

SEAFARERS' BULLETIN



INTERNATIONAL
TRANSPORT
WORKERS'
FEDERATION

WINNING FOR SEAFARERS

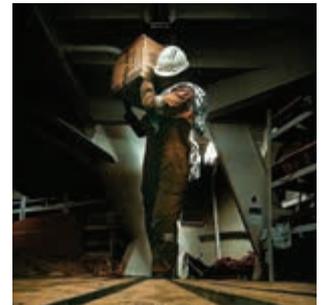
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75 YEARS OF THE FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE CAMPAIGN
SUPPORTING UKRAINE'S SEAFARERS

YOUR 12-PAGE PULLOUT GUIDE TO GETTING HELP

English no. 37/2023



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The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing over 18 million transport workers from 735 affiliated unions in 153 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 125 inspectors and contacts working in ports worldwide.

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Cover photo: Elijah jose Barrios



“We continue to expose fraudsters who target seafarers looking for jobs, and share our success in exposing another unscrupulous manning agent.”

Dear friends,

This year has been blighted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The MTWTU, which represents Ukrainian seafarers, shares with the *Seafarers’ bulletin* how this has affected its members and their families. And we also learn how the ITF Seafarers’ Trust is helping Ukrainian cadets continue with their training.

This issue of *Seafarers’ bulletin* marks the 75th anniversary of the ITF’s campaign against flags of convenience. Thanks to our efforts, this discredited system is firmly on the international agenda. We show what FOCs really mean for seafarers, and we celebrate the wins achieved for seafarers by our inspectors, working with our affiliated unions.

We hear from the International Labour Organization how new amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention will bring added protections to seafarers in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

We continue to expose fraudsters who target seafarers looking for jobs, and share our success in exposing another unscrupulous manning agent. Read how our ShipBeSure website will guide you through the recruitment process and help you stay safe from scams.

We put the spotlight on the illegal sacking of 786 ferry workers in the UK. This exposed the human cost of social dumping and created public outrage. We look at union efforts to bring an end to this abuse in the ferry industry.

A new task force consisting of the ITF, its affiliated maritime unions, shipowners and UN bodies has identified that some 800,000 seafarers will need extra training by the mid-2030s to achieve a greener shipping industry. We examine this hugely important development.

Our 12-page pullout section is packed with essential information about how to contact an ITF inspector and how they can help you, as well as advice on contracts and your legal rights.

Seafarers’ bulletin looks at the continuing impact for some seafarers of the Covid crisis. As China starts to relax its Covid restrictions, I hope that in 2023 we can put the worst of the pandemic behind us. Once again, I thank all the seafarers and other transport workers who kept the world moving when so much of our lives came to a standstill.

In solidarity.

Stephen Cotton
ITF general secretary

4 FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE

The ITF FOC campaign in numbers

As at 4 April 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

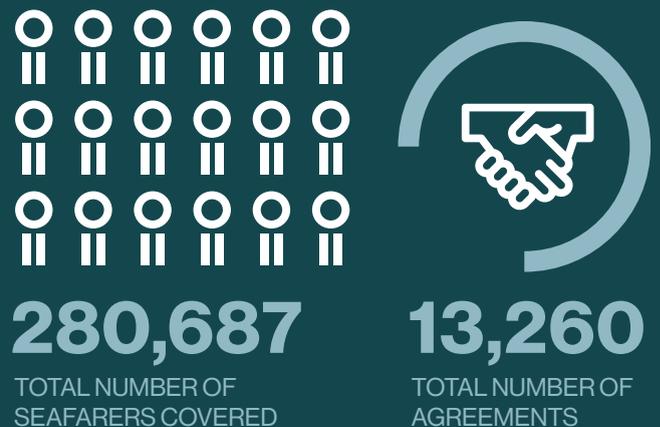


As at 31 December 2022

TOTAL OWED WAGES RECOVERED



VESSELS AND SEAFARERS COVERED BY ITF AGREEMENTS





75 years of campaigning against flags of convenience

Photo: Karlo Immanuel D. Garcia

It is 75 years since the ITF began its campaign against the scourge of flags of convenience (FOCs) in the shipping industry. In that time, it has forced the issue onto the international agenda and its inspectors and unions have fought tirelessly to secure decent wages and conditions for seafarers working on board FOC vessels. ITF inspectorate coordinator **Steve Trowsdale** shares some highlights and explains why FOCs continue to exist.

6 FEATURE FOCs

Why FOCs exist

A flag of convenience ship is one that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership.

Although they often operate in international waters, ships must be registered with a single country. That country, the so-called flag state, is legally responsible for ensuring the ship's owners meet certain basic standards on safety and crew welfare.

At the grubbier end of the shipping industry, shipowners are far more likely to have their eyes firmly on the bottom line than on the welfare of the seafarers employed on their vessels. The attraction of the FOC system is that it can save them money. A foreign flag state will offer cheap registration fees and low or no taxes.

Flagging out a vessel to a foreign register also promises a way to avoid the labour regulations in the country of ownership, and to apply cheaper and lower standards of wages and conditions for the seafarers on board. In short, shipowners who flag out their vessels can effectively distance themselves from their moral and financial responsibilities for the seafarers they employ.

And it's the incentive of money that drives countries without their own shipping industry to set up a ship registry. Charging fees to shipowners is easy money. So foreign flag states make money without the responsibilities towards the crew that go with being a genuine flag state. The registers have no incentive to enforce the laws on rigorous safety and welfare standards because this would cost their shipowner customers money. Some of these registers have poor safety and training standards, and they place no restriction on the nationality of the crew.

In the shabby, exploitative FOC system, it's like the police are being paid by the criminals.

The impact on crew welfare

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) is designed to ensure a level playing field so that ships around the world meet the same standards on treatment of seafarers.

But there is a serious loophole which allows the flag of convenience system to become a vehicle for passing the buck over responsibilities for seafarer welfare. Seafarers are caught up between different interests, with everyone putting them last on the priority list. As a result, seafarers are exploited, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months on end, and – far too often – even for years.

For many abused and exploited seafarers it can be too frightening to complain or reach out for assistance.

These are the most common abuses that ITF inspections of FOC vessels have revealed:

- very low wages
- poor on-board conditions
- inadequate food and clean drinking water
- long periods of work without proper rest, leading to stress and fatigue
- payments delayed or simply not made, sometimes for months
- unsafe vessels
- poor safety practices, leading to serious accidents and little chance of compensation without help
- failures to act on responsibilities towards abandoned seafarers
- seafarers not being able to access medical facilities when they need to



The home countries of crew members can do little to protect these seafarers because the rules that apply on board are often those of the country of registration. As a result, most FOC seafarers are not members of a trade union. Also, since FOC ships have no real nationality, they are beyond the reach of any single national seafarers' trade union. So that's where the ITF comes in.



The role of the ITF in protecting you

The ITF has a unique and powerful influence on the wages and conditions of seafarers working on FOC ships. The federation negotiates ITF agreements with shipowners, and its inspectors police and enforce these agreements. ITF inspectors also respond to and investigate seafarers' complaints and calls for help.

ITF inspectors work tirelessly with local maritime unions to promote and protect the rights of seafarers where neither shipowners nor flag states are prepared to meet their obligations.

If you have a problem on board, contact a local union or the ITF inspector in the country you are in or heading to. If there is no union or inspector there, email the ITF seafarers' support team at seafsupport@itf.org.uk.

The power of the FOC campaign

The Panama flag, established in 1917, was the first flag of convenience. It was soon attracting major shipping companies to flag their vessels there, including Esso in 1935.

In response to this worrying development, the ITF formally launched its FOC campaign at the Oslo congress in 1948. In the same year, the Liberia flag was established, and the trend was set to grow. By 2022, there were 42 FOC registries (for the full list, go to <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/focs/current-registries-listed-as-focs>).

The campaign is the joint responsibility of ITF-affiliated seafarers' and dockers' unions – and both groups are represented on the campaign's decision-making body, the Fair Practices Committee (FPC).

The political element of the ITF campaign is aimed at eliminating the FOC system. To do this, it is working to achieve global acceptance that there should be a genuine link between the real owner of a vessel and the flag the vessel flies, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The financial incentives offered by the FOC system to unscrupulous shipowners mean this is a long, hard campaign. However, the ITF has promoted much wider understanding of the FOC system internationally and has put it on the agenda of governments, United Nations bodies like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the wider maritime industry.

ITF Congress in Oslo establishes the FOC campaign and calls for an international boycott

1948

Liberia flag is established

ITF Congress in Stuttgart establishes the welfare fund

1950

ITF Special Seafarers Department is established

1952

50 FOC vessels covered by union agreements

1956

FOC tonnage reaches 9m tonnes

ITF Congress in Amsterdam demands international boycott of Panama, Liberia, Honduras and Costa Rica flagged vessels

1958

8 FEATURE FOCs

While the system exists, the ITF continues to fight to enforce decent minimum wages and conditions for seafarers working on board FOC ships, regardless of nationality. The ITF has become the standard-bearer for the defence of exploited and mistreated seafarers throughout the world.

ITF agreements

The ITF and its affiliated maritime unions developed the first ITF agreements in 1971.

The most common form is the framework agreement negotiated every two years in the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) by the ITF and the Joint Negotiating Group, consisting of specific shipowners' associations. These IBF agreements apply only to seafarers on vessels owned by companies belonging to those associations, and can only be signed by ITF-affiliated unions. Unions use them to negotiate national agreements with companies in their country, and sometimes company-level agreements.

