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## **Fishers Rights Network Demands Justice for Myanmar 31—Release Detained Crew Now**

At a Ministry of Labor inquiry in Ranong today, the Fishers Rights Network called on the Myanmar and Thai governments to work for the immediate release and safe return of all 31 crew detained in the November 30<sup>th</sup> IUU fishing incident.

All fishers involved were following the directives of their employer and should not be held responsible or detained for this incident. “My husband has done nothing wrong, and is being wrongfully detained. The Myanmar and Thai governments should punish the employer not the fishers,” said Su Nadar, wife of a Myanmar 31 fisher.

The Thai government's failure to adequately inspect fishing vessels, monitor vessel movements, and enforce the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188) provisions are all contributing factors that created the conditions that led to this incident.

“PIPO and the Thai agencies responsible for inspecting vessels are not doing their job,” said Ye Thwe, President of the Fishers Rights Network. “Most fishers are in debt bondage, have their passports held by their employer, are forced to work overtime with limited hours of rest, and have no power over where they are taken to fish.”

Poor implementation and enforcement of C188 has allowed labor abuse and severe exploitation to continue throughout the industry and has set the stage for IUU fishing to return. Disturbingly, Thai government officials are considering rollbacks to existing laws that curtail transshipment, limit time vessels can stay out at sea, and relax already inadequate inspection procedures.

“Unfortunately, in the fishing industry, lack of effective oversight and monitoring that is backed up with real penalties for bad actors creates conditions that enable IUU fishing, labor abuse and exploitation, and fails to protect fishers and fish stock,” said Johnny Hansen, Chair of the ITF Fisheries Section. “This is a global problem, but conditions in Thailand are particularly bad,” said Hansen.

FRN called on the Thai government to address the widespread labor rights abuses in the industry by enforcing the law, ensuring the safety and fair treatment of fishers, and improving working conditions so incidents like this do not occur again. “We are ready to work with the Thai authorities to bring about meaningful reforms and ensure that the rights of all fishers are respected, but these guys need to come home first,” said Ye Thwe.

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