

# SEAFARERS' BULLETIN



INTERNATIONAL  
TRANSPORT  
WORKERS'  
FEDERATION



## SEAFARERS AT HEART OF GREEN MARITIME

**IN THIS ISSUE:**  
**CRIMINALISATION – KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**  
**PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST BEING ABANDONED**

**YOUR 12-PAGE PULLOUT GUIDE TO GETTING HELP**

English no. 38/2024



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The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing nearly 18.5 million transport workers from 740 affiliated unions in 150 countries, including nearly a million seafarers from 211 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 world level and promotes their interests through global campaigning and solidarity. The ITF has 138 inspectors, contacts and network coordinators in more than 120 ports worldwide.

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Cover photo: Empowering Man's Resolve: Monitoring the Waves of Change for a Cooler Tomorrow." | ITF Trust Photo Gallery ([lifeatsea.co.uk](http://lifeatsea.co.uk))



**“*Seafarers’ bulletin* highlights new protection for seafarers who are abandoned, and urges you to act swiftly if you think you are at risk of being abandoned.”**

Dear friends,

Seafarers are at the heart of greening the maritime industry. The challenge for the ITF and its affiliated seafarer unions is making sure that there is a just transition which protects seafarers’ labour rights and working conditions while skilling them for the jobs of the future. *Seafarers’ bulletin* looks at the opportunities this provides for seafarer supply countries. We also examine how the industry has to change.

We know that gross human rights violations occur daily at sea. We unveil two important ITF initiatives to ensure that companies fulfil their moral and legal responsibilities for seafarers’ rights in their supply chains by working constructively with us.

*Seafarers’ bulletin* highlights new protection for seafarers who are abandoned, and urges you to act swiftly if you think you are at risk of being abandoned.

Seafarers whose vessels are involved in incidents at sea are at risk of being scapegoated. If this happens to you, read how our newly-updated criminalisation toolkit for seafarers can help you.

Our inspectors and contacts work tirelessly to assist seafarers in trouble. *Seafarers’ bulletin* features a handful of the cases they have assisted with in 2023. It also introduces the newest members of the team, and shines a spotlight on those inspectors who are the only ones in their countries.

All the essential information you need about how to contact an ITF inspector and how they can help you, together with advice on contracts, your legal rights, and avoiding scams, is contained in the 12-page pullout section.

As we start 2024, commercial ships are still coming under attack in the Red Sea. We applaud the decision of some leading shipping companies to reroute their vessels to avoid putting seafarers’ lives at risk. We appreciate that this will potentially add weeks to the time seafarers will be at sea but it is vital that crew health and safety is put above the cost of oil and transport.

In solidarity,

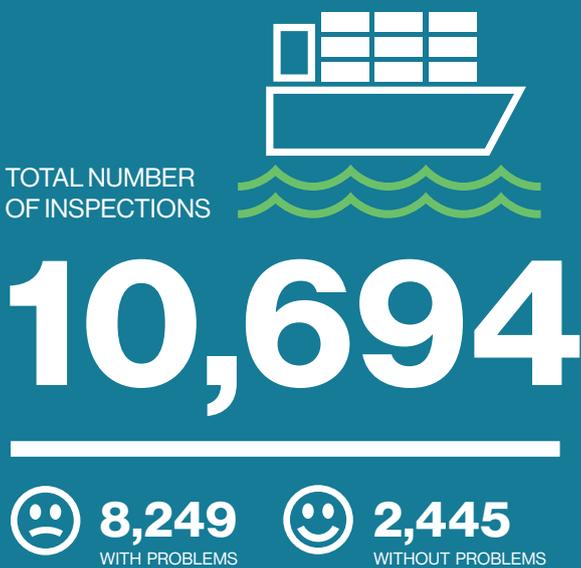
**Stephen Cotton**  
ITF general secretary

# The ITF FOC campaign in numbers

As at 31 December 2023

## ITF INSPECTIONS

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



## TOP 5 PROBLEMS

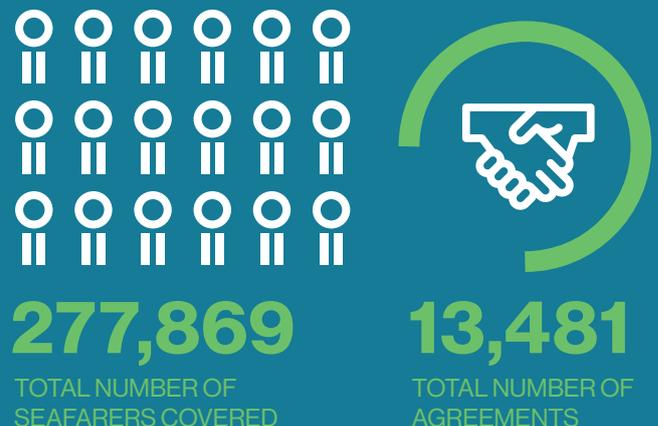
by type found during ITF inspections

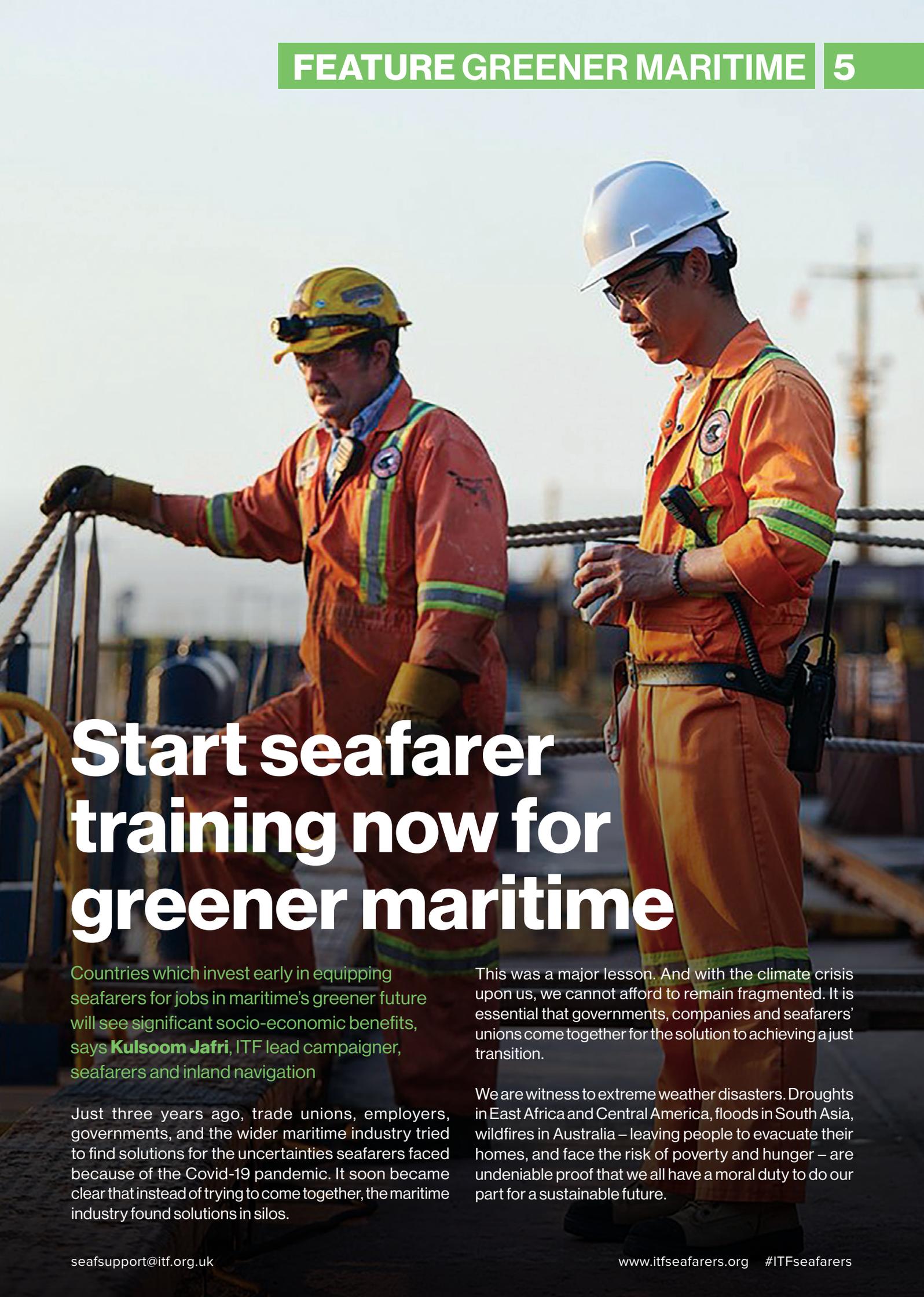


## TOTAL OWED WAGES RECOVERED



## VESSELS AND SEAFARERS COVERED BY ITF AGREEMENTS



A photograph of two seafarers on a ship's deck. They are wearing orange high-visibility work clothes and white hard hats. The seafarer on the left is wearing a yellow hard hat with a headlamp and is holding onto a rope. The seafarer on the right is wearing a white hard hat and glasses, and is holding a small cup. The background shows the ship's structure and rigging under a clear sky.

# Start seafarer training now for greener maritime

Countries which invest early in equipping seafarers for jobs in maritime's greener future will see significant socio-economic benefits, says **Kulsoom Jafri**, ITF lead campaigner, seafarers and inland navigation

Just three years ago, trade unions, employers, governments, and the wider maritime industry tried to find solutions for the uncertainties seafarers faced because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It soon became clear that instead of trying to come together, the maritime industry found solutions in silos.

This was a major lesson. And with the climate crisis upon us, we cannot afford to remain fragmented. It is essential that governments, companies and seafarers' unions come together for the solution to achieving a just transition.

We are witness to extreme weather disasters. Droughts in East Africa and Central America, floods in South Asia, wildfires in Australia – leaving people to evacuate their homes, and face the risk of poverty and hunger – are undeniable proof that we all have a moral duty to do our part for a sustainable future.



**“We know that the world’s nearly two million seafarers are key to powering the maritime industry through a successful transition to a zero-carbon future. Seafarers must have a say on that future: workers must be represented on all the key bodies driving this change at both international and national levels.”**

### **A just transition for seafarers**

The global shipping industry accounts for three percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. It must face up to its role in climate change and be accountable for its emissions. But it must also take a leading role as a decarbonising industry.

We know that the world’s nearly two million seafarers are key to powering the maritime industry through a successful transition to a zero-carbon future. Seafarers must have a say on that future: workers must be represented on all the key bodies driving this change at both international and national levels.

The ITF and its affiliated unions will ensure that we implement a just transition so that green practices in the maritime industry do not negatively affect the seafarers we represent.

This includes moves towards automated vessels, which was a hot topic at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2023. Trade unions have the opportunity to shape those discussions and lobby for worker protection while encouraging technology that supports – not replaces – our seafarers.

We believe that seafarers should have jobs with strong, secure agreements; fully funded training and retraining at no cost to the seafarer; vessels that are safe to work on; and a planet that is safe to live on.

### **Maritime business model must change**

From the ITF’s perspective, the maritime business model must change. We know this industry is confronting a huge environmental transformation, so now is the perfect time for businesses to incorporate the welfare and wellbeing of workers into employment decisions. Employment-related decisions need to be made in the interests of workers – not just shareholders, executives and profits – because there is too much at stake for us all as human beings.