A second form of agreement is total crew cost. This must be approved by the ITF and signed by the shipowner (this could be the beneficial owner, operator or ship manager) and a union from the country where the beneficial owner is based, or sometimes a union in the labour providing countries. This ensures that the agreement considers any national laws and customs, and that the crew members are able to join their national union.

ITF agreements legally bind the employer to the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which details all the terms and conditions of the crew employed on the ship. It also provides each crew member's seafarer's employment contract (SEA), which states the details of the seafarer, the employer, the vessel, and the CBA terms and conditions that apply to that particular crew member.

By 1952, 50 FOC vessels were covered by union agreements. By 2022, there were 11,862 live agreements, of which 10,953 are on FOC flagged vessels. The five flags with the most vessels covered by ITF agreements were Panama, Marshall Islands, Liberia, Malta and the Bahamas.

ITF inspectors

In 1971, the ITF inspectorate was established to monitor compliance with ITF agreements, and the first inspectors were appointed – in Australia, Finland, Great Britain, Italy and the USA.

By 2022, a network of 125 ITF inspectors and contacts in more than 104 ports in 55 countries was policing these agreements. The make-up of the inspectorate remains largely male, reflecting employment in the maritime industry. Currently there are 10 inspectors under the age of 35, and 18 women.

Every year, ITF inspectors and affiliated unions recover millions of dollars in owed wages and in compensation for death or injury on behalf of seafarers who have nowhere else to turn.



In the past 10 years (which include the Covid pandemic, when inspections were severely restricted):

ITF inspectors have carried out **102,407** inspections of vessels.

ITF inspectors have won owed wages for seafarers totalling over **USD 450 million (USD 450,957,104)**

ITF Standard Collective Agreement is adopted

ITF TCC Agreement is adopted

International Bargaining Forum established

7 new flags are declared as FOC

1971

1980

1984

2003

2006

2021

ITF Inspectorate is established with inspectors appointed in Australia, Finland, Italy, Great Britain and USA

Isle of Man International Ship Register established

Port of Convenience (POC) campaign established



Seven years in slavery, thanks to FOC system

Ten years after joining the Al Maha as engineer, Abdul Naser Saleh is still stuck on board – and he has not been paid since 2015. **Mohamed Arrachedi**, ITF FOC network coordinator (Arab World and Iran), says the seafarer continues to suffer while those who should resolve his situation fail to act

This is a clear case of modern slavery: Saleh has been tricked and cajoled by the shipowner into remaining at his post, while other crew members have come and gone. Saleh, a Syrian national, has family both in Egypt and Sudan but has been unable to support them, forcing them to rely on friends and build up debt. Only once has he been able to visit his children.

“I have asked for my pay but received only threats,” Saleh told me in a message on 19 September 2022. “The original owner died and when his son took over, he agreed to pay the sum of USD140,000 in back wages. He even signed a document. But the pay never arrived.”

The ITF is doing all it can. We have written to the current owners, Abalkhail Marine Navigation, the flag state, Tanzania, and the Saudi Arabian maritime authorities, to demand that Saleh be paid what he is owed, and repatriated. By the end of December 2022, the only

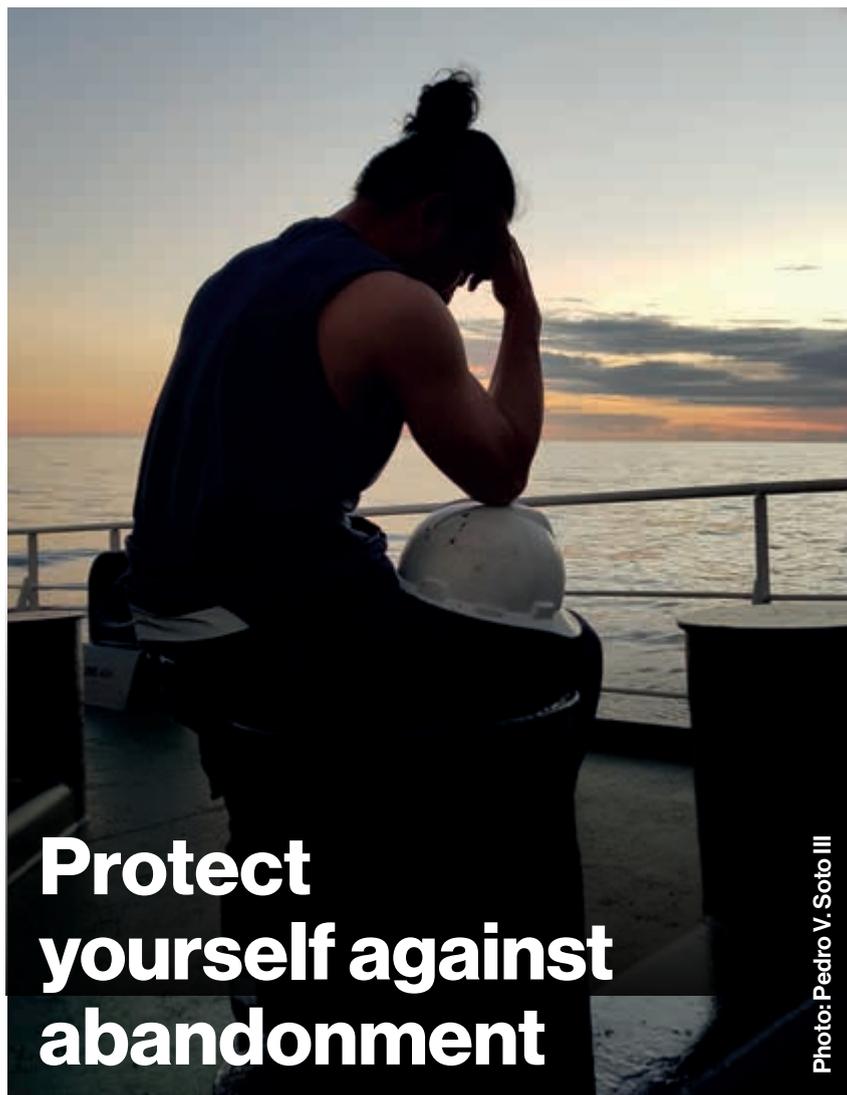
responses are that the Saudi PSC has inspected the ship, and the Tanzanian authorities have said they are looking into the case. The owner has not responded at all.

The ITF is also demanding the payment of the wages owed to four other Syrian seafarers on board, who have not been paid since they joined in July 2022. Two other crew members have been transferred, unpaid, to another vessel and three others have been repatriated. Other Sudanese former crew members are believed to be taking legal action against the owner.

Saleh is still working on board the Al Maha, currently at the port of Jeddah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sadly for Saleh, Tanzania is one of the worst FOC registries. Following port authority inspections, in November 2022, 11 ships registered in Tanzania are banned from ports in Europe and along the North America Atlantic coast because of deficiencies. And there have been 15 cases of abandonment of Tanzania-flagged vessels in the past three years.

A country should not operate an open registry unless it has the capacity to enforce basic labour rules on the ships it registers. A case like Saleh’s would never have happened were it not for the FOC system. ■



Protect yourself against abandonment

Photo: Pedro V. Soto III

Soaring numbers of abandonments mean seafarers must do all they can to protect themselves, warns ITF inspectorate coordinator **Steve Trowsdale**

The number of abandonments is on the rise, with a particularly big increase during the Covid pandemic. In 2018, there were 34 cases of abandonment reported. In 2022, there were 118, of which the ITF reported 113. Across these 113 cases, the total owed wages was over USD9.9 million, and ITF inspectors assisted more than 1,300 seafarers on board.

According to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), abandonment occurs when the shipowner:

- fails to cover the cost of the seafarer's repatriation; or
- has left the seafarer without the necessary maintenance and support; or
- has otherwise unilaterally severed their ties with the seafarer, including failure to pay contractual wages for a period of at least two months.

All the cases handled by ITF inspectors were the result of seafarers getting in touch with us to ask for help. We have no power to help you if you do not contact us in the first place.

Help yourself by following these four basic steps.

1. Try to avoid the risk in the first place. Before signing 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.)

2. 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 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.

3. Act swiftly. If you think you are in danger of abandonment, DO NOT WAIT. If your shipowner does 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 collective bargaining agreement (CBA), as well as reasonable expenses (eg repatriation, accommodation, essential supplies, medical care) from the moment of abandonment to when you get home.

4. Speak out. If the owner or insurer don't help, don't let fear of the employer stop you from acting. Reach out to the ITF – you can speak to us completely confidentially.

Contact us by email at abandonment@itf.org.uk. ■

Four abandoned crews home but still owed wages

Seafarers' bulletin describes how the ITF is assisting with the recovery of wages owed to the Pakistani crews of four Panama-flagged tankers abandoned by owner St James Shipping



Two of the ships were abandoned in India – the Aeon (with 21 seafarers on board) in Mumbai and the Sol (with 20 seafarers) in Hazira. The Lua (with 22 crew on board) was abandoned in Las Calderas, Dominican Republic, and the Ariana (with 23 crew) in Al Mocha, Yemen.

