objectives, reinforcing its commitment to worker rights and benefits. ■

Seafarers losing out on shore leave

Shore leave and shore-based services are getting harder to access, reports **Katie Higginbottom**, Head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust.

Nearly 6,000 seafarers responded to the Trust's survey on shore leave in mid-2024. Analysing the responses in 2025, researchers from the World Maritime University concluded that:

- more than a quarter of seafarers had no shore leave at all;
- one-third only got ashore once or twice during their entire contract, based on an average of 6.6 months onboard;
- officers were least likely to get shore leave;
- seafarers on offshore vessels and tankers were the least likely to get ashore;
- even when seafarers did get shore leave, 47% were able to spend less than 3 hours ashore and, overall, 93.5% spent less than 6 hours ashore.

The barriers to shore leave include minimal crewing and high workloads, increasing inspections, port security and operational efficiencies reducing time in port, lack of shore-based facilities, and transport costs. Our 2025 survey of people working in port-based welfare backed these findings. We received 96 responses from 83 organisations in 25 countries, and these revealed a 61% decline in seafarers spending time in seafarers' centres since March 2020, with 68% reporting that most seafarers spend less than two hours there. Port state and company restrictions were significant factors.

Seafarers' centres and service providers offer crew a vital break from the confines and pressures of the vessel, alongside access to facilities, and connections with people and communities ashore.

Shipowners, regulators and funders must act to maintain and expand this vital component of sea life, which is required under the MLC. ■

Download *Shore Leave: Rare, Brief and in Danger of Extinction* (May 2025) and *Shore Leave and the Future of Port-Based Welfare* (November 2025) at <https://www.seafarerstrust.org/publications>.

Exhibition takes seafarers' perspective to maritime regulators

An exhibition featuring photographs from the ITF Seafarers' Trust 'Life at Sea' archive was launched in April 2025 at the ILO in Geneva – bringing the unique perspective of seafarers into the space where regulators were discussing amendments to the MLC.

The annual photography project began in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, to shine a light on seafarers' experiences during the crew change crisis. The archive now holds over 13,000 digital images – with themes including isolation, camaraderie, and professionalism. Collections of the photos have been shown at over 80 exhibitions in maritime museums, international organisations and churches around the world to highlight seafarers' critical role in the global economy. ■



When Nature takes command – 1st prize
Parwaz Mukadam

See the 2025 competition winning entries at <https://www.seafarerstrust.org/life-sea>.

Unions driving change in ferries

Campaigning for new, publicly owned, rail-enabled ferries.

Ferry unions are at the forefront of two important developments in 2025, says **Sadie Saunders**, ITF Maritime Policy Adviser.

Union campaign wins government u-turn

In a huge win for trade unions, the New Zealand Government committed to deliver two new, publicly owned and rail-enabled Interislander ferries in 2029. When, in 2024, the National Party Government cancelled the previous Labour Government's contract to replace the ageing fleet of three ferries, it sparked union fears that the ferry service would be privatised and de-unionised, and split from the essential rail service.

The campaign throughout 2024 by the ITF-affiliated Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ) and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union Inc (RMTU) included political lobbying, securing over 10,000 signatures for a public petition, and public protests in Wellington, joined by ITF affiliates from around the world.

The government u-turn came in April 2025. The two new ferries will have a 30-year service life. Each one will be able to take 1,500 passengers and have 2.4km of lanes for cars and trucks, with 40 rail wagons able to shunt onto specific rail decks.

This victory wins huge benefits for communities. Transport infrastructure is a long-term investment that ensures good jobs and efficient supply chains.

Ferry operator bans faulty EVs on board over fire risk

BC Ferries in Canada has banned tow trucks carrying non-operational electric vehicles (EVs) on board its vessels because of the serious fire hazard posed by damaged or malfunctioning lithium batteries.

While EVs are not more prone to fires than vehicles with an internal combustion engine, EV fires require special procedures because the fires can burn hotter, last longer, and are more likely to re-ignite once extinguished, according to Transport Canada. The risk is particularly serious in the confined space of a roll-on/roll-off ('ro-ro') ferry.

Since 2014, Transport Canada has required that batteries from damaged or defective EVs be removed from vehicles and transported separately on board ferries. The move by British Columbia's provincial ferry authority in July 2025 goes further and, it says, gives its staff better guidance on EVs or hybrids that are not fit to be driven. BC Ferries has also formalised an existing safety policy which barred EV charging on board or at its terminals.

The ITF is working with transport unions in Canada to address this issue nationally, and to call for education and training for ferry staff. They are also urging the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to require that ro-ros carrying passengers have, for early detection, an infrared camera system on vehicle decks, and the release of a drencher, or water cooling system, within the first 90 seconds, as this has proven to limit fire spreading to other vehicles. ■

New protections for migrant fishers agreed

A crucial step: new rights for migrant fishers won at the ILO.

A global meeting has delivered important new guidelines on the recruitment of migrant fishers – but now, argues **Chris Williams**, ITF Fisheries Section Coordinator, they must be implemented without delay.

For too long, migrant fishers have been invisible in the global seafood industry, facing abuse and exploitation in their vital job of putting seafood on our plates.

The five-day tripartite meeting at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva in October delivered a major step forward for migrant fishers, with governments, fishing vessel owners and fishers' organisations adopting new Guidelines for Fair Labour Market Services for Migrant Fishers.

The ITF and its sister organisation, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), called the agreement 'a crucial step forward', provided that governments and employers act without delay.

The meeting in October 2025 brought together representatives from across the global fishing industry for an intensive week of negotiations. The group examined every stage of the recruitment and employment journey for migrant fishers, responding to widespread evidence of deception, debt bondage, abuse and a lack of access to justice for some of the world's most vulnerable maritime workers.

The ITF and ETF are urging flag, port and labour-providing states to begin implementation immediately. This includes licensing and monitoring recruitment agencies, strengthening labour inspections, gathering data, and ensuring proper grievance and redress systems.

The two federations welcomed the UK's support during the meeting and highlighted that the Fair Work Agency which will be set up in April 2026 could be a game changer, but only if it also regulates fishing industry recruiters and agents, and puts the ILO Guidelines into practice. That means fair recruitment, fair contracts and real accountability.

The ITF is urging retailers and global seafood buyers to embed the Guidelines into their responsible sourcing policies. After all, if a business profits from fish caught by migrant workers, it has an obligation to ensure those workers are recruited and treated fairly.

The Guidelines complement the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), which sets minimum standards on living and working conditions for fishers.

The new ILO Guidelines set minimum global standards, stating that:

- recruitment must be free, fair and transparent;
- contracts must be in writing and provided in languages understood by fishers;
- decent working and living conditions must be guaranteed;
- migrant fishers must have meaningful access to justice. ■

The Guidelines for Fair Labour Market Services for Migrant Fishers are available at <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/guidelines-fair-labour-market-services-migrant-fishers>.

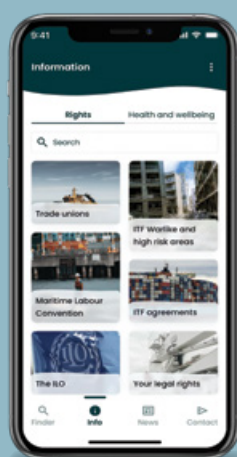


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