Moves are underway at the IMO to consider a target of net zero emissions for shipping by 2050, in line with the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. To meet this target, research commissioned by the Maritime Just Transition Task Force (MJTTF) has found that up to 800,000 seafarers could require additional training by the mid-2030s to use the new fuels.

The MJTTF was established during COP26 in November 2021 by the ITF, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the United Nations Global Compact, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the IMO. It has developed a 10-point action plan focused on five key areas:

- Strengthening global training standards
- Ensuring a health and safety first approach
- Championing diversity, equity and inclusion
- Delivering fair training
- Investing in skills

## Labour standards core to just transition

Labour standards are at the core of a just transition. It is now more difficult for governments and employers to say no to labour standards when seafarers' unions tell them that improving conditions and training standards is about a just transition.

This is also crucial for the current review of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) convention and code. Training for decarbonisation is playing a major role in the review – with significant buy-in from all industry players. The MJTTF is developing a decarbonisation baseline training framework and learning materials, in partnership with the IMO.

Just transition is now established in climate policy. The 2023 ILO International Labour Conference had strong conclusions on just transition, including the need for collective bargaining and social dialogue. And in July 2023, seafarers' unions won landmark commitments to a just transition for the world's maritime workforce as part of the IMO's decision to adopt its Revised Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy.

This revised strategy is a historic recognition by the IMO that seafarers, and their health and safety needs, are critical to meeting shipping's decarbonisation challenge. It means the IMO will need to review seafarer training instruments and guidance, as well as ensuring that all new zero, or near-zero, emissions technologies are safe for maritime workers and all affected communities.

## Opportunities for seafarer supply countries

As the global demand increases for seafarers able to handle new technologies, and low and zero-carbon fuels, such as hydrogen and ammonia, it is becoming very clear that seafarer supply countries which invest early in equipping seafarers for jobs in maritime's greener future will see significant socio-economic benefits.

And early investment would also minimise risk and human error along the supply chain when transitioning to new fuels and technologies.

These opportunities have been highlighted throughout 2023 at a series of maritime industry conferences in Ghana, Kenya, and the Philippines.

Conference participants in Africa heard that the continent could cement its place as a potential new crewing frontier for shipping, providing a highly skilled workforce in decent, fairly paid jobs which includes more women seafarers. While participants in the Philippines – which trains more seafarers than any other country – were told that the nation's ability to shift its training systems towards low and zero-carbon will impact the global maritime sector. ■



## Here's a snapshot of some countries' early initiatives.

### South Africa

The National Seafarer Development Programme (NSDP), run by the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI), is a regional effort to empower future deck, engine room and fishing crew and create good jobs. In May 2023, SAIMI and the International Maritime Employers Council (IMEC) launched a cadet training programme.

### The Philippines

In January 2023, President Marcos launched the tripartite International Advisory Committee on Global Maritime Affairs (IACGMA) to advise on how best to ensure the global competitiveness of Filipino seafarers, and to serve as a key forum to prepare seafarers for a greener future.

### Indonesia

The Skills for Prosperity programme in Indonesia, delivered by the ILO, is helping the country to modernise its training regime through international partnerships that share knowledge and best practice. The United Kingdom-funded programme includes the establishment of an industry advisory board for each of four Indonesian polytechnics to promote closer collaboration between education and industry, and provide clear progression for graduates into skilled employment.

# Stories from the frontline

## Freezing Russian ships punishes seafarers for government actions

The ITF is calling on France to release two Russian-flagged vessels in the interests of the crews' physical and psychological welfare, reports ITF inspector **Laure Tallonneau**

The vessels have been frozen since their arrival in French ports on 2 March 2022 – the Vladimir Latyshev in Saint Malo, the Victor Andryukhin in Fos-sur-Mer. The registered owner is JSC GTLK in Russia but the beneficial owner and manager is Moscow-based Alpha LLC. France held the vessels under EU sanctions against Russia over the invasion of Ukraine.

Crew changes are taking place regularly – although I had to obtain the Schengen visas for five relievers stranded at Charles de Gaulle airport in March 2023. But being stuck in a port during a six-month contract is not what the seafarers want, and their Russian wages do not allow them to do very much, particularly as they are unable to withdraw cash locally.

Being Russian in a European country at the moment is not so easy – at the beginning some seafarers were even afraid to go ashore. We are worried for the welfare of the seven seafarers currently on board the Vladimir Latyshev and the 10 on board the Victor Andryukhin, as tempers can fray and promiscuity on board may rise.



I regularly visit the Vladimir Latyshev to keep an eye on the conditions and morale of the seafarers. This includes ensuring – along with the local authorities – that owner Alpha LLC is still delivering provisions and water, and keeping the bunkering flowing. I also check that their wages are being paid.

So far, the owner has complied with its responsibilities towards the seafarers but there is uncertainty about how long this will continue if the situation is not resolved. The EU sanctions risk bankrupting the company, in which case the seafarers would be abandoned. The case is stuck in unnecessarily long court proceedings. That is why we are calling for a diplomatic solution to achieve an honourable way out.

The longer the case drags on, the more normalised the ships' situation becomes, and this increases the risk that the seafarers get forgotten. ■

## Eleven years abandoned, eight in slavery

It seems unbelievable, but a Syrian seafarer has been abandoned for over 11 years. **Mohamed Arrachedi**, ITF FOC network coordinator (Arab World and Iran), describes his plight as a maritime industry scandal

This is an incredible and sadly notorious case of abandonment. Syrian seafarer Abdul Naser Saleh joined the Al Maha (formerly the Jeddah Palace) as engineer in 2012, and he has not been paid since 2015. At the end of December 2023 he was owed USD198,600. This is a clear case of modern slavery.

He has been tricked and cajoled by the shipowner into remaining in his post, while other crew members have come and gone. He is extremely worried about his family in Egypt and Sudan, who rely on his income, as he has been unable to support them. He cannot sleep, he is tired and he is both physically and mentally unwell.

## Abandoned Mega Speed crew home after six months

The crew of the Mega Speed found themselves in dire circumstances when they were abandoned. **Sandra Bernal**, ITF FOC network coordinator (Asia Pacific), reports on the coordinated efforts to assist the seafarers and get them home



The Mega Speed cargo ship, owned by Sea Lion Shipping and registered under the Marshall Islands flag, was sailing through the waters of Southeast Asia when it was abandoned by its owners. The vessel was arrested in Thailand for pollution on 15 July 2023. Its dedicated crew – hailing from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Myanmar – were left stranded without pay for over three months.

The crew, already grappling with the challenges of life at sea, faced uncertainty about their future, and the stress of their predicament weighed heavily on their minds.

In times like these, it's organisations like us that step up to support seafarers in distress. Along with the invaluable assistance of our contacts in Thailand, Reverend Dave Hinay from the Mission to Seafarers, and our affiliates from SMOU (Singapore Maritime Officers Union), the ITF took swift action to address the crew's urgent needs.

Reverend Hinay played a crucial role in assisting us to arrange shore leave for the Mega Speed crew. This

respite allowed them to step onto solid ground, breathe fresh air, and briefly escape the confines of their vessel. It provided a much-needed break from their dreadful situation and offered some solace amidst the uncertainty.

He has also been in touch with the crew and, along with the ITF, continues tirelessly to engage with the vessel's management to ensure that the crew receives the wages they rightfully deserve, in accordance with the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC).

In December, the owner finally appointed a representative to travel to Thailand and take over the vessel from the charterers. The crew was paid the wages they were owed and returned home safely after months of being abandoned in Thai waters.

*Read more about Sea Lion Shipping abandoning its crews on page 20. ■*

The ship has been in Jeddah Port, Saudi Arabia since 15 June 2022 – and Saleh has not been able to get off the vessel or go ashore since. In April 2023 four new Syrian seafarers joined the vessel, bringing the total crew to five, and by the end of December none of them had received any wages.

Worst of all for Saleh, there are no signs of a solution, despite persistent and continuing efforts by the ITF to urge action by those who have responsibilities to the seafarer under international law.

The shipowner, Abalkhail Marine Navigation, has

completely ignored our attempts to open serious negotiations. Tanzania, the flag state, has responded only once to say it was 'looking into the case' but there is no evidence it is doing anything. And the contacts taking place now with the Saudi Arabian maritime authorities have not yet led to a solution.

Saleh is a victim of impunity and indifference. His situation is intolerable and cannot be normalised. The maritime industry should be ashamed that this situation has been allowed to drag on for all these years. The ITF continues to demand urgent action for Saleh to be paid and repatriated. ■

## Apollo Offshore forced to pay year's owed wages

A case that had supposedly been resolved in 2022 reared its ugly head again a year later, leading to concerted action by three ITF inspectors, as Andreas Husa in Norway explains

The original contact with the crew of the Apollo Moon came as an email to me on 20 June 2022 from the 2nd officer. He told me that the vessel had lost manoeuvring and engine power, and was drifting close to offshore installations. There were no freezers on board so all the crew's food had to be stored on the deck. And the cost of being repatriated was being deducted from his salary.

The vessel was owned by Apollo Offshore and chartered by Shearwater, a Norwegian operator in the offshore sector. At the charterer's insistence, it was covered by a special agreement with the Norwegian Seafarers' Union.

I contacted the local port state control (PSC), and a week later we carried out a joint inspection of the Apollo Moon in the port of Bergen. The PSC noticed that the main engine had undergone major repairs without any notice being given to the class company, and immediately detained the ship.

This visit coincided with ITF Norway's week of action in Bergen, so I and my colleagues from Tromsø and Oslo went through all the documents. We discovered that Apollo Offshore was not paying wages in accordance with the North Sea offshore standard. Instead, it was paying the seafarers at an old rate.

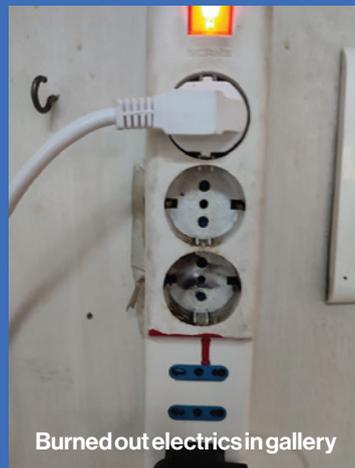
Shearwater was due to pay for the charter at the end of June, so we agreed that Apollo Offshore could pay the owed wages – totalling USD17,260 – at the start of July. On 29 June, Apollo Moon lost the charter contract and went for cold lay-up in London.

All sorted. Or so I thought. A year later, in June 2023, I was tipped off that Apollo Offshore had got a charter for the Apollo Moon with a French company. I immediately contacted my colleague Corine Archambaud in France, who found out that the charterer was SeaOwl, with whom she had a good relationship.