While attempts were made by the mortgagees to repossess the ships, the plight of the distressed seafarers who had not been paid for months was exacerbated by a lack of food, fresh water, and fuel. On 22 July 2022 the captains of the Sol and Aeon warned that their vessels were in danger of losing power from failing generators, exhausted fuel supplies and a lack of essential spare parts.

Since becoming involved with this case in early July 2022, ITF consultant John Wood has been engaged in a complex and frustrating chain of correspondence with owner St James Shipping, mortgagees Entrust and their lawyers, the American Club, crewing agent Global Radiance Ship Management, charterers, cargo receivers, and others.

Wood advised the captains of the Sol and Aeon not to participate in any commercial operations until the crews were paid and provisioned. When an Indian court ordered the Sol to discharge its cargo of fuel and the master refused, lawyers representing cargo receivers Oleo Energy issued him with a contempt order threatening him and the crew with imprisonment if they failed to comply with the court order.

In August 2022, Wood reached an agreement with Entrust and their London lawyers for the payment and repatriation of the Aeon, Sol, and Lua crews – but Entrust failed to honour that agreement. The American Club had withdrawn its P&I cover for the St James fleet but was still required under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) to provide certain cover for the abandoned seafarers. While the club eventually repatriated the Lua crew and paid them the four months' wages required by the MLC, it failed to do the same for the crews of the other three vessels.

The Sol and the Aeon have now been sold through Indian courts and the crews have been repatriated. The ITF has appointed lawyers to represent both crews in claiming their owed wages from the sale proceeds, which have been paid into the courts.

The ITF has also appointed lawyers to arrest the Lua and claim the crew's outstanding wages (those in excess of the four months paid by the American Club).

The crew of the Ariana were eventually paid up to and including 26 July by St James but were not disembarked from the ship to be repatriated until 31 July 2022 and did not arrive home in Karachi until 5 August. The ITF is pursuing a total of USD21,033,33 in wages still owed to this crew. ■

ITF inspector Andrey Chernov (middle) with the seafarers from the Viva Trinity



Stuck in Klaipeda port? Contact local ITF Inspector for advice

Two seafarers declared medically unfit for work remained stuck on board for one month while an issue with the State Border Guard Service in the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda was resolved. **Andrey Chernov**, the local ITF inspector, has advice for any non-EU crew facing similar difficulties in the port

The Panama-flagged Viva Trinity was anchored outside Klaipeda from 15 September to 20 November 2022. Two Russian ABs became unwell – one with high blood pressure, the other with knee pain – and

were twice taken to hospital. Both times, the seafarers were declared unfit for work and told to continue medical treatment in their home country.

As non-Schengen country residents, the men needed a transit travel visa. However, the border authority refused to issue the visas until the vessel was in port, and claimed the cases were not particularly dangerous.

It was not clear if or when the Viva Trinity would berth at Klaipeda, due to issues with the charterer party agreement. The shipowner offered to pay the costs of a border control officer to escort the seafarers to the Russian border 85 km away, but this was rejected.

The Lithuanian Seafarers' Union requested clarification from both the head of border control and the government's migration department but we have received no reply. The shipowner asked the Russian Embassy in Lithuania to act through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. Finally, with our joint efforts, the two men were repatriated on 15 November 2022.

I have a clear message for seafarers from non-EU countries: if you are in Klaipeda Port and have been refused a transit visa by the local border authorities, please contact me. The authorities must refer to particular legal provisions and, when I get involved and ask for these details, the office usually issues the visa.

Contact details for all ITF inspectors are in the pullout section of the *Seafarers' bulletin*. ■

Crew abandoned for five months in Greece

After a five-month battle with an uncooperative vessel owner and port authority, an abandoned crew was finally repatriated. **Luka Simic**, ITF inspector in Croatia, shares this account

The crew of the Panama-flagged Mirjana K supply ship was abandoned when the vessel was at anchor at Piraeus, Greece in May 2022. Because the beneficial owner, crew manager and the crew were from Croatia, I handled the case, working very closely with the

Panhellenic Seamen's Federation, the Seafarers' Union of Croatia, ITF inspector Costas Halas and the ITF's legal team.

The crew were mentally and emotionally exhausted by their ordeal – the owner's false promises to book their flights, their struggle to survive on board and their desperation to return home to their families. My colleagues and I made sure that they were regularly supplied with fresh water and food, and I negotiated with the P&I club to pay their wages in full until the day of their repatriation.

The owner, Alveus Capital, and the Port State Control (PSC) in Piraeus were uncooperative throughout. Panama's minimum safe manning (MSM) required nine

Abandoned crews fight for their rights

Two cases handled by ITF Japan coordinator **Fusao Otori** clearly illustrate how abandoned seafarers still struggle to get their rights to owed wages and repatriation, as set out by the MLC

The Vietnamese crew of **Duyen Hai 1** had been on board for 14 months when they contacted the ITF in January 2022.

The contracts of the 18 seafarers had long expired, and one crew member needed medical treatment. The crew had endured a shortage of food and fuel since the vessel was arrested in Labuan Port by the Malaysian court on 24 December 2020, in a lawsuit from the ship's charterers.

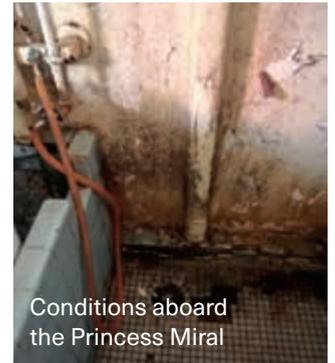
The ITF contacted flag state Panama and the P&I insurer in Korea on 14 January. The insurer said that COVID-19 made it impossible to repatriate and replace the crew until the court judgment, which was due in January 2022, as Vietnam had closed its borders and there were no medical staff to take care of the crew. Requests to get the crew vaccinated were rejected by the Malaysian authorities.

This meant the seafarers had to wait for their replacements until the ship returned to Vietnam on 30 April 2022 after the court case was settled. By this time, they'd been on board for 17 months.

Fifteen Syrian crew members had to be rescued by the Indian Coast Guard on 21 June 2022 when the **Princess Miral** ran aground off New Mangalore, India because seawater

crew members to be on board the vessel. Because one seafarer had to be repatriated following a stroke, when a second became ill and required surgery and repatriation, too, the Piraeus authority would not allow him to go home because it would leave only seven crew.

I contacted the Panamanian maritime administration, who agreed to issue a new MSM requirement of three crew members. Still the PSC would not act – until the Croatian embassy stepped in. The seafarer was repatriated, but the PSC refused to allow any other repatriations, even when two further seafarers were declared medically unfit for duty, arguing that the ship would not be safe with a crew of three. It insisted that a new crew needed to replace the current one. The situation was intolerable.



Conditions aboard the Princess Miral

had leaked into the cargo hold during rough weather. The traumatised men were taken to a detention centre.

The ITF had already been dealing with the crew because, since joining the ship the previous March, the seafarers had only received one month's pay (for April), and were enduring miserable conditions on board, including filthy toilets, bath and shower.

Responding to the seafarers' requests to be paid their outstanding two months' salaries and be repatriated, the management company in Turkey demanded that they accept just one month's salary before any repatriation arrangements would be made.

In July, we reported the case to the Belize flag state and the P&I insurance company, and we informed the Indian PSC. The P&I refused to be involved, claiming the case did not meet abandonment criteria and that the shipowner was in close contact with the crew and preparing their flights. Worried about their families living without money but eager to return home, the men eventually agreed to accept just one month's pay and were repatriated on 3 September 2022. The ITF is pursuing their outstanding four months' salaries. ■

The relief when a new crew finally arrived in Piraeus at the end of September was short-lived. The port authority and the police refused to let them board because the vessel's Safety Equipment Certificate, necessary for navigation, had expired. It was understandable that the PSC detained the Mirjana K. But there was no excuse for the port police and PSC to prevent crew change and repatriation.

In desperation, I turned to the secretariat of the Paris MoU on Port State Control and, with their help, we were finally able to resolve the case. The seven crew members were repatriated on 8 October 2022, after a crew change. ■



ITF inspector Jeff Engels working on the case, and ITF inspector Ryan Brazeau with the Tai Honesty crew

ITF thanks US Coast Guard for ‘remarkable’ repatriation assistance

The US Coast Guard doesn't normally assist with seafarer repatriations because the US has not yet ratified the MLC. But in the case of the Tai Honesty, the agency in Portland, Oregon collaborated closely with the ITF to get 12 exhausted Chinese seafarers home. **Jeff Engels**, ITF West Coast USA coordinator, says this assistance was both remarkable and pivotal

Before the Tai Honesty arrived at Longview Port in early May 2022, the US Coast Guard was alerted to the concerns of 12 crew members about their length of time on board.

Coast Guard inspectors boarded the Panama-flagged vessel and found it to be unseaworthy – but not because of any technical problem or engine trouble. Instead, they found 12 exhausted and homesick Chinese crew members who had been stuck on board for more than 14 months. They judged their condition as presenting “a clearly hazardous condition to the safety of the ship and the waterway”.

The US has only ratified five ILO Conventions regarding seafarers' rights. In the Tai Honesty case, the PSC had utilised the US Ports and Waterways Act,

put in place to comply with ILO C147. This was the first time in my 19 years on the job that the Act was invoked to repatriate an over-contract crew. It attracted news coverage in the US media and maritime publications because of the possible ramifications in US waters.

