

SEAFARERS' BULLETIN



INTERNATIONAL
TRANSPORT
WORKERS'
FEDERATION

SEAFARERS KEEPING THE WORLD GOING

IN THIS ISSUE:
COVID PANDEMIC STILL HURTING SEAFARERS
SCOURGE OF ABANDONMENT

YOUR NEW EXTENDED PULLOUT GUIDE TO GETTING HELP



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The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing nearly 20 million transport workers from nearly 700 affiliates in 150 countries, including more than 910,000 seafarers. 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 130 inspectors and contacts working in ports worldwide.

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Cover photo: © Aljon Manlangit 'Papawill never give up' winner of the ITF Seafarers Trust 2021 seafarers' photo competition 'Out of Sight, not Out of Mind'



“On behalf of the ITF, I want to say a huge thank you to seafarers for your professionalism, sacrifice and hard work in keeping the world’s goods moving during another year of hardship and uncertainty caused by the Covid pandemic.”

Dear friends,

On behalf of the ITF, I want to say a huge thank you to seafarers for your professionalism, sacrifice and hard work in keeping the world’s goods moving during another year of hardship and uncertainty caused by the Covid pandemic.

And I want to thank our affiliated unions who have continued to provide solidarity, and practical and psychological support, to their members during such challenging times, when seafarers and their families are experiencing financial instability and anxiety.

Working over-contract, being denied shore leave, sometimes not getting the medical attention you need ... the *Seafarers’ bulletin* looks at what the ITF and our affiliated unions are doing to lift the effects of the pandemic on seafarers’ lives.

We’re not there yet but a big achievement has been the push for seafarer vaccinations at home and when visiting foreign ports. Local unions, ITF inspectors and seafarers’ welfare centres have helped drive this vital work on the ground.

We give a guide to what the flags of convenience system really means for seafarers. We look at some cases of abandonment, where the FOC system gets in the way of seafarers winning unpaid wages and being repatriated. And we look at some examples of how the system delays justice when seafarers are caught up in criminal investigations.

If you’re looking for a new job in maritime, read how our new, dedicated ShipBeSure website can help you every step of the recruitment journey – including how to avoid falling victim to scammers.

We’ve expanded our pullout section, to pack in more essential information and advice and to make it easier for you to use.

As the Seafarers’ bulletin goes to press, the horrific events in Ukraine are unfolding. I speak for everyone in the ITF family in saying that our thoughts are with the Ukrainian and Russian seafarers, and their families, who are caught up in these tragic events. Our hearts go out to you.

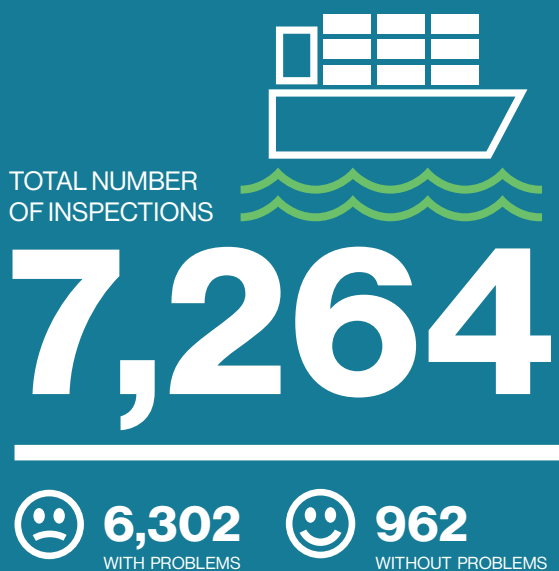
In solidarity, and in the hope of a peaceful 2022.

Stephen Cotton
ITF general secretary

The ITF FOC campaign in numbers 2021

ITF INSPECTIONS

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



TOP 5 PROBLEMS

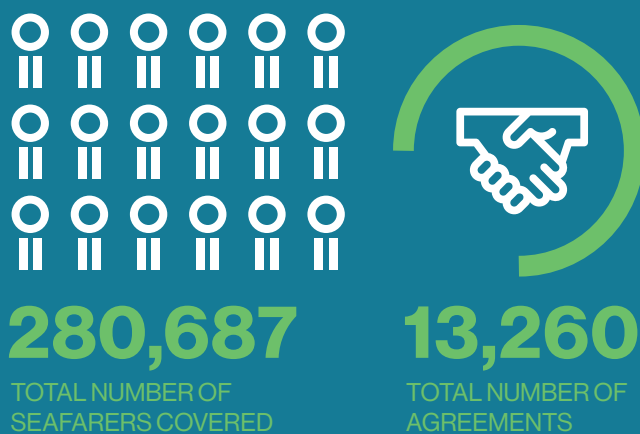
by type found during ITF inspections



TOTAL OWED WAGES RECOVERED



VESSELS AND SEAFARERS COVERED BY ITF AGREEMENTS



Seafarers still being hit hard by pandemic

Two years on from the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, seafarers' lives are still being badly affected. **Steve Yandell**, ITF assistant coordinator, seafarers and inland navigation section, explores the problems and how the ITF and its affiliated maritime unions have tried to address them

The ongoing effects of the pandemic have manifested themselves in extended time on board ships, a denial of shore leave, and heightened anxiety among seafarers and their families.

On World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2021, the ITF issued a call for the world to listen to the voices of transport workers worldwide after being in the frontline of the pandemic for 18 months.

In some cases, seafarers have had to bear an even greater strain: taking on extra work when ships have sailed with less crew, or not receiving medical or dental attention ashore because of intransigent governments.



Photo: Chan Min Thet

Stuck on board

In July 2021, an estimated 250,000 seafarers were still over contract, with travel restrictions being imposed by numerous countries. As restrictions eased, the numbers lessened, but in early 2022, thousands of seafarers are still forced to stay on board beyond the end of their contracts.

Governments and shipowners owe all seafarers who have been at sea for nine months a commitment to do whatever it takes to facilitate repatriation. Sometimes shipping companies have failed to do this, even if it only means paying a little more for a flight home or diverting to another port where fewer restrictions are in place. Others have been more proactive and have funded hotel facilities for seafarers for Covid-19 testing and quarantine.

Failure to repatriate

In the worst cases, owners have abandoned ships and crews. The ITF reported 88 of the 95 official abandonments in 2021 and there has already been a significant number at the start of 2022. *(Read more on abandonment on pages 13-15.)*

It is no surprise that flags of convenience ships feature very prominently when seafarers report abuses such as a failure to ensure repatriation. Flag states Panama, Liberia, the Marshall Islands and the EU states of Malta and Cyprus are among the consistent repeat offenders. *(Read more on FOCs on pages 30-31.)*

The failure to repatriate has also meant that thousands of other seafarers who would normally replace crew on ships have not been able to do so. The resulting lack of salary, sometimes for a very long period, has led to severe financial hardship for seafarers' families, particularly where the seafarer is the sole breadwinner. Most of the largest seafarer labour supply countries do not have adequate income protection schemes to cover this.

Changing travel restrictions

Seafarers are still facing restrictions on freedom of movement imposed because of the pandemic, and these change from country to country. In recent months, governments have changed their immigration policies or closed borders in reaction to the Omicron surge, European Union countries are applying their own restrictions, and the number of flights between Asia and Europe is still not back to normal.

In China, crew change is very difficult, with off-signing subject to local government approval and only possible in certain ports. In Indonesia, fully vaccinated crew signing-on must now undergo five days' quarantine and take two PCR tests before being allowed to join their vessel. In Japan, crew coming from the Philippines or India must isolate for 10 days before departure, undergo two PCR tests and show negative certificates.

Restrictions also apply in Latin America. In Argentina, for example, while the national government currently allows crew changes in many ports, they can't take place because

local governments are unable to provide safe corridors. In Brazil, all foreign crew, including those signing-off, must provide proof of a negative PCR test taken a minimum of 72 hours prior to departure. In addition, seafarers must keep a temperature log going back 14 days.

Throughout the pandemic, the ITF has worked with the industry to do everything it can to ensure seafarers continued freedom of movement. This has involved consistent and high-level lobbying, often alongside the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), of international institutions and of individual governments over specific national restrictions.

Getting seafarers vaccinated

“We need to see the home countries of seafarers prioritising them as key workers for vaccines. We need port States to offer vaccines to seafarers visiting their shores. We need flag States to vaccinate all seafarers on ships which fly their flags.”
Dave Heindel, ITF seafarers’ section chair

Out of more than 1.5 million seafarers serving at sea, a majority are not vaccinated. This presents procedural obstacles to crew change in many localities. In Singapore and China, for example, seafarers need to show proof of vaccination or face being blocked at the border points.

The ITF has been working with the industry to try and facilitate vaccinations for seafarers, including urging governments to support the temporary waiving of intellectual property rights for vaccines (known as the TRIPS waiver). In October 2021, over 375 trade unions, representing over 12 million transport workers from 118 countries, submitted a letter to leaders from the UK, Germany, Switzerland, and the EU Commission demanding that they end their opposition to this. *(Read more on vaccinations on pages 8-9.)*

Communications

Seafarers worried about their friends and families at home have no guarantee of being able to connect online in the way so many of us take for granted onshore. Shipowners are not required to provide internet access for their crews and many simply do not.

The ITF is seeking to change this. We are proposing an amendment to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) to make reasonable internet access a mandatory commitment. This and other amendments will be debated in May 2022 by the ILO MLC Special Tripartite Committee in Geneva. If adopted, our amendment will need to be ratified by member governments. This normally happens, so in practical terms it would become part of the MLC.



“We need to see the home countries of seafarers prioritising them as key workers for vaccines. We need port States to offer vaccines to seafarers visiting their shores. We need flag States to vaccinate all seafarers on ships which fly their flags.”