I also discovered that Apollo Offshore had not paid the seafarers in Norway in 2022 as agreed. SeaOwl did not want to be associated with a company practicing modern slavery, so it demanded that the owner paid all the owed wages to the Apollo Moon crew. Apollo Offshore eventually agreed, and transferred the money – now a total of just over USD21,310 – directly to ITF Norway, which in turn completed payments to the seafarers on 20 September 2023. ■



**“There were no freezers on board so all the crew's food had to be stored on the deck. And the cost of being repatriated was being deducted from his salary.”**



Inspectors always get crew's permission to name them or use their images publicly, as Romano Peric's WhatsApp screengrab shows



## Captain freed after nine-month detention

When a captain detained on a ship in Albania called the ITF for help, **Romano Peric**, the federation's FOC coordinator for Croatia, travelled to the country to investigate and to help the seafarer. Here is his account of the case

The product tanker Grace Felix was arrested by the Albanian authorities on 14 February 2023, when it was found to be carrying a cargo of 22,500 tons of oil. It had allegedly been loaded from a Turkish-flagged tanker in Kalamata, Greece.

Captain Alexey Smaznov, master of the Grace Felix for 12 years, was imprisoned on suspicion of trying to smuggle oil of Russian origin.

Russian refined petroleum products have been banned in the European Union since 5 February 2023. As a candidate for EU membership, Albania has already aligned its sanctions policy with the European Union. Since the sanctions were introduced, the waters near Kalamata have become a hub for the transfer of Russian oil from ship to ship. Based on intelligence data, the police suspect that the shipment to the Grace Felix originally came from Russia.

I visited the ship and crew on October 17, spoke with the captain and reviewed the documents. Smaznov had initially been imprisoned but the authorities allowed him to return to the ship and be detained on board, without the right to leave the country. He told the authorities from the start that the last refuelling operation had been no different from any other.

The evidence led me to establish that this case was a clear example of a seafarer being criminalised. The shipowner hired a lawyer to represent both the company and the captain in court. The first hearing was postponed. At the next hearing, on 23 October, the court ordered that the captain be released. He finally arrived home on 26 October.

If the captain had not turned to us, he might not have been acquitted, as it is very hard for any seafarer on their own to fight being criminalised. The involvement of the ITF and the Seafarers' Union of Croatia in cases of criminalisation also helps to raise awareness about the problem.

*Read the advice for seafarers who are criminalised on page 22. ■*

# Filth and non-payment – ITF action swiftly resolves crew’s ordeal

**Luka Simic** describes a routine ship inspection that revealed the worst conditions he had seen in his three years as an ITF inspector

When I boarded the Lady Rasha livestock carrier in Koper, Slovenia on 26 July 2023 and met the crew, I discovered that none of the 18 Syrians and one Egyptian had an employment contract. They did not maintain any records of working and rest hours, and they were not provided with payslips. One seafarer was only 16 years old, yet the ship’s flag (Tanzania) stipulated a minimum age of 18. They had been on board for one month.

I was shocked by the crew’s accommodation area. The corridors had no working lights so I had to use my phone’s torch to see where I was going. There were thousands and thousands of flies everywhere, on the food, in the cabins and toilets, and covering the seafarers. The communal toilets and showers were extremely dirty and smelly and the floor was soaking wet, as they couldn’t turn off the water properly. There was only one washing machine on board – and it wasn’t working. The ship was totally unhygienic and represented a serious health hazard for the crew.

On boarding, I had met the charterer representative. He told me that they had signed the charter party for three voyages and were likely to prolong it for another year. After everything I had just seen, I went back to him and told him that the ship was a disaster zone. He asked me to show him. When he saw the terrible conditions, he informed the company that the charter party would be cancelled and that the vessel would only be chartered for the rest of the current voyage so that the loaded livestock cargo could be delivered to their destination.

I informed the port state control immediately but they were unable to come on board. However, the agent boarded and I told him to buy at least 50 fly traps and a new washing machine, which he did.

In response to my request, the company sent SEAs for all the crew members, and I calculated how much they had to be paid – it came to USD42,000 in total. Tanzania sent an exemption for the young seafarer. The company put new LED lights in the corridors and the shower cabins were cleaned and painted. So when the ship sailed the next day for Lebanon, all the crew had received their wages and their living conditions had been improved.

I then worked with the company on all the documentation it had to provide to the seafarers. ■

Thankful Lady Rasha crew



## Sources of advice and support

If you are a seafarer with a problem on board, please contact [seafsupport@itf.org.uk](mailto:seafsupport@itf.org.uk).

If you’re working on a fishing vessel and would like assistance, please contact [fishsupport@itf.org.uk](mailto:fishsupport@itf.org.uk).

If you’re in a port, use our new global seafarers’ welfare centre index to find out if there is a seafarer centre there. Seafarers’ centres can provide advice, someone to talk to, facilities to contact home, and a place where you can relax away from the ship. Visit <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/welfare-directory-landing>.

The ITF has developed a Seafarers’ Breach of Rights Index to identify and list actions by shipowners, ship managers, flag states or other parties that deny or abuse seafarers’ basic human and trade union rights, ignoring international conventions that govern seafarers’ working and living conditions on board. Read more at <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/issues/seafarers-breach-of-rights>.

# Don't fall for recruitment scams

## Too good to be true

Most scams depend on offering jobs that require few or no qualifications, or little training, but promise high wages, large tips, or unusually good terms and conditions. If the job looks too good to be true, it almost certainly is.

## Requests for money

Scammers usually promise work in return for a bribe or payment. The financial request normally comes after you have provided a copy of your passport and other personal documents, and just before the job offer is made. You may be promised your money back but you will NEVER get it. DO NOT PAY ANYTHING.

These fraudulent requests may be disguised as:

- an agency, registration, or administration fee
- a payment for a medical examination or to a clinic
- a payment for visa or passport processing
- an immigration fee, or a payment to a government department
- a payment directly to a bank, perhaps so you can join a cargo ship
- a payment for airfares to join a ship

## Beware other types of fraud

- Avoid websites that invite you to post your CV or resumé for free. Your personal details can be used for identity fraud, particularly if a pretend employer then asks you to send your passport and other personal documentation.
- Ignore any unsolicited (unexpected) job offer that arrives by e-mail, through social media, or via messaging apps. Be particularly wary on Facebook – the major cruise lines and cargo companies do not use Facebook to recruit seafarers.
- Refuse any request for a fee to have your job application or CV circulated to prospective employers. They may promise your money back if you don't get a job. It's a lie.
- Look at the regularly-updated Scam Alerts page on [www.itfshipbesure.org](http://www.itfshipbesure.org) to see the names of individuals and companies to avoid, as well as fake email addresses and websites you should stay clear of.
- Look out for the use of box numbers and false addresses.
- Google the company name and 'scam', 'fraud' or 'warning'.

## The bottom line

You should never have to pay for work at sea. It is illegal under the Maritime Labour Convention to request advance payment for work on vessels. If anything about a job offer looks wrong, stay well away from it.

**“Arm yourself with the facts about scams, and do all you can to stay safe from the fraudsters. They pretend they're offering good jobs but are really after your money or your identity.”**

**Steve Trowsdale, ITF inspectorate coordinator**

## Report a scam to the ITF

If you identify a scam, a fake email address, or a fake website – or you simply want our advice – please contact us in confidence via email at [jobscam@itf.org.uk](mailto:jobscam@itf.org.uk).

**Let the ITF guide you through the recruitment process – visit [www.itfshipbesure.org](http://www.itfshipbesure.org).**

**Cases of seafarers being abandoned continue to soar. *Seafarers' bulletin* looks at why seafarers can hope to see their situation resolved more quickly, and shares advice on how to protect yourself against being abandoned**

## **New guidance aims to resolve abandonment cases more quickly**

The steep rise in recorded cases of abandonment has prompted the maritime industry to adopt new guidelines on how to deal with seafarers, reports **Jonathan Warring**, ITF senior legal assistant

There has been a steep rise in the number of recorded abandonment cases in recent years. In 2023, 132 cases were reported to the International Labour Organization (ILO)/International Maritime Organization (IMO) database on reported incidents of abandonment – the most in a year since the database began. The previous record was 119 cases, in 2022.

In response to this rise, on 20 December 2022, the joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group adopted new guidelines on how to deal with abandoned seafarers. These were approved by the ILO's Governing Body in March 2023 and finally by the 110th session of the IMO's Legal Committee.

The guidelines aim to assist flag states, port states and the governments of seafarers' home states to resolve cases of abandonment in a timely manner which reduces the impact of the abandonment on the crew.

The ITF will promote the guidelines as a tool to help resolve cases quickly and in the interests of seafarers.

The guidelines can be found at on the ILO website here: [rb.gy/vqpn35](https://rb.gy/vqpn35)

## **Protect yourself against being abandoned**

When a shipping company goes broke with crew on board unpaid and fearful of what's going to happen to them, it can be hard for seafarers to know where to turn for help. Follow this advice on how to help yourself.

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 (eg for repatriation, accommodation, essential supplies, medical care) 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](mailto: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 2023 – the facts

IN 2023:

**132** ABANDONMENTS  
WERE REPORTED

UP BY 13 (11 PERCENT) ON 2022



The ITF reported **129** of these and **3** were reported by **2** governments

Owed wages from the **129 cases** reported by the ITF is more than **USD12.1 million**

We have so far received more than **USD10.9 million** from just **60** of these vessels

**1,676** seafarers on abandoned vessels complained to the ITF

Of these, over **400** were Indian crew, making them the most abandoned nationality



### THE FLAGS WITH THE MOST ABANDONMENTS

Panama: 23    Palau: 12    Cameroon: 11    St Kitts & Nevis: 8  
Unknown: 8    Comoros: 6    Tanzania: 6    Togo: 6



## 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](mailto:abandonment@itf.org.uk).



## Eliminating violence at work is everyone's responsibility

Violence and harassment at work affects seafarers' ability to get and stay in jobs, and harms their physical and mental wellbeing. Women are also subject to gender-based violence and harassment. **Helene Netland**, ITF seafarers and inland navigation section assistant, looks at how companies, unions and seafarers can bring about change

Convention 190 (C190) was adopted by the International Labour Organization in June 2019 to ensure that employment is based on safe and decent work. It identifies the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. And it provides a clear framework for action by shipping companies, unions and seafarers to help end this behaviour.

C190 gives shipping companies a responsibility to ensure that policies are in place to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment on board their ships. Likewise, unions and seafarers have a duty to help ensure that inappropriate behaviour does not take place.

It gives seafarers the right to complain directly to the master, and to external authorities where appropriate, and it provides the right to be accompanied or represented when making a complaint. These are embedded in the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 grievance procedure.

Seafarers' unions can:

- require that C190 language is included in collective bargaining agreements;
- negotiate workplace policies with companies and ensure that education to prevent and address violence and harassment are mandatory for everyone; and
- put pressure on their governments to ratify and integrate the ILO standards into national legislation.

Companies and seafarers' unions can:

- arrange training programmes for seafarers that actively promote a workplace culture of equality and mutual respect;
- encourage open discussions about the impact perpetrators have on the workplace and on the person they are targeting; and
- explain procedures for reporting and investigating incidents.

The guidelines can help seafarers to:

- recognise the early signs of bullying and harassment in their colleagues – such as changes in behaviour, isolation, low morale or poor work performance;
- get actively involved as bystanders where they witness these behaviours; and
- encourage people who have experienced violence and harassment to report incidents without fear of retaliation.