I tried without success to negotiate with a representative of the owner, Taiwan-based Tai Shing Maritime, to secure flights home to China. On 6 May, I boarded the vessel, along with Ryan Brazeau, who had just joined the ITF inspectorate and was being trained by me. We found that the workers were four months past the 10-month maximum duty time specified in their labour agreement and they wanted to go home.

The PSC informed the US Department of Labor and I filed a complaint with the Panama flag state. The Coast Guard ordered the Tai Honesty to stay moored near the port until the seafarers could be replaced. Only then did the owner agree to bring in the new crew.

The 12 seafarers flew to Tanzania on May 14, where they were quarantined for coronavirus before returning home to China. We asked the owner to provide pay, as well as room and board, while the crew was in Tanzania – the seafarers confirmed that they had been receiving pay there. ■



Captain Kumar home after 18-month ordeal

A relieved Captain Santosh Kumar is finally home after being held in Dubai for 18 months, reports ITF senior legal assistant **Jonathan Warring**

The Indian national and his entire crew were questioned after an explosion as a container was being loaded onto their ship, the Cormoros-flagged Ocean Trader, at Jebel Ali Port in July 2021. In November that year, the other 13 seafarers were allowed to go home but the police continued to detain Kumar. The crew was abandoned at the time of the explosion and have not been paid since March 2021.

The crew vigorously denied responsibility for the explosion but the police charged Kumar and four crew members of 'causing a fire by mistake to others' properties'. In August 2022, the Dubai Court of First Instance found them guilty. Each man was fined UAE dirham (AED) 100,000 (USD27,225) and sentenced

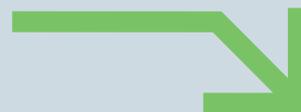
to one month's imprisonment, suspended for three years. Management company Inzo Shipping, owner Shas Shipping Ltd, and three other companies were each fined AED100,000.

Determined to clear his name, Kumar chose to appeal the judgement. However, the appeal hearing kept being postponed and was eventually declined by the courts. Undeterred, a further appeal has been lodged with the Court of Cassation. In order to return home, Kumar had to pay the fine imposed by the UAE court. The only way he could do this was to sell his house. He hopes that the money will be returned if his appeal is successful.

Following arrangements made by the ITF, Kumar finally arrived in India on 14 January 2023. There, he awaits the outcome of the final criminal appeal.

Cases lodged to claim the unpaid wages of Kumar and the rest of the crew are also underway. We hope that soon justice will be granted by the quashing of criminal charges and the payment of all the wages owed.

The ITF has supported Kumar throughout his ordeal and has funded his accommodation, legal representation and legal fees. ■



“We hope that justice will soon be granted by the quashing of criminal charges and the payment of all the wages owed.”

MTWTU continues to support its members and their families

Ukraine union keeps supporting seafarers during war

As the war in Ukraine continues, **Oleg Grigoryuk**, chairman of the Marine Transport Workers' Trade Union of Ukraine (MTWTU), generously spared the time in December 2022 to provide *Seafarers' bulletin* with an insight into what the situation is like for seafarers and his union



How are Ukrainian seafarers being affected?

For months, Ukrainian seafarers were unable to cross the border to board their vessels. That changed with the Cabinet of Ministers Decree 992 on 7 September 2022, which allowed seafarers and cadets to leave the country if they had jobs at sea. While that decree is in place in the regions of Odesa and Mykolaiv, where most seafarers live, it isn't working properly because our military leaders are following national laws on mobilisation. The laws in Ukraine take precedence over decrees of Cabinet of Ministers.

Nevertheless, many Ukrainian crew members have already found temporary shelter outside the country and are continuing to work at sea, supporting their families and friends at home.

What's it like for Ukrainian seafarers working at sea?

It's very hard for seafarers away from home and knowing how their country is suffering. But they are strong and professional, so they manage to keep up their morale by focusing on their work. They continue to be an important part of the workforce in world shipping. Those working for decent shipping companies have access to the internet, so they can keep fully aware of all the developments of our resistance.

How is the union managing to operate?

My union has never stopped working, despite all the complications we face – such as absence of a normal electricity supply, internet connection problems, and the constant air raids. We continue to assist thousands of our members through the provision of welfare programmes and financial, social and humanitarian support. And we keep on fighting for the protection of our workers' labour rights.

We are of course also providing financial support for the families of many of our members, alongside education initiatives and joint projects with fraternal unions and others.

How do you feel, as the MTWTU chairman?

I always feel great pride in our country's seafarers and in how the union supports them. But now I feel even more responsible for the future of the MTWTU and its members. Everyone in the union feels as I do, that we are determined to do everything possible to continue our fruitful work to benefit our members and their families.

Having support from the global union movement, we serve as an example of the positive mindset and hope! ■

Covid still affecting signing off and shore leave

Helene Netland, ITF seafarers and inland navigation section assistant, reports on the difficulties still faced by seafarers

Many seafarers on six- and nine-month contracts are frequently required to extend their contracts, sometimes two or three times, despite the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) statement that a seafarer cannot be on board for longer than 11 months.

The situation seems to be easing, however. The Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator (published monthly to provide reliable crew change crisis data) shows that the number of over-contract seafarers on board vessels fell from 4.2 percent to 3.3 percent from July to October 2022. The number of seafarers working on board for more than 11 months has remained at 0.3 percent since May 2022, down from 1.3 percent in August 2021. In October 2021, the number of seafarers working over-contract was 7.9 percent.

The ITF has recorded more than 300 cases since October 2021 of seafarers having difficulties with signing off after completing contracts, despite timely requests for repatriation. One AB said, “I’m at the end of contract but company ignoring sign off. Completed resignation form, no reply”.

Companies cite reasons such as tickets are too expensive, flights are unavailable, immigration officers don’t permit crew changes, and crew change has been cancelled due to drydock in China. The war in Ukraine has also been a factor.

The MLC states that seafarers have the right to shore leave. Yet some seafarers have not been ashore for seven months, and others have stayed on board longer without shore leave. The ITF recorded 70 cases between June and October 2022 where shore leave was denied, usually because of company policy. Other reasons included: foreign crew were not allowed shore leave; shore leave was only for emergency and medical reasons; COVID-19 and risk of infection; crew did not have visas; and the next port was China or Japan.



Photo: June D. Famur Jr



“I’m at the end of contract but company ignoring sign off. Completed resignation form, no reply.”

The uncertainty of not knowing when you can go home, having repatriation cancelled at the last minute, and not getting time off, is badly affecting seafarers’ health. They report suffering fatigue, exhaustion and stress; being depressed and unable to sleep; being unable to focus on the job; and worrying about their families. One chief officer says he “no longer has the strength to work. I worry about crew, cargo and the ship since I can no longer fulfil my obligations at a proper level”.

The ITF is continuously pressing on shipowners the importance of allowing crew to take shore leave and have access to port-based welfare facilities. We have also asked the International Labour Organization to remind flag and port states of their responsibilities to facilitate this right under the MLC. ■

Training on stress management gets off to flying start

Depression and anxiety affect many seafarers because of the unique nature of their jobs. The ITF has developed an innovative training programme to help them manage stress.

Dr Syed Asif Altaf, ITF global wellbeing programme coordinator, tells us more

Being away from family for a long time, shift work, disrupted sleep and rest schedules, difficulties in balancing work and personal life, sometimes risky work environments – these can often cause stress and other psychological issues.

A report of a study of seafarers – commissioned by the ITF and published in 2019 by Yale University – found that 25 percent were showing symptoms of depression, 17 percent had anxiety, and that one in five (20 percent) seafarers had experienced suicidal thoughts.

The huge levels of uncertainty experienced by seafarers during the Covid pandemic and the crew change crisis has led to an epidemic of mental health issues.

Seafarers can find it hard to get the help they need because they often face stigma, lack of understanding, and difficulty in accessing mental health care.



“Although I may have had quite a bit of knowledge regarding depression and anxiety and how to handle it, I now feel much more empowered in being able to tackle and help others as well as myself.”

Ruth A J Theriot, director of port health, Houston, USA

In response, the ITF has developed a programme that trains first responders or peer educators – those who routinely interact with seafarers – to raise awareness and establish a network with their co-workers. The aim is to provide a safe space for seafarers to talk about their mental health and to seek individual support.

The programme ensures that trainees understand their roles and responsibilities, and that they learn both how to provide mental wellbeing ‘first aid’ and to identify when they should refer a case to a mental health professional. The training also teaches the trainees how to look after their own wellbeing.

The training has taken place in nine countries – Bangladesh, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Panama and the USA – and will be rolled out to many more. By the end of December 2022, 300 people had been trained, with participants including union officials, ITF inspectors, seafarer welfare organisations and port state officials. The response has been very positive. ■



“Our officers were not well equipped to face the challenges when hundreds of phone calls started ringing. These were not for wages rises but for seafarers’ mental stress, due to delays in repatriation, the Covid threat onboard...and being unable to attend the last rituals of family members who died, because of closed international borders. The training helped us a lot.”

Manoj Yadav, general secretary, Forward Seamen’s Union of India (FSUI)



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

You can check ITF maritime affiliated unions on <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/look-up>

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

Use the app to:

- Find contact details for the nearest ITF inspector, ITF FOC coordinator or ITF maritime affiliated union.
- Look up a ship and check whether the vessel is covered by an ITF agreement on 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.



