



THAILAND'S SEAFOOD SLAVES

**Human Trafficking, Slavery and Murder
in Kantang's Fishing Industry**



A report produced by the Environmental Justice Foundation
supported by Humanity United



Protecting People and Planet



Protecting People and Planet

The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

is a UK-based organisation working internationally to address environmental and associated human rights abuses. (Registered charity No. 1088128)

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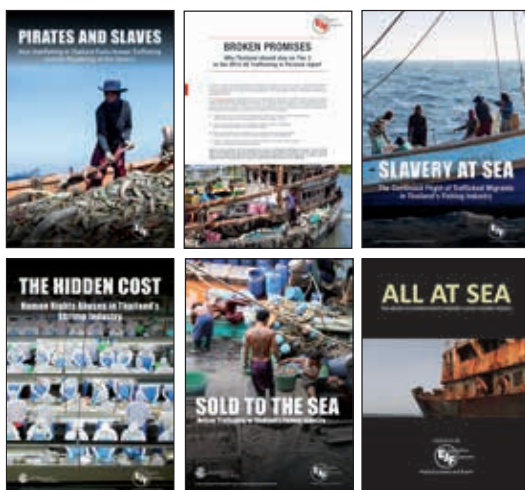
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OUR MISSION

To Protect People and Planet

EJF believes environmental security is a human right.

EJF strives to:

- Protect the natural environment and the people and wildlife that depend upon it by linking environmental security, human rights and social need
- Create and implement solutions where they are needed most – training local people and communities who are directly affected to investigate, expose and combat environmental degradation and associated human rights abuses
- Provide training in the latest video technologies, research and advocacy skills to document both the problems and solutions, working through the media to create public and political platforms for constructive change
- Raise international awareness of the issues our partners are working locally to resolve.

Our Oceans Campaign

To protect the marine environment, its biodiversity and the livelihoods dependent upon it.

EJF's Oceans Campaign aims to eradicate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) or 'pirate' fishing. We are working to create full transparency and traceability within seafood supply chains and markets. We actively promote improvements to policy-making, corporate governance and management of fisheries along with consumer activism and market-driven solutions.

Our ambition is to secure truly sustainable, well-managed fisheries and with this the conservation of marine biodiversity and ecosystems and the protection of human rights.

EJF believes that there must be greater equity in global fisheries to ensure developing countries and vulnerable communities are given fair access and support to sustainably manage their natural marine resources and the right to work in the seafood industry without suffering labour and human rights abuses.

We believe in working collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve these goals.

For further information visit ejfoundation.org/oceans

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SLAVERY, 'PIRATE' FISHING AND OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THAILAND'S SEAFOOD SECTOR HIGHLIGHTING THE SHORTCOMINGS IN PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES AND GOVERNMENT CONTROLS.

- Human trafficking and slavery are global problems. It is estimated that as many as 35.8 million men, women and children are currently victims of human trafficking around the world.¹
- Thailand is the 30th largest economy in the world with a GDP of US\$404 billion.²
- The Thai seafood industry employs more than 800,000 people, while seafood exports are valued at \$6 billion.^{3/4}
- A growing number of independent reports over the past decade have documented abuses of workers trafficked on to Thai fishing vessels, including bonded, forced and slave labour and the use of extreme violence. One report by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) found that 59% of trafficked migrants interviewed aboard Thai fishing vessels reported witnessing the murder of a fellow worker.⁵
- Thailand's fish stocks and marine biodiversity are in crisis. The Thai fishing industry has undergone decades of over-fishing and astonishingly poor fisheries management. Rapid industrialisation during the 20th Century has resulted in too many vessels using destructive and unsustainable fishing methods to catch too many fish. The overall catch per unit effort (CPUE) in both the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea has plummeted by more than 86% since 1966, making Thai waters among the most over-fished regions on the planet.⁶
- The pressure on Thailand's over-exploited fish stocks has been and continues to be due in large part to the demand for animal feeds and farmed shrimp.⁷ The fishmeal industry has masked the true economic and ecological costs of over-fishing by over-valuing the trash fish which constitutes one of its key raw materials.
- The lack of an adequate fisheries management regime and effective enforcement along with extensive corruption have facilitated overfishing in Thailand, which has generated economic pressures that fuel the ongoing, widespread use of slave labour.
- Exhausted fish stocks mean that vessels are staying at sea longer and going further afield, often fishing illegally in other nations' territorial waters, to bring in diminishing catches. In turn operators are using human trafficking networks and bonded, forced and slave labour to crew their vessels and depress costs. This largely export-focused industry is able to carry on providing cheap products to western markets as a direct result of these human rights abuses. Consumers in the west are eating product contaminated with slavery, 'pirate' fishing, corruption and criminality.



EIF's most recent investigation highlights how Government efforts to combat trafficking and slavery remain piecemeal while seafood tainted by forced labour continues to reach global consumers. © EIJ

- This report builds on over three years of in-depth research and field investigations to first expose abuse and then critically assess claims that slavery and 'pirate' fishing in Thailand's export-oriented seafood sector have been significantly reduced. By returning to Kantang, this report presents evidence that is broadly representative of trends across the country – namely the Government's ongoing failure to address corruption and prosecute and convict those engaging in and benefiting from criminal activity.⁸ EJF recommends that this report is read in conjunction with its previous three publications about the Thai seafood sector: *Pirates and Slaves, Slavery at Sea* and *Sold to the Sea*.
- The Thai seafood industry is today globally notorious for being one of the most abusive and destructive economic sectors in the world. In 2015, Thailand remained on the US Government's 'Tier 3' – the lowest possible tier – in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report, in part due to abuses in the seafood industry.⁹ This year, the European Commission also used its powers under an EU Regulation to 'yellow-card' Thailand for its ongoing failures to curb Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU).¹⁰
- Two and a half years ago, one of Thailand's most high profile trafficking cases generated international attention around the plight of the men forced to fish in a brutal seafood industry.¹¹ EJF's most recent investigation in the port of Kantang has uncovered multiple abusive fishing companies in a town where corrupt officials continue to operate with impunity, trafficking networks remain unbroken and men are still forced to fish aboard Kantang boats – trapped in an endless cycle of debt, exploitation and abuse.
- Testimony from recent escapees reveals how fleets of Kantang fishing vessels routinely plunder the waters of Malaysia and Indonesia, using carrier vessels to land fish caught through forced labour and illegal fishing at piers and factories along the Trang River. A large proportion of the catch is 'trash fish' – small species, juvenile and putrefied fish unfit for human consumption. The trash fish is destined for processing in local fishmeal plants and EJF investigations have linked feed inputs from these plants to the supply chains of multiple major companies producing seafood for the international market.
- The actions taken by producers and global retailers of Thai seafood – following a spate of high profile media exposés – are currently failing to prevent the ongoing human rights abuses and illegal fishing; nor are they halting the flow of tainted products into international supply chains. Further action is still needed.
- It is vital that the Thai Government meets its obligations to effectively enforce its own laws across the industry nationally. Without such action, any initiatives by corporate interests are likely to be critically undermined. To date, while multiple new measures have been introduced by Government, they have still failed to initiate the essential nationwide programme of intelligence-led enforcement to crackdown on human rights abuses and illegal fishing and with this successful prosecutions with meaningful deterrent penalties.
- In 2015, Thailand's military Government introduced new regulations and controls on the country's fishing fleets. However, evidence from southern Thai ports indicates serious shortcomings in the implementation of Government policy. In particular, recent EJF investigations demonstrate that the new Port in – Port out (PIPO) system is not working to identify or assist victims of trafficking, forced and bonded labour, as the Government has claimed.¹² Worryingly, the registration of thousands of migrant fishers by 112 mobile registration units seems to have regularised victims of exploitation and abuse – with EJF's investigations indicating that some officials are assuming that fishers in possession of formal identification do not need to be screened for indicators of trafficking, forced or bonded labour.
- International political pressure on Thailand is intensifying on both sides of the Atlantic while consumers in market countries are waking up to the reality of how the abuses occurring within Thailand's fishing industry relate to their own purchasing power. Now more than ever the Thai Government and producers, buyers and retailers of seafood must heed the global call for change and undertake urgent action to rid our supply chains of human misery and environmental destruction.
- Overall, while some measures are now being taken to combat illegal 'pirate' fishing (notwithstanding many extremely important, fundamental issues have yet to be addressed) insufficient action has been taken by the Thai Government to address human rights abuses in the industry. A near-total failure in coordinated, nationwide enforcement responses that identify the true beneficiaries of criminal activity and prioritise the protection of victims continues to be evident. Meaningless show-casing and PR-driven exercises still guide Government policy. It is essential that the Government rapidly foster a culture of robust enforcement and compliance. Allied to this they must employ a focussed and secure, intelligence-led and forensic approach to their enforcement.
- Failure by the Thai Government and industry to address, at a fundamental level, the interconnected issues of illegal, unsustainable fishing and associated human rights abuses, including the routine use of slavery and extreme violence, has left the Thai seafood sector engaged in one of the most outrageous ecological and human rights abuses of recent years. It is critical that the Thai Government demonstrates its leadership and clear intention to stamp out these abuses with extensive, high-impact and consistent enforcement operations targeting the real beneficiaries of these abuses and addressing the official corruption that surrounds this industry.