**“Violence and harassment is a powerful barrier to women’s equality which, if not addressed, will undermine any intervention to increase women’s employment in the sector. C190 provides an important foundation to ensure that employment is based on safe and decent work, where no worker is left unprotected.”**

**Claire Clarke, ITF acting women transport workers and gender equality officer**

### Five checks to make before you board a vessel

1. Ask to see the company’s health and safety policy, and check if it includes violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, and if it provides a clear statement of zero-tolerance.
2. Does the health and safety policy embed a seafarer’s right to confidentiality?
3. Does the policy contain measures to protect complainants, witnesses and whistleblowers against victimisation or retaliation?
4. Is the vessel covered by a collective bargaining agreement?
5. Does the agreement have measures to prevent, address and remedy violence and harassment, in line with C190?

Download the ITF’s *ILO C190: A Transport Workers’ Toolkit* at: [rb.gy/zbximu](https://rb.gy/zbximu).

# Groundbreaking mental health training in Arab maritime academy

Academy staff participating in the first mental health training workshop



A leading maritime academy in the Middle East and Africa has launched a groundbreaking wellbeing and mental health training programme for its staff, who will in turn train their students.

**Dr Syed Asif Altaf**, ITF's global wellbeing program coordinator, and **Dr Captain Kazem Agamy**, director of the International Forum for Maritime Transport, welcome the move

As one of the leading maritime academies in the Middle East and Africa, the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport aims to create a nurturing and supportive environment that prepares students to thrive both personally and professionally in the challenging maritime industry.

It is committed to producing well-rounded and resilient seafarers who can contribute to a safe, efficient, and sustainable maritime sector. One way it seeks to achieve this is through collaborations with other institutes and industrial bodies.

For example, the academy has joined forces with the ITF to strengthen industry insights, training support, and advocacy for seafarers' rights. Together, they have tailored a workshop for academy staff to learn the methodologies and tools to manage mental health effectively and prevent mental health crises. The staff will in turn teach these approaches to their students. The aim is to contribute to higher retention rates in the industry and support the long-term career satisfaction and success of future seafarers.

The workshop focuses on the particular challenges of a career at sea – prolonged periods of isolation, high workload, and exposure to stressful situations. It explores how poor mental health can impact on safety and productivity at sea because it impairs cognitive functioning, concentration, and the ability to judge situations effectively and make sound decisions under pressure.

The workshop also teaches seafarers' rights to decent working conditions, fair wages and access to medical care.

ITF inspectors in the Arab World know that when a seafarer files a complaint under the Maritime Labour Convention it is usually because they are under systemic pressure from the employer – perhaps being threatened, or being confined to cabin as a punishment. This results in huge psychological pressure, which affects the seafarer's mental and physical health.

Captain Mohamed Elmeligy, a retired lieutenant commander of the Egyptian navy and currently a lecturer on maritime culture, leadership, and navigation at the academy, told us that attending the workshop "was an eye opener" for him.

He said, "I gained a deep understanding of the effects of stress on the body. I learned that when dealing with a diverse and multicultural environment, adapting to new situations is key. To do this, one must first accept the differences and then implement problem-solving and resilience strategies to manage stress effectively." ■



## Getting seafarers' voices heard

*Seafarers' bulletin* interviews **Carlos Muller**, president of both Brazilian union SINDMAR and CONTTMAF, the transport union federation in Latin America and the Caribbean

### Tell us about your career background

I began my career as a cadet in 1992 on board a chemical carrier, and have spent 24 years working on board ships as a merchant marine officer and later a captain, in cabotage and international navigation.

In 2013, I was elected workers' representative on the administrative board of Transpetro, the transport arm of the state-owned oil giant Petrobras. SINDMAR, with whom I have been associated since my first day as a seafarer, fully supported me, and invited me to join its leadership in 2014. The valuable guidance I received from its late president Severino Almeida Filho motivated me to go ahead. He appointed me director of international relations and I often assisted him with SINDMAR and CONTTMAF activities at the ITF.

### What are you particularly proud of as SINDMAR president?

I was elected president in 2018, shortly after Severino retired. I began my term in 2019, on the same day that the Covid pandemic was declared in Brazil. Unfortunately my first act as president was to seal our doors to in-person activities, something that had only occurred under the military regime, decades earlier. We started working remotely and made a great effort to keep lines of communication open with each other, our members, and the authorities. Severino's support for my election

made it easier for us to move forward in unity, as well as developing the determination to fight for achievements during a period that has proven to be incredibly challenging for maritime workers around the world. I am very proud that the union has managed to do this.

### What is CONTTMAF's role?

Acting jointly with organisations from other sectors enables us to better convey workers' issues to the government and in our international activities. We bring together 250 trade unions from the maritime, ports, inland navigation, fisheries, aviation, and tourism transportation sectors, representing more than half of all workers in those industries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Brazil, around 90 percent of the transportation of all imported and exported goods is handled by the workers we represent.

### What challenges face seafarers in your region?

A major challenge is defending cabotage in Latin America, to ensure good jobs for local seafarers in their own national waters. We are engaged in the ITF campaign against flags of convenience and their substandard conditions that undermine the work environment for seafarers that we have struggled so hard to build. Other priorities are to raise the participation of women in our maritime industry and to ensure a just transition for our transport workers. ■



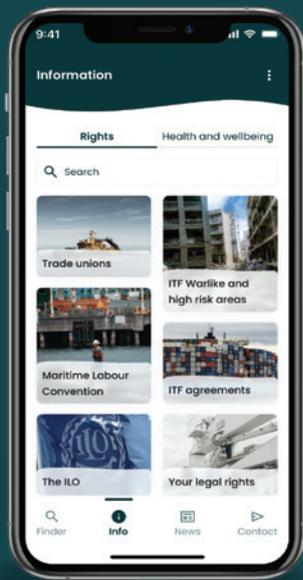
Photo: Mikael Cesat Bureros. Seafarers Showcasing the Importance of Responsible Waste Management both at Sea and in Life. ITF Seafarers' Trust

# YOUR 12-PAGE PULLOUT GUIDE

**WHAT'S INSIDE:**

- GETTING HELP
- CONTRACTS
- INSPECTOR CONTACTS
- HOW INSPECTORS HELP
- LEGAL RIGHTS
- SCAMS

# Your ITF guide to getting help



### How to find an ITF maritime affiliated union or ITF inspector

Your first point of contact should be your union. If you are not a union member, find out how to join one. You can check ITF affiliated maritime unions on [www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up](http://www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up).

Contact an ITF inspector if you need help immediately, or if you're a union member and finding it difficult to get hold of your union. All contact details can be found in this pullout guide.

If you have a mobile phone or tablet, download your FREE ITF Seafarers app now at [www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm](http://www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm).

Use the app to:

- Find contact details for the nearest ITF inspector, ITF coordinator or ITF affiliated maritime union.
- Look up a ship and check whether it is covered by an ITF agreement board before you sign on.
- Check that your hours of rest are in line with regulations.

*Download a free QR code reader on your smartphone, then scan this code.*

### How to contact the ITF Seafarers' Support team

SMS/WhatsApp/Viber

+44 7523515097

Email [seafsupport@itf.org.uk](mailto:seafsupport@itf.org.uk)

Before you contact the ITF, ensure you have the following information ready:

About you

- Name
- Position on board
- Nationality
- Contact details

About the ship

- Name
- Flag
- IMO number
- Current location
- Number of crew and nationality

About the problem

- Describe the problem
- How long have you been on board?
- Are all the crew experiencing the same problem?



[www.facebook.com/itfseafarerssupport](http://www.facebook.com/itfseafarerssupport)



Available on



# Getting hired

## Crewing agents

The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 says that private crewing agencies must be regulated. It prohibits charging seafarers fees for finding positions on board, illegal deductions from wages, and blacklisting individuals. Shipowners must make sure the crewing agents they use meet these standards.

## Before you sign a contract

The best guarantee of proper conditions of employment at sea is to only sign a contract drawn up in accordance with an ITF-approved collective agreement. Failing that, follow this ITF advice.



- Don't start work on a ship without having a **written contract**.
- Never sign a blank contract, or one that binds you to any terms and conditions that are **not specified** or are not familiar to you.
- Check if the contract refers to a **collective bargaining agreement (CBA)**. If it does, read the CBA, and keep a copy of it with your contract.
- Make sure that the **duration of the contract** is clearly stated.
- Don't sign a contract that allows the shipowner alone to change the **contractual period** – such changes should be by mutual consent.
- Ensure that the contract clearly states the **basic wages** and **basic working hours**. The International Labour Organization (ILO) states that basic working hours should be a maximum of 48 per week (208 per month).
- Make sure that the contract clearly stipulates how **overtime** will be paid and at what rate. The ILO states that all overtime should be paid at a minimum of 1.25 x the normal hourly rate.
- Ensure that the contract clearly states how many days' **paid leave** per month you will get. The ILO states that it should not be less than 30 days per year (2.5 days per calendar month).
- Make certain the contract **separately itemises** payments for basic wages, overtime and leave.
- Never sign a contract that makes you responsible for paying any portion of **joining or repatriation expenses**.
- Don't sign a contract that allows the shipowner to **withhold or retain any portion of your wages** – you should be paid in full at the end of each calendar month.
- If your employment contract does not include details of **additional benefits**, try to get confirmation in a written agreement or contractual entitlement of what compensation will be payable in the event of sickness or injury, death, loss of the vessel (including loss of personal effects), and premature termination of the contract.
- Don't sign a contract that contains any clause that **restricts your right to join, contact, consult with or be represented by a trade union** of your choice.
- Check the conditions and notice period for the **termination** of your contract.
- Any contract/agreement that you enter into voluntarily would be considered legally binding in most jurisdictions. So, keep **copies of your contract**, payslips and other correspondence from the shipowner and manning agent (even after you have finished working on the vessel) as evidence if you need to make a claim for wages or compensation

**To find out if your ship is covered by an ITF-approved agreement, visit <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up>.**

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Ranjan Perera	Inspector	Sri Lanka	Colombo	+94 77 314 7005	perera_ranjan@itf.org.uk
Fredrik Bradd	Coordinator	Sweden	Gavle	+46 761006445	bradd_fredrik@itf.org.uk
Göran Larsson	Inspector	Sweden	Gothenburg	+46 70 626 7788	larsson_goran@itf.org.uk
Haakan Andre	Inspector	Sweden	Norrkoping	+46 70 574 2223	andre_hakan@itf.org.uk
Tse-Ting Tu	Inspector	Taiwan, China	Kaoshiung	+886 988513979	tu_tse-ting@itf.org.uk
Kenan Dinc	Inspector	Türkiye	Mersin	+90 531 023 0109	dinc_kenan@itf.org.uk
Nataliya Yefrimenko	Inspector	Ukraine	Odessa	+380 50 336 6792	yefrimenko_nataliya@itf.org.uk
Dwayne Boudreaux	Coordinator	USA	Gulf Coast	+1 504 442 1556	boudreaux_dwayne@itf.org.uk
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Corey Connor	Inspector	USA	Charleston	+1 843 469 5611	connor_corey@itf.org.uk
Cyrus Donato	Inspector	USA	Seattle	+1 503 954 4659	donato_cyrus@itf.org.uk
Eric White	Inspector	USA	Tampa	+1 813-576 9805	white_eric@itf.org.uk
Joshua Bobic	Inspector	USA	LA - S California	+1 310 808 7135	bobic_joshua@itf.org.uk
Sam Levens	Inspector	USA	San Francisco	+1 415 490 8956	levens_sam@itf.org.uk
Shwe Tun Aung	Inspector	USA	Houston	+1 713 447 0438	aung_shwe@itf.org.uk
Mohamed Arrachedi	FOC Network Coordinator	Arab World & Iran		+34 629 419 007	arrachedi_mohamed@itf.org.uk
Sandra Bernal	FOC Network Coordinator	Asia Pacific		+61 410 541 763	bernal_sandra@itf.org.uk
Lucien Razafindraibe	FOC Network Coordinator	Africa		+254 789 007 558	razafindraibe_lucien@itf.org.uk
Adan Suarez	Inspector/FOC Network Coordinator	Latin America & the Caribbean		+598 99 569 656	suarez_adan@itf.org.uk

# What an ITF inspector can do

ITF inspectors are union officials who are engaged in the ITF's campaign against the scourge of flags of convenience (FOCs) in the shipping industry.