Available on



How to contact the ITF Seafarers' Support team

SMS/WhatsApp/Viber

+44 7523515097

Email 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

Getting hired

Crewing agents

The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 says that private crewing agencies must be regulated. It prohibits: the charging of fees to seafarers for finding positions on board; the making of illegal deductions from wages; and the practice of 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, in most jurisdictions, be considered legally binding. 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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Helping seafarers around the world



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Sam Levens	Inspector	USA	San Francisco	+1 415 490 8956	levens_sam@itf.org.uk
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Adan Suarez	Inspector	Uruguay	Montevideo	+598 99 569 656	suarez_adan@itf.org.uk

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Lucien Razafindraibe	FOC Network Coordinator	Africa			razafindraibe_lucien@itf.org.uk
Vacant	FOC Network Coordinator	Latin America & the Caribbean			seafsupport@itf.org.uk

What an ITF inspector can do

ITF inspectors are union officials who are engaged in working on the objectives and issues relating to the ITF Flags of Convenience (FOC) campaign. (Read more about this on pages 5-9 of *Seafarers' bulletin*.)

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 they police ITF agreements on board to ensure compliance.

The first ITF inspector was appointed in 1971 and today there is a network of 125 inspectors and contacts 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/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 with 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

There are international guidelines to ensure seafarers are treated fairly if their ship is involved in a maritime accident – 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

More information is available at www.itfseafarers.org/your_legal_rights.cfm

Outsmart the job 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 and 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, and 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 for advice on recruitment, scams and rogue agents. Read more on page 23 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 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 to find everything you need to know to avoid being scammed.



Passionate about trade unionism

The granddaughter of 'one of Liberia's uncompromising warriors', **Jackie N W Doe** is national president of the Dockers' Union of Liberia (DOWUL). She takes us through her journey and tells *Seafarers' bulletin* what drives her

What brought you into maritime?

I volunteered as a daily casual worker at the Freeport of Monrovia, the largest of Liberia's four ports, between 2004-2005, and was later employed in the sanitation department, until I was dismissed for advocating workers' rights. I was elected as a shop steward in the DOWUL in June 2005, and my passion for trade unionism grew.

What union roles have you held?

I became the union's women's coordinator, then the national women's chair in the Liberia Labor Congress (LLC). I was elected DOWUL's acting secretary general in 2012 and its first national president in 2018. In 2021, I was elected LLC national vice president. I am also the Africa region chair on the ITF's dockers committee, which enables me to advocate for maritime workers' rights internationally.

Have you experienced gender discrimination?

Yes, many times. As a woman, you have to be very bold to talk publicly about issues affecting women workers and trade unionists. During our strike action against APM Terminals (APMT), I was the only woman of five trade unionists jailed, and it was one of the happiest days of my life. You have to take the fear from inside you. Women need to make their voices heard and stand up for their rights and for their country, working positively alongside men.

What are you most proud of?

I am proud of my DOWUL journey and of being able to bring about change – such as winning better pay and conditions for the warehouse restackers and workers at the National Port Authority. I have made a difference through organising women to stand up for their rights.

But my proudest achievement is successfully organising the workers at APMT and negotiating the first-ever collective bargaining agreement there. This came seven months after winning a long, hard fight between the union and the government. In September 2020, the DOWUL was suspended, and a month later APMT suspended 24 workers. All my ITF training and knowledge drove me on as we pursued the case. By the help of God, the ITF and all the trade unions around the world who sent their solidarity, we won. In April 2021, the Ministry of Labour ordered the immediate reinstatement of the workers and the end of the union's suspension.

What challenges lie ahead?

In Liberia, we need to build capacity to train workers so that they understand the importance of the union in their workplaces. And we need to think outside the box to attract more young men and women into union membership. ■

Unions see significant gains in securing cabotage policies

Chris Given, chair of the ITF Cabotage Task Force, highlights how global union efforts to secure cabotage policies are seeing significant gains

Cabotage restricts foreign activity in a country's coastal trade, in order to protect local shipping industries, ensure the retention of skilled maritime workers, preserve maritime knowledge and technology, and promote safety and national security.

The task force that I chair was set up to drive implementation of the ITF national cabotage policy and support ITF-affiliated unions to promote and defend cabotage in their countries.

In countries like the USA and Canada, where cabotage laws have long been established and are a key component of domestic and international shipping

policy, unions continue to successfully defend against attacks on cabotage from underhanded corporate interests pushing for a race to the bottom.

Unions in countries such as Norway, Australia and New Zealand are leading the fight to secure new shipping and labour policies that are directly tied to cabotage. These policy gains have been made through advocacy work which demonstrates that cabotage laws have a positive impact in a variety of ways. They create and support domestic jobs, secure strategic fleet capacity, facilitate training and education opportunities for seafarers, and provide decent wages and working conditions for all mariners engaged in these sectors.

The task force also supports affiliates who are looking to sustain or secure new policies that promote the principle of reserving a nation's domestic maritime commerce for its own citizens.

Governments around the world are considering how to create more resilient supply chains, following the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. The task force is developing campaigns to remind them of the important and strategic value that domestic shipping policies must have in these plans. ■

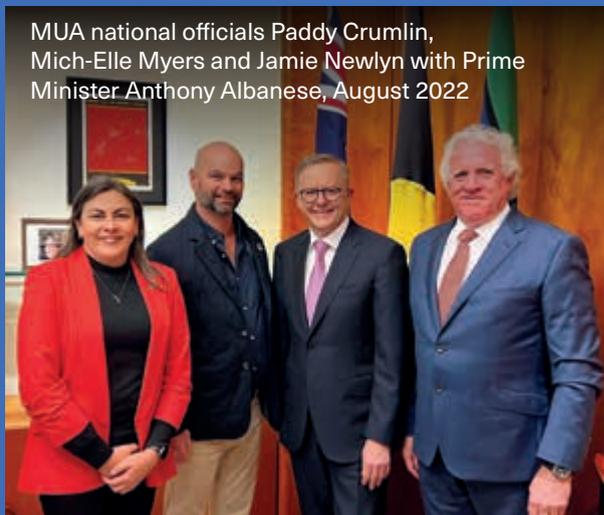
MUA on task force to establish Australian strategic fleet

The Maritime Union of Australia has welcomed government moves to establish a Strategic Fleet Task Force to ensure that the nation has ongoing access to essential imports, such as fuel, in the event of a national disaster or international conflict.

MUA president Paddy Crumlin will represent the union and Australian seafarers on the task force, which will bring together industry, union, defence and government representatives to discuss the make-up, size and operation of the strategic fleet.

During talks with prime minister Anthony Albanese, MUA officials raised the need for vocational training places to ensure an adequate labour supply for an expanded fleet of Australian flagged and crewed vessels. They also argued for reform of the Australian Jobs Act to ensure requirements for Australian labour in major projects, such as federally-funded offshore wind projects.

MUA national officials Paddy Crumlin, Mich-Elle Myers and Jamie Newlyn with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, August 2022



The bushfire crisis in 2019/20 and the Coronavirus pandemic highlighted the lack of an Australian fleet to transport supplies and provide security and economic sovereignty. ■

Foreign seafarers robbed of millions a year in Australia

International seafarers on foreign-owned vessels operating in the Australian coastal trade are being robbed each year in unpaid wages, claims a new report. **Ian Bray**, ITF inspector and Australia coordinator, tells us more



A huge part of our job as inspectors is winning unpaid wages for foreign seafarers. But as we only have four inspectors covering the whole of Australia, it seemed likely that our limited inspections recovered just a small amount of the total money owed. We commissioned research to get a clearer picture.

We were shocked to learn that AUD65 million (USD44 million) of wages is stolen from foreign seafarers every year in Australia.

ITF inspectors in Australia carry out between 450 and 500 inspections annually, out of a total of 6,000 vessels that visit the country each year.

Between 2018 and 2021, we conducted 1,824 inspections and recovered a total of almost AUD13.5 million (over USD9.1 million) – an average of AUD513 (USD349) per worker. (These results are averaged out across all our inspections, including ships with no problems.) This is a lot of money for seafarers from poor countries, whose families depend on their income.

The Australian authorities also recovered some wages when inspecting specific problems. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) recovered AUD405,000 (USD275,000) in 2020, and AUD175,000 (USD119,000) in 2021. And the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered a total of just under AUD1.6 million (almost USD1 million) over the three periods 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21.

In Australia, the MLC standards that protect seafarers from exploitation are intended to be enhanced by domestic rules, to close the gap between the labour standards applying to foreign-registered ships and those considered socially acceptable in Australia. However, temporary licenses (TL) introduced in 2009 exempt the first two 'good will' voyages from domestic standards, and a ship is only deemed to be engaged in coastal trading when it is loaded with cargo.

The report identified that wage theft occurs in three ways.

- AMSA may not be adequately enforcing seafarer employment agreement provisions, as it tends to respond only to complaints lodged by the ITF.
- After the two 'good will' voyages, shipping companies often do not apply the required wage and entitlement obligations.
- Ships often leave Australian waters before enforcement action is completed.

Since a 2014 Federal Court decision to allow greater use of temporary licenses, the use of foreign ships with non-national crew has soared – from 25 percent in 2014 to just under 60 percent in 2019.