Dave Heindel, ITF seafarers’ section chair

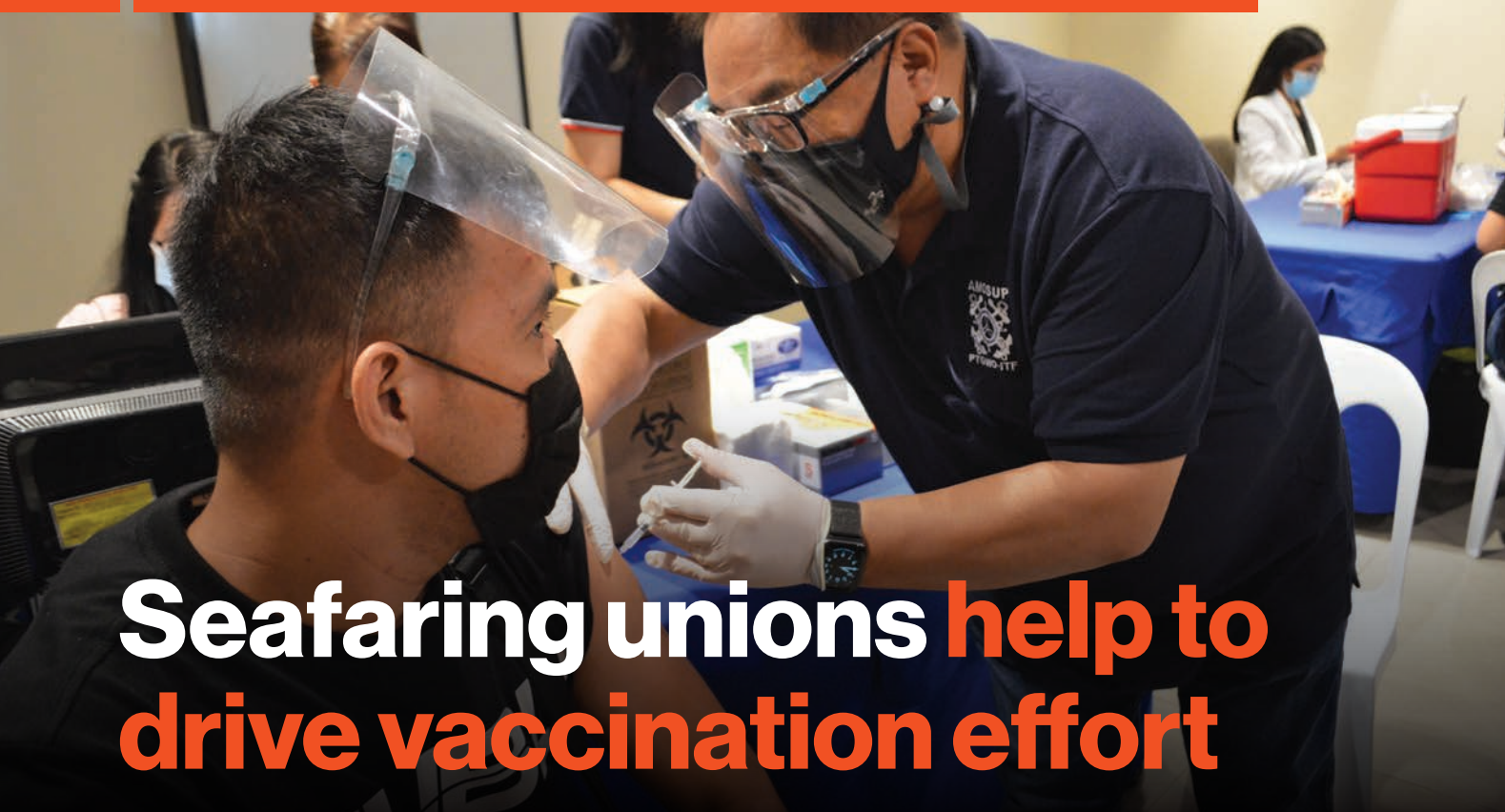
Medical assistance

Some seafarers are still facing difficulties in accessing medical care because of Covid restrictions. Take this case that recently came to the ITF’s attention, for example.

Early in January 2022, soon after the Bigroll Beaufort departed from Singapore to Sri Lanka, the crew tested positive for Covid-19. One crew member was seriously ill and needed medical assistance. The captain contacted the local authorities in Hambantota, Sri Lanka but was advised that medical care ashore was not possible, although a doctor could come aboard. Fortunately, the crew member recovered. The full circumstances of the refusal by the Sri Lankan authorities are being investigated.

In October 2021, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) issued a joint statement on medical assistance. It highlighted the ‘obligation to ensure seafarers can access medical care ashore without delay, whenever they need it, and to extend medical assistance on board should the need arise by allowing qualified doctors and dentists to visit ships’.

The ITF and the ICS are proposing an amendment to the MLC to this end, also at the Special Tripartite Committee in May.



Seafaring unions help to drive vaccination effort

Seafarers' bulletin presents a snapshot of efforts around the world to get seafarers vaccinated

From the start, unions across the world swung into action to help get seafarers vaccinated. ITF inspectors and coordinators worked with local unions and seafarer welfare charities to help roll out vaccine doses in the United States, while ITF-affiliated maritime unions pushed for their port state governments to extend vaccines to visiting crew.

In April, Nautilus called for the United Kingdom to become an international seafarer vaccination hub, while the Seafarers' International Union of Canada warned of a total shutdown of the country's shipping industry, if a plan was not developed to vaccinate seafarers rapidly. In May, Texas was the first to start vaccinating crews in ports, thanks to a partnership between the ITF, unions, the Houston International Seafarers Center (HISC) and local healthcare clinic Workplace Safety Screenings (WSS). This led to similar programmes in the US and around the world.

As seafarer vaccinations started in earnest in the United States in May 2021, the *Canola* stands out for ITF inspector Barbara Shipley (Seafarers' International Union - SIU). She took nine crew members to be vaccinated in Newport News, Virginia but the third mate had no US visa so couldn't be included. In August, when the *Canola* returned, she fulfilled her promise to help him and got him vaccinated on board.



Photo: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)



“How can you remember one like me amidst of your busy schedule? And you are doing it with lots of passion. Thank You Barbara for asking my experience... this means a lot to me.”

Canola third mate Reshal Balasubramaniyam

“On behalf of the crew of KETA, I would like to express my gratitude towards ITF/ MUA Dockers that helped us a lot to be repatriated and get the vaccine along with the new agreement for the ship. We appreciate your accomodations and assistance that you’ve provided towards the whole process.” – KETA crew

AMOSUP collaboration in the Philippines

Over 25,000 Filipino seafarers were fully vaccinated in the eight months to the end of February 2022, thanks to the partnership between ITF-affiliated union AMOSUP, the Department of Health and the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina). AMOSUP also administered 4,342 booster shots at its Seamen’s Hospitals in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Davao City. In its provincial branches AMOSUP has also vaccinated seafarers’ dependents.

“We are grateful for the outpouring of support from the government, the private sector, and our social partners... It is crucial for seafarers to stay protected against the virus and to keep their jobs onboard the world’s fleets.” AMOSUP president Dr Conrado F Oca

Free vaccinations for foreign seafarers in Croatia

Following consultation with local ITF inspectors and the Seafarers’ Union of Croatia (SUC), the Croatian government made available Johnson & Johnson vaccinations to foreign seafarers, completely free of charge. The ITF organised crew transportation to the vaccination centre and the SUC paid for it.

By the end of February 2022, more than 400 seafarers in the ports of Rijeka and Ploce had been vaccinated, some for the first time and others receiving a booster dose. Vaccinations are immediately recorded in the International Vaccination Book, which their home countries accept, and 15 days later seafarers receive an EU Digital COVID Certificate, which allows them to move freely within Europe.

Partnerships deliver vaccinations in US

Virginia: by the end of Feb 2022, around 1,600 vaccinations had been administered. At the start, inspector Barbara Shipley entered discussions with port partners about how vaccinated seafarers would help keep the supply chain moving. Working through the governor’s office, the Virginia Health Department was given permission to utilise the Virginia National Guard to vaccinate on board vessels. Eventually, Independent Maritime Consultants took over vaccination coordination and, since December, Shipley has taken the lead on it. She works with local pharmacies to vaccinate crews on board.

Houston: By the end of February 2022, some 19,700 seafarers on over 1,020 vessels were vaccinated onboard for a minimal fee, thanks to the ITF, HISC and WSS partnership. Inspector Shwe Aung (SIU) receives vaccination requests from captains and crew and ensures that they happen. The ITF gave a grant to HISC towards the costs of escorting the vaccine team to the vessels or seafarers to the clinic on shore. The grant also means that crew transport for vaccinations is free of charge.

Australia adopts Queensland vaccination model

Queensland: in September 2021, the state became the first Australian jurisdiction to administer Covid vaccines to all international seafarers arriving in local ports. The trial programme was developed by Maritime Safety Queensland, working with QLD Health. It started with high-risk vessels, ships that regularly visit Australian ports and those carrying liquid fuels and was later widened to include all visiting vessels. The programme’s success won approval by the Australian government in March, and it is expected that the model will be rolled out across the country.

Victoria: in February 2022, non-profit organisations Stella Maris and MTS began to administer vaccines free of charge on visiting vessels, including the TSL Rosemary and Mount Owen. ITF inspector Matt Purcell (Maritime Union of Australia – MUA) has used these examples to encourage the state government to coordinate the expanding vaccine programme, pointing out also that the two organisations would incur costs in providing vaccines.

New South Wales: by the end of February 2022, some 1,600 seafarers had been vaccinated between Port Kembla and Newcastle, since the 11 crew of the Inge Kosan were the first to receive the vaccine in September 2021. ITF inspector Dan Crumlin (MUA)) works closely with the state’s health maritime team, port, MTS and Stella Maris to ensure visiting seafarers get access to first and second doses, and vaccine certification. A highlight was when the 16 crew on the KETA – who had been on board more than 10 months – received the vaccine before being repatriated home to their families.

Inspector wins widow compensation

Kirill Pavlov, ITF inspector in St Petersburg, was touched to receive a handmade captain doll from a grateful widow for his “great deed” of helping her win the battle for compensation following her husband’s death.

The doll was supposed to be a surprise gift for Oksana’s husband but she never got the chance to give it to him. Instead of coming home at the end of his four-month contract, captain Rostislav was told by the owner of the Portugal-flagged Selinda that Covid restrictions made it impossible to replace him. He was asked to take the bulk carrier to the Philippines, where it was sold 15 weeks later. Immediately after handing the vessel to the new owner, Rostislav had a heart attack on board and was hospitalised.

Oksana recalls, “The husband did not complain about his health, before sailing he underwent a medical examination and no problems were revealed. But a different climate, an air conditioner broken during sailing, stuffiness, dehydration due to the heat, a protracted contract, a crazy workload due to the

sale of a bulk carrier. All that played a fatal role in what happened.”

Rostislav was sent back to Russia and admitted to hospital. However, he was quickly discharged because of a coronavirus outbreak, and died at home from a blood clot.

