



Released on 28 August 2018

Press Release

**Department of Special Investigation's Bureau of Trafficking In Persons Litigation
arresting two Myanmar brokers for conspiracy and being complicit in trafficking 12
fishing workers including their family members in Prachuap Khiri Khan**

On 28 August 2018, officials from the Department of Special Investigation's Bureau (DSI) of Trafficking In Persons Litigation in collaboration with the Prachuap Khiri Khan Immigration Office and police force from the Muang Police Station in Prachuap Khiri Khan have arrested a couple from Myanmar invoking a court warrant for conspiracy and being complicit in trafficking in persons. Both are accused of bringing in 12 fishing workers including their family members to Prachuap Khiri Khan's Ao Noi District in order to force them to work on board fishing boats and downstream industry. They are compelled to work as a result of debt bondage.

Prior to this, on 22 December 2017, the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN) has received complaints from the local community of migrant workers that 12 fishing workers including their family members had been lured from Myanmar's Mon State, Ye Township, A Zin Village to work in Thailand. Upon their arrival in Prachuap Khiri Khan's Ao Noi District, they were informed of their steep debt and were told they would have to pay a lot more for the incremental interest that would have gone up if the debt could not be written off. To write it off, they were told to work for the brokers. MWRN has thus cooperated with the Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) to their rescue. The case was then reported to DSI for initial investigation and further proceeding according to the law. It has turned out that seven of the fishing workers including their family members have been flagged as trafficking survivors. As a result, DSI officials have carried out further investigation and it has led to the arrest of the two suspects.

The case shows vulnerabilities of fishing workers who can become victims of grave human rights violation including being victims of trafficking in persons. It is a vitally important issue that needs to be addressed by Thailand's more efficient effort. The issue has garnered attention from international community and buyers of seafood from Thailand. Efforts are being made by Thailand to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons including the promulgation of law for the protection of fishing workers' rights in compliance with the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and its 2014 Protocol and the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188). This should help to ensure a systematic and sustainable effort to address issues faced by fishing workers and in compliance with international standards and to ensure safe migration.

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