Many ITF inspectors are former seafarers or dock workers. Their job is to inspect ships calling in their ports, to ensure the seafarers have decent pay, working conditions

and living conditions, and to respond to and investigate seafarers' complaints and calls for help. They also police and enforce ITF agreements on board FOC vessels.

Today there is a network of 134 inspectors and contacts (union officials who assist seafarers where there are no ITF inspectors) working in ports worldwide.

### An ITF Inspector CAN

- Inspect a ship for problems relating to employment and living conditions.
- Meet with crew members ashore.
- Provide advice and assistance to seafarers.
- Advise on the legal possibilities for resolving a problem in a particular port or country.
- Act as a representative for the crew (power of attorney) in contractual disputes.
- Liaise with the Port State Control on safety matters.
- Connect a seafarer with an ITF affiliated union, where present, in their home country.
- Raise shipboard problems with the shipowner and apply pressure on the shipowner to resolve them.
- Facilitate the signing of ITF-approved collective bargaining agreements.
- Legally board a vessel that has an ITF agreement, to carry out an inspection.
- Contact other ITF Inspectors, ITF affiliated unions and contacts in other countries.
- Calculate owed wages and handle back pay claims.
- Speak good English.
- Deal with matters confidentially, as far as possible.

- Be contacted by phone, mobile, email, or instant messaging.
- Liaise with third parties, such as flag state authorities, welfare agencies and embassies, in handling seafarers' disputes.
- Provide support to seafarers who find themselves hospitalised.
- Provide copies of ITF publications.

### An ITF Inspector CANNOT

- Do more than their national legislation allows.
- Always gain access to a ship or terminal.
- Solve problems without the cooperation of the crew.
- Guarantee that a seafarer will not lose their job or be blacklisted.
- Get a seafarer a job on a ship.
- Change ITF policy.
- Act outside of the policy of the ITF or local ITF affiliated unions.
- Act against the interests of the national union that employs them.
- Act unlawfully.

# Standing up for your rights

## Industrial disputes

The ITF is committed to assisting seafarers serving on flag of convenience ships to get just wages and proper collective agreement coverage.

Sometimes seafarers have to resort to legal action in local courts. On other occasions, boycott action may be taken against a ship. Different actions are right for different places. The right action in one country may very well be wrong in another.

Contact the local representative of the ITF for guidance. You will find contact email addresses and phone numbers in the centre of this pullout section of the Seafarers' bulletin. You should also seek local legal advice before you take any action.

In some countries, the law actually works against you and your fellow crew members if you take industrial

action. In such a case, the local ITF affiliated union representatives will explain this to you. In many more countries, the key to winning a dispute is industrial action. Once again, this depends on the local advice you receive. You have the legal right to take industrial action in many countries, as long as your ship is in port and not at sea.

In any industrial action it is important to remember to remain disciplined, peaceful and united. And remember – the right to industrial action is a basic human right guaranteed, in many countries, by the law or constitution.

Whatever you choose to do, don't forget to talk to the local ITF representatives before you take any action. Working together, we can win the battle for justice and basic rights.

## Maritime accidents

If your ship is involved in a maritime accident, there are international guidelines to ensure that seafarers are treated fairly – whether by the shipowners, the port, the coastal state, the flag state, or their own country's laws.

Here are your rights if this happens to you:

- If you are required to give evidence, this should be taken by the authorities at the earliest opportunity, and you should be allowed to return to your ship, or be repatriated, as soon as possible after this is done.
- You have the right to a lawyer. Ask for one before answering any questions or making any statements, since these could be used against you in any future legal case.
- You must be able to understand what's being said – ask the authorities to stop the questioning if you don't understand. If you have difficulties because of the language being used, ask for an interpreter.
- Your company has an obligation to assist you – contact your company and/or union for advice and help.

If you want further advice, and there is no local union or ITF inspector present where you are, email the ITF Seafarers' Support team on [seafsupport@itf.org.uk](mailto:seafsupport@itf.org.uk).

More information is available at [www.itfseafarers.org/your\\_legal\\_rights.cfm](http://www.itfseafarers.org/your_legal_rights.cfm).

# Avoid recruitment scammers

Recruitment fraud targeting seafarers is on the rise. And it's becoming ever more sophisticated. Follow the advice below to learn how to outsmart the scammers

## How a scam works

Most scams offer jobs with high wages or large tips, or provide unusually good terms and conditions to lure you in.

Scammers pose as recruitment agents or HR managers. They use sophisticated ways to make their job adverts look genuine – such as email addresses and fake websites that look and feel like the real thing.

They increasingly spread the word through direct contact methods like WhatsApp, Viber and LinkedIn, as well as via Facebook and other social media platforms.

Any vacancy promoted in this way is a scam. Well-known shipping and cruise companies do not send out unsolicited job offers or advertise vacancies on social media.

**Do not respond. And warn your friends.**

If you do apply for a vacancy, they'll ask for copies of personal documents, such as your passport, and for personal information, such as your date of birth or bank account details. **Don't ever give out this information.** They can use it to steal your identity and empty your bank account.

Then they'll ask for a 'one-off' fee – perhaps for transport to the ship or an administration cost – or a direct payment to a bank account. This is illegal. Under the Maritime Labour Convention, seafarers should not pay anything to get a job, and visa fees should be paid by the shipowner. **Don't pay them.**

Advice if you're looking for work:

- **Visit the ITF's new ShipBeSure website** [www.itfshipbesure.org](http://www.itfshipbesure.org) for advice on recruitment, scams and rogue agents. Read more on page 13 of the *Bulletin*.
- **Visit the official websites of renowned cruise lines and big-name shipping companies.** They normally offer a dedicated section with onshore and onboard vacancies where you can send your CV, and many operators run free recruitment events. Look for fraud warnings on the site and contact the official headquarters if you're in any doubt.
- **Beware job vacancies on what pretend to be shipping or recruitment company websites and of fake jobs on real websites,** especially those that have free-to-post job listings and adverts.

If you're in doubt, email the ITF at [jobscam@itf.org.uk](mailto:jobscam@itf.org.uk) for advice.

## It's likely to be a scam if:

- It's an unsolicited job offer.
- It's a job advert on social media.
- You are asked for money, for any reason.
- You are asked to hand over personal information or scans of personal documents.
- The contact is a mobile telephone number, especially if it's for a supposed office.
- The international dialling code doesn't look right.
- Email addresses do not include the company name.
- The company's emails are with free providers such as Gmail, Globomail, Yahoo.
- The email address has a different country domain from the office's supposed location.

Visit [www.itfshipbesure.org](http://www.itfshipbesure.org) to find everything you need to know to avoid being scammed.

Abandoned crew of Med Sea Fox grateful for ITF efforts to get them home



## Flag state forsakes abandoned seafarers

It's terrible to be abandoned. And when those who are supposed to take on responsibility for your wellbeing cut you adrift, too, imagine the added stress. That's what happened to the crews of three flag of convenience (FOC) ships, in a case condemned as morally unacceptable by **Dave Heindel**, ITF seafarers' section chair and president of the Seafarers International Union

More than 30 seafarers on three vessels were abandoned by owner Sea Lion Shipping in May 2023. The Med Sea Eagle, the Med Sea Fox, and the Med Sea Lion were flagged to St Kitts and Nevis (SKN).

Three ITF inspectors were to become involved in the cases, along with the ITF contact in Sierra Leone, Tejan Savage.

## Soaring stress levels, ill health and non-payment

The first call to the ITF came to Mohamed Arrachedi, FOC network coordinator (Arab World and Iran), on 22 May from a seafarer on the Med Sea Fox. He said that the crew had not been paid for months, were running low on food and water, and many were in urgent need of medical help and experiencing poor mental health.

Conditions were similarly bad on the Med Sea Eagle. A member of the crew contacted the ITF and told Sandra Bernal, ITF FOC network coordinator (Asia Pacific), on 8 August that one seafarer had attempted suicide and another was threatening to harm themselves. They also reported that several seafarers needed urgent medical attention and there were no medicines on board.

Bernal called the port authorities and a number of the crew were taken ashore for medical treatment. But they were returned to the stressful environment of the abandoned vessel. Some, including the seafarer who had attempted suicide, were then repatriated on compassionate grounds but received no salaries.

Meanwhile, ITF inspector Paul Falzon in Malta received messages in June from the crewing agency and the crew of the Med Sea Lion, which was in Freetown, Sierra Leone. They said that the 12 Pakistani crew on board had not been paid since April. Some of the crew needed to be hospitalised, including two with severe malaria who had to be treated in intensive care.

## The battle for pay and repatriations

In June, the Med Sea Eagle towed the Med Sea Fox into Oman. Nine new seafarers joined the Med Sea Fox, where two seafarers had been on board since February 2023. Both vessels set sail and eventually anchored off Sharjah in the UAE in July, where they have been ever since.

Sea Lion Shipping eventually agreed to pay and repatriate some of the 12-strong Med Sea Fox crew on 26 June and 2 July, although four Ukrainian seafarers are still owed wages for 27 days in June. In October, some of the Med Sea Eagle crew received two months' pay out of the four-plus months owed. Bernal managed to recover some money from the previous P&I club for seafarers covered by it.

On the Med Sea Lion, Falzon engaged with both the P&I Clubs which were involved with the abandonment to try and get the owed wages paid. It took three months to pay the Pakistani crew four months of their owed wages, totalling USD95,000, and to be repatriated by the financial security provider Thomas Miller. The Azerbaijani master who had joined after a change in the financial security provider was paid USD13,500 and repatriated by Turk P&I. The last crew member left Freetown on 22 September.

## Avoiding responsibility

Sea Lion Shipping claims to be in financial trouble but is flouting international law by shifting the burden of its failures on to its crews. Turk P&I, the insurer of the Med Sea Fox and the Med Sea Eagle, has failed to respond to any ITF emails or other communications about the welfare of those crews.

Under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006), which St Kitts and Nevis has ratified, if shipowners do not repatriate seafarers and insurers do not step in, the flag state takes on the obligation to do so. St Kitts and Nevis did not take steps to ensure the crew were repatriated.

Instead, on 20 October 2023 SKN deregistered the three ships to avoid its responsibility towards the crew, leaving the seafarers to rot on stateless vessels. The fact that this can be allowed to happen highlights the lunacy of the flags of convenience system. While the world's economies continue to tolerate it, they are putting seafarers' lives at risk.