They would torture and murder the fishers then throw them into the sea. They abused the crew in many ways – beating, hitting and killing out on the ocean. I witnessed murder with my own eyes.

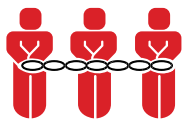


Tun Thet Soe, escaped victim of trafficking

INTRODUCTION

Thailand is under intense and increasing global pressure to address the use of trafficked, bonded, forced and slave labour in its fishing sector and crack down on the activities of its enormous industrial fishing fleets. Over half a century of too many boats using unsustainable fishing methods has degraded Thailand's fisheries to the point where many vessel operators slash labour costs through the use of brutal systems of exploitation and turn a profit by illegally plundering the seas for fish.

In 2014, Thailand was downgraded to Tier 3 in the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report and remained there for 2015. Tier 3 places Thailand in the same category as Iran and North Korea, reflecting a severe lack of meaningful progress in the prevention and suppression of human trafficking and the protection and rehabilitation of survivors. After several years of dissatisfaction with Thailand's non-compliance with the European Union's Regulation on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU), which entered into force in 2010, the EU issued a 'yellow card' warning to the country in April 2015. A review of that decision could see a 'red card' ban on imports of wild-caught fish products potentially worth over €640 million (\$730 million) to the Thai economy – almost a tenth of the country's revenue from seafood exports.¹³ Communications from European Union officials in mid-2015 have already hinted at possible trade sanctions.^{14/15}



- 94% had no contract
- 80% reported never feeling free
- 68% reported sexual/physical violence
- ▲ 59% witnessed executions at sea
- 52% witnessed their boss/trafficker harming someone
- 47% reported at least one injury
- 44% reported lack of food
- 42% experienced wage reductions
- 23% were locked in a room during trafficking situation
- 17% worked against their will
- 17% were threatened with violence
- 11% attempted escape
- 10% were severely beaten
- 5.8% reported being forced to use drugs

Sources:

- ▲ UNIAP (2009) (n = 49)
- ILO (2013) (n = 596)
- Zimmerman et al (2014) (n = 275)

Findings from interviews with Thai fishing crew and victims of trafficking aboard Thai fishing vessels.

'Pirate' fishing and slavery are transnational crimes that ruin lives and devastate ecosystems. As a stream of investigations, reports and research continues to expose the disturbing social and ecological problems at the root of our global seafood supply chains, consumers and fishers on different sides of the world are being brought together in an unprecedented way.^{16/17/18} There is growing pressure from consumers for producers and retailers to change their behaviour and disclose what steps they are taking to clean up their supply chains. In August 2015, lawsuits were filed against Costco and Nestlé, alleging that they knowingly sold products sourced through the use of forced labour.^{19/20} For too many years, retailers and suppliers have been disconnected from the operations at sea that are the basis of their seafood supply chains. Several have now made commitments to tackle these problems 'from the inside' continuing to source from Thailand, while engaging new supply chain auditing and controls to eradicate illegal fishing and human rights abuses.^{21/22} However, it is now essential that they ensure these actions can work, are made public, and are in place throughout their supply chains.

Over the last two and a half years, EJF reports have highlighted the social and environmental problems in Thai seafood supply chains.^{23/24/25} While drawing on evidence from across the country and assessing the situation nationally, these reports have been grounded in an analysis of the port town of Kantang in the southern Thai province of Trang. Crucially, EJF investigations in 2015 demonstrated forcefully that the problem of 'pirate' IUU fishing persists.

In March 2013, EJF travelled to Kantang with Thailand's Department of Special Investigation (DSI) and the Royal Thai Police as they rescued 14 victims of slavery from Boonlarp Fishing Limited Partnership (L.P.)²⁶ pier. Most of the men, the youngest of whom was 16, had just returned from a six-month term at sea on three different fishing vessels. During in-depth interviews with EJF, the men gave accounts of deception and exploitation by brokers and traffickers, slave-like working conditions, forcible confinement and frequent verbal and physical abuse. Several were witnesses to torture and execution-style murders. These interviews were documented in EJF's 2013 report *Sold to the Sea*.

The group of men from the 2013 Kantang case were under the control of a human trafficking network believed to be headed by Ko Myo, a 42-year-old man from Bago, Myanmar. Over several decades, Ko Myo had risen through the ranks of Kantang's criminal underworld; starting out as a drug dealer supplying methamphetamine (*yaa baa*) and cannabis to migrant workers and eventually becoming one of the town's most powerful brokers.

The sophisticated system of exploitation in Kantang's fishing industry – of which Ko Myo was an integral part – relies on luring prospective workers with the promise of desirable jobs, smuggling them across national borders or from other parts of Thailand and getting them onto fishing boats and keeping them there, at any cost. Ko Myo, renowned and feared for his cruelty, would routinely torture and execute migrant workers who attempted to flee, in order to serve as a warning to others thinking of making their own attempt at escape. Some of the corpses of these men would be cast into the Trang River, their brutalised bodies discovered with hands-bound and weighed down with chains. Senior officers in the Kantang police reported to EJF that they estimated Ko Myo was responsible for the trafficking of around 700 migrant workers and the murder of 40 individuals.²⁷ In August 2013, Ko Myo was shot and captured by police in Surat Thani, shortly after the arrest and interrogation of a member of his gang.²⁸

Part of EJF's 2014 report *Slavery at Sea* was dedicated to highlighting the experiences of the men from the 2013 Boonlarp case as they lingered in a Government shelter for victims of trafficking and went through a protracted and alienating legal battle in a Thai court. The report also sought to underscore how the owner of Boonlarp had evaded investigation – despite initially being implicated in criminal charges for forcible confinement and trafficking – and allegedly attempted to manipulate legal proceedings.²⁹ A Thai national supposedly renting the Boonlarp vessels upon which the men worked and pier space in which they were confined was later convicted for sheltering undocumented migrants and served a three month sentence in prison.³⁰

After suffering unacceptable verbal and physical abuse at the hands of shelter staff, the men from the 2013 Boonlarp case left the Government shelter in mid-2014 and demanded immediate repatriation to Myanmar – as detailed in EJF's briefing *Broken Promises*. According to an officer of the Royal Thai Police involved in the case, Ko Myo has now been sentenced to prison for human trafficking and is awaiting the court's decision on a murder case for which he has also been charged.³¹

In early 2015, EJF's report *Pirates and Slaves* drew on findings from Kantang to present the first detailed interrogation of the relationship between overfishing, IUU fishing and trafficking, forced and bonded labour in the Thai fishing industry.

The report outlined the weak regulatory environment, compromised enforcement efforts and lack of political will which had driven Thailand's fisheries to exhaustion and incentivised vessel operators to engage in criminal activity with impunity.