Under his contract, Oksana and her young child were entitled to compensation. But the insurance company didn’t want to pay out because Rostislav had died on shore a month after his contract finished. When the local representative of the P&I offered a much lower amount than Oksana was due and wanted her to sign a waiver, she refused.

“The insurer chose to stall for time,” Oksana said, “Several times they gave the wrong email address... then they stopped answering my calls and messages, most likely, they blocked my number because they were still talking to me if I called from friends’ phones.”

Losing hope, Oksana was advised by her husband’s crew to approach the ITF. We insisted that Rostislav’s health problems were triggered by the stress of working beyond the end of his contract and transferring the ship. The vessel’s national CBA with the FESMAR union in Portugal stipulated that if a seafarer died during the period of work, his beneficiary



Record wages recovery in one day

Over USD270,000 was recovered in stolen wages in a single day’s training by the ITF’s Australian inspectors in the port of Geelong, as Matt Purcell, ITF assistant coordinator in the country, reports

On 14 February, six new delegates and existing volunteers – dockworkers, port workers and seafarers – spent a day at the offices of the Maritime Union of Australia learning ITF theory with me, assisted by our long-time volunteer, Graham Archer, and David Ball, a Victoria State official.

For the practical training the next day we grouped the delegates with experienced ship visitors and carried out four inspections.

And what an amazing result – over the four vessels we identified more than USD270,000 of unpaid wages. We think this is a record.

On top of this, several repatriation plans were agreed between us, the port state and the owners, and we identified the possibility of a new build being covered with an ITF agreement with our Hong Kong affiliates.

Mark Craven, a port worker at Geelong, said: “I was really impressed with the way the ITF protects seafarers’

“Cases like this make me so angry. The company used the master like a slave to cut costs and then threw him out like garbage. It didn’t care about providing proper medical treatment or have concern for his mental health. Shipowners employ the insurers and can insist that compensation be settled quickly. Too often, they choose not to.”

Kirill Pavlov, ITF inspector

was entitled to the full salary for the month in which the death occurred, plus the base rate. We successfully pressed for this and we also won compensation for a minor. Finally, Oksana received nearly USD70,000. □

rights and how we, with little experience, were able to assist Matt and the ITF in achieving such a great result on behalf of the seafarers. Thanks to the ITF for giving us this opportunity to see how we as dockers and seafarers in Australia can assist the campaign.”

The national training programme is organised by Sandra Bernal, ITF assistant in Australia, and had been on hold since the first session in July 2021 in Melbourne because of Covid restrictions. It will now take place in Portland, Newcastle, Sydney, Tasmania, Adelaide, Queensland, Western Australia and Darwin, and be completed by the middle of this year. □



Dog brings comfort to crews

In what may be a first, a dog is bringing comfort and pleasure to crews during ship inspections. Eric White, ITF inspector in Florida, describes his and Stanley’s ship visits

My family adopted Stanley, a rescue five-year-old Siberian husky, in July 2021. In his first week with us, I walked him in the dock before putting him back in my truck while I was about to board a vessel. To my surprise, the captain called out to bring him on board.

The crew loved him and took pictures of him and he’s now a popular fixture in the port and onboard. The mainly Filipino and Eastern European visiting seafarers tell me that Stanley reminds them of home and brightens their day. One chief engineer even asked to take him for a short walk in the dock. Recently, an able seaman became very emotional when he was with Stanley as his dog at home had just died. It’s moving to see how Stanley affects people, and he enjoys every minute of it. When he’s with me, my inspections take longer – crew members are often wary around inspectors but Stanley means they flock to me.

Stanley’s a regular in the seafarers’ centres, too, and chaplains are happy to look after him if I judge that it’s not appropriate to take him on board. Witnessing the positive impact Stanley has, a few of the centres are looking at introducing some sort of comfort dog programme.

For now, though, customs officers, seafarers and other ITF inspectors tell me that Stanley and I are unique.

Landmark ruling against Russian owner of FOC vessel



For the first time, the claim of a Russian seafarer against a Russian owner of a FOC vessel was upheld. **Alexandra Zgorzhelskaya**, deputy chair of the seafarers' trade union committee of Vladivostok from the Seafarers' Union of Russia, reports on the four-year battle

Boatswain Nikolay Mikhailovich Kharchenko was injured aboard the Sierra Leone-flagged *Platon* way back in May 2018. He had an operation in a South Korean hospital, went home and continued to receive treatment in the Vladivostok polyclinic until August.

His claim for three months' sick leave and compensation, and his request for an incident report, was refused by Vladivostok-registered SK Grand Shipping, on the grounds that the company was the manager, not the shipowner, and therefore not his employer. The company claimed the beneficial employer was a foreign company, Pratis Corporation, registered in the Virgin Islands. However, Kharchenko's employment contract was signed by SK Grand and it was listed as an employer and shipowner in the shipping book.

The seafarer turned to the Seafarers' Union of Russia for help in March 2019. We recommended that he undergo a medical consultation so that, armed with a disability report, he could apply to the government's Social Insurance Fund. It was shocking to discover that SK Grand Shipping had not paid Kharchenko's insurance premiums and taxes, so the boatswain could not make a claim. In August, we enlisted the support of the transport prosecutor's office and the investigative department of transport. The transport prosecutor applied to the court with a claim to oblige the company to fulfil its legal obligations to make tax and other payments to the Russian Federation.

To back the court case, we asked the flag state to submit MLC compliance documents which showed that SK Grand Shipping acted as the shipowner and employer responsible for insurance and payment of wages, and, accordingly, payment of sick leave.

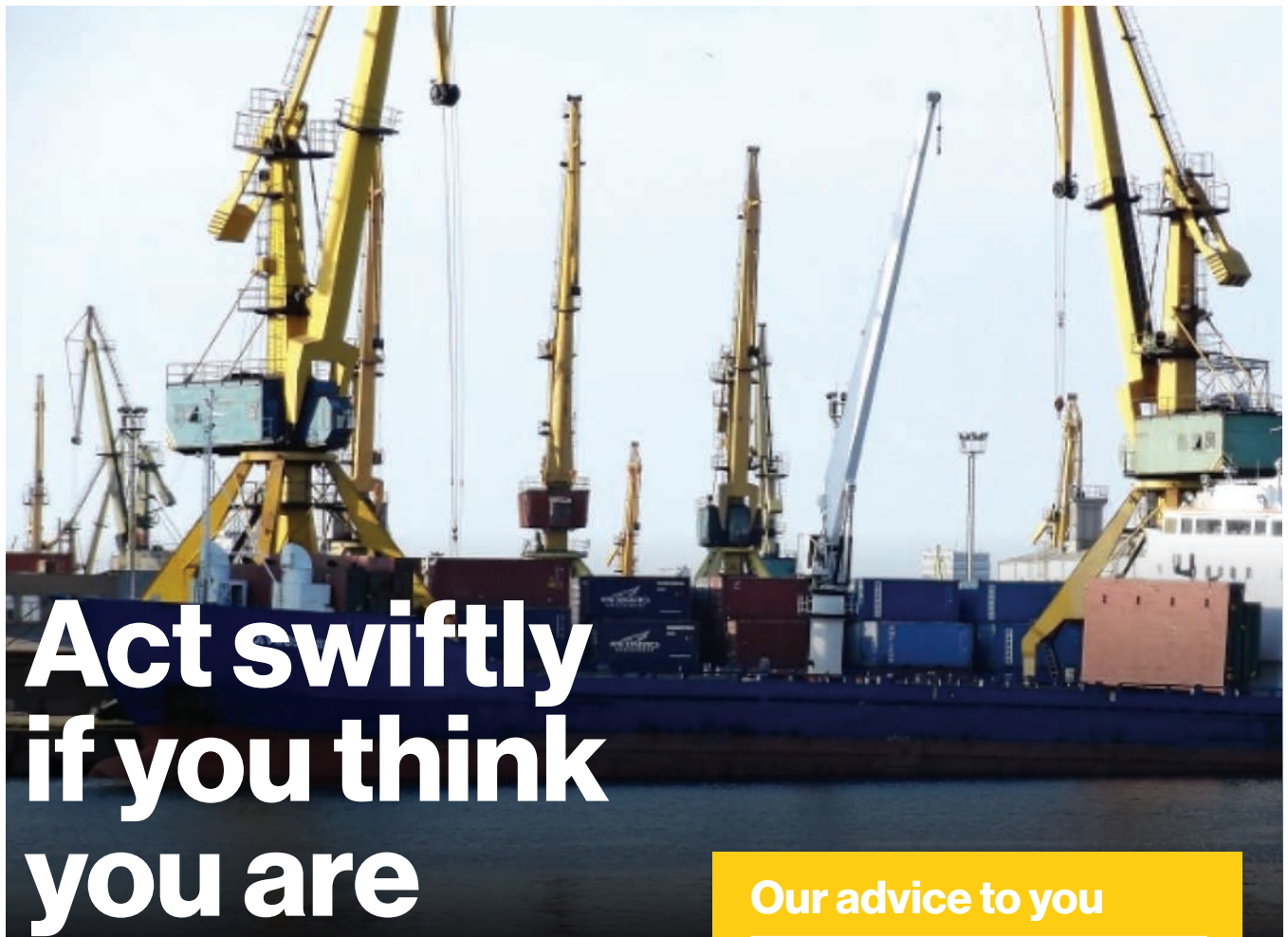
For administrative reasons, the first court hearing failed. But the appeal succeeded and on 8 October 2021, the court ruled that SK Grand Shipping must accept its responsibilities and pay its financial dues to the Russian Federation, so that Kharchenko could receive the state temporary disability allowance.

This was a landmark case. For the first time, the transport prosecutor's office supported the claim of a citizen of the Russian Federation against a Russian shipowner in relation to a FOC vessel. Until then, Russian courts claimed that they had no jurisdiction and that disputes should be regulated in accordance with the law of the flag state.

However, Kharchenko's battle for his sick leave and compensation from the company continues.

Read more about FOCs on pages 30-31.





Act swiftly if you think you are abandoned

The harrowing stories on these pages are just some of the 88 abandonment cases ITF inspectors assisted with in 2021. ITF inspectorate coordinator Steve Trowsdale advises abandoned seafarers to act swiftly and ask for help

When a shipping company goes broke with crew on board and unpaid, it can be hard for seafarers to know where to turn for help, thanks to the complicated system of flag of convenience shipping.