The ITF is developing proposals for legislative and regulatory changes to close these loopholes, and for considerable improvements in how Australia inspects and enforces its responsibilities under the MLC. ■



Felix Roondina Impas Jr on board and with ITF inspector Arvin Peralta



ITF demands manning agency ban over illegal fees

A Philippines-based recruitment agency that unlawfully charged seafarers placement fees had its licence suspended after its illegal practices were highlighted, reports inspector **Arvin Peralta** from Manila, who dealt with the cases

Global Marine and Offshore Resources Inc, based in Manila, was red listed on the ITFShipBeSure.org directory of manning agents in late July 2022 – a warning to seafarers that they should avoid seeking employment through that agency.

The ITF had provided incontrovertible evidence to the Filipino Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), which regulates the country's manning agency system, that four seafarers were illegally charged placement fees, placed with different employers on different ships to those described in their contracts, and some were owed more than two months' pay.

The DMW suspended Global Marine's license, but reinstated it shortly afterwards. The ITF hopes that its evidence will lead to a permanent ban on the agency. But the ITF also demanded that the DMW takes a tougher line with corrupt agents, to protect seafarers from unscrupulous employers.

Three of the seafarers – Ricardo Dagami Aya-ay, Cesar Abes Jurilla and Toni Dawn Domanais de Guzman – had contacted me on 28 June to report poor working and living conditions on board and non-payment of wages.

A fourth, Felix Roondina Impas Jr, approached me soon afterwards. Global Marine had placed him on a small support vessel, where he became ill. Global Marine disputed his claim that his condition was work-related and refused to give him sick pay or money for his medical treatment. ITF-affiliated union AMOSUP helped him with a legal application for sickness allowance, reimbursement of medical costs and unpaid wages. While his claim is considered by the National Labor Relation Commission, Felix is back on board and the ITF Seafarers' Trust has granted financial assistance to his family.



“Seafarers should avoid an agency that charges a placement fee. They break the law like this because they don’t expect to be paid by the shipowner. That should be a red flag – you may not be paid either.”

Each of the four seafarers testified that immediately prior to their employment in March and April 2022, they had visited Global Marine’s offices in Manila and were asked by fleet manager Gilbert Torrecer for a placement fee of between USD600 and USD1,000, which they paid. This is prohibited under the MLC, which has been ratified by the Philippines and forms part of the country’s laws.

As ITF inspectorate coordinator Steve Trowsdale warned, “Seafarers should avoid an agency that charges a placement fee. They break the law like this because they don’t expect to be paid by the shipowner. That should be a red flag – you may not be paid either.”

The ITF helped the four men get back to the Philippines in early July and persuaded Global Marine to refund the placement fees. Global Marine reached a settlement for unpaid wages with Aya-ay in July but the other three are still pursuing their claims for more than two months’ pay.

Unscrupulous manning agencies make a mockery of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) contracts, rules and regulations which ensure that the rights of migrant workers are protected while working overseas. They arrogantly believe that they can avoid sanctions by using intimidation, money and connections to deceive and take advantage of Filipino crew. ■

Looking for a job? Visit ShipBeSure first

Before you even start looking for a job, check out the ITF’s ShipBeSure website - www.itfshipbesure.org/.

It will guide you right through the recruitment process. And it may even save you from being scammed.

ShipBeSure was set up by the ITF to identify rogue manning agents and red list them – so that seafarers do not fall victim to them.

It is packed with important information and advice and is easy to navigate:

- **Getting started** – guidance on what to do before you board to what you should look for if you use a manning agent. It sets out your rights under the Maritime Labour Convention. It lists cruise operators and their contact details and recommends that job seekers go directly to the operators.
- **Find a manning agent** – find an officially registered manning agent from India, Indonesia, Myanmar or the Philippines and see its ITF rating. Reputable agents are on the green list. You are advised to avoid agents on the red list – such as Global Marine.
- **Scams and fake jobs** – how to identify the signs of a scam and how to spot a cruise ship Facebook scam. The Scam Alerts page provides a way to check for scams, fake companies and websites.
- **Look up a ship, inspector or union** – find out more about a ship you may be considering joining, or identify the nearest ITF inspector or affiliated union who may be able to offer help.
- **Report an agent or scam** – tell the ITF if you identify a scam or fake website so the ITF can investigate and keep ShipBeSure as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible.

For advice about an offer you’re not sure of – or to report a scam – contact the ITF at jobscam@itf.org.uk.

REMEMBER THE GOLDEN RULE – if the job looks too good to be true, it almost certainly is.



Seafarers at heart of transition to zero-carbon shipping

Warnings that some 800,000 seafarers will need extra training by the mid-2030s have led to the publication of a 10-point action plan for building a more sustainable shipping industry. **Fabrizio Barcellona**, ITF seafarers and inland navigation section coordinator, explains what delivering a just transition means for seafarers

Shipping currently accounts for three percent of global carbon emissions. It needs to transition from conventional fuels towards alternative low- and zero-carbon fuels and technologies to meet the world's target of keeping global warming to 1.5C or less by 2050.

To shape the industry's response to this challenge, seafarers' unions, shipowners and UN bodies formed the Maritime Just Transition Task Force at COP26. The task force commissioned new research and drew on these findings to develop the action plan, published at COP27 in November 2022.

The research, by leading maritime consultancy DNV, found that some 800,000 seafarers will need additional training by the mid-2030s in the move to zero-carbon shipping. But it warned that training is being hindered by a lack of certainty on alternative fuel options.

At the launch of the plan, ITF general secretary Stephen Cotton said, "The good news is that seafarers are prepared and willing to be part of this transition. But crew want to know that the fuels they're handling are indeed safe, and that we as an industry have the training

pathways established to upgrade their skills. Seafarers and other maritime workers are already feeling the effects of an unstable climate — dry unnavigable rivers, soaring ocean surface temperatures, shutdown ports with heatwaves and flash floods."

The ITF played a leading role in ensuring that the action plan puts seafarers and communities at the heart of the transition to zero-carbon shipping. This means ensuring the safety and health of the maritime workforce and the protection of livelihoods. It will require:

- consideration of reskilling, upskilling and new green skills to retain a high-skill seafarer workforce in a way that leaves no seafarer behind;
- harnessing opportunities for decent work across the zero-emission vessel and zero-carbon fuel supply chain; and
- recognising that the maritime workforce needs to promote diversity and gender parity, to represent the society it serves.

Equally important factors – such as how the transition is paid for, who benefits, and how supply chains are considered – will involve looking at zero-carbon fuel production and handling; port infrastructure; zero-emission vessel production and recycling; and reskilling port workers. ■

You can find out more about the task force, or read the DNV report, at <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/think-labs/just-transition/about>

New MLC amendments bring additional protection for seafarers

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted new provisions to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) to reinforce the protection of seafarers' rights following the Covid pandemic. **Beatriz Vacotto**, head of the maritime unit in the ILO's international labour standards department, explains

The ILO highly values the role of seafarers in keeping the world's goods moving. This year, eight important amendments to the MLC were adopted to give you additional protections. They should enter into force on 23 December 2024.

1. Manning agencies. The MLC currently requires that recruitment agencies have a system of protection in place, like insurance, so that you can get your wages and entitlements if something goes wrong with the agency, or your shipowner fails to pay. This amendment means that these agencies must inform seafarers, before or while engaging you, about your rights regarding this protection.

2. Abandonment. Flag states, port states and labour supplying states will be obliged to cooperate to facilitate the prompt repatriation of abandoned seafarers, and to safeguard the rights of those who replace them on board. This means that under no circumstances should abandoned seafarers be replaced by new abandoned seafarers. The ILO and IMO will soon adopt guidelines for port and flag state authorities on how to deal with seafarer abandonment cases in an expeditious way.

3. Access to medical assistance. This amendment reinforces governments' obligation to ensure the prompt disembarkation of seafarers in need of immediate medical care from ships in their territory, and access to medical facilities ashore for appropriate

treatment. The MLC now defines 'in need of immediate medical care' to include, among others, severe pain which cannot be managed on board, suicide risk, and cases when the tele-medical advisory service recommends treatment ashore. The amendment is also intended to facilitate the repatriation of the body or ashes of seafarers who have died on board.



Photo: Jan Pau I. Guinoo

4. Internet connection. The right to 'social connectivity' has explicitly been added to the MLC. This means shipowners should, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide seafarers on board their ships with internet access, with any charges being reasonable in amount. And Member States that have ratified the MLC should provide internet access in their ports.

Three other amendments underscore the obligation to have free, suitable quality drinking water available for seafarers, and highlight the importance of balanced meals on board; say seafarers must have appropriately-sized personal protective equipment; and allow for the name of the registered owner, if different from the shipowner, on financial security certificates.

Finally, there is also a new obligation to adequately investigate all deaths of seafarers at sea, record them and report them annually to the ILO to be published in a global register.

Download the free app of MLC Frequently Asked Questions at: <https://faqmlc.ilo.org/>

UK unions drive Europe-wide fight against ferry social dumping

The shocking mass sacking of P&O employees in March 2022 was a stark reminder of why UK unions are seeking to put an end to social dumping by ferry companies. **Steve Yandell**, ITF seafarers and inland navigation section assistant coordinator, explains



There was public outrage at the news that P&O Ferries had illegally sacked 786 seafarers in the UK. On 17 March 2022, the workers learnt of their dismissals via a pre-recorded Zoom call, with just 30 minutes' notice. The company had not carried out its statutory duties to consult its workforce.