These and other structural drivers of environmental destruction and human rights abuse have yet to be addressed by Government and industry. Since initial warnings in late 2014 around the likely issuing of the EU's 'yellow card', the Thai Government has embarked on a campaign to reform the fishing industry, undertaking actions such as the introduction of port controls on every fishing vessel over a certain size, updating obsolete legal frameworks, installing boats with vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and registering fishing boats.^{32/33/34} Progress on some of these reforms has been hampered by significant pushback from vessel operators and the wider seafood industry.³⁵

In mid-2015, EJF returned to Kantang to conduct an investigation following fresh reports of trafficking in the fleet belonging to Boonlarp Fishing L.P. This report once again draws on Kantang to expose the shortcomings in private and public sector efforts aimed at tackling both 'pirate' fishing and slavery. It presents the argument that Thailand has yet to grapple with these two deeply interconnected problems, which continue to tarnish the supply chains of, and even threaten export revenues from, one of its key industries.

On 7th November 2015, a joint operation in Kantang raided onshore and offshore targets connected to the owner of Boonlarp Fishing Limited Partnership and President of the provincial Fishing Association, Sompon Jirotmontree. The operation was initiated after EJF passed a detailed dossier of evidence to Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan and other high-level officials. Arrest warrants were issued for eight individuals following an at-sea operation on 20th October 2015 which rescued 12 men from aboard Boonlarp vessels who, in addition to six escaped victims of abuse, provided investigators with information and evidence.³⁶ Among those arrested was Mr. Jirotmontree. Officials from the Anti-Money Laundering Office are reportedly now working with local police on the potential seizure of Mr. Jirotmontree's assets.³⁷

However, it is vital that the following points are given special attention in considering the context and impact of this enforcement action and the subsequent arrests:

1. EJF welcomes the initiation of this action at sea to target some of those controlling and benefiting from the abuses. However, it is apparent that multiple points of inquiry highlighted by EJF's evidence were not pursued, including abuses within another prominent Kantang fishing company and the involvement of local law enforcement officers.
2. EJF makes special note that similar operations are not being rolled out nationally and, crucially, that enforcement agencies are not yet employing the necessary intelligence-led operations that can effectively target the controlling figures behind abuses and those who gain the major benefits from them. We highlight that without a comprehensive engagement in this way the abuses will continue and that ongoing reliance on civil society actors as the main source of intelligence is neither effective nor appropriate.
3. We stress that unless the Royal Thai Government takes extensive measures to combat intelligence leaks and associated corruption within the enforcement agencies, especially in the local agencies close to the abuses, it will be extremely difficult to secure successful prosecutions and convictions and abuses are likely to continue.
4. It is overwhelmingly clear that there is an ongoing need for a speedy response in Thai courts and for the application of forceful deterrent penalties. We highlight the almost total lack of convictions of Thai nationals over recent years and very lenient, functionally meaningless penalties, when convictions have been secured.
5. Lastly we believe that the capacity to act effectively and consistently over time is present – assuming necessary financial and human resources are dedicated to these abuses. However it will require consistent ongoing action from the highest levels in Government to deliver these political will and actions.

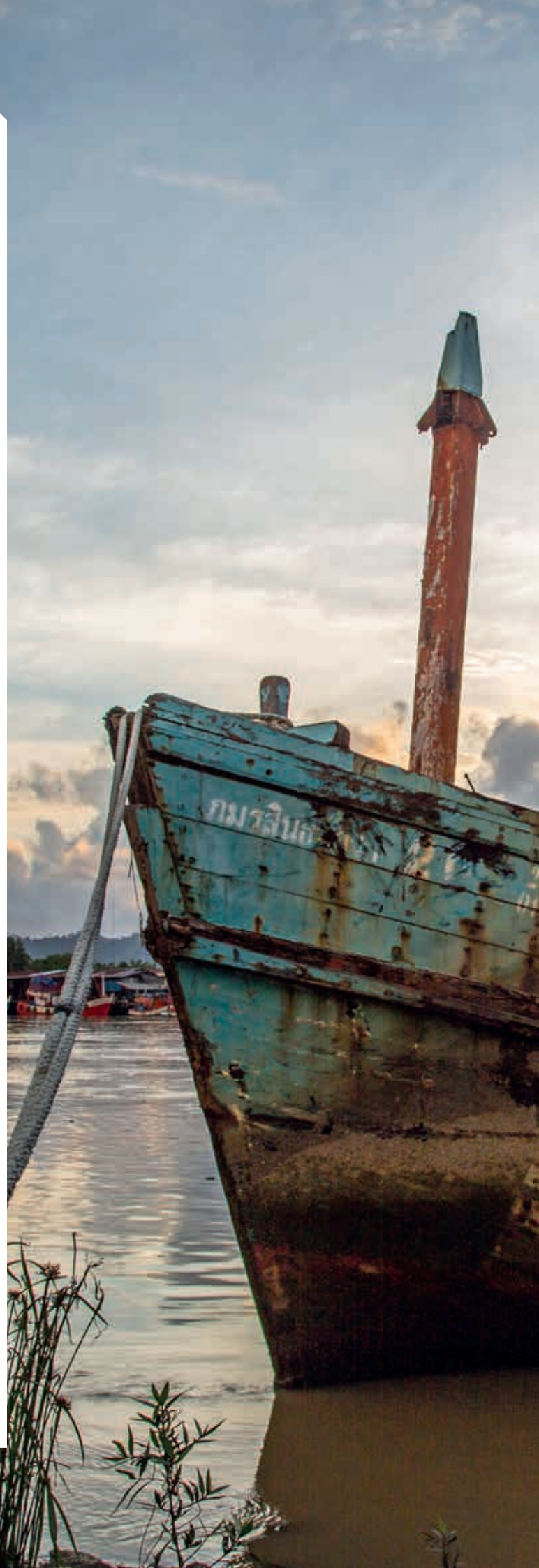
KANTANG'S FISHING INDUSTRY

Kantang, once the provincial capital of Trang, has been an important port for more than a century. Like many other settlements in southern Thailand, Kantang's economic development was driven by the influx of entrepreneurial Chinese families – some of whom would go on to become the owners of Kantang's fishing piers.^{38/39} In the mid-1970s, after the rapid industrialisation of Thailand's fishing industry, Kantang's fishing piers increasingly started operating their own fishing vessels crewed by local Thais. Over the years, as social and economic shifts across Thailand made fishing less attractive to Thai nationals, Kantang's fishing companies came to rely almost exclusively on skilled (predominantly Cambodian) and unskilled (predominantly Burmese) migrant workers to crew fishing boats and work at the piers.

Kantang's fishing industry is dominated by three of its oldest Sino-Thai companies, which together operate a mixture of fishing vessels, carriers, piers and landing sites, ice factories, cold storage and processing facilities and fishmeal plants. These three companies – Boonlarp Fishing L.P., Jor Monchai L.P.⁴⁰ and Wor Wattana Sohpon L.P.⁴¹ – own three adjacent premises known, respectively, as Boonlarp, Chon Sin⁴² and Wor Suphaporn⁴³ piers. Chon Sin and Boonlarp are Kantang's most affluent fishing companies, followed closely by Wor Suphaporn.⁴⁴ These three companies also jointly own and operate ancillary companies, loading carriers with fresh ice to replenish fishing vessels at sea at Union Ice Kantang L.P.⁴⁵ and unloading trash fish from carriers to process into fishmeal at Union Fishmeal Kantang L.P.⁴⁶ One additional company referred to throughout this report is JDP Co. Ltd.⁴⁷, which runs an integrated fishing, ice and fishmeal operation – the fishing pier of which is known locally as Ouway Meng.⁴⁸

Sompon Jirotmontree⁴⁹, the owner of Boonlarp Fishing L.P., operates one of the many fishing piers lining the Trang River in Kantang as well as a fleet of some 62 fishing vessels. A member of one of the most powerful families in Kantang, Mr. Jirotmontree has served two terms as the municipal mayor, a position his brother Soranont currently holds while his other brother Jaruwat acts as deputy mayor. At the time of the 2013 Kantang trafficking case, Mr. Jirotmontree was listed as a 'consultant' on the Kantang municipal website. Mr. Jirotmontree is the current President of the Trang Fishing Association and also heads the Council for the Monitoring and Inspection of the Kantang Police.