Shipping companies have obligations to seafarers under the MLC but may ignore them if they're in financial trouble. Flag states that have ratified the MLC have a central role in ensuring that abandoned crew are provided with provisions, unpaid entitlements and a way home but may want to turn the other way. And flag authorities asked by the ITF to encourage or compel a shipowner to pay owed wages often fail to act.

Our advice to you

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 the IMO/ILO joint database, which lists all abandoned vessels. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/seafarers/seafarersbrowse.home>

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.

Don't let fear of the employer stop you from acting. The ITF can only help you if you take the first step and ask for assistance. Contact us by email at seafsupport@itf.org.uk or visit the ITF Seafarers' Support Facebook page. And you must make your complaint and contact the insurer as soon as possible to avoid losing out financially.



Maritime courts need to do better for abandoned crew

Jason Lam, ITF inspector in Hong Kong, witnessed the deterioration in the physical health and mental wellbeing of the seafarers trapped on board the Angelic Power for 12 months, as their abandonment case dragged on through the Chinese courts

Nine Greek and 13 Filipino crew members were on board when the bulk carrier discharged its cargo at Guangzhou near Hong Kong, China in July 2020. A routine call turned into a nightmare for the crew as a financial dispute ensued between the cargo receiver and the ship's owner.

In December, the ship was arrested by a court. In February 2021 the Greek owners, Angeliki Dynamis Investment, and operators, Panthalassa Maritime Corp, abandoned the vessel and stopped paying the crew. The insurance had expired.

The court appointed a local agent and funded the supply of provisions, water and other necessities for the crew trapped on board through no fault of their

own. In April, the manning agent organised and paid for seven of the Greek seafarers to be repatriated.

Desperate by now, the Filipino seafarers appointed their own lawyers to fight their repatriation case in court. The lawyers agreed to my request that they also represent the two remaining Greek seafarers. Eventually the Chinese authorities responded. Five Chinese relievers went on board the Angelic Power to learn its operations before the existing crew was finally allowed to leave the ship and return to their families, in July 2021.

However, the story does not end there. In February 2022 the vessel had not yet been sold and the 22 seafarers were still owed their pay, which totalled USD221,000.

Instead of leaving the seafarers festering on board for months, the court should have arranged for their immediate repatriation when the case first came up. This all-too-common scenario is why the ITF is demanding that authorities act swiftly in respect of crew welfare while financial disputes progress.

Abandoned in a storm

Concerted action by the ITF, a local union and welfare services assisted eight abandoned seafarers after their terrifying rescue in a storm and finally got them home. Jason Lam, ITF Hong Kong inspector, tells the story

The Palau-flagged Lidia was travelling to Ho Chi Minh City with a crew of eight Myanmar seafarers when rough seas forced it to drop anchor near Dogsha Island, Taiwan on 6 October 2021.

Two days later the Taiwan Coast Guard repeatedly warned the master that two tropical storms were heading their way and that the island would be caught between them. He urged the vessel to leave immediately. However, the captain reported that this would be dangerous as the ship's condition was very poor and it could only sail in calm water.

As the wind picked up and the swell reached up to six metres high, the master took the decision to abandon the vessel that evening. The coastguard called the Hong Kong Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre, which safely helicoptered all the seafarers to Hong Kong. The crew was accommodated in the Penny Bay Quarantine Centre.

The Myanmar embassy in Hong Kong asked the ITF to assist the crew. The master told us that most of the crew had lost their passports, seaman's books and all their belongings during the rescue. He said that none of them had been paid since August and that they were owed a total of USD29,914.

Despite our many email enquiries about paying and repatriating the crew, the Malaysian shipowner, Prestige Marine LCC, could not be reached after 11 October. The Myanmar Consulate requested the manning agent to follow up on the repatriation.

Nothing happened until the ITF, local unions and welfare services swung into action.

I joined forces with the embassy and persuaded the manning agent to pay for the crew's repatriation. On 1 November, the Merchant Navy Officers' Guild union successfully applied to the Hong Kong Seafarer Mutual Assistance Fund to provide each seafarer with emergency funds of USD500. The Hong Kong International Seafarer Services Centre, which is funded by the ITF Seafarers' Trust, arranged their hotel accommodation and transport to the airport.

Finally, on 2 November, all eight seafarers went home to Yangon, Myanmar. Some have since received from the manning agent at least part of the wages owed to them.

Freed from dangerous, sinking prison

ITF Arab World & Iran network coordinator **Mohamed Arrachedi** shares the story of the seafarers he assisted after they were abandoned on the dangerous Haj Abdulla in Somalia

The 44-year-old bulk vessel developed cracks below the water line as it sailed a cargo of sulphur from Dubai to Tanzania. On 13 August, 2021 the Haj Abdulla called in at Mogadishu, where the 11-strong crew hoped to get the vessel checked and supplies replenished. But to their dismay, the port authorities would not allow the ship into the harbour and insisted it remained anchored off the Somali coast, considered a high piracy risk.

I was alarmed to learn that the seafarers were having to pump out water day and night to keep the vessel afloat. Food and water supplies were on the verge of running out.

One crew member told me: "We all fear for our lives stuck here at anchor. At the moment, the pumps are coping but we have no way of knowing how long the ship may stay afloat until we can get the hull inspected. It is a very frightening situation."

The ITF implored the authorities to give the ship emergency access to the port but to no avail. Our enquiries to the owners went unanswered. The ship's flag state, Sierra Leone, said it was investigating but it took no practical measures to improve the safety of the ship or to secure provisions or wages for the crew. The crew had been unpaid for between four and six months, and many had gone past the end of their contracts. They all just wanted to leave their dangerous, sinking prison and go home.

Eventually, all the seafarers received their wages up to 24 December and the last one was repatriated on 10 January 2022.



Be proud to be union. Be proud to be ITF

Seafarers' bulletin asks **Paddy Crumlin** – ITF president and dockers' section chair, and national secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia – about his passion for maritime and the proudest achievements of his long career

What brought you into maritime?

Growing up in Sydney, my merchant seafarer father was a big influence. As a youth, I travelled widely and did a variety of jobs – tuna fishing, abalone diving, making surfboards. The sea was a constant theme. I went to sea in the engine room and subsequently on deck aged 22 in 1978 to provide for my young family,

as the industry provided decent and secure work.

Why did you become a full-time union official?

At sea over 10 years, in dredging, the fledgling offshore industry, carrying iron ore in capesize bulkies and the container trade, the union basically told me it was time to give more back for its help, and appointed me

in the Sydney office. The union was very strong and carved out great conditions for seafarers in dignified, secure employment within the industry, not just with one company.

It was a time of great struggle against deregulation of national flag vessels and attacks on cabotage in favour of flag of convenience shipping gaining market share through tax avoidance, labour exploitation, poor safety and maintenance and avoiding regulatory accountability. This exploitative behaviour created a strong union identity and the intense belief that we had to defend our jobs urgently, which remains today.

Sydney was too expensive for my family to live in, so for years I only saw them at weekends. But my father and union delegates of the



“I worked to rebuild the union in the face of consistent attacks on dockworkers and cabotage by Australia’s conservative governments.”



Seamen’s Union of Australia had impressed on me that supporting yourself, your union and seafarers in general was the priority – ‘you’ve got obligations to the union comrade, to each other’.

What did becoming MUA national secretary mean to you?

I was honoured to become MUA national secretary in 2000. It was just after the landmark Patrick Stevedores dispute, a political effort to break our stevedoring workforce and the union itself in a conspiracy the courts found between the Australian government and the company.

I worked to rebuild the union in the face of consistent attacks on dockworkers and cabotage

by Australia’s conservative governments.

This experience determined our view that the international campaign for maritime and other transport workers needed revitalisation, through a strong ITF. This was critical to defend Australian and all maritime workers.

What are your proudest achievements as president of the ITF?

I was humbled to be elected president in 2010 at the Mexico City congress, where ITF general secretary Steve Cotton and I and many others set out a new vision for how the ITF would strengthen its campaigning and organising. This would involve galvanising affiliates

and growing their capacity on the ground to respond to the challenges we faced - the increasing corporate and regulatory failures of the deregulation of supply chains across maritime and intermodal sectors, particularly through so-called free trade agreements. The current crisis in those industries bears out the importance and ongoing relevancy of that decision.

I’m particularly proud of two achievements.

The Maritime Labour Convention in 2006 – the seafarers’ bill of rights – gave seafarers for the first time protection through enforceable port state international standards, wherever they were working. It was reached through long, hard negotiations between the ITF, national governments and maritime employers.

The creation of the International Bargaining Forum was a herculean achievement. It replaced informal dialogue between employers and their workforce with a formal process with the ITF and all the maritime unions, to ensure responsibilities on both sides to reach an agreement on labour rights and protections for seafarers and dockers. It’s not always easy but it brought to an industry that was largely unaccountable the basic human and labour rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, through an enforceable international legal framework.

Your message for seafarers?

You keep the world going, mostly without recognition. The abuses of your rights under Covid reinforce our determination to stand fast, together, for our basic rights. To use a boxing metaphor: the bell rings every day and we all come out swinging if that is needed. It’s the only way to gain and protect true justice and decent, safe jobs for you and your family. Be proud to be union. Be proud to be ITF.



Photo: Nomcebo Siphesihle Xulu



Photo: Christina Gkazouni, Second Officer, Greece

Violence on board a barrier to recruiting women

Recently reported incidents of assault have put into sharp focus the prevalence of violence and intimidation within the maritime industry. And, says **Lena Dyring**, ITF seafarers' section women's representative, while this is bad for all maritime workers, it is especially problematic for women and our industry's ability to attract and retain women seafarers

An ITF inspector was physically assaulted by a ship's master in an unprecedented attack in October 2021. She was just trying to do her job, investigating a vessel for failing to comply with safety regulations, and for apparent irregularities in crew pay and conditions. We have launched a review into the training and support we offer inspectors – but there needs to be a zero-tolerance approach to violence and violent attitudes right across the industry.

A cadet bravely reported on the Maritime Legal Aid & Advocacy (MLAA) website that she had been raped while serving a year at sea in 2019 on a Maersk Line

vessel. Going public prompted an independent inquiry from A P Moller-Maersk, and investigations by the Maritime Administration of the US federal Department of Transportation. Five Maersk crew have been suspended.

The cadet claimed that, of the 50 women in her year at the US Merchant Marine Academy, all reported sexual harassment, including at least five rapes, while at sea. She has become a victim's advocate and has found the number of girls reporting sexual assault "absolutely sickening".

