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Human Trafficking for Labour exploitation, Slavery, Servitude, Forced labour: What has Shrimp Consumed in Europe to do with Slavery in Thailand?

"EJF's film [Pirates and Slaves](#) sheds light on the interlinkages between the environmental destruction of marine resources, and the widespread use of trafficked, forced, bonded and slave labour.

In addition, there are multiple different factors interplaying in Thailand. These range from legislative to enforcement issues, cultural, historically grown issues, as well as political issues.

Exacerbating these are additional factors, such as:

- inadequate migration and registration regulations that incentivise informal migration;
- recruitment practices that facilitate forms of exploitation by brokers or employers, while lacking appropriate grievance mechanisms;
- but above all, the vulnerability of migrant workers is facilitated and entrenched by the existing legal framework regulating migrant workers in Thailand. It legally excludes migrants from forming labour unions or serving in leadership positions in unions, thereby rendering them unable to coordinate actions or address the abuses they are faced with.

At the core of the situation however remains a factor that, in varying degrees, can also be observed in other regions around the world - the destruction of marine resources, the overfishing and illegal pirate fishing that is depleting fish stocks, for a globalised supply chain that reaches directly to European or US supermarkets and customers.

In Thailand, this is in part driven by the demand for trash fish, fish unfit for human consumption, but a key raw material for the fishmeal industry. Almost 8 tons of trash fish are needed to produce just over 1 ton of farmed shrimp. Fishmeal from trash fish is also found in pet food, which Thailand is exporting millions worth of, or in livestock food such as poultry, entering international supply chains in multiple ways.

With almost 90% of the world's fish stocks already fully or overexploited, while global seafood demand continues to increase, human rights and labour abuses in fisheries and seafood industries will continue to occur if not adequately addressed.

The underlying consideration to the interlinkage between environmental destruction and human trafficking or forced labour is that without a certain consumption pattern, this would not occur in this form - and that without trafficked or forced labour, the production or sourcing structure may not even be feasible. The responsibility for change lies with everyone associated with the supply chain; governments, private sector and consumers.

Since the film was published, EJF has undertaken additional investigations into the Thai seafood supply chains and we are now supporting the Thai Government in their reforms. These have been progressing positively as a result of the political determination and support in Thailand, but issues still persist.

A main driver of reforms has been international pressure, in part by the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, where Thailand has now been upgraded to the Tier 2 watch list, but even more so, by the European Union (EU). In 2015, the EU issued a yellow card warning to Thailand under a regulation that allows the EU to ban imports of wild-caught fisheries products to the entire EU market from countries it assesses as not sufficiently combatting illegal fishing. It is a unique example of how market-based measures are informing and promoting improvements in the fisheries sectors around the world. While the regulation's mandate only centres on fisheries, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella stated that the EU was also assessing the measures and progress to address human rights and slavery on board of the fishing vessels.

This interlinkage of environmental and human rights issues - in this as well as other contexts - has equally been acknowledged by other international bodies or agencies, such as the ILO, Interpol and UNODC, and we can expect further focus on this interlinkage as more such conditions are

identified and cases exposed.

Thailand currently still has a yellow card warning and further reforms are needed in order to ensure that the mix of the root causes of marine destruction, resulting economic pressure and the drive for trafficked and slave labour on fishing vessels is effectively addressed.

The international community can best support efforts to address these issues in supply chains by firstly acknowledging the connections between environmental destruction and human trafficking and slavery, and secondly by supporting efforts to strengthen transparency and traceability in global supply chains. In particular, this needs to incorporate measures to make private sector reporting on supply chain measures more robust, accountable and actionable for consumers and policymakers alike. We have seen development in the UK on this with the Modern Slavery Act, prior to that in the US with the California Transparency in Supply Chain Act as well as more recently in France – but more needs to be done in order to provide the teeth to these kinds of legislation to ensure accountability, effective implementation and compliance."

Recommendations:

Moving forward, States need to urgently introduce robust legislation for effective reporting of supply chain measures by companies. This is to ensure there will be a level playing field for businesses that in effect rewards best practices, instead of enabling non-compliant stakeholders to profit from violating environmental and labour standards. Environmental security and sustainability is key to the protection of human rights. Reporting has to go beyond identifying risks that slavery can pose to supply chains, and should be required to identify and offer effective mitigation for the risks that business operations pose for human rights, the environment and long-term sustainability. Governments further need to introduce monitoring mechanisms that can verify companies' reporting, and in cases where it is inadequate, to establish effective enforcement as well as deterrent legal and financial consequences for companies that have taken insufficient measures to address slavery in supply chains.

In regard to fisheries, and in order to promote transparency, traceability and an adequate labour standard, all States should ratify and fully implement the ILO Work in Fishing Convention 2007 (No. 188). ILO Convention 188 provides a framework for minimum labour standards to be implemented in national legislation. In addition, all States should put in place national enforcement instruments – such as port labour inspections (including inspection of working conditions) in port and at sea. All States should further ratify and fully implement the 2009 FAO Port State Measures Agreement to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Coastal, flag, market and port States should implement new and additional tools for supply chain transparency, that include:

Legally binding requirements for mechanisms to deliver transparency across the sector such as the rapid introduction of digital data collection and management systems – specifically vessel licenses, catch certificates, landing certification, crew manifests, ship logs, mandatory vessel monitoring data, as well as the vessels' Unique Vessel identifier (UVI).

Enforcement agencies must ensure that this data is readily available and accessible by the appropriate authorities at all times to aid in effective enforcement and compliance. Data must also be kept securely to prevent unauthorised data access or manipulation.

In all instances, except where it can be proven to create competitive disadvantage, or create security risks, all data should be made publicly available and as a minimum^[1]_{SEP} all vessel licenses must be published with and include a requirement to identify the "true beneficial owner" of any vessel; identify the value of the license and the specific elements for which it has been granted.