Pramote Cholwisit⁵⁰ is reportedly a lay judge as well as the owner of Jor Monchai L.P., the company that operates Chon Sin fishing pier, a large hotel in Trang and a local private school.⁵¹ According to official documents, Mr. Cholwisit has licenses and registrations for 40 fishing vessels under his name. Sohpon Mitphanphanit⁵² owns Wor Wattana Sohpon L.P., the parent company of Kantang's Wor Suphaporn fishing pier. Vessel and gear licences for 31 fishing boats existed in Mr. Mitrphanphanit's name in 2012. Mr. Mitrphanphanit is a major shareholder in multiple publicly listed companies – including the quasi-Government media giant MCOT and life insurance providers AIA Group Ltd. Although named by victims of abuse and confidential sources during interviews in 2015, EJP was not able to independently verify claims that Wor Wattana Sohpon L.P. is engaged in criminal activities.



Senior officers in the Kantang police reported to EJF that they estimated Ko Myo was responsible for the trafficking of around 700 migrant workers and the murder of 40 individuals.

Testimony from recent escapees reveals that fleets of Kantang fishing vessels routinely plunder the waters of Malaysia and Indonesia.



KNOWN BROKERS IN KANTANG'S FISHING INDUSTRY



"Ah Kyaw"



"Gah Gweh"



"Goh Yeh"



"Gah Thaug"



"Thet Kyo"

KNOWN RECRUITERS IN MYANMAR



"San Shey"



"Mama" or "Aunty"

People smuggler,
Kawthoung-Ranong



Ma Mar

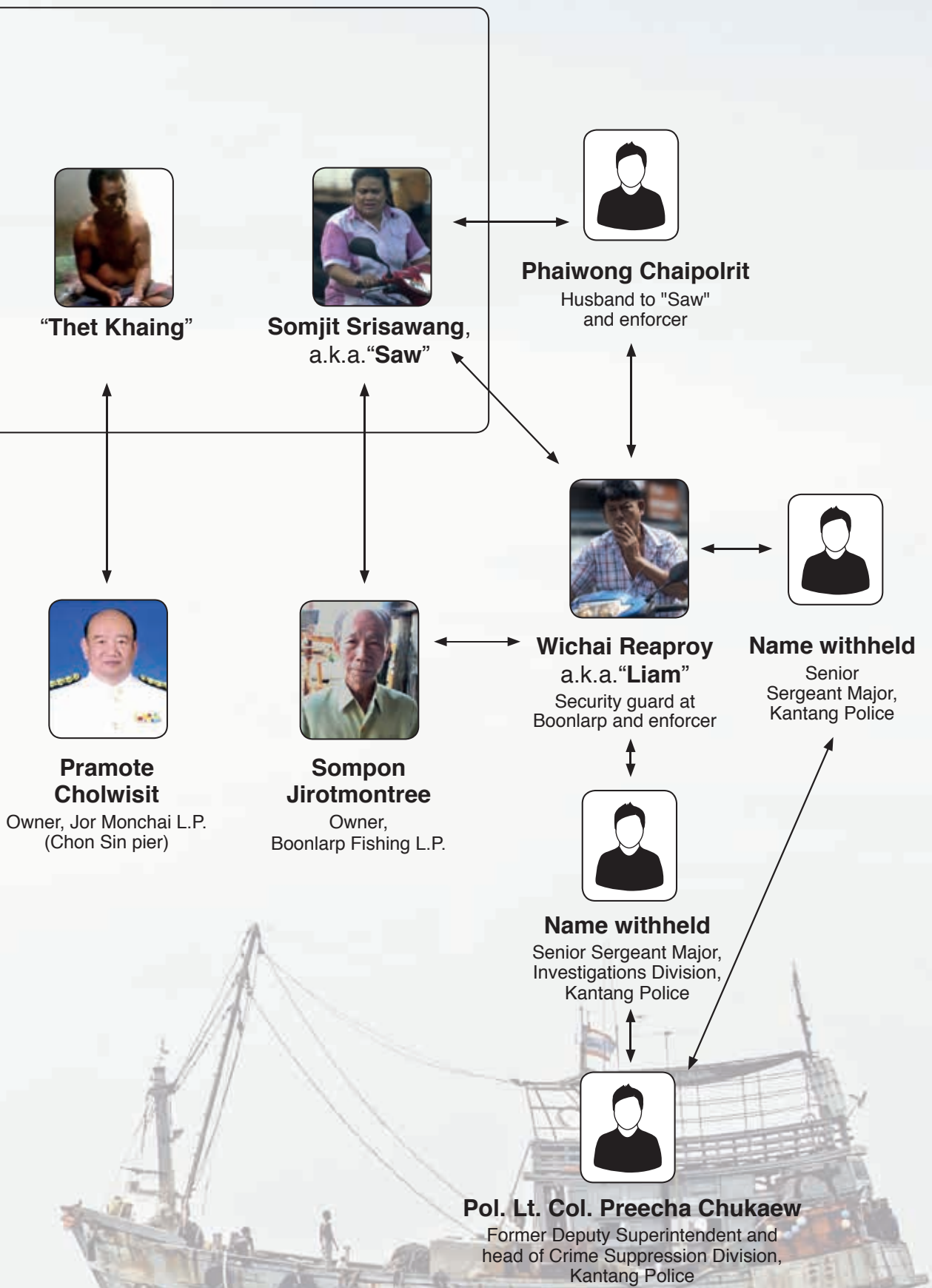
People smuggler,
Southern Thailand-Kantang

In mid-2015, EJF conducted in-depth interviews with six victims of slavery who had escaped from five different Boonlarp fishing vessels between February and August 2015. The testimony from each of the victims was hauntingly similar and, substantiated by further EJF investigations and interviews with multiple informants, revealed a sophisticated system for the trafficking, exploitation and violent abuse of vulnerable migrant workers in Kantang's fishing sector.



"Sarapong"

Ex-Immigration
Bureau Official
and people smuggler



THE JOURNEY TO KANTANG

The ordeals documented by EJF in 2015 typically began in the border town of Kawthoung, Myanmar, several years earlier. Burmese recruiters linked to Kantang-based trafficking networks approach would-be migrants with promises of good jobs, typically factory work, in Thailand.⁵³ Some recruiters gain the trust of their victims by plying them with gifts, alcohol and food.

The cross-border trade is coordinated by the wife of a senior Burmese immigration officer in Kawthoung, known to migrants only as 'Mama' or 'Aunty'.⁵⁴ The victims are smuggled across the border to the Thai province of Ranong where they are picked up by a transport network operated by a Burmese woman and resident of Kantang named Ma Mar.⁵⁵ Her network comprises boat captains and bus, pick-up truck, *songtaew* (a common Thai passenger vehicle) and motorbike taxi drivers who bring workers from Ranong to various destinations in Thailand, including the fishing piers in Kantang.

Victims described journeys to Kantang being made in multiple stages and via both overland and maritime routes, with traffickers switching vehicles and separating groups as people were segregated by final destination.⁵⁶

In 2014, officers in the Kantang Municipal Police admitted to EJF that Ko Myo – who heads the local trafficking network – was protected by a retired Senior Sergeant Major in Thailand's Immigration Bureau.⁵⁷ A confidential informant subsequently revealed to EJF how this former official, known by the name 'Sarapong', maintained a network of corrupt police and immigration officers manning the checkpoints from Ranong to Kantang.⁵⁸ Drivers in Ma Mar's network transporting victims of trafficking to Ko Myo would simply show a card on which the phone number of Sarapong was written before being waved through checkpoints. One victim of trafficking described to EJF how, as his group was separated and put into different pick-up trucks, two of the prettiest young Burmese girls were selected to travel to Sarapong's house in order to become his mistresses.⁵⁹

Upon arrival in Kantang, some trafficking victims are dropped off at the bridge two kilometres north of the town before being picked up by local motorbike taxi drivers in Ma Mar's network – many of whom also double as informants and enforcers for Kantang's various brokers. Trafficking victims arrive in Kantang destined for work at specific piers or under specific brokers, who coordinate with recruiters in Myanmar to place orders for trafficked crew. Ko Myo maintained strong links with recruiters in Myanmar and, in mid-2015, Kantang's brokers were still sourcing directly from Myanmar – with one of Ko Myo's former deputies even having returned to Myanmar to set himself up as a recruiter.⁶⁰



Trafficking networks involve a variety of actors from recruiters and carriers to corrupt officials and labour brokers. EJF's recent investigation highlights how Kantang's trafficking networks remained unbroken after high-profile arrests in 2013. © EJF

SLAVERY IN KANTANG'S FISHING INDUSTRY

Labour brokers in Thailand's fishing industry, almost universally operating through informal channels, charge arbitrarily high fees for transportation, recruitment, documentation and the provision of goods and services. These exorbitant costs leave workers vulnerable to debt bondage and brokers use the confiscation of documents and wages, deceit and restrictions on freedom of movement to lock vulnerable migrants into cycles of misery and exploitation. Many brokers use intimidation, threats, violence and even torture and murder to keep men on fishing boats and make an example of those who resist or attempt to escape.