Such appalling cases have industry-wide implications. We anticipate significant shortages of seafarer officers and ratings positions, and to attract and retain more women in seafaring roles the industry needs to promote the positive contribution that women make at sea, and ensure good quality jobs with safe workplaces.

For there to be real progress, the shipboard environment must be inclusive of women. This requires awareness training of male seafarers with their active cooperation, establishing formal support networks for women seafarers, creating confidential avenues for seafarers to raise concerns, and prompt investigations.

In 2020, women made up just 1.28 percent of the global seafaring workforce, and just 0.73 percent of officers. Most were employed in the cruise and ferry sectors, but the pandemic has caused many to move from cruising to cargo, where a female seafarer will typically be outnumbered 20:1 amongst an otherwise all-male crew. The ITF will publish its own support materials for women seafarers, including guidance on seafarers' rights to safe, healthy and violence-free workplaces.

If you have experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment or gender discrimination on board, you can contact the Safer Waves charity for information and support – www.saferwaves.org

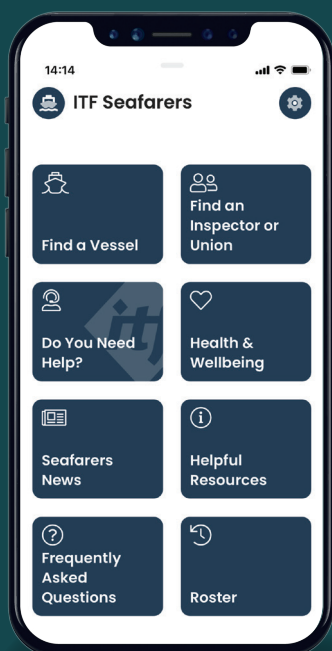


YOUR 12-PAGE PULLOUT GUIDE

WHAT'S INSIDE:
HOW TO GET HELP
CONTRACTS
CONTACT AN INSPECTOR
HOW INSPECTORS HELP
YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS
SCAMS

Photo: Van Alfred M. Villanueva

Your ITF guide to getting help



How to find a maritime 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 straight away, or if you're a union member having difficulty getting hold of your union, contact an ITF inspector – all contact details can be found in this guide.

You can check ITF-affiliated unions on www.itfseafarers.org – click the tab Find an Inspector or Union.

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

- Find contact details for the nearest ITF inspector, coordinator or union
- Look up a ship and check conditions 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 and then scan this code.

How to contact the ITF

SMS/WhatsApp/Viber
+44 7523515097

Email seafsupport@itf.org.uk

Before you contact the ITF Have the relevant information ready using the following checklist:

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?



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Available on



Getting hired

Crewing agents

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

Before you sign a contract

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



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

Use the new ITF Seafarer App for mobiles and tablets to look up a ship:

www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm

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Helping seafarers around the world



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What an ITF inspector can do

The first ITF inspector was appointed in 1971 and today there is a network of 130 inspectors and contacts working in ports worldwide.

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 FOCs on pages 30-31 of *Seafarers' bulletin*.)

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.
- Apply pressure on a shipowner to resolve shipboard problems.
- 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 backpay claims.
- Speak good English.

Many ITF Inspectors are former seafarers or dock workers. Their job is to inspect ships calling in their ports, to ensure the seafarers have decent pay, working conditions and living conditions, and to police ITF agreements on board to ensure compliance.

- 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 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 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, so 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 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 Seafarer Support team on seafsupport@itf.org.uk

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

Outsmart the job scammers

Recruitment fraud targeting seafarers is on the rise. And it's becoming more sophisticated. Seafarers need to learn how to outsmart the scammers.

How a scam works

Most scams offer jobs with high wages, 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 20 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.



Seafarers at heart of just transition to green future

Guy Platten, secretary general of the International Chamber of Shipping, shares how maritime is leading the way in transport towards a just, green transition

There are many uncertainties in the green transformation that shipping is embarking on. We do not yet know which alternative fuels or propulsion methods will win out. We do not know which shipping routes will be transformed, dependent on the green fuels available along the way. And we do not yet have clarity from governments on their support for a range of vital decarbonisation measures, from agreeing a global market-based approach to supporting the creation of a proposed USD5 billion research and development fund.

However, one thing is crystal clear: seafarers will be at the heart of shipping's decarbonisation journey.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is undertaking work across all these issues to provide much-needed clarity and to ensure that change can happen at the pace and scale needed to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

A vital part of this work sits with the Just Transition Maritime Task Force, formed during COP26. It brings together the ICS, the ITF, the UN Global Compact, the International Labour Organization and the International Maritime Organization. Tackling climate change will be a seismic transformation for our industry, and the task force has been formed to ensure that shipping can use this transformation to make fundamental changes for good.

Creating a just transition must be at the core of this. The

work of the task force is underpinned by the principle that to be just, the transition must ensure the safety and health of the maritime workforce and the protection of their livelihoods. It will consider reskilling, upskilling and new green skills, along with the updating of current curricula and training programmes.

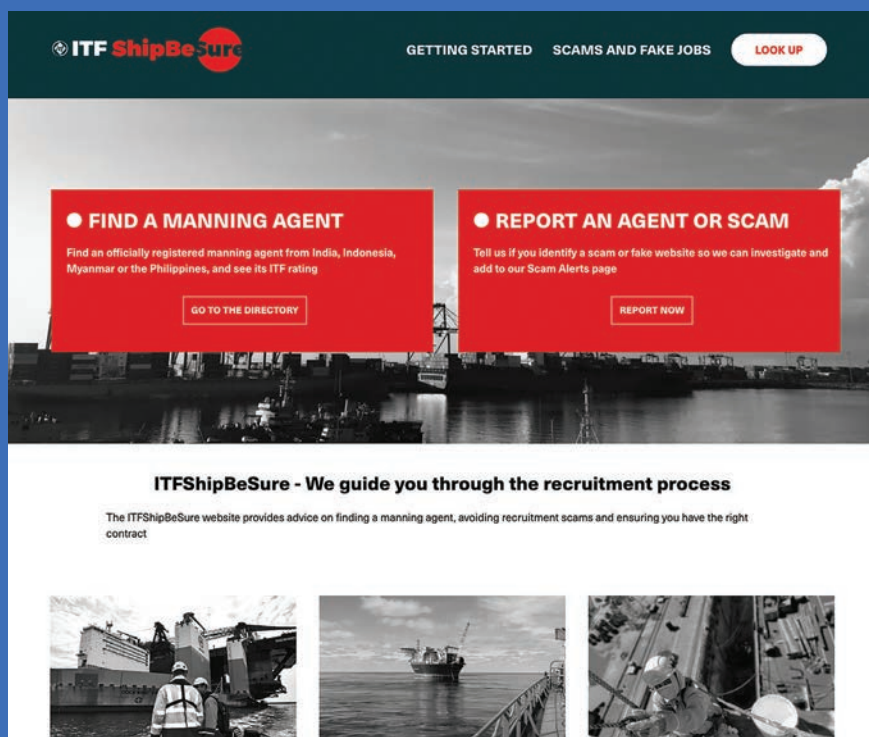
The task force will first undertake a study to determine the green skills required for the green transition. The research will seek to provide concrete numbers and facts to inform what training crews will need across the global fleet, so that they can handle the most prevalent alternative fuels and propulsion technology, including ammonia and hydrogen-based fuels, and operate zero emission vessels safely.

The task force will also make recommendations to business and governments on their role in upskilling the seafarer work force, through developing skills planning and training policy, and providing best practices and strategies.

Underpinning all the work of the task force is to ensure an equitable transition, so that developing nations are not disenfranchised. This means that skill and knowledge transfer must be shared from the global north to the global south, that Internet Protocol (IP) and access to green technology is shared, and that access to investments are provided to all, not just a limited few.

Looking for a job?

Make ITFShipBeSure your first stop to avoid scams



Before you even start looking for a job, check out this new website to guide you through the recruitment process. It may save you from being scammed, advises **Steve Trowsdale**, ITF inspectorate coordinator

ShipBeSure - <https://www.itfshipbesure.org/> - has been set up by the ITF because of the huge rise in recruitment scams and their terrible impact on seafarers who fall victim to them.

We are hearing more and more heartbreaking stories from seafarers who have been robbed of money, left jobless and feeling humiliated by criminals running recruitment scams. These scammers are smart in their greed for your money and use social media and every means they can to carry out their fraudulent activities.

We urge you to make ShipBeSure your first stop in your recruitment journey, so that you are armed as fully as possible against being scammed. And we ask you also to bring the ITF your accounts of recruitment scams so that we can make ShipBeSure as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible.



Help available on ShipBeSure

ShipBeSure is packed with important information and advice and is easy to navigate.

- **Getting started** – guides you from what to do before you board to what you should look for if you use a manning agent. It offers a guide on your rights under the Maritime Labour Convention and advises on contracts. For seafarers looking for work on a cruise ship, it lists cruise operators and their contact details and recommends that you go directly to them.
- **Find a manning agent** – find an officially registered manning agent from Bangladesh, 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.
- **Scams and fake jobs** – how to identify the signs of a scam and how to spot a cruise ship Facebook scam. The ScamAlerts 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 working on, 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 add it to its Scam Alerts page

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

Victory for Filipino seafarers as Able Maritime manning agent loses licence



Filipino seafarers will be rejoicing that Able Maritime has finally had its licence withdrawn in response to their formal complaints and pressure by the ITF. Arvin Peralta, ITF inspector in Manila, welcomes the move but says the regulator's inaction caused misery to many

This victory should send a strong warning to other rogue manning agents that exploiting seafarers will put you out of business. Seafarers have the right to decent treatment in safe working environments.

The estimated 220,000 Filipino seafarers provide a huge economic boost to their country by sending back billions of US dollars to their families and communities. But for too long they and their families were badly let down by the failure of the Philippines Overseas Employment Authority (POEA) to act against Able Maritime.

Manning agencies – the companies tasked with placing seafarers on vessels and guarding the wages, welfare and conditions of overseas-employed seafarers and ensuring families receive a proportion of a seafarer's pay – are regulated by the POEA. Yet, despite overwhelming evidence that Able Maritime had been failing many of the seafarers it placed, the POEA continued to license the company to operate as a crewing agency.

In October 2021, the ITF red-listed Able Maritime on the ITFShipBeSure.org crewing agency watchlist directory, with advice to seafarers to avoid taking employment through the company. It did this after a news story about Able Maritime's behaviour generated a flood of complaints from seafarers and their families to the ITF. Still, Able Maritime's licence stayed in place – until now.