## The ordeal continues

In December 2023, the Med Sea Eagle and the Med Sea Fox both had their cargo discharged, and the administrative sale of the vessels by auction was completed. However, arrangements to pay and repatriate the crew are still ongoing, and the abandoned seafarers remain stuck on board the two vessels.

Most of the crew of the Med Sea Fox have not been paid since June 2023, while some are owed wages from March and May. Half of the Med Sea Fox crew and several of the Med Sea Eagle crew have been on board for over 12 months.

Arrachedi and Bernal continue to speak to the crews most days to offer moral support, update them on the situation, and help to ensure that they get the food, water and medical help they need. The ITF is working closely with the UAE maritime authorities to secure the payment and repatriation of the seafarers on board both vessels. ■

## FOC registries

St Kitts and Nevis is one of 43 registries officially listed by the ITF as flags of convenience (FOCs), with San Marino added in December 2023. These are registries open to any shipowner, regardless of whether they have a genuine connection to the state, and are often selected by less scrupulous owners in the expectation of a poor standard of oversight and saving money.

## ITF blitz on worst flags in Mediterranean Sea

Over two months in 2023, an army of ITF inspectors targeted ships flagged to the four worst offenders for safety, maintenance and seafarer welfare inspections in the Mediterranean Sea – the Cook Islands, Palau, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

**During that period, they found that the flag states were responsible for:**

- 20 substandard vessels
- Over USD120,000 in owed wages
- 29 vessels where wages were below the ILO minimum
- 7 vessels with safe manning issues

## Advice for criminalised seafarers

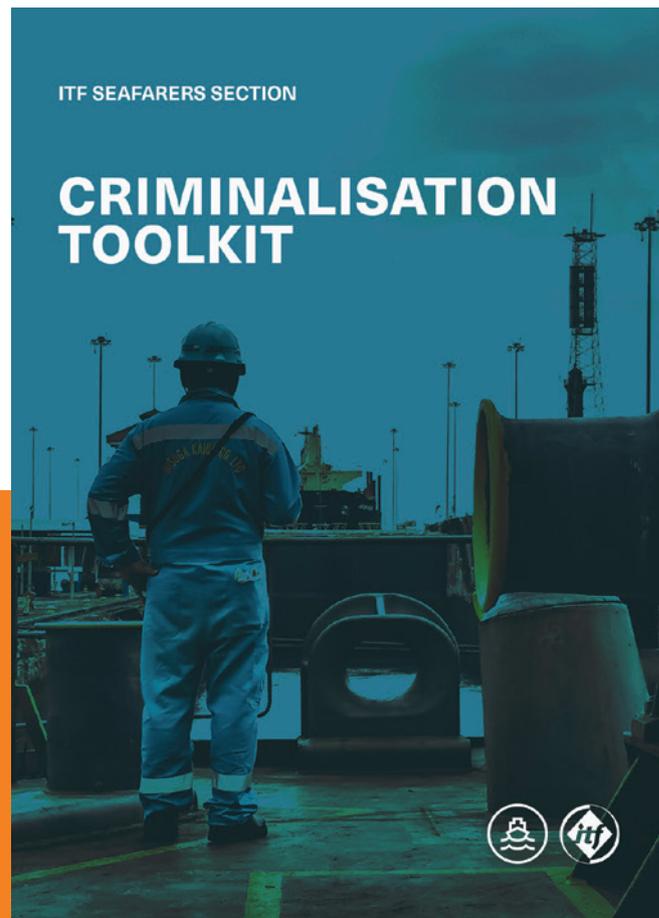
If your vessel is involved in an incident at sea, you are at risk of being scapegoated and denied your legal rights. Turn to the ITF's updated criminalisation toolkit for advice on how to ensure you are being treated fairly, says **Helene Netland**, section assistant, seafarers and inland navigation

When faced with criminal charges following a maritime accident or pollution incident, seafarers are often detained and denied access to proper legal proceedings. Recently, more seafarers have also been imprisoned as suspects in maritime crimes, such as drug smuggling or transportation of illegal cargo.

The new version of the ITF's toolkit puts a spotlight on the need for fair treatment of seafarers detained on suspicion of committing maritime crimes. It illustrates some recent landmark cases and includes an annexed list of cases.

It also shares the findings of Seafarers' Rights International (SRI) surveys on the criminalisation of seafarers. One study shows the difficulties that seafarers have with getting legal representation, information about their legal rights, and access to interpretation services.

It sets out the rights of seafarers to fair treatment, as well as the responsibilities of flag states, seafarer states, and shipowners towards seafarers involved in a criminal investigation.



The shipowner has an obligation to take steps to avoid or limit an accident onboard or at sea, as indicated in the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC). It is essential that any communications between the ship and shipowner regarding decisions to rectify a situation are kept on record, in case of an investigation.

### Your legal protections

If you are required to act as a witness following a maritime accident, and/or are being detained pending investigations, it is important that you know about the legal protections that are in place.

Seafarers who are detained in a foreign port should be dealt with promptly under due process of law and with appropriate consular protection, as stated in MLC Guideline B4.4.6.

Detained seafarers should get legal representation, access to medical care and consular assistance, and be treated fairly, as stated in the IMO/ILO Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of a Maritime Accident. The guidelines do not cover maritime crimes but the IMO is considering proposals to give the same protections to seafarers detained for committing maritime crimes.

## FIVE STEPS TO REMEMBER



If you face criminal charges:

1. **Know your basic rights – and insist on them being observed**
2. **Seek help from organisations who can help you – such as your employer, union, local ITF inspector, local embassy, and seafarers' centre**
3. **Cooperate – be truthful but exercise your right not to incriminate yourself, by answering questions with 'no comment' or silence**
4. **Ask for an interpreter if the investigating authorities are using a language you are not familiar with**
5. **Ask for legal representation**

Mandatory safeguards for seafarers who are required to provide evidence are contained in the IMO's Code for International Standards and Recommended Practices for a Safety Investigation into a Marine Casualty or Marine Incident:

- Evidence should be provided at the earliest opportunity, and the seafarer should be allowed to return to their ship, or be repatriated, as soon as possible.
- Seafarers need to be informed of the nature and basis of the marine safety investigation, that is, having access to legal advice, so that they are aware of:
  - any potential risk of incriminating themselves in any subsequent proceedings which might follow an investigation;
  - their right not to self-incriminate and to remain silent; and
  - any necessary protections that need to be provided to the seafarer to prevent their evidence to the marine safety investigation from being subsequently used against them.

**The shipowner has an obligation to take steps to avoid or limit an accident onboard or at sea, as indicated in the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC).**

### The shipowner's obligations

This is what the Fair Treatment Guidelines state in regard of shipowners' obligations:

'The shipowners have an overriding duty to protect the interests of their crews. This includes the seafarers' right to avoid self-incrimination and to receive fair treatment. In addition, the shipowner also has a number of the same duties as the Port and Flag State.'

Specifically, the Guidelines require shipowners to:

- Take steps to ensure that no discriminatory or retaliatory measures are taken against seafarers due to their participation in investigations
- Cooperate and communicate with all interested parties and take steps to provide seafarers with access to seafarers' representative organisations
- Take action to expedite the investigation
- Encourage seafarers to cooperate with the Investigation, but take into account their rights
- Preserve evidence and minimise the need for the continued presence of the seafarer
- Fulfil obligations in relation to repatriation, or take steps to re-embark seafarers
- Take steps to ensure that sufficient subsistence is in place for seafarers' wages, accommodation, food, and medical care

You can find more information and advice in the toolkit: [rb.gy/x4twke](https://rb.gy/x4twke)

*Read about the case of a captain imprisoned on suspicion of trying to smuggle Russian oil – see page 11. ■*

# Seafarers flock to historic ITF expo



Seafarers and their families from the Philippines gathered in Manila to enjoy the chance to meet ITF inspectors and union representatives, get advice on legal, labour and health issues – and to have a great time socialising and sharing their experiences with each other. ITF inspectorate coordinator **Steve Trowsdale** reports

In total, more than 4,000 people attended the ITF's largest-ever Seafarers' Expo between 23 and 25 June 2023. Held outdoors, the main stage featured labour, political and industry leaders celebrating the contribution of seafarers in keeping the global supply chain moving.

Visitors could choose between activities and seminars in three other tents. And there were many information tents hosted by unions and organisations supporting seafarers, including AMOSUP, ver.di, and ISWAN, where seafarers could pick up leaflets and other materials and discuss any issues they had.

Twelve ITF inspectors took part to explain to seafarers their rights when working on board flag of convenience (FOC) vessels. Of the 132 ships abandoned by their owners in 2023, 80 percent were FOC vessels. Filipinos were the fifth most abandoned nationality.

The Expo also raised awareness of the Maritime Labour Convention, designed to protect seafarers' rights, as this is key to helping seafarers stand up for themselves.

Other topics included ensuring seafarers' rights in a just transition to a carbon-neutral maritime industry in 2050, physical and mental health and wellbeing, and services provided by other ITF affiliates.

Visitors enjoyed musical entertainment and sports, including basketball. There was also the opportunity to try out navigating a ship using the simulator provided by the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP).

Opening the Expo, ITF general secretary Stephen Cotton said: "I'm excited to be here in Manila, the heart of the world's seafaring capital, to welcome seafarers and their families to the ITF Seafarers' Expo. This is a chance



**“I’ve been a seafarer almost 26 years. It’s a tough job but in many countries I’ve often seen ITF members coming on board and helping Filipino crew. It’s a big help for seafarers that there’s an organisation always looking for their interests.”**

**A 2nd officer**

**“We’re here talking to Filipino seafarers about their rights and trying to give them opportunities to talk to us as well, ITF representatives and inspectors.”**

**John Canias, ITF maritime operations coordinator**

for them to learn more about the ITF and our affiliates, and about their rights and opportunities in a changing global maritime industry.”

Union speakers included AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca and ALU-PSU national president Michael Mendoza. Philippines government representatives included the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ferdinand Martin G Romualdez and Raymond Democrito C Mendoza, and the Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers, Susan ‘Toots’ V Opie. The maritime industry was represented by Gerardo A Borromeo, vice chair of the International Chamber of Shipping, and Belal Ahmed, chair of the International Maritime Employers Council. ■

# ITF inspectors ready to assist you

In times of trouble, seafarers around the world can call on ITF inspectors and contacts for help. *Seafarers' bulletin* provides an update on the ITF's regional networks of union contacts, and shines a spotlight on those who are the only inspectors in their country. It also introduces the 17 newest inspectors, recruited in 2023, who bring a wealth of experience, are excited about their new roles, and share a passion for wanting to champion seafarers' rights and support those in need



**Raffaele Formisano**  
(Naples, Italy - FIT-CISL) worked on ships, first as a radio operator and then as a captain.



**Mohammad Gulam Ali Ansari** (Haldia Port, India – National Union of Seafarers of India) worked for over 11 years as a motorman in the ship's engine room. He has served on his union's executive committee, been an organiser, and worked as an ITF contact.



**Christiana Efstratiou** (Nicosia, Cyprus – FTPAW-SEK) has a long experience in crewing. She has a degree in political science and history, a master's in international trade and shipping management, and a certificate in ship operations. She covers Limassol, Larnaca and Vasiliko ports.