Many of the victims of slavery aboard Kantang fishing vessels interviewed by EJF over the last two and a half years were originally trafficked to Thailand. The six men interviewed by EJF in 2015 had all been working in Kantang for several years and one for over two decades. Much of this report therefore addresses the system of debt bondage which keeps vulnerable men working in the fishing industry once they have been trafficked.

Article 1(a) of the United Nations 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery defines debt bondage as *"the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or of those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined"*. The United Nations Trafficking Protocol (one of the three Palermo Protocols adopted as a supplement to the 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and which was ratified by Thailand in October 2013) criminalises the use of bonded labour in Article 3(a) – as does Section 6(1) of Thailand's own Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, B.E. 2551 (2008).^{61/62/63}

Evidence gathered during EJF's recent investigation indicates that, since the arrest of Ko Myo in 2013, there has been one significant change at Kantang's fishing piers. During an interview with EJF in August 2015, Mr. Jirotmontree, owner of Boonlarp Fishing L.P., claimed that he had introduced a new payment system for workers following the 2013 allegations of trafficking, abuse and murder at his pier – crimes which he linked to Ko Myo.⁶⁴ Mr. Jirotmontree claimed that he pays workers directly without the involvement of brokers and that photographs of the exchange are taken for company records. However, testimony from victims and confidential sources dispute Mr Jirotmontree's account of the payment system at Boonlarp pier.⁶⁵

Six victims of slavery (who had escaped from five different Boonlarp vessels between February and August 2015) were able to pick out Mr. Jirotmontree from a random collection of pictures. They identified Mr. Jirotmontree as the man who handed them their wages in an envelope while a photograph of the exchange was taken, after which the money was handed to their broker – typically while Mr. Jirotmontree was still present and sometimes by Mr. Jirotmontree himself. Testimony from interviews at sea in August 2015, with two victims of debt bondage working aboard a Chon Sin fishing vessel, attested

“

Before Ko Myo was arrested, they never called me when they paid the wages. They didn't call the fishers. After the Ko Myo case, Bangkok police and some organisations visited the area. Since then, the company owner, Saw and the fishers were all present whenever wages were paid...

The company owner and his employees took photos and videos of us, just to prove that they had paid us our wages... They didn't take photos of Saw taking the wages back from us. This was the only difference. Apart from this, the lives of fishers remained the same.

”

Myo Thant Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking

to the same system at the Chon Sin pier – with a man described as the company owner Mr. Cholwisit being photographed handing them a packet of money which was then immediately given to their broker.⁶⁶ During subsequent interviews with EJF, confidential informants who corroborated this system at Chon Sin identified a picture of Mr. Cholwisit as the company owner and person present throughout the transfer.⁶⁷

The group of men rescued from Kantang fishing vessels by Thai authorities in 2013 represented only a fraction of the total number in need of assistance. By late 2013, a new group of brokers had stepped into the void created by the arrest of Ko Myo and three of his associates. Some of the prominent brokers supplying labour to Kantang's fishing piers during EJF's investigation in 2015 were in fact former deputies of Ko Myo. In 2015, EJF discovered that two brokers, a female Thai national named Somjit Srisawang⁶⁸ and known by the moniker 'Saw' and a male Burmese national called Thet Khaing, had successfully managed to assume control over a significant number of the men originally sold to Ko Myo. Locked in an unending cycle of exploitation and abuse, this group of men have become the silent victims of inadequate responses from both the Government and private sector.

Six escaped victims of trafficking interviewed by EJF in 2015 were able to identify an image of Saw from a randomised collection of people. All six confirmed that Saw was the abusive broker who controlled them and to whom Mr. Jirotmontree ultimately paid their wages. Saw reportedly controls fishers working from the piers of Kantang's three oldest fishing companies, all located adjacent to one another: Boonlarp, Chon Sin and Wor Suphaporn. One confidential source estimated that roughly 70 per cent of the workers controlled by Saw were previously working under Ko Myo, up until his arrest in 2013.⁶⁹ Saw works one or two hours a day sorting fish at Wor Suphaporn pier, using this part-time job as a cover to maintain the illusion that she leads a normal life.⁷⁰

In reality, Saw has been controlling workers at Kantang fishing piers since 1998 and has risen to become one of the town's most affluent and powerful brokers. Saw and her associates run a sophisticated system of debt bondage in order to force victims of trafficking and vulnerable economic migrants from Myanmar onto Thai fishing vessels and keep them there.

Once Saw has bought or established control over a fisher, she uses a variety of means to keep them in debt.⁷¹ Fishers will often take out advances on wages in order to stockpile personal goods and supplies for long-haul trips to sea. Saw turns these advances into 'loans', on which she then calculates extortionate levels of interest. Through the accumulation of crippling interest over the six to seven month terms that any given Boonlarp vessel is typically at sea, Saw is able to lock fishers into debt bondage. Tun Thet Soe⁷² told EIJ of how, after just three months at sea, a 4,000 baht (\$111) loan from Saw turned into 40,000 baht (\$1,116) of debt.⁷³ After more than 10 years working under Saw's control, Tun Thet Soe never once received the wages due to him.

Saw ensures that the money she does hand over to fishers is also spent on goods and services which she herself provides.⁷⁴ Just over 100 metres from the entrance to Boonlarp pier is Saw's general store which sells sundries, toiletries and alcohol at vast markups to fishers in port and by delivery to those on vessels. Deeper within the building is a karaoke bar and brothel, where Saw's prostitutes offer their services to fishers, providing another opportunity for Saw to inflate their debts. Saw's accounts are opaque and the men under her control are not allowed to see the records which list the value and breakdown of what they supposedly owe her. Fishers aren't even aware of the total value of their debt to Saw.

Katang's brokers take advantage of the vulnerability of migrant workers in Thailand – a country which has attracted condemnation from leading international human rights organisations for its systematic marginalisation and exploitation of its sizeable migrant workforce.⁷⁵ Many fishers, trafficked or smuggled into Kantang through labyrinthine routes, are unsure of their exact geographic location – let alone how to return back home. Few are aware of any means of asking for help – and the official hotlines printed on Government billboards in migrant-populated areas are actively distrusted. Facing language barriers and with few other options, fishers often end up returning to the clutches of Kantang's brokers whenever they attempt to get help to leave the port and return home.

“

I'd been working [at Boonlarp] for many years, I didn't get any money. Luckily, I didn't die. Here are the wounds that I got, where they stabbed me with their knives... I'd tried to escape from them ever since I was sent to the sea. But I was captured again, I was beaten. Since then, I decided that, whatever happens, I would run away when I went back to port.

”

Thein Myat, escaped victim of trafficking



A victim of trafficking picks out an image of broker Saw from a randomised selection of photographs of local people. All six escaped victims interviewed by EIJ identified Saw, the company owner and the security guard as being responsible for their abuse. © EIJ

AUNG KYI'S STORY ⁷⁶

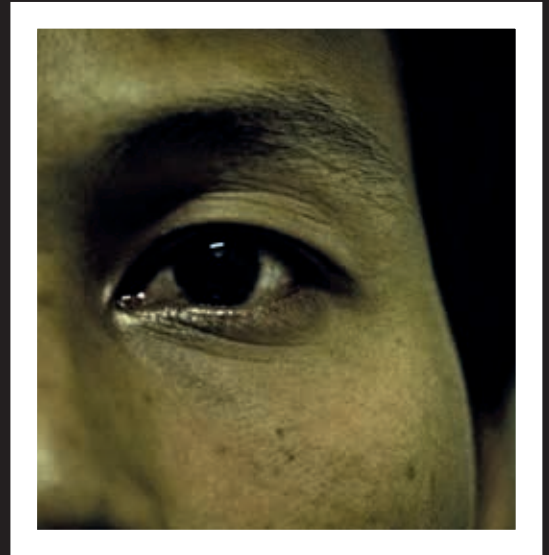
In April 2006, a motorbike taxi driver in the Burmese border town of Kawthoung offered Aung Kyi⁷⁷, who had just quit a low-paying job in the province, some decent work in a factory in Thailand. That evening, the taxi driver took Aung Kyi out drinking and, once they were drunk, Aung Kyi remembers the taxi driver offering him a place to stay. The man took Aung Kyi to the riverbank to get on a taxi boat.