P&O Ferries is owned by global ports giant DP World, which had reported record-breaking profit for the first half of 2022 of USD721 million, up 52 percent year-on-year. Yet the ferry company sacked its employees so that it could bring in cheaper agency workers.

There were also serious safety concerns about the move – for example, inspectors from the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) listed an unprecedented 31 separate violations on one of the detained P&O Ferries ships, with problems ranging from fire safety to lifeboat drills.

Despite the brazen admission by P&O Ferries chief executive officer Peter Hebblethwaite to UK Parliamentarians that he had failed to honour the UK's legal redundancy requirements, by the end of 2022 there have been no government sanctions against the company.

ITF affiliated unions and the UK government have now started discussions on a minimum standards framework agreement to apply to all ferries operating out of UK ports. The unions argued for a legally-binding legislation but it looks as though the government will try to introduce it as a voluntary agreement, policed by the unions and employers. The Bill will continue its passage through Parliament in early 2023, so unions will continue to press for changes to be made.

To strengthen efforts to end social dumping, the ITF and its European arm, the ETF, formed a joint Fair Ferries Taskforce, in a bid to ensure that their policies, and those of national governments, apply to seafarers working on board ferries in European waters.

French unions affiliated to the ETF have lobbied the French government. In response, France has expressed support for the introduction of minimum standards on ferries operating between the UK and France. Meanwhile, UK unions affiliated to the ITF will be stepping up their campaign against social dumping on ferries in 2023. ■

Global network of ITF inspectors serves world's seafarers

The ITF's inspectors are there to support seafarers in need. *Seafarers' bulletin* introduces the 10 newest members of the team, profiles the Africa and Arab World teams, and provides an update on the ITF's regional networks of union contacts

Meet the newest inspectors



Rodrigo Pinto Aguero
(Valparaiso, Chile – Federacion de Tripulantes de la Marina Mercante de Chile, FETRICH, and Sindicato Interempresas Profesional de Oficiales de la Marina Mercante de Chile, SIPROMAM)

I entered the Chilean Naval School in 1982 and became a midshipman in 1987. I achieved my pilot sufficiency certificate in 1993 and have since gained a degree in Naval and Maritime Sciences, and diplomas in both foreign affairs and human resources. A SIPROMAM member since 1998, I was elected president in 2006.



Hakimah Saiful Bahri
(Port Klang, Malaysia - National Union of Seafarers of Peninsular Malaysia)

I have 13 years of experience as a chief officer and senior dynamic positioning officer. I have served in both international and multinational shipping and oil and gas companies. I will be based in Port Klang but will cover other ports in Malaysia.



Joshua Bobic
(Los Angeles, USA – ILWU/IBU)

I've been in the maritime industry for over 20 years and with my union for 17 years, including as a shop steward and a safety committee member. I joined the ITF to fight for seafarer's rights and living conditions. I look forward to working with my brothers and sisters on the FOC campaign.



Brian Gallagher
(Brisbane, Australia – Maritime Union of Australia)

I am a fourth-generation seafarer. In 43 years, I have worked in every maritime section, including tankers, tugs, offshore, salvage, dredging, roll-on/roll-off, seismic, and lighthouse vessels. I am a proud financial member of the mighty MUA and have often relieved as an official in the union office..



Leo Hwang
(Incheon, Korea – Korean Federation of Port and Transport Workers' Unions)

I have been working for the KFPTWU as policy director for 12 years. I'm very proud to become a member of the ITF inspectorate team and excited to work with every inspector and coordinator all over the world.



Jim McVeigh
(Dublin, Ireland – SIPTU)

I am a former industrial organiser with Ireland's biggest general trade union, SIPTU. Before joining the ITF inspectorate, I was responsible for organising dockers in several Irish ports for 10 years, and bring a wealth of experience as a trade union official.



Goodlife Okoro
(Lagos, Nigeria – Maritime Workers' Union of Nigeria)

I have a HND in business administration and a degree in peace and conflict resolution. I have worked as a seafarer, and have held several posts in the MWUN, including district chair and zonal vice-president. My academic and industry experience will help me fulfil the demanding role as ITF inspector.



Adan Suarez
(Montevideo, Uruguay - UTT)

I sailed more than 30 years as a bosun, then worked full time in my union. Since 2019 I have been an ITF contact. My sailing career experience involved drafting agreements, resolving claims and seafarer repatriations. As ITF inspector, I will fight for social justice and the rights of seafarers.



Nino Torrevillas
(Cebu, Philippines - Associated Philippine Seafarers Union)

I graduated in law, specialised in my union's legal and public relations as administration director, and am a university maritime professor. As the son of a transport worker, I witnessed labour struggles. As ITF inspector, I will continue to give voice to unheard and oppressed workers in the fight for better seas.

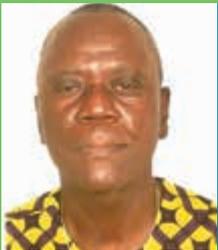


Kim Youngin
(Busan, Korea – Federation of Korean Seafarers' Unions)

My experience as a ship officer for the last seven years has given me opportunities to work for seafarers' interests and benefits. Sometimes I felt that seafarers were treated as a cogwheel which can be easily replaced. They should be treated well and I welcome this new role to serve seafarers.

Meet the Africa and Arab World inspectorate teams

As we see a rise in the number of seafarers requesting assistance in the Africa region, so the ITF has continued to strengthen its network of inspectors there. In 2022 we appointed our new inspector in Nigeria and in 2023 we will appoint our first ever inspector in Senegal. These appointments, coupled with our inspectors in Ghana, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire, and in Morocco and Algeria in the Arab World, show the importance the ITF places on both regions.



Joachim Djedje (Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire – Syndicat des Marins Ivoiriens au Commerce)

As a former deck officer, I joined the trade union world in the early 1990s. My position as secretary general of the Seafarers' Union was very useful. It has brought me closer to the maritime and port actors and users, and even to the ITF. I have held several positions in the ITF, including national coordinator, and chair of the African seafarers' committee.



Catherine Haizel (Tema, Ghana – Ghana Merchant Navy Officers' Association, GMNOA)

I am a former senior lecturer in the Nautical Studies department at the Regional Maritime University, and I continue to work there work part-time. I have been a member of the GMNOA since I was a cadet in the mid-70s, and I joined its executive committee in 2005. I have a MSc in Maritime Affairs from the World Maritime University in Sweden. I have been the ITF inspector in the ports of Tema and Takoradi since 2019.



Rachik Hamid (Casablanca, Morocco – Union of Moroccan Workers, UMT)

I sailed for 12 years on board container ships, bulk carriers and refrigerated ships, and reached the rank of second captain. I was also operations manager at the CMA-CGM terminal in Casablanca. I have been an active member of the UMT since 1991 and became an ITF inspector in 2019. I am based in Casablanca but as the only ITF inspector in Morocco I cover all ports, working with dockers and seafarers.



Hassen Mellis (Algiers, Algeria – FNTT/UGTA)

I was a seafarer for 27 years and my final position was as chief officer on an Algerian LNG carrier. I was appointed as an ITF inspector in 2019 and am proud to be part of the ITF family. I am determined to help seafarers in difficulties and to ensure that shipowners respect national and international labour standards.



Betty Mutugi (Mombasa, Kenya – Dock Workers Union)

I was a dock worker for 22 years at Mombasa port and was elected as a member of the DWU executive board. I was later elected as chair of the women's committee in the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU-K). I then volunteered for two years with the ITF office in Mombasa, before becoming a full-time inspector in 2013. My passion is assisting seafarers. I have learned a lot from ITF London and my fellow inspectors.



Goodlife Okoro (Lagos, Nigeria – Maritime Workers' Union of Nigeria) (See opposite page.)

ITF networks assist you where there are no inspectors

The ITF's FOC network operates to assist seafarers in countries and ports where there are no ITF inspectors. It consists of contacts, who ensure that shipowners are complying with their obligations to provide decent pay and onboard working and living conditions. The contacts do this on a voluntary basis and are nominated by ITF-affiliated unions and based in their offices.



Latin America/Caribbean

The network continues to provide a vital lifeline for seafarers in countries where the ITF does not have any inspectors. In 2022, a number of our contacts took part in the ITF dockers regional conference, and in 2023 we will be looking to expand the network, particularly in the Caribbean.

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

Steve Trowsdale (London)

Email: seafsupport@itf.org.uk

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



Arab World and Iran

We faced a challenging 2022, as the number of abandonments in our region continued to rise. Some were particularly notorious cases of modern slavery and severe breaches of human rights – such as the Jeddah Palace (Al Maha), where a seafarer has been on board for over 10 years. We also dealt with a growing number of cases of seafarers being criminalised, unpaid wages, denial of medical assistance, and denial of repatriations.

Our team worked tirelessly throughout the region, with special mentions to those in Iran, UAE, Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In many cases, seafarers only came to us after being unpaid for months. The earlier we get the complaint, the better we are able to help.

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

Mohamed Arrachedi (Spain)

Email: arrachedi_mohamed@itf.org.uk

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



Africa

The network in West Africa has continued to expand, with the addition of Sierra Leone. In 2023 we will be looking to add more countries from across the Africa region to strengthen the network and ensure that seafarers have someone to turn to whenever they need assistance.

Contact the FOC network coordinator (Africa):

Lucien Razafindraibe (Kenya)

Email: 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

Our contacts provided concrete support and assistance to seafarers in their local country and strengthened the existing regional network.