**Cyrus Donato** (Seattle, USA – ILWU/IBU) has served in the US Coast Guard as a deck officer and a port state control officer, and was a marine surveyor and an MLC, ISPS and ISM auditor. He holds a degree in applied mathematics and a master's in homeland security studies.



**Seydina Ousmane Keita** (Dakar, Senegal – SNTMM) joined a cargo ship as an oilman in 2004, after training in general mechanics. After 10 months on board, the SNTMM seized the ship over salary problems, and appointed him as the union's administrative secretary. He became an ITF contact in 2010.



**Paola Cervetto** (Genoa, Italy – FIT-CISL) has over 18 years' experience as crew manager for an Italian shipping company and manning agency. As ITF inspector, she covers the ports of Genoa, Savona, and La Spezia.



**Harshada Bhamre** (Mumbai Port, India – National Union of Seafarers of India) has worked as a seafarer with a multinational cruise company, and was her union's organiser and agreement assistant.



**Kenan Dinc**  
(Mersin, Turkey – Seafarers Union of Turkey) worked as a lawyer in his union, specialising in seafarers' rights and both Turkish and international maritime labour law.



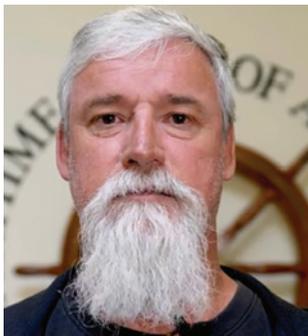
**Kyle Campbell**  
(Montreal, Canada – Seafarers International Union of Canada) worked as an AB (wheelsman) on board a tanker for six years.



**Sushil Deorukhkar**  
(Mumbai, India – FSUI) entered the industry in 1999 and has worked as an AB in many Indian and foreign shipping companies. He was his union's joint secretary.



**Mariano Cannioto**  
(Messina, Italy – FILT-CGIL) worked as a deck officer onboard cruise ships and Ro-Ro vessels.



**Jack McCabe**  
(Port Hedland, Australia – Maritime Union of Australia) has worked on tankers, passenger ships, offshore support vessels, and towage vessels since 1980. He has been a crew delegate on vessels, and has worked as a MUA branch organiser.



**Helen Meldrum**  
(Aberdeen, Scotland – Nautilus International) has been involved in the trade union movement all her adult life. She has organised workers in the public and private sector and can't wait to put her 25 years' of experience to work for seafarers.



**Michele Innocenti**  
(Livorno, Italy – FILT-CGIL) started as a docker in Livorno in January 2006, when he was 19 years old. After a couple of years, he became a union representative. He also covers the ports of Piombino and Marina di Carrara.



**Matthew Parsonage**  
(Liverpool, UK – Nautilus International) worked for seven years on oil and gas tankers as an electro-technical officer. He has also worked in the NavCom technology industry.



**Tony Patten**  
(Southampton, UK – Unite) was a docker in Southampton for 26 years, serving as a union shop steward for most of that time. He has also served as a safety rep, and recently chaired the union's South East Health and Safety Committee.



**Carlos Sandoval**  
(Panama City, Panama – Union de Capitanes y Oficiales de Cubierta) started his career in 2002 as a deck officer on container ships. He worked as a ship's agent, class surveyor, ISM/ISPS auditor, and as an MLC inspector for nearly 10 years.

## 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, help is on hand. The ITF's 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. They work on a voluntary basis, and will do all they can to assist you. Here's a snapshot of their latest activities.



### Latin America/Caribbean

The ITF has appointed Adan Suarez as the FOC network coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. Adan's priorities will be to coordinate with ITF affiliated unions and welfare organisations in the region to expand the network of contacts, so that we can provide even greater assistance to seafarers in the region. Adan will also retain his position as a full-time ITF inspector in Montevideo, Uruguay.

#### Contact the FOC network coordinator (Latin America/Caribbean):

**Adan Suarez (Uruguay)**

Email: [suarez\\_adan@itf.org.uk](mailto:suarez_adan@itf.org.uk)

(Contacts in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Nicaragua, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela)



### Arab World and Iran

During 2023, our consolidated contacts in the Arab World and Iran continued to deliver support and assistance in many cases across the region.

Unpaid wages, denied medical assistance, and difficulties in being repatriated were once again the top issues we had to deal with. By the end of December, we had handled 147 cases, which resulted in the recovery of over USD9.2 million in wages owed to seafarers.

Abandonment remains on the rise in the Arab World, and is a very high priority for our efforts in the region.

Additionally, we are expanding the scope of our collaboration in the region, working with more port and maritime authorities to secure seafarers' rights. And we are assisting our affiliated unions by delivering the ITF's training programme, which includes union awareness seminars, workshops on the MLC, collective bargaining, and seafarer wellbeing.

#### Contact the FOC network coordinator (Arab World and Iran):

**Mohamed Arrachedi (Spain)**

Email: [arrachedi\\_mohamed@itf.org.uk](mailto:arrachedi_mohamed@itf.org.uk)

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





## Africa

In 2023, we successfully began to extend the Africa network, starting with Cameroon, Togo, and Guinea Conakry, where the contacts have shown great commitment. This enabled us to obtain more than USD162,000 in owed wages, help seafarers who needed medical care, and assist with repatriating abandoned seafarers. Thanks to cooperation with the port and maritime authorities in Cameroon and Benin, we are beginning to reduce the number of abandonment cases, and this will be cut further when Cameroon ratifies the MLC 2006, which we are campaigning for. Our work to protect and promote the rights of seafarers will also benefit their communities and their local economies.

### Contact the FOC network coordinator (Africa):

#### Lucien Razafindraibe (Kenya)

Email: [razafindraibe\\_lucien@itf.org.uk](mailto:razafindraibe_lucien@itf.org.uk)

(Contacts in Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo)



## Asia Pacific

In 2023, our network has been at the forefront of addressing critical issues faced by seafarers – such as the surge in the number of abandonment cases, particularly in Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Our contacts have shown unwavering commitment and diligence, working tirelessly with me to protect the rights and wellbeing of seafarers in the face of adversity. From ensuring provisions on board to advocating for repatriation, these contacts have made a remarkable impact. We will all continue to confront challenges and secure a brighter future for all the seafarers we support.

### Contact the FOC network coordinator (Asia Pacific):

#### Sandra Bernal (Australia)

Email: [bernal\\_sandra@itf.org.uk](mailto:bernal_sandra@itf.org.uk)

(Contacts in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Thailand and Vietnam)

## Meet the sole inspectors

In countries where there is only one ITF inspector, they have the sole responsibility for responding to seafarers' complaints in all their nation's ports and waters. It could be a lonely job without the support of their trade unions and local maritime authorities, and being able to share knowledge, ideas and experiences with other ITF inspectors in the global network is a crucial part of the job. Here we introduce six of them.



**Andrey Chernov (Klaipeda, Lithuania - Lithuanian Seafarers' Union)** sailed briefly as a messman and cook before deciding to work for his union. He graduated in law and began work as a claims handler in 1999. In 2003, he was appointed as an ITF inspector. He also valued the opportunity to improve his knowledge and gain more experience working in the actions team in the ITF's London head office.



**Jaanus Kuiv (Tallinn, Estonia - ESIU)** is a former deck officer and sailed for 11 years on board ferries, reaching the rank of chief officer. He founded the ESIU in 1994, and was appointed as ITF inspector in 2001. This experience has given him great knowledge about how best to help seafarers when they need it.



**Adrian Mihalcioiu (Constanta, Romania - Romanian Seafarers Free Union/SLN)** graduated from the Maritime Academy of Constanta and spent 10 years as deck officer and chief officer on dry and large tanker vessels. In 1992, he started working for his union, first as vice-president, then organiser and claims handler, before becoming president in 1994. He became an ITF inspector in 1996.



**Vladimir Miladinov (Varna, Bulgaria - Federation of Transport Trade Unions in Bulgaria)** worked for eight years as a FTTUB union officer and campaign organiser. A sole inspector for almost nine years, he has found the ITF network of inspectors and coordinators very important in helping him find solutions to the cases he handles, and also appreciates the invaluable assistance of the local port maritime administrations.



**Nataliya Yefrimenko (Odesa, Ukraine - Marine Transport Workers' Trade Union of Ukraine)** started at the MTWTU in 1997 as an administrative officer, before joining the seafarers' department, where she handled claims and conducted preparatory work for CBAs on FOC ships. She has been an ITF inspector since 2005, and, as an ITC ILO certified MLC trainer, she trains new ITF inspectors.



**Norbert Petrovskis (Riga, Latvia - Latvian Seafarers' Union of Merchant Fleet)** was a seafarer for 20 years, progressing from messman to captain, mainly on feeder Ro-Ro and container vessels. In May 1996, he was appointed the ITF inspector for three Baltic States – Latvia, Lithuania & Estonia (Lithuania and Estonia now have their own inspectors) – and has since achieved a BA in law to help him in the fight for seafarers' rights.

# Making companies accountable for seafarer rights in supply chains

**Kulsoom Jafri**, ITF lead campaigner for seafarers and inland navigation, heralds two important ITF initiatives to ensure that companies fulfil their moral and legal responsibilities for seafarers' rights in their supply chains

Gross human rights violations occur daily at sea, from unpaid or withheld wages, abandonment of vessels, and seafarers required to work beyond contract – situations that may give rise to forced labour.

The obligation to protect human rights – human rights due diligence (HRDD) – is a relatively new feature for corporate due diligence. Neglecting this responsibility makes brands vulnerable to financial and reputational damage, as consumers highly rank a commitment to ethical working practices.

Current political volatility and global economic uncertainty are creating massive challenges for the pension funds and global asset managers who invest the USD55 trillion in pension fund assets under management today.

Questions about what sustainable investment means when it comes to social issues, including workers' rights and impacts on human rights, have led to changes in regulation in Europe, Asia and the US, and to new forms of guidance and reporting requirements.

Under new laws in several countries, companies have to report on human rights issues in their supply chains. Unions can provide a perspective about what is actually happening on the ground compared to what the company says that they are doing.

The ITF stands alone in being able to offer a worker-centred analysis of human rights abuses at sea, measured against international laws and standards. That is why it published *Respecting the human rights of seafarers in global supply chains* in July 2023 to help brands and other cargo owners ensure that they fulfil their HRDD obligations to seafarers.



The launch event brought together global companies with a combined turnover of £166 billion together with international trade union bodies, labour rights organisations, and non-governmental organisations.

The guidance sets out four steps brands can take to cooperate with the ITF:

1. An introductory meeting to set out worker-centred HRDD approaches in transport and logistics supply chains.
2. A confidential ITF Rights Check to identify risks and human rights abuses of seafarers on ships carrying cargo.
3. A dialogue with the ITF on risks and mitigation.
4. An ITF cooperation agreement to work together to prevent and remedy human rights abuses.

On 29 March 2023, the ITF signed a landmark agreement with leading fashion group TFG Brands London, which owns brands including Hobbs and Whistles. This will see the company cooperating on preventing, mitigating and addressing human rights risks for transport workers in its entire supply chain. It will cover all TFG's directly operated and subcontracted transportation operations and include shipping, freight, and warehouse workers.