When Aung Kyi woke up the following morning, he was in an unfamiliar room with around 20 other people. After a day waiting, the group was picked up by boats which landed somewhere in the Thai province of Ranong. From the shore they were loaded into eight pick-up trucks and drove through the day until reaching a lone house on a hill in the early evening. From there, they disembarked and were led on foot for three hours through the jungle before meeting another group of pick-up trucks, where they were separated by destination.

Aung Kyi's pick-up truck dropped him and eight male companions off in Kantang, where Aung Kyi would spend the next nine years of his life. As Aung Kyi saw the boats lining Kantang's river, he became filled with disappointment and trepidation. When the motorbike taxi dropped him off at Ouway Meng (JDP Co. Ltd.) pier, he and his companions were lined up and presented to the brokers – one of whom selected Aung Kyi and another three men. The broker told Aung Kyi that he now owed him 30,000 baht (\$837) for "transportation fees".

Aung Kyi would spend the next three years working to pay off this debt on an Ouway Meng (JDP Co. Ltd.) fishing boat. By 2009, finally free from one extortionate cycle of debt, Aung Kyi took a job on a Chon Sin carrier to try and earn enough money to fulfill his dream of returning home. After seven months and just 5,000 baht (\$139) in wages, Aung Kyi was told that the additional 20,000 baht (\$558) he was owed for his time at sea was now forfeit – four men had recently escaped from a Chon Sin fishing boat and the brokers had decided that he was to blame.

In desperation, Aung Kyi found work at Boonlarp pier, falling into the hands of Saw. After one term at sea on *Phokasathaporn 26*, Aung Kyi realised that he was being exploited again when, rather than receiving his wages, Saw informed him of the outstanding debts that he owed her. Aboard another Boonlarp



vessel *Phokasathaporn 20*, Aung Kyi met men who told him how Saw's system worked to entrap them all in a cycle of mounting debts. When *Phokasathaporn 20* arrived back in port, Aung Kyi, penniless and crippled by Saw's debts, decided to run away back to Ouway Meng (JDP Co. Ltd.) pier and work on a short-haul fishing boat.

As the Ouway Meng boat returned to shore after 12 days at sea, Saw's husband was waiting for him at the pier. Saw's husband was accompanied by an Ouway Meng security guard and two other men, both armed with handguns. Aung Kyi was warned by Saw's husband that these two companions were policemen. Saw's husband handcuffed Aung Kyi at the pier and escorted him back to Saw's compound, where he had Aung Kyi kneel on the floor. Placing the gun to Aung Kyi's forehead, Saw's husband demanded to know whether he "wanted to work or wanted to die".

Terrified for his life, Aung Kyi promised to go back to sea on the Boonlarp vessel *Duwong Pramong 5* and silently accepted the thousands of baht Saw added to his debt – which she told him was the amount paid to motorbike taxi drivers, corrupt police and the Boonlarp pier security guard in order to locate him and stop him from fleeing Kantang. Aung Kyi didn't attempt to escape from Saw again until four years later, in May 2015.

“

If we disappear for three or four hours whenever we are back in port, they assume we've fled. [The brokers] immediately show pictures of us to motorbike taxi drivers to get them to find us, offering them money if they bring us back. They also show the police and tell them who is escaping from which pier and offer them money as well to bring us back. That's what they do.

“

Aung Kyi, escaped victim of trafficking

“

Saw's husband pointed the gun at me and asked me "Why did you run away?" and said "I'm going to shoot you, do you want to die?". I begged him not to shoot me with my hands in the respectful, prayer-like position (wai).

“

Aung Kyi, escaped victim of trafficking

LIFE AT SEA

Life aboard a Thai fishing vessel can be a hellish experience with crew working inhumane hours in dangerous conditions, while often being subjected to verbal and physical abuse. Daily routines are strenuous and repetitive and shifts are irregular – with fishers having to work on demand to deploy or retrieve nets, undertake repairs and sort, clean and store fish. A 2013 International Labour Organization (ILO) survey of 596 fishers working aboard Thai vessels found that a quarter laboured between 17 and 24 hours a day with a further 14 per cent reporting 'indefinite' hours.⁷⁸

A separate study in 2014, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), similarly found that many fishers worked 20-hour days, seven days a week.⁷⁹ Almost 6 per cent of the surveyed fishers reported being force-fed methamphetamine to get them to work harder, faster and for longer. Fishers have reported working as long as three days and nights without rest.⁸⁰ The hours described to EJF by the men forced to work on Boonlarp vessels present clear violations of Thailand's 2014 Ministerial Regulation Concerning the Protection of Workers in the Marine Fisheries.

The provisions supplied to fishers aboard boats often form part of the system of debt bondage which keeps men trapped for years and even decades. Food deliveries to Boonlarp vessels typically consist of one or two chickens and several kilograms of pork along with bags of rice, oil and occasionally vegetables. According to victims of trafficking interviewed by EJF in 2015, although these supplies were meant to last between 10 and 12 crew members for a period of 10 days, they would often be exhausted after only three or four.⁸¹ Typically, the captain and other senior crew take most of the meat for themselves, leaving the fishers to subsist on boiled juvenile fish and other low-value catch.

Physically gruelling, repetitive work, poor nutrition and little regard for the safety or welfare of crew leaves many fishers with debilitating physical health issues. Victims have reported chronic headaches, malnourishment, back pain, lung conditions and digestion problems due to the working conditions onboard Thai fishing boats. Accidents are frequent, most commonly resulting in cuts, back and neck injuries. Almost half of fishers surveyed in the LSHTM and IOM study reported at least one serious injury, sometimes involving the loss of a body part, although few fishers received medical care.⁸²

Sickness or disability results in further injury. In 2015, Thein Myat told EJF how an elder, more experienced fisher fell sick with fever aboard a Boonlarp Fishing L.P. vessel which had no medical supplies.⁸³ Faced with a relatively inexperienced crew, the boat's captain decided to beat the elder fisher with a stick as he lay semi-conscious on the upper deck, until the captain was able to force the man to continue working. Verbal and physical abuse is common on Boonlarp vessels and shockingly prevalent throughout the entire industry. Over 65 per cent of the fishers interviewed by LSHTM and IOM for their 2014 study had experienced physical abuse during their time aboard Thai fishing vessels.⁸⁴

Tun Thet Soe experienced first-hand the cruelty of senior Thai crew when he mistakenly reported an incorrect count on the number of barrels of economic fish and trash fish to a captain.⁸⁵ The captain shouted at him and attempted to punch him but Tun Thet Soe pushed him away. In a furious rage, the captain then threw a knife at Tun Thet Soe which he narrowly dodged. Tun Thet Soe claimed to EJF that the captain subsequently held a grudge against Tun Thet Soe and made a further attempt on his life. As Tun Thet Soe worked in the hold used to store fish, the captain threw a bucket of ice at him. Upon seeing that he had failed, the captain reportedly descended into the hold to beat Tun Thet Soe.

Occasionally, the simple fear of abuse from senior crew can lead to tragic results. Aung Kyi related to EJF how on Boonlarp vessel *Duwong Pramong 5* he witnessed a fisher commit suicide.⁸⁶ Some days before, the man had left a lit cigarette on a threshold above a door on the boat which had charred the wooden frame. Once the captain was informed of the damage and had determined who was responsible, he slapped the fisher around the face with a sandal so hard that the man fell to the floor. The fisher fled to the front of the boat, which at that time was mid-trawl. The captain picked up a knife and beckoned him, telling him to come closer. Instead, the fisher chose to jump overboard and, when the crew pulled the nets 15 minutes later, he had disappeared and was presumed dead.