Although crew change restrictions in most Asia Pacific countries were relaxed, the situation in China, which has kept very strict restrictions, remained a major challenge. We received a number of cases from foreign seafarers who were stuck in a shipyard in China and not allowed to leave their vessel, were over contract in the port without any signing-off arrangement, or were not allowed to receive proper onshore medical treatment.

As there are no ITF inspectors or contacts in mainland China, our network did its best for these seafarers. We liaised with local authorities, relevant embassies, port agents and shipowners; and we coordinated crew change in the next port after China, so that seafarers could sign off with the assistance of the ITF inspector or contact there.

Contact the FOC network coordinator (Asia Pacific):

Sandra Bernal (Australia)

Email: bernal_sandra@itf.org.uk

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

How to be a male ally against workplace gender discrimination

Men who witness gender discrimination at work are being encouraged to act in positive ways, thanks to an innovative bystander initiative that many unions are beginning to adopt. **Kim Rojas Powell**, a specialist from the ITF's programme on ending violence against women transport workers, tells us more

The 'Be More Than a Bystander' initiative began in a province of Canada, with a partnership between the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVABC) and the BC Lions football team in 2015. It involved training male leaders to educate schools, colleges, workplaces and professional sports leagues, and to promote the programme widely through social media. It is now being implemented in schools and workplaces across the world.

In the traditionally overwhelmingly male waterfront of British Columbia, the ILWU dock workers' union (which is affiliated to the ITF) has embraced it wholeheartedly. The union has already trained over 6,000 of its workers and is passionate about the impact it is having on behaviour and cultural change – both in workplaces and in the communities its workers represent.

The programme is based on the understanding that only a minority of men commit violence and abuse, and that most people wish to live and work peacefully and respectfully. But when harmful behaviour is left unchallenged, it has a negative impact on the wider workplace culture.

It aims to create safer and more respectful and inclusive workplaces, using the model of male allies. It advocates that violence against women isn't a problem which women need to solve, promoting instead the power of men speaking to men and boys about the importance of creating healthy relationships and saying no to violence against women.

The programme tackles workplace culture that has long tolerated bullying and harassment, and challenges entrenched behaviours. It does this by stimulating tough



conversations, through the use of videos showing workplace scenarios, and by showing the importance of intervening early before hostile attitudes and beliefs escalate into verbal and physical expression.

It teaches individuals how they can intervene:

- non-verbally, such as simply refusing to join in an offensive conversation or to take part in sexist behaviour
- verbally, such as talking directly to the person being targeted, speaking out to the perpetrator, or encouraging others to show their disapproval

Watch docker and ILWU Canada member Cam Sture reveal powerful truths about what needed to change in his workplace – https://fb.watch/cmj5q0WaO_/.

Discrimination, bullying and violence against women is rife in workplaces and in unions themselves. The ITF is exploring how it might use the bystander training to help its own teams and its affiliated unions bring about change. ■



Help for Ukrainian cadets

Katie Higginbottom, head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust, introduces a programme that is enabling 50 Ukrainian cadets to complete their maritime studies while war ravages their country

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and subsequent martial law, prevented Ukrainian seafarers from joining vessels. This had a dramatic effect on the crewing of ships, and cadets in maritime educational institutions were unable to get the seagoing experience they needed to complete their courses and obtain working diplomas.

Despite its premises being occupied, Kherson State Maritime Academy managed to maintain a form of distance learning. But more needed to be done to help the cadets. The Marine Transport Workers' Trade Union of Ukraine (MTWTU) and the ITF Seafarers' Trust came up with the idea of the project – to give Kherson State Maritime cadets from the occupied and hostile territories a chance to study at the Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LMA) in Klaipeda.

Since the start of September 2022, the cadets are able to combine lectures and practical classes at two educational institutions at once and will obtain both Lithuanian and Ukrainian certificates of competency.

The project focuses on cadets who had completed their third year but were unable to complete their studies and get their certification. They are enrolled into the LMA and receive financial support for academic studies, accommodation and subsistence in Lithuania, and help with finding placements.

The two academies work together to ensure that the cadets receive a top-class education in a nurturing environment in Klaipeda, while keeping their connection with Kherson.

The Trust is also providing financial support for cadets in Odessa. ■



WINNER.
Home sick
by SAN KO OO

Bright future for seafarers' photo competition

Building on the phenomenal success of its last three photography competitions for seafarers, the ITF Seafarers' Trust is making it an annual event, launching on the Day of the Seafarer.

Thirty shortlisted images from Life at Sea 2022 were showcased at an exhibition and awards ceremony during Crew Connect in Manila, Philippines. The Trust is now working to share these and previous seafarers' pictures and stories with maritime museums around the world – in a bid to get wider public recognition of seafarers as the ultimate invisible workforce, keeping global supply chains moving through the most dramatic of events.

See the winning images at <https://www.seafarerstrust.org/what-we-do/photo-competition-2022>.

The Seafarers' Trust is the charitable arm of the ITF – find out more at www.seafarerstrust.org

New drive to prevent workplace injuries and deaths in ports

A review by the ITF revealed that 200 dockers and seafarers have been seriously injured and over 700 have died while working in ports over the past 20 years – and these are just the incidents that were reported. **Steve Biggs**, senior assistant in the ITF dockers section, shares plans to make ports safer to work in

These figures are simply unacceptable, and they don't even include the countless other injuries and deaths that go unreported. Nor do they include fishing or cruise related deaths.

Although the figures are higher and lower in different years over the 20-year period surveyed, there is a clear overall trend upwards: in 2000, there were 18 reported fatalities and three serious injuries, while in 2022, there were 87 fatalities and 26 serious injuries.

A key finding of the ITF review was that 71 percent of the reported deaths occurred on board ship. Most were crew but many were shoreside personnel going on board to carry out cargo handling duties. The ITF has been discussing with ICHCA International how we can work together to change this.

ICHCA International is a non-governmental organisation that brings the port and shipping industries together to improve the health, safety, and welfare of all associated workers. Its members include global terminal operators, major shipping lines, and the ITF, as well as industry regulators and insurance companies.

We identified the need for a consistent approach to vessel risk management. Currently, most ports and terminals have their own version of a vessel risk assessment, but there has been no consistent approach to identify and manage risk in work areas before operations begin. There is also little or no communication between ports that a given vessel is calling at to alert each other to any defects or hazards on board.

We have embarked on the first steps to change this. The ITF is participating in a project being led by ICHCA to develop and implement a global standard for vessel workplace inspections. It will cover all aspects of a working vessel. It will identify and control risks, and it will reduce or eliminate serious injuries and fatalities on board all types of cargo vessels.

Having an international standard will:

- level the field for all stakeholders
- ensure that information can be shared and understood
- set out common training procedures for personnel to conduct inspections
- increase efficiency of operations, through a common process of inspections
- make operations safer, with risks managed before they become accidents

We hope to further develop the inspection standard into an App or online tool for ports and terminals. ■



The study found:

- 35 percent of fishers reported experiencing regular physical violence, including racial abuse and sexual violence.
- Migrant fishers' average pay was £3.51 per hour, almost three times lower than the National Minimum Wage which all crew working as employees on UK-flagged fishing vessels are entitled to.
- 19 percent of participants reported working conditions indicative of forced labour.
- 18 percent of migrant fishers were required to work on a vessel not named in their contract, a clear violation of the terms of their transit visa.
- Most migrant fishers reported being required to work excessive hours, without adequate rest, in violation of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188), which the UK ratified in 2019.
- Migrant fishers fear deportation if they speak out, and over 60 percent of fishers (including UK nationals) said they would never report a grievance, out of fear of blacklisting.

Explosive report confirms UK exploitation of migrant fishers

A recent report confirms that migrant workers in the UK fishing industry are facing labour exploitation and human rights abuses and are too frightened to speak out, explains **Chris Williams**, ITF fisheries expert

Between June and October 2021, the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab studied working conditions for UK, EU and migrant crew across the UK fishing fleet.

The report confirms that all non-European Economic Area (EEA) fishers were brought to the UK on seafarers' transit visas and were vulnerable to exploitation because the UK's immigration policies ('the hostile environment') and maritime MLC/fisheries (C188) regulations are not joined up. The ITF had revealed in May 2022 that misuse of these visas enabled unscrupulous employers to play on migrant fishers' fears over their immigration status, to get them to work longer and harder than local crew, for less pay.

One UK fisher interviewed by the Rights Lab said: "I heard a vessel owner say. I can get 2-3 foreign crew for the price of one of you local lads."

One migrant fisher told the Rights Lab: "Because of the visa, you have to stay on that vessel. If you leave that vessel for help then maybe you can't work. You just wait with no money. Or if you ask for help they will just call the agency and say you broke your visa and you will have to pay for your travel home."

The ITF is urging the UK Government to close the loopholes which allow this abuse, end the use of seafarers' transit visas for migrant fishers, and switch to a system, like a skilled worker visa, that will give them better protections and decent working conditions.

Download *Letting exploitation off the hook? – Evidencing labour abuses in UK fishing* at [tinyurl.com/Lettingexploitationoffthehook](https://www.tinyurl.com/Lettingexploitationoffthehook).

Download *A one way ticket to labour exploitation: how transit visa loopholes are being used to exploit migrant fishers on UK fishing vessels* at <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/one-way-ticket-labour-exploitation>. ■



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