**To read or download the ITF guidance, go to:**  
[rb.gy/ar82xs](https://rb.gy/ar82xs)



## ITF and unions step up work to protect ferry workers

The ITF and seafarer unions in Europe and the UK are stepping up efforts to stop the ferry industry's race to the bottom, says **Steve Yandell**, assistant coordinator, ITF seafarers and inland navigation section

### Seafarer unions win new UK law

Following the illegal sacking of 800 seafarers via Zoom by P&O Ferries in 2022, lobbying and campaigning by ITF affiliates Nautilus International and the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) resulted in the implementation of a new UK law. The Seafarers Wages Act 2023 has some limited protections for the payment of the UK National Minimum Wage on ships regularly calling at UK ports.

### Unions step up activism

More broadly, the ITF and its affiliates also organised a Ferries Roundtable in Manila in June 2023, to enable shop stewards in the ferry sector to become more involved in union organising and campaigning to improve working conditions on board globally. The activists:

- learned how to increase union power and strengthen their unions,
- learned more about the ITF, global solidarity and campaigning, and
- built international links and shared their knowledge, experiences and ideas.

The participants agreed that the best way to prevent employers from being able to indiscriminately fire workers is to encourage seafarers to join trade unions, to be fully aware of the laws and regulations that affect their rights, and to be informed about activities to tackle threats to their jobs.

### New ferries agreement needs teeth

The new ferries agreement signed by France and the United Kingdom on 24 July 2023 introduces seafarer employment and welfare standards – but they are voluntary.

The ITF and the European Transport Workers' Federation are urging the governments to do more to force ferry companies, owners and crewing agents to comply. We want mandatory standards applied to all ferry operators in the English Channel, the Irish Sea and the North Sea to eradicate substandard working conditions, and to re-establish decent standards, wages and rights through properly enforced legislation and collective bargaining.

The changes to UK law would not stop a shipping company from carrying out fire and hire practices like those of P&O Ferries, although they would have to pay the UK minimum wage for the time that the ship was in UK territorial waters. And the likes of Irish Ferries and P&O Ferries are still allowed to operate, despite not paying UK or French national minimum wages. ■

### The ITF's global ferry programme

The programme aims to:

- Improve health and safety
- Ensure that owners and operators properly implement their safety responsibilities
- Establish a Fair Ferry Rate for different routes
- Develop an ILO inland navigation convention
- Train more women to work in deck and engine departments

# Calling all budding maritime photographers!

**Katie Higginbottom**, head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust, wants to hear from you



The Life at Sea 2024 photography competition opens for new submissions on 25 June 2024, the Day of the Seafarer, and closes six weeks later on 15 August.

The winners will be announced on World Maritime Day, 26 September 2024.

The ITF Seafarers' Trust photography competition is now in its fifth year. Born of a desire to expose the reality of life in the Covid 19 pandemic lockdown, when seafarers kept the world moving but countries closed their borders, this competition has taken on a life of its own:

- The prestigious National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, is exhibiting a digital display of 2023's winning images between November 2023 and March 2024.
- We've been able to organise spectacular exhibitions worldwide, including at the USS Constitution Museum (Boston), International Maritime Organization (London), and the Senate and Department of Migrant Workers (Philippines).
- Look out for our seafarers' photos at the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam (from August to October 2024), where the winners of the photography competitions from 2020-2023 will be exhibited for World Port Days Rotterdam and the International Council of Maritime Museums Congress.

**“Michael Jackson? No. This is me trying his moves while balancing myself as the ship's rolling reaches 12 degrees. This prevents me from getting dizzy with the ship's heavy rolling. This was taken during our drifting in Fremantle, Australia.”**

**John Robert M Marañón – his image '12 Degrees' won 1st prize in 2023**

We're also working hard to get your images in front of the movers and shakers of the industry and the regulators and policy makers in the international organisations. It's all about reminding the world about the critical importance of seafarers in the transportation of almost everything, telling your stories and sharing your insights through amazing photos.

**Life at Sea 2024:**  
**Open for entries 25 June to 15 August 2024**  
 1st Prize GBP 1,000.00  
 2nd Prize GBP 750.00  
 3rd Prize GBP 500.00



Put the dates in your diary, check out <https://www.seafarerstrust.org/what-we-do/photo-competition-2023>, and share your 'life at sea' photos and stories.

## New ITF app to make ports safer workplaces

Ports are notoriously dangerous working environments, where a shocking number of work-related deaths of dockers and seafarers occur. **Steve Biggs**, senior assistant in the ITF dockers section, explains how a new app-based course will help to make ports safer for workers

There have been over 700 work-related deaths of dockers and seafarers in the last 20 years. Protecting workers' safety and health requires a culture change in the port industry. It also needs workers to have the knowledge to engage effectively with management and other stakeholders in port safety and health improvements.

In response to union requests, the ITF and the ITF Seafarers' Trust have worked together to develop an innovative online tool for port workers.

The new OSH Ports App was launched in the Arab World in 2021 and has now expanded to Latin America and the Caribbean. Workers can now access the app's powerful occupational safety and health knowledge in Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish and English.

The app was written by industry experts, with contributions from ITF-affiliated dockers' unions, and is supported by the International Labour Organization's International Training Centre (ILO-ITC).

It offers a course based on the best industry research and practice. It covers the fundamentals of occupational safety and health and is specific to the ports sector. It has been designed for users to understand occupational

health and safety risks in their own workplaces, while considering the national, regional, and international context.

The OSH Ports App is split into five modules, which participants can complete at their own pace:

- Module 1: Introduction to OSH Ports.
- Module 2: How and why things go wrong.
- Module 3: Hazard identification and risk assessment.
- Module 4: How to control risk.
- Module 5: Information and communication.

At the end of each module, participants must successfully complete a short assessment, before they can move on to the next module. When they have completed all five modules, participants can take a final assessment within the app or on the website to receive a course completion certificate supported by the ILO-ITC.

Workers can study independently, or in workplace group training. A trainer's manual is available, along with promotional materials for the course.

The next stage will be to deliver a face-to-face train the trainer course throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Arab World. Selected individuals will go back into their workplaces and train hundreds more workers to complete the app.

The ultimate goal is fewer injuries and fatalities, and more worker participation in all activities involving safety and health in ports. ■

**Download the app via Google Play and the AppStore, or online at [www.oshports.org](http://www.oshports.org).**



## Boost to fishing vessel inspections

Ten more ITF inspectors have been trained to inspect fishing vessels in order to promote safety and decent work in the sector, reports **Rossen Karavatchev**, ITF fisheries coordinator

At the three-day ITF FishSupport Inspectorate Network workshop in October 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand, newly selected ITF inspectors learned how to provide support to abandoned, unpaid and distressed fishers on board fishing vessels worldwide by applying international standards, ITF procedures, and the network's operation and procedures.

The participants agreed that the ITF needed to campaign for the provision of free internet access for fishers on fishing vessels, and to negotiate for ITF approved or equivalent national collective bargaining agreements covering fishing vessels.

The ITF began training inspectors to inspect fishing vessels in 2010. Today, there are 15 ITF inspectors and many more ITF contacts providing support to fishers in distress. In 2023, they carried out more than 100 fishing vessel inspections. ■

If you work on a fishing vessel and need assistance, email [fishsupport@itf.org.uk](mailto:fishsupport@itf.org.uk).

## West African fisher unions fight for agreed rights

A coordinated campaign by fisher unions in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire is trying to force Spanish and French tuna vessel owners to honour the terms promised in their EU agreements. **Michael O'Brien**, ITF fisheries expert, explains

The EU's Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements promise that locally employed fishers will be paid at least the global seafarers' minimum monthly salary set by the International Labour Organization (ILO) – currently USD658. But the reality is that the West African fishers are typically being paid around one third of that amount.

The fishers went on a remarkable four-day strike on over 60 industrial scale vessels across Africa in June 2023 to demand justice.

The European vessel owners claim that they already meet this ILO minimum. The truth lies with the activities of the local agents they engage. These agents are responsible for both the recruitment of fishers and managing the payroll on behalf of the employers, so it can only follow that the agents are illegally keeping a share of the fishers' salaries.

The local labour and maritime authorities in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal have played a poor role in the dispute. They intervened to bring the strike to an end, and have since supervised an extremely flawed negotiation process between the local agents and unions. This has resulted in an interim agreement committing the employers to paying just 57 percent of the ILO seafarers' minimum.

The ITF and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) have raised this scandal directly with the EU Commission and Europeche, the European fisheries employers' group. Together with our affiliates in France, Spain and West Africa, we have demanded that Europeche directly engages with us to agree ITF approved collective bargaining agreements. ■

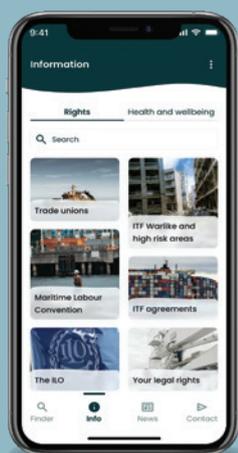


INTERNATIONAL  
TRANSPORT  
WORKERS'  
FEDERATION

# Seafarers – make the ITF your daily port of call for information and advice

## Free ITF apps – available for both Android and iOS devices

Download them from your app store, or from [www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up/-/itf-seafarers-apps](http://www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up/-/itf-seafarers-apps)



### ITF Seafarers

- Check out your ship and see if it is covered by an ITF agreement
- Discover where to get help in a crisis
- Get in touch with the ITF
- Find an ITF inspector or ITF maritime union
- Find health and wellbeing information and advice

## ITF social media

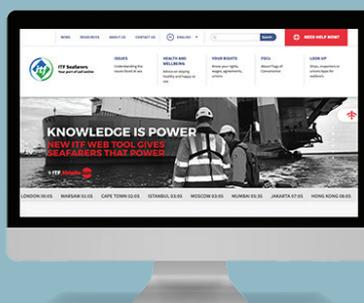


- Follow and have your say on the latest news, using #itfseafarers at [www.facebook.com/ITFseafarerssupport](https://www.facebook.com/ITFseafarerssupport) and on X.

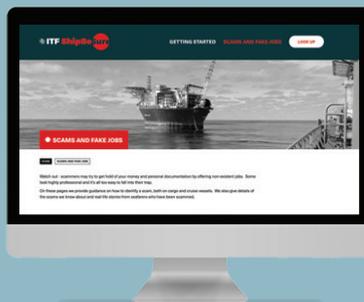


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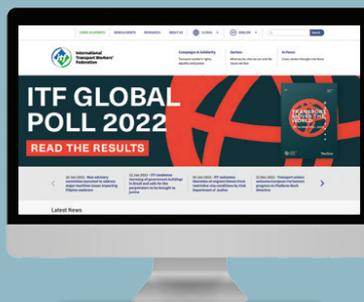
## ITF websites



[www.itfseafarers.org](http://www.itfseafarers.org) – find out about your rights and how ITF inspectors provide assistance at sea and in port, at our dedicated website for seafarers



[www.itfshipbesure.org](http://www.itfshipbesure.org) – find everything you need to know if you're looking for a job, including the current scams



[www.itfglobal.org](http://www.itfglobal.org) – follow all the latest developments affecting workers and their ITF unions