Reports of fishers witnessing suicides or even murders onboard fishing boats are disturbingly common. A study conducted by a regional UN trafficking task force based on the testimony of a small sample of trafficked fishers found that more than half had witnessed a murder at sea committed by a Thai boat captain.⁸⁷ As this report and other EJF reports detail, over the last two and a half years multiple victims and confidential informants have reported witnessing murders by captains and senior crew.

Entrapped by spiralling debts and surrounded by violence and abuse, life aboard Thai fishing boats is difficult to escape from. The 2014 LSHTM and IOM study found that out of 219 victims of trafficking interviewed for the research, the median number of days that fishers spent in a trafficking situation was 639.8 (one year and nine months).⁸⁸ Nearly half of the fishers had been in a trafficking situation longer than two years and the longest reported time was more than 10 years. In 2015, EJF asked each of the six Boonlarp escapees the question: "How many years would you say that you have worked at sea against your will, under compulsion or in order to pay off unfair debts to brokers?" Their answers were: 2 years; 2 years; 4 years; 5 years; 10 years; and 15 years.⁸⁹

The harrowing ordeal of the trafficking experience can devastate mental health. Survivors of trafficking have suffered trauma, aggression, substance abuse, and memory problems. The LSHTM and IOM report found that 62 per cent of interviewees showed symptoms of depression, 54 per cent of anxiety and 46 per cent of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁹⁰ Even if they manage to return home, most survivors do not receive proper support for the far-reaching physical, psychological and social effects of slavery in the Thai fishing industry.



“

If we hadn't caught any fish when the nets were pulled up, we were not given any food...If there was a chance before pulling the nets, we might get 15 or 30 minutes rest.

”

Aung Kyi, escaped victim of trafficking

“

The captain shouted at me; saying that he could kill me, that he doesn't care and that I am only Burmese.

”

Tun Thet Soe, escaped victim of trafficking

“

Whenever any food is cooked, the captain takes half of everything even though there are many more crew.

”

Thein Myat, escaped victim of trafficking

PHYSICAL ABUSE, TORTURE AND MURDER IN KANTANG'S FISHING INDUSTRY

Kantang's abusive brokers control fishers through a system of intimidation, forcible confinement, physical abuse and, in some cases, torture and murder – in order to limit the ability of their victims to escape the cycle of slavery. Thai broker Saw uses a network of informants and enforcers, often motorbike taxi drivers, to monitor, coerce and restrict the movements of crew while they are in port. Behind Saw's house, general store and brothel situated nearby to Wor Suphaporn, Boonlarp and Chon Sin piers are a series of rooms where victims describe being forcibly confined or kept under guard during the three to 12 days they are onshore in between terms at sea. Saw uses this as another opportunity to inflate fishers' debts: charging 500 baht (\$14) for the one meal provided each day in the morning, regardless of whether the food is actually consumed.⁹¹

Saw's husband, Phaiwong Chaipolrit⁹², serves as one of her principal enforcers and is said to be a former officer in the Royal Thai Police.⁹³ Victims of trafficking related to EJF how they had met failed escapees who had been forced back to sea, two of whom – men who had attempted to flee from *Phokasathaporn 34* – described being taken to Saw's house and beaten by her husband before being handcuffed and laid out on the ground.⁹⁴ Mr. Chaipolrit and two accomplices then tortured the two men by driving over their prone bodies on motorbikes. One of Saw's other main enforcers is the senior security guard at Boonlarp pier, a Thai national called Wichai Reaproy⁹⁵ known by his nickname 'Liam'. Confidential sources allege that Liam was also once an officer in the Royal Thai Police, although EJF was unable to verify this claim independently.⁹⁶



*Whenever I came back to port
they told me I owed them 20,000
or 30,000 baht [\$558 or \$837].
I couldn't ask why I owed this amount.
If I asked why, they would
beat me – any one of them would've
killed me, so I didn't ask.
I've seen beatings and killings before
so I didn't dare ask.*



Myo Thant Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking

Liam is quick to violence and renowned for his short temper.⁹⁷ He is feared by Thais and Burmese alike for his reputation as a prolific murderer. Among the local migrant community, Liam is known only as Beh Gyan Gyi – Burmese for “the wicked man”. All six victims of trafficking and exploitation aboard Boonlarp vessels interviewed by EJF in 2015 were able to identify an image of Liam from a random collection of pictures, describing him as the person responsible for the physical abuse of crew and multiple murders of migrant workers. Other sources from Kantang's Thai and Burmese communities were able to do the same.

Saw pays Liam to beat workers who cause trouble for her and uses her network of senior crew members on Boonlarp fishing vessels to deliver non-compliant fishers back to port on carrier vessels in order for Liam to physically abuse them.⁹⁸ Workers under Saw's control are charged 500 baht (\$14) every time they arrive and depart port on a Boonlarp vessel – Saw adds this to their debt, informing her victims that these payments are made directly to Liam. Victims of trafficking also alleged that Saw employs Liam to kill workers whom she feels she has lost control of, although EJF was unable to confirm a specific instance in which this has occurred. Among the older migrant fishers in Kantang, Saw herself also has a reputation as a murderer. Victims of trafficking referred to corpses of five migrants murdered by Saw which are buried at a clearing within the compound behind her general store and brothel.⁹⁹

Throughout EJF investigations spanning over two years, sources have described the regular discovery of corpses of murdered migrant fishers, found floating around the fishing piers lining the Trang River.¹⁰⁰ Many of these men were victims of torture and murder at the hands of Ko Myo and his gang – some of which Liam is said to have directly assisted with. However, multiple sources allege that Liam has also independently committed a series of murders of migrant workers at Boonlarp pier, stretching back to the 1990s. Liam has shot, stabbed and beaten migrant workers to death, occasionally in front of multiple eyewitnesses, before throwing their bodies into the Trang River.¹⁰¹

One particular incident dated to around August 2012 is common knowledge among both the Burmese and Thai communities of Kantang. It began with a fight between two migrant fishers at Boonlarp pier, one of whom – a man working on *Phokasathaporn 12* – was drunk. Liam proceeded to shoot the drunken worker who, injured by a flesh wound, immediately jumped into the Trang River to escape while the second fisher, fearing for his safety, did the same. Two migrant workers from Boonlarp pier subsequently entered the water to assist the injured individual. Liam approached the riverside and opened fire on all four individuals, killing each one. This multiple murder was committed in broad daylight at Boonlarp pier, in front of 10-30 eyewitnesses.¹⁰²

EJF investigations in 2015 uncovered that the execution of migrant workers in Kantang's fishing industry is ongoing. After the arrest of Ko Myo in 2013, the number of murdered fishers found floating in the Trang River around Kantang has reportedly reduced and some speculate that Liam, who briefly fled Kantang after he was shaken by the arrest of some of his main accomplices, has now stopped murdering migrant workers – in public at least.¹⁰³ However, testimonies provided to EJF by escaped victims of trafficking and confidential informants described multiple specific murders which had occurred onshore and at sea aboard Boonlarp and Chon Sin fishing vessels since the arrest of Ko Myo.¹⁰⁴

“

There was a Burmese guy from Taungoo called Anya. He went [to another boat during transshipment] to relax with his friends. When he came back, the [Phokasathaporn 29] captain kicked him. Anya cursed, he cursed at the captain. Without saying anything, the captain went to his cabin and took his gun and shot Anya two or three times through the window. Afterwards, they threw Anya into the sea. That captain is still alive in Kantang.