Your Able Maritime stories

Andy Umbania Bolo was placed on the fishing vessel Qing Yuan Yu 008 on 9 September 2021 by Able Maritime Seafarers Inc. His partner was alone with her two young children and turned to the ITF in desperation when she hadn't seen him, or any of his pay, after four months. "I need money for basic items for my 10-month-old baby and my three-year-old boy."

Leslie Ann De Torres contacted the ITF in September 2021 because she had been unable to contact her husband, Jemuel Cris De Leon De Torres, for more than eight months and feared for his welfare. Publicity generated by the ITF revealed her husband to be alive, and still working on board the fishing vessel Lu Qing Yuan Yu 116. De Torres is now home after the shipowner (rather than Able Maritime) insisted on his return.

Twenty-one seafarers placed by Able Maritime with Goundar Shipping in Fiji found themselves poorly paid and facing terrible conditions. The POEA briefly suspended Able Maritime's licence when the ITF showed it had switched contract terms on the seafarers upon their arrival in Fiji but two weeks later reinstated it. It took until October 2021 to free the crew members from their situation and get them home.

Seafarers caught up in an accident investigation

Seafarers' bulletin sets out your rights and where to turn for help if you are caught up in a criminal investigation because your vessel is involved in a maritime accident or a pollution infringement – while ITF inspectors report on cases where it has gone horribly wrong

Know your rights

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 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 Seafarer Support team on seafsupport@itf.org.uk

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



If you are involved in a maritime investigation and want advice, contact the local union or ITF inspector. If there are none present where you are, email the ITF Seafarer Support team on seafsupport@itf.org.uk

Calls for pardon for innocent Flying crew

The ITF and the ITF Seafarers' Trust are ramping up efforts to get 15 innocent seafarers released from prison in Malagasay, where they have already served three years of their sentence. **Katie Higginbottom**, head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust, describes the case

The Flying was arrested by the Malagasy Coast Guard on 19 December 2018 for entering Malagasay territory without permission. All 15 crew members were arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment and each man was fined MGA10,000,000 (£1,953.88). The ship owner received a fine of MGA 2 billion (£204,081.63) and the vessel was seized by the State.

The crew were additionally charged with illegal trade in wood, though no evidence was found on the vessel. They were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Let's get Santosh Kumar home

Seven months after a container explosion aboard the Ocean Trader made headlines, the Dubai police have still not allowed the captain to return home. **Steve Trowsdale**, ITF inspectorate coordinator, describes the ITF's efforts to assist him

A container which had just been loaded on to the Ocean Trader at Jebel Ali Port in Dubai caught fire and exploded on 7 July 2021, shaking buildings up to 25km away. Thankfully, no-one was seriously injured.

A crew member spotted smoke coming from the container. He warned the captain, who instantly evacuated the ship and informed the port rescue authorities. Captain Santosh Kumar is a hero. He acted swiftly and properly, and probably saved many lives.

Police interviewed several crew members, including Kumar, as part of the investigation into the blast. The entire crew of 14 was kept in a nearby hotel until 28 November 2021, when all the seafarers except Kumar were repatriated. The authorities have given Kumar no reason for his prolonged detention nor any idea of how long he will be held. The ITF has moved him into a self-contained apartment so that he has better living conditions.

The ITF has contacted the flag state (Comoros, a FOC) and the ship's owners (Panama-registered Sash Shipping Corp), both of whom have responsibilities relating to the crew. We have also urged the Dubai police,

on humanitarian grounds, to allow the master to go home to his wife, two young children and elderly father, all of whom rely on his income to survive.

The ITF is supporting Kumar financially but he should be receiving his full salary because he remains employed until he is repatriated. In fact, none of the 14 crew has been paid properly since March 2021 and already more than USD95,000 is owed.

The crew's basic human rights have been woefully ignored and yet the flag state, shipowner and the Dubai police are all allowing the situation to continue

The nine seafarers from China, four from Bangladesh and two from Myanmar have been in prison for three years. Some began their contracts in March 2017 and have been away from their homes for more than five years.

They had been abandoned by the shipowner, operator and agency and had no one to represent or support them. Their families were left without income and the seafarers were at breaking point.

The case of the seafarers has been followed by the local ITF affiliate, SYGMMA, and a local charity, The Good

Samaritan Seamen's Mission. The ITF Seafarers' Trust has provided the Mission with funds to help buy food and clothes for the imprisoned men and assist their families. The ITF is paying for a lawyer to appeal. On 14 January 2022, the Trust wrote to Andry Rajoelina, the president of Madagascar, to urge him to 'consider the humanitarian aspects of this case [and] grant them a presidential pardon and allow them to return home to their families at the earliest opportunity'.



Unfairly detained in Mauritius

A maritime accident led to two Sri Lankan seafarers being imprisoned for 18 months and others being prevented from leaving Mauritius. It took campaigning by the ITF and others to help free them, reports ITF inspector **Ranjan Perera**

On 25 July 2020, captain Sunil Nandeshwar and chief officer Subodha Tilakaratna were on watch when the *Wakashio* was grounded off Mauritius. The crew remained onboard the stricken vessel until airlifted by the Mauritian authorities 10 days later and placed in a quarantine hotel.

On 18 August, the master and chief officer were provisionally charged with endangering safe navigation, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 60 years, and detained in prison. The lawyer engaged by the shipowner succeeded in getting the charge reduced to breach of innocent passage, with a maximum five-year sentence. Requests for bail were refused. Most of the remainder of the crew were detained under house arrest in a local hotel.

On the anniversary of their arrest, the ITF appealed to the Mauritian president, Prithvirajsing Roopun, for the men's immediate release and repatriation of all the crew.

On 15 December 2021, the formal charge against the men was reduced, with a maximum of two years in prison.

Subodha Tilakaratna decided to plead guilty, despite asserting his innocence. He told the ITF: "It was the only way I had to secure my return to... my family as soon as possible since fighting the case in Mauritian Courts could take months or even years. My legal advisor understood my mental and emotional stress and completely supported my decision."

On 27 December 2021, Tilakaratna was sentenced to 20 months' imprisonment but with remand and remission time taken into consideration, he was released the next day. He arrived home two days later. The remaining three seafarers had been allowed to repatriate on 25 December.

He said: "I still wonder how people can be made to serve sentence before having proven any case against them! And if such is the case with the best legal representation, I fear to even wonder what happens to those accused parties who do not have the means to afford legal assistance."



Photo: Johnrey Alterad

First Covid. Now the hidden pandemic: mental health

During the Covid pandemic, calls soared to the 24/7 Sahara psychological helpline run by the National Union of Seafarers India (NUSI) for seafarers and their families. **Abdulgani Serang**, NUSI general secretary, describes how NUSI has responded

We promoted the Sahara helpline extensively through social media, manning agents and shipping companies, to make seafarers aware that help was on hand. When safely possible, we re-started our face-to-face wellbeing and stress management sessions, and we also organised regular Facebook live sessions, sometimes with the ITF and the Norwegian Seafarers union (NSU).

We received a record number of calls to the helpline. In 2019, there were 679 calls. Between April and December 2020, there were 1,275. In 2021, the number rose to 1,595.

Early in the pandemic, most calls stemmed from problems caused by the crew change crisis – stress, depression and anxiety over extended contracts, delays in coming home and financial instability. In 2021, there was a growing number of calls about medical issues, such as how to get



“We received a record number of calls to the helpline. In 2019, there were 679 calls. Between April and December 2020, there were 1,275. In 2021, the number rose to 1,595.”

oxygen and medical insurance, and the effectiveness and availability of vaccines and whether they were safe, particularly for young children. From late 2021, many calls were from seafarers and family members concerning relationship issues, including separation and divorce, alcohol and drug use, and lack of sleep.

There is no doubt that the uncertainty, financial instability and helplessness caused by the pandemic have triggered a mental health pandemic that can likely outlive the virus itself, with potentially devastating results.

NUSI had to step up its practical support. With funding from the ITF Seafarers' Trust, we provided oxygen, PPE and medical help. We started NUSI Salaah (Salaah in Hindi means advice) to provide education and career guidance to seafarers' children – and have now expanded it to provide spouses with sessions on financial management, career guidance and setting up small businesses.

Physical activity is important for good mental health and wellbeing. We began a meditation and yoga programme, NUSI Swasth, in our Mumbai hostel to help with stress management, and will shortly offer live yoga sessions across our social media platforms.

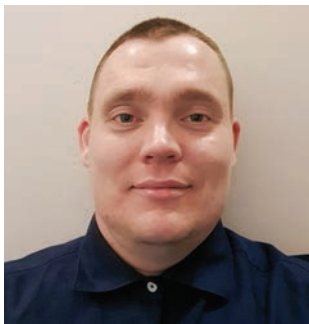
When the Covid situation allows, we will start organising health camps to focus on preventing high blood pressure, cardiac disease and diabetes, all of which are very common among Indian seafarers. We have a plan for a holistic lifestyle and wellbeing programme, with activities including healthy eating and managing weight, good sleep and using digital devices healthily. And we will re-start our HIV/AIDS awareness and education sessions.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of equipping trainees and cadets with the knowledge and skills to manage the pressure of life on board. We support the ITF's efforts to get health and wellbeing onto the curriculum of maritime academies and will start the process in India this year.

ITF inspectors here for you

The ITF's 130 inspectors are here to support seafarers in need. *Seafarers' bulletin* introduces the newest inspectors, profiles the Latin America and Caribbean team and provides an update on the ITF's regional networks of union contacts

Meet the newest inspectors



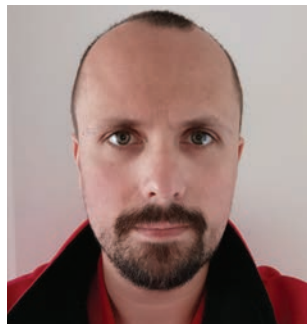
Patrick Kuronen
(Helsinki, Finland –
Finnish Seafarers' Union)

I started at sea at the beginning of the 21st century and have worked on deck and in the engine room on various types of vessels. In 2017 I was elected chief shop steward onboard Eckerö Lines Finlandia, where I worked as boatswain. Being an ITF inspector, I can stand up for seafarers at home and internationally.



Evelina Saduikyte
(Dublin, Ireland –
SIPTU)

I'm from Lithuania and moved to Ireland in 2001. Since school I have published information newsletters, including very popular articles about workers' rights. In 2005 I was employed by Ireland's biggest union, SIPTU, as a union organiser. I became an officer and continue to use my four languages to help workers first-hand. I sail and love the sea, so I am delighted to help seafarers as part of the ITF.



