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Global unions call on EU for action to protect seafood industry workers

Two global union federations representing millions of workers worldwide will meet with the European Union (EU) commission on fisheries this week to call for an expansion of legislation to protect fishers and workers employed in the production of seafood.

The meet will coincide with the Brussels Seafood Expo Global, which brings together more than 2000 fish and aquaculture companies.

The European Transport Workers Federation (ETF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) and International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF) want to see concrete mechanisms developed for ensuring respect for labour rights by companies whose products are imported into the European Union.

Chair of the ITF fisheries section committee Johnny Hansen said: "The current EU yellow card system only officially looks at a country's IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing violations. We know that on occasion extreme labour violations are taken into account because time and time again it has been shown that these are linked with IUU fishing. What we would like to see is the commission adding all labour violations officially to their considerations of the seafood card system. That's not going to happen overnight but we have to make a definitive start backed up by robust legislation."

IUF general secretary Ron Oswald said: "Barbaric human rights abuses in the fishing industry have been brought to the public's attention through media exposure, but the abuses in many cases continue because the companies are under no real pressure to comply with international human rights standards. Effective mechanisms must urgently be developed to ensure that companies that export their products to the European Union respect the right of workers to form trade unions and to negotiate their conditions of employment. Companies which fail to do so must face meaningful consequences."

A rally will also be held outside the Expo venue to raise awareness among participants of the ongoing human rights abuses in the industry. The case of Citra Mina workers, sacked for trying to form a union in General Santos in the Philippines will be particularly highlighted.

More information

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The Seafood Expo Global runs from 26-28 April at the Brussels Expo

[Access more information on the Citra Mina dispute](#)