Andreas Husa
(Bergen, Norway –
Norwegian Seafarers
Union)

I started my career at sea onboard a fishing vessel, and for the last 12 years I've worked on tugboats and operated mooring boats. Early on, I became a union representative for the Norwegian Seafarers Union and was elected to its youth committee. I am honoured to become an ITF inspector and be able to assist seafarers in my ports.



Pedro Esteban
(Cadiz, Spain –
FeSMC-UGT)

I was a deck officer on tankers. In early 2020, we were abandoned in a loaded LPGc in the Philippines. For eight months ITF inspectors supported us and helped us get our unpaid wages and go home. This was the moment I realised I needed to become an inspector and fight for seafarers' rights.



Ryan Brazeau
(Portland, Oregon, USA – International Longshore and Warehouse Union)

I have spent 22 years in maritime and am a fourth-generation seafarer. In my union, I have worked on organising campaigns, handled seafarers' cases and created a podcast to help seafarers connect each other. I am looking forward to bringing my experience and creativity to the ITF, learning from other inspectors and finding solutions to making seafarers lives much better.

Spotlight on the Latin America Caribbean team

Some of the world's most important commodities are exported from Latin America and the Caribbean, including sugar, bananas, coffee, molasses and tobacco. But with numerous ports spread across countries like Brazil, Chile and Argentina and more than 700 islands in the Caribbean, our team of inspectors in the region provide assistance to any seafarer who finds themselves in need of the ITF.



Roberto Jorge Alarcon (Rosario-Buenos Aires, Argentina – CCUOMM) has been an ITF inspector for 27 years and team coordinator since 2003, following a long career at sea and a four-year stint as a union officer. He has captained ships, has a degree in labour relations and during ITF campaigns has helped to get 60 vessels to sign ITF collective agreements.



Ali Zini (Paranagua, Brazil – CNTTL) was director of his union, working on tugboats, when in 1997 he responded to two ITF requests for a multilingual speaker to visit vessels and assess the crew's situation so that the inspector could assist them. He became a part-time inspector the following year and in 2007 became full-time.



Renialdo DeFreitas (Santos, Brazil – CNTTL) was a deck officer before becoming director of the Merchant Marine Officers' union. In 1989, he started as a part-time ITF inspector, pioneering work in Brazil to help foreign seafarers, and became full-time in 1994. He is proud to be part of the ITF family, giving both practical assistance and supporting crew morale.



Miguel Sanchez (Barranquilla, Colombia – UNIMPESCOL) worked on ships as an engineering officer for 18 years, before being appointed as an ITF inspector in 1998. He is proud to support seafarers in Colombian ports in their just claims for payment of wages, repatriation, shore leave and other labour and human rights.



Jose Ramirez (Manzanillo, Mexico – ORDEN) became an ITF inspector in 2017, having been a ship's master, working with multicultural crews. He helps seafarers to have fair conditions, successful repatriations and recovers owed wages. He believes 'if you help someone, you help everyone'.



Enrique Lozano (Veracruz, Mexico – ORDEN) has been a union member since 1989 and worked at sea for 16 years, as cadet, deck officer and master. He became an ITF inspector in 2003, having experienced the ITF's support himself, as master of the crew of an abandoned vessel in Africa with malaria on board. He is very happy to be able to help crews.



Luis C Fruto (Balboa-Cristobal, Panama - SITRASERMAP) became an ITF inspector in 2007, following 12 years as a deck officer and tug master. He has been a member of his union since 1989, including four years as general secretary, has taught at the Maritime Academy of Panama and has a master's degree in Naval and Occupational Safety.



Jose A Claudio Baez (San Juan, Puerto Rico – ILA, AFL-CIO) was a longshoreman and checker and is president of committee elections in his union, ILA Local 1740. Jose continues to help crews get free Covid vaccinations and have places to relax during their free time, with free wi-fi.

ITF networks assist you where there are no inspectors

The ITF's contact networks operate to assist seafarers in countries and ports where there are no ITF inspectors. They work to 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 network

The network operates where the ITF does not have inspectors. It is made up of representatives from ITF affiliated unions. It is building strength in the region by supporting seafarers requiring assistance and providing solidarity action with dockers. The network has been actively involved in ITF campaigns.

Contact the Latin America/ Caribbean network coordinator:

Steve Trowsdale (London)

Email: seafsupport@itf.org.uk

(15 contacts across, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela)



Arab World and Iran network

Our work this year continued to be made even more difficult by some shipowners using the Covid pandemic as an excuse for not responding to seafarers' complaints and requests for support. Despite this, the ITF union contacts in our region worked tirelessly and delivered assistance to hundreds of seafarers, helping them to get paid, receive medical assistance and be repatriated.

In 2021, we received a big increase in requests for assistance from seafarers. We dealt with 136 cases and succeeded in recovering USD7,325,864 in owed wages. Many of these were severe cases of abandonment. Our contacts made a huge contribution towards this achievement.

We are committed to continue developing, strengthening and expanding our network so that we can assist more seafarers on vessels calling at ports in the Arab World and Iran.

Contact the Arab World and Iran network coordinator:

Mohamed Arrachedi (Spain)

Tel: +34 629 419 007

Email: arrachedi_mohamed@itf.org.uk

(31 contacts across Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen)



West Africa network

Contact the West Africa network coordinator:

Bayla Sow (Burkina Faso)

Email: seafsupport@itf.org.uk

(9 contacts across Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Senegal and Togo)



Asia Pacific network

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

As of 31 December 2021, they had handled and completed over 114 seafarers' cases during the year. These included seafarer abandonment, unpaid wages claims, delayed home allotment, repatriation issues, work injury and requests for medical treatment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the greatest concern for seafarers was possibly being able to sign off in their next port. Our contacts provided all kinds of assistance to seafarers within their port, especially in Thailand and Malaysia. This included liaising with local authorities, relevant embassies, port agents and shipowners. They successfully helped over 600 seafarers to be repatriated from their country – in some cases, seafarers had been on board for over 16 months.

Contact the Asia Pacific network coordinator:

Jason Lam (Hong Kong)

Tel: +852 9735 3579

Email: lam_jason@itf.org.uk

(8 contacts across Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Thailand)



Flags of convenience: a seafarer's guide

What is a flag of convenience?

A flag of convenience (FOC) ship is one that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership, through the payment of registry fees.

Why do they exist?

In an increasingly competitive shipping market, FOCs offer a way to cut costs and minimise responsibility, with little or no regard to the rights and wellbeing of seafarers.

Shipowners use FOCs to exploit a loophole in international law to avoid labour regulation in the country of ownership. They become a vehicle for paying low wages and forcing long hours of work and unsafe working conditions on seafarers. A shipowner may also be motivated to 'flag out' a vessel to benefit from cheap registration fees and low or no taxes.

Countries choose to set up registers as a way to make money without any of the usual responsibilities towards the crew that go with being a genuine flag state. Some of these registers have poor safety and training standards and place no restriction on the nationality of the crew.

The ITF believes 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).

Who decides what is a FOC registry?

The ITF declares a register to be an FOC, through its Fair Practices Committee. It looks at:

- how many foreign owned vessels are registered and fly the country flag;
- how able and willing the flag state is to enforce international minimum social standards on its vessels, including respect for basic human and trade union rights, and whether it has ratified the International Labour Organization Conventions and Recommendations that contain these protections; and
- the flag state's safety and environmental record – through evidence from port state control inspections of vessels, the number of deficiencies and detentions, and whether it has ratified and enforces International Maritime Organization Conventions.

How many FOCs are there?

In January 2022, there were 42 FOCs, up from 35 a year earlier. In August 2021, the ITF added seven countries to its list of FOC registries – Cameroon, Cook Islands, Palau, Sierra Leone, St Kitts & Nevis, Tanzania (Zanzibar) and Togo. Many of these have a poor record in protecting the seafarers who work on ships flying their flag.

“What flags of convenience countries do is morally irresponsible. They take the registration fees but do not have the will or the means to ensure the wellbeing of the seafarers who operate the vessels... When becoming a flag state, a large responsibility must be accepted along with it. Ticking the boxes is not being responsible. Too many seafarers end up suffering so that shipowners can trim a few dollars from their crew cost.” – David Heindel, ITF seafarers’ section chair

What do FOCs mean for seafarers?

ITF inspections of FOC vessels have revealed a catalogue of abuse of seafarers:

- 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

Many FOC seafarers are simply too frightened to complain.

I work on a FOC vessel, who can protect me?

The home countries of the crew can do little to protect them because the rules that apply on board are often

those of the country of registration. And, 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 ITF has a unique and powerful influence on wages and conditions of seafarers working on FOC ships. This is policed and enforced through the work of ITF inspectors, who respond to and investigate seafarers’ complaints and calls for help. They 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. And they police ITF agreements to ensure that vessels comply with them.

In 2021, the ITF inspectorate recovered USD 37,291,112 in owed wages and compensation for death or injury on behalf of seafarers who had nowhere else to turn.

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 Seafarer Support team at seafsupport@itf.org.uk.

Registries listed as FOCs (as of January 2022)

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Bermuda
- Bolivia
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Cayman Islands
- Comoros
- Cook Islands
- Curacao
- Cyprus
- Equatorial Guinea
- Faroe Islands
- French International Ship Registry (FIS)
- German International Ship Registry (GIS)
- Georgia
- Gibraltar
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- Lebanon
- Liberia
- Malta
- Madeira
- Marshall Islands
- Mauritius
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- North Korea
- Palau
- Panama
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Sierra Leone
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Vincent
- Sri Lanka
- Tanzania (Zanzibar)
- Togo
- Tonga
- Vanuatu

ITF launches fishers' rights campaign in UK

In response to continued labour exploitation and migrants being underpaid aboard UK fishing vessels, the ITF is collaborating in research to shape its new Fairness in Fishing campaign. Chris Williams, ITF fisheries campaign lead, UK, tells us more

The UK fishing industry has not been immune to reports of human rights abuses aboard its vessels. But beyond the most shocking cases, fishers experience extreme working hours with no resting times and no days off. Forced labour in some parts of the industry has been reported and migrant fishers are at a high risk of abuse.

For this reason, the ITF has partnered with The Seafarers' Charity and the University of Nottingham Rights Lab to research fishers' working conditions across the UK. The Rights Lab surveyed national and migrant fishing crew in-person and online and additionally interviewed migrant fishers. The findings will provide evidence for the ITF's new Fairness in Fishing campaign in the UK, which will launch in 2022.

Dr Jess Sparks, associate director of the Rights Lab's Ecosystems and Environment Programme, said: "This campaign is imperative as some migrant fishers in the UK are being abused by a system that permits gross remuneration disparities, excessive working hours, and systemic discrimination. (These are) all reinforced by immigration schemes that disempower workers and increase their exposure to poor labour practices. Bringing the migrant fishers' voices into the campaign... will ensure that decisions will not be made for them, without them."

The UK fishing industry is complex. Vessel size, crew demographics, target species and markets in the UK

fishing fleet vary significantly. There are 5,783 fishing vessels providing jobs for 11,298 fishers. It is estimated that 72 percent of the workforce are UK nationals, 20 percent are from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and 8 percent are EEA nationals.

The working group of the three organisations has brought together trade unions and arranged a roundtable of statutory bodies responsible for enforcement and regulation of the sector. For many of these key stakeholders it is the first time they have had an opportunity to discuss these issues together.

There is more focused attention to working conditions in the sector since the UK government ratified the work in the ILO's Work in Fishing Convention (Convention 188). The Convention was designed to ensure that fishers worldwide have decent working and living conditions, setting out a basic framework of obligations for employers and governments.

Tina Barnes, head of impact at The Seafarers' Charity, which provides grants to seafarer welfare services, said: "Participating in this research will help us understand how best to target our grants towards improving working conditions and making the UK fishing industry an attractive career prospect for fishers from inside and outside the UK."

ITF steps up Irish fishing campaign as migrant abuses continue

The ITF has stepped up its campaign in the Irish fishing fleet, explains Michael O'Brien, ITF fisheries campaign lead, Ireland, because the government's permit scheme for migrant fishers is failing

The Atypical Working Scheme for non-European fishers was established by the Irish government in 2016, in large measure due to the agitation of the ITF, to deal decisively with abuses in the sector.

However, the reality is that most migrants working in the fleet, both documented in the Atypical Scheme and undocumented, continue to suffer the abuses of gross overwork and consequential injuries, together with below minimum wage pay rates. The situation is so bad that the ITF has successfully had 35 fishers admitted into the state's referral mechanism for human trafficking. Unfortunately, no convictions of the abusive vessel owners have yet followed.

As a result, in early 2021, we wanted to find out what was happening to migrant fishers after the disruption of the initial Covid lockdowns. The ITF funded Maynooth University Law Department to carry out qualitative research, involving in-depth interviews with migrant fishers from Egypt, Ghana and the Philippines, the main nationalities working on Irish vessels.

The findings, published in October 2021, received widespread publicity in the national media and led to discussion in the national parliament and a response from the Taoiseach (prime minister).

They showed an all-too-familiar picture. Working days of 15 to 20 hours, racist abuse, and coercion into illegal acts such as over-quota fishing – these were among the most frequent types of exploitation and abuse recounted by the interviewees in the research.

Even when the ITF or the Irish authorities detect these abuses and the courts or the Workplace Relations Commission find against vessel owners, the penalties have not been strong enough to prevent a culture of repeat offending.

Soon after the report's publication, the government announced a review of the Atypical Working Scheme. In February 2022, the ITF made a comprehensive submission, calling for the scheme to be scrapped. We highlighted its disadvantages in terms of pay and visa status compared to other permit schemes, which do not tie the migrant worker to the one employer indefinitely. And we argued that undocumented fishers need to be offered a path to apply for their visas.

The changes we are campaigning for cannot by themselves guarantee the elimination of all abuses in the Irish fishing industry. However, they will serve to empower migrant fishers to organise and more easily assert their rights and seek redress when necessary.

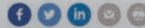
Unsafe conditions and low pay for migrants on Irish fishing boats exp

Study prompts call for reforms to safeguard conditions of fishers from countries including the Philippines, Egypt, Ghana and Indonesia



'Last chance saloon' to protect undocumented fishers - Cmte hears

Updated / Wednesday, 20 Oct 2021 18:26



Independent.ie

Fisherman was 'underpaid by €114,000', politicians told

Oireachtas committee hears migrant fishers have 'legitimate fear' in making work complaints

Irish Examiner

'Radical reforms' needed on non-EU fishers scheme

Business Post

Migrant workers tell of low pay, 'house in fishing jobs'

Maynooth University report finds that conditions for migrant fishing

workers have w

scheme

thejournal.ie

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'Severe exploitation' of migrant fishers a daily recurrence, Oireachtas committee to hear

A report published this week highlighted issues with 'severe exploitation' of migrant fishers in the Irish fishing industry.

Dockers are not supply chain problem



Dockers, seafarers and road transport workers are challenging the industry narrative that they are the cause of supply chain disruption and delays to goods and services during the Covid-19 pandemic. Steve Biggs, ITF dockers' section senior assistant, analyses the real problems

There is growing port and road congestion in many parts of the world. But transport workers are not to blame. The congestion is caused by a collision between the unchecked cartel behaviour of the global shipping industry and a massive upswing in consumer demand alongside a worldwide truck driver shortage.

The pandemic disrupted nearly every aspect of the global supply chain. Factories were shut down or forced to reduce production due to widespread Covid-19 cases in countries where most of the world's manufacturing capacity is, especially in China.

Shipping companies miscalculated: they reduced their schedules in anticipation of a drop in demand for moving goods globally during the pandemic while, in fact, consumer demand increased. This surge saturated the system for transporting supplies to factories, while an extreme shortage of shipping containers left finished products accumulating in warehouses and ports in China and throughout Asia.

This shortage was caused by containers being stuck in the wrong places. For example, China shipped huge volumes of PPE worldwide, but empty containers remained in the many countries that don't ship back to China. Meanwhile, production of goods in China sharply increased to meet consumer demands.

The scarcity of containers and the increasing demand for shipping resulted in price-gouging – the unreasonable increase in prices of goods and services – and the cost of cargo transport skyrocketed. The heavy influx of ships overwhelmed ports. And company decisions about the quarantine of truck drivers and dockers also had an impact.

In the USA, President Biden publicly thanked Willie Adams, the president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), and all his members for their hard work throughout the pandemic in keeping the supply of goods flowing. He called on businesses to follow labour's lead and do their part to relieve supply chain congestion. "This is not called a supply chain for nothing. This means terminal operators, railways, trucking companies, shippers, and other retailers as well.

"If the private sector doesn't step up, we're going to call them out and ask them to act. Our goal is not only to get through this immediate bottleneck but to address the longstanding weaknesses in our transportation supply chain that this pandemic has exposed."

The ITF stands with our dockers' affiliates in demanding a correct analysis of the situation and respect for the extremely difficult job dockworkers are doing under enormous pressure.



OUT OF SIGHT NOT OUT OF MIND

40 PORTRAITS OF SEAFARERS BY SEAFARERS

A view of seafarers, by seafarers

Katie Higginbottom, head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust, reports on how the organisation marked its 40th anniversary in 2021

ITF unions presented the book to government officials and lawmakers around the world to demonstrate the vital role and real experiences of the seafarers who make international trade possible.

We were delighted that the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in London hosted a two-week exhibition of images from the book during its annual Assembly, when delegations from governments globally gather to approve the IMO's programme of work and elect members to its Council. The exhibition is now available to view online <https://www.seafarerstrust.org/exhibition>.

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

To celebrate our 40th year of helping provide services to seafarers, the ITF Seafarers' Trust wanted to highlight the seafarers themselves, in their own words and images.

We ran a photography competition – Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind – and the result is a limited-edition book, Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind – 40 Portraits of seafarers by seafarers.



Photo: Rommel Roma

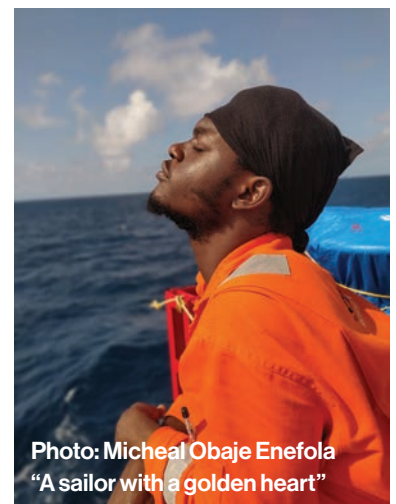


Photo: Micheal Obaje Enefolo
"A sailor with a golden heart"

To see all the winning photos Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind – 40 Portraits of seafarers by seafarers online, go to: <https://www.seafarerstrust.org/what-we-do/photo-competition-2021>

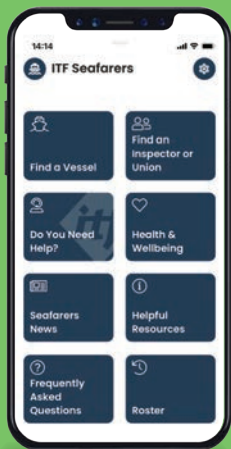


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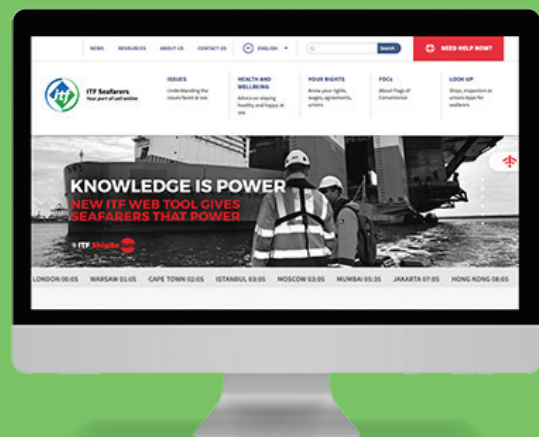
ITF Seafarers

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- Get in touch with the ITF
- Find an ITF inspector or ITF maritime union
- Find health and wellbeing information and advice



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- Keep up with our campaigns
- Find out more about the ITF and its unions



ITF websites

www.itfseafarers.org – find out about your rights and how ITF inspectors provide assistance at sea and in port, at our dedicated website for seafarers

www.itfshipbesure.org – find everything you need to know if you're looking for a job

www.itfglobal.org – follow all the latest developments affecting workers and their ITF unions

ITF social media



- Follow and have your say on the latest news, using #itfseafarers on Twitter and at www.facebook.com/ITFseafarerssupport



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