”

Thein Myat, escaped victim of trafficking

Thet Khaing, a Burmese national and one of Kantang’s two most powerful brokers, controls workers on Chon Sin fishing vessels and was described to EJF as 'the new Ko Myo' – indicating his reputation for cruelty and violence. Thet Khaing uses the same system of debt bondage as Saw at Boonlarp pier, including the provision of goods and supplies to fishers at vast mark-ups in order to increase their debts. Similarly, Thet Khaing collects the wages of the fishers under his control – reportedly through the same process of falsified written and photographic records of payment which is directly facilitated by Chon Sin’s owner, Mr. Cholwisit. Confidential informants implicate Thet Khaing in around 20 murders since the arrest of Ko Myo in 2013. In 2015, sources informed EJF that Thet Khaing maintains a network of enforcers both onshore and aboard Chon Sin vessels who beat and, in extreme cases, assassinate non-compliant workers on Thet Khaing’s orders.¹⁰⁵

One informant described to EJF one of the most recent murders at sea which occurred in June 2015. As a group of Chon Sin fishing boats gathered together near the tourist island of Koh Lipe to transfer fish to the carrier *Wor Sapmongkon 2*, one of Thet Khaing’s enforcers – a mechanic on Chon Sin vessel *Thanomchon 2* – approached a worker from *Thanomchon 15* and stabbed him eight times in front of multiple witnesses. Thet Khaing had reportedly ordered this execution because the fisher had complained about the crippling rate of interest that he was being charged on his debts. The corpse of the murdered fisher was stored aboard the vessel until the transshipment was complete and then thrown into the ocean as *Thanomchon 15* and *Thanomchon 2* departed the group of islands around Koh Lipe in order to head back out to sea to fish.¹⁰⁶



Liam, one of Boonlarp’s enforcers, is allegedly responsible for a string of violent murders stretching back to the 1990s. Although public executions in Kantang have apparently decreased over the last two years, EJF uncovered evidence of multiple recent murders committed by trafficking gangs. © EJF

THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL POLICE IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN KANTANG'S FISHING INDUSTRY

Victims of trafficking and local sources interviewed by EJF over the last three years have consistently underlined that corrupt elements within the Kantang police force are directly and indirectly involved in a range of criminal activities at multiple fishing piers, including Boonlarp, Chon Sin, Wor Suphaporn and Ouway Meng.¹⁰⁷ According to one confidential source, Pol. Lt. Col. Preecha Chukaew¹⁰⁸, former Deputy Superintendent and chief of the Crime Suppression Division unit of the Kantang Municipal Police, coordinated a group of corrupt officers who maintained close links to fishing company owners and were actively involved in the intimidation, arbitrary arrest, extortion, trafficking, physical abuse and even murder of migrant workers.¹⁰⁹

Following the arrest of Kyo Myo and his associates in mid-2013, Pol. Lt. Col. Preecha Chukaew was transferred to the nearby city of Trang; where he currently serves as Deputy Superintendent of the Trang Provincial Police.^{110/111} In an interview with EJF in 2014, a senior officer in the Kantang police claimed that a Bangkok-based unit of Thailand's Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTD) was investigating individuals in the local police force in relation to the 2013 Boonlarp case.¹¹² In 2015, multiple sources affirmed that over the last two years – since the arrival of a new Superintendent and Deputy in charge of the Crime Suppression Division, Pol. Col. Apichai Kobpetch¹¹³ and Pol. Lt. Col. Isaraphong Jina¹¹⁴ – the local police have improved.¹¹⁵

However, despite the transfer of Pol. Lt. Col. Chukaew and some of his associates, a corrupt faction within Kantang's police force still remains. One source estimated to EJF in 2015 that approximately 40 per cent of Pol. Lt. Col. Chukaew's corrupt network continues to be posted in Kantang – including around half of the officers in the Investigations Division unit as well as other officers in the Crimes Suppression Division unit.¹¹⁶

“

We are illegal if we leave [Saw's] compound and the police can arrest us anytime. If we try to do so, Saw buys us back from the police.

”

Thura Aung, escaped victim of trafficking



Corrupt elements within local enforcement agencies have directly facilitated, concealed and profited from criminal activities in Kantang's fishing industry. EJF's investigation underscores how the Thai Government has yet to act to address official complicity in trafficking crimes. © EJF

Off-duty Royal Thai Police officers reportedly engage in remunerated work to “maintain security” at premises in a variety of different sectors across Thailand. In Kantang’s fishing industry, corrupt police officers receive payments and bribes from brokers, pier staff and company owners.¹¹⁷ The close-knit community around Boonlarp, Chon Sin and Wor Supharn piers is populated with informants and enforcers working for Kantang’s brokers, ranging from pier staff to motorbike taxi drivers.¹¹⁸ Victims of trafficking report that within three to four hours of the disappearance of a migrant fisher from port, brokers will assume an escape attempt and begin providing pictures of the individual to motorbike taxi driver informants and corrupt police officers – offering them money for the fisher’s return.¹¹⁹

Escaped victims interviewed by EJF in 2015 reported that migrants attempting to flee Thai broker Saw had been arbitrarily arrested and, without even being taken back to the station for processing, sold back to Saw for between one and two thousand baht (\$27 to \$55). Following this, Saw will typically add roughly double the amount which was paid by her to the police to the victim’s debt. The same testimonies also describe Saw calling local police officers to arrest inebriated workers and detain them in cells overnight, in order for Saw to collect them from the station in the morning and ‘charge’ them for this service.¹²⁰

Thura Aung¹²¹ recalled witnessing how one member of the *Phokasathaporn 34* crew attempted to escape from Saw’s compound in January 2015. With Saw’s husband blocking the main exit, the fisher chose to slip out through the back. As the fisher turned the corner onto the street, he encountered local police officers and was immediately arrested. Although Saw added 5,000 baht (\$139) to the fisher’s debt, explaining that this was what she had paid to avert his arrest, the fisher reportedly heard the officers charge Saw only 4,000 baht (\$111) for his return.¹²²



Get rid of the old cadre of [corrupt officers], the ones that are connected to the piers. Transfer all of them out and the drug trade will collapse, human trafficking will reduce and the number of dead migrants will plummet.



Confidential informant

Kantang’s corrupt police are not just involved in working with brokers to keep trafficked fishers on boats and in debt. Evidence gathered by EJF over the last three years indicates that elements within the Kantang police force have knowingly suppressed investigations into suspected multiple murder cases and – in particular instances – directly participated in the killing of migrant workers.¹²³ Informants described the general investigative process following the discovery of a murdered migrant fisher as perfunctory and ineffective – with police officers undertaking routine enquiries at Kantang’s fishing piers even when the perpetrator was almost certainly known to them, as well as the migrant workers and witnesses too scared to speak out.¹²⁴

In 2014, a senior officer in the Kantang police informed EJF that a multiple murder case from August 2012, involving migrant victims from Boonlarp pier, was not under investigation because the police were unable to locate the corpses.¹²⁵ However, EJF investigations have determined that the Kantang police pressured key witnesses into not revealing specific details around the recovery of four corpses from the Trang River – either publicly or to Thailand’s Department of Special Investigation (DSI) during a 2013 investigation – and have failed to open any investigation into this multiple murder case, despite knowing the location at which the four corpses in question are buried.¹²⁶

Testimony provided to EJF over the last two and a half years names one Senior Sergeant Major¹²⁷ still serving within the Kantang Municipal Police as an accomplice to a series of murders of migrant workers committed by Liam, the senior security guard at Boonlarp pier.¹²⁸ One confidential source claims that Liam’s freedom to operate with impunity is a result of the direct protection he receives from a different Senior Sergeant Major in the Investigations Division unit of the Kantang Municipal Police.^{129/130} Thai and Burmese local informants also referred to the protection that Boonlarp company owner Mr. Jirotmontree bestows on Liam through his personal patronage.¹³¹ As chair of the Council for the Monitoring and Inspection of the Kantang Police, Mr. Jirotmontree’s influence extends to local enforcement agencies.

One source close to the 2013 Boonlarp trafficking case revealed to EJF that the investigating officers came under significant pressure and had fielded phone calls from several of Mr Jirotmontree’s “powerful connections” (เส้นใหญ่).¹³² Testimony from migrant workers rescued from Boonlarp vessels in 2013 indicates that Mr. Jirotmontree was given privileged and pre-arranged access to the victims during their multiple stays at the Kantang police station and that associates of Mr. Jirotmontree attempted to pressure the victims into not implicating the owner or his company by recalling identifying features of the vessels on which they were forced to work – this coercion included offers of money in exchange for dropping the case and returning home to Myanmar.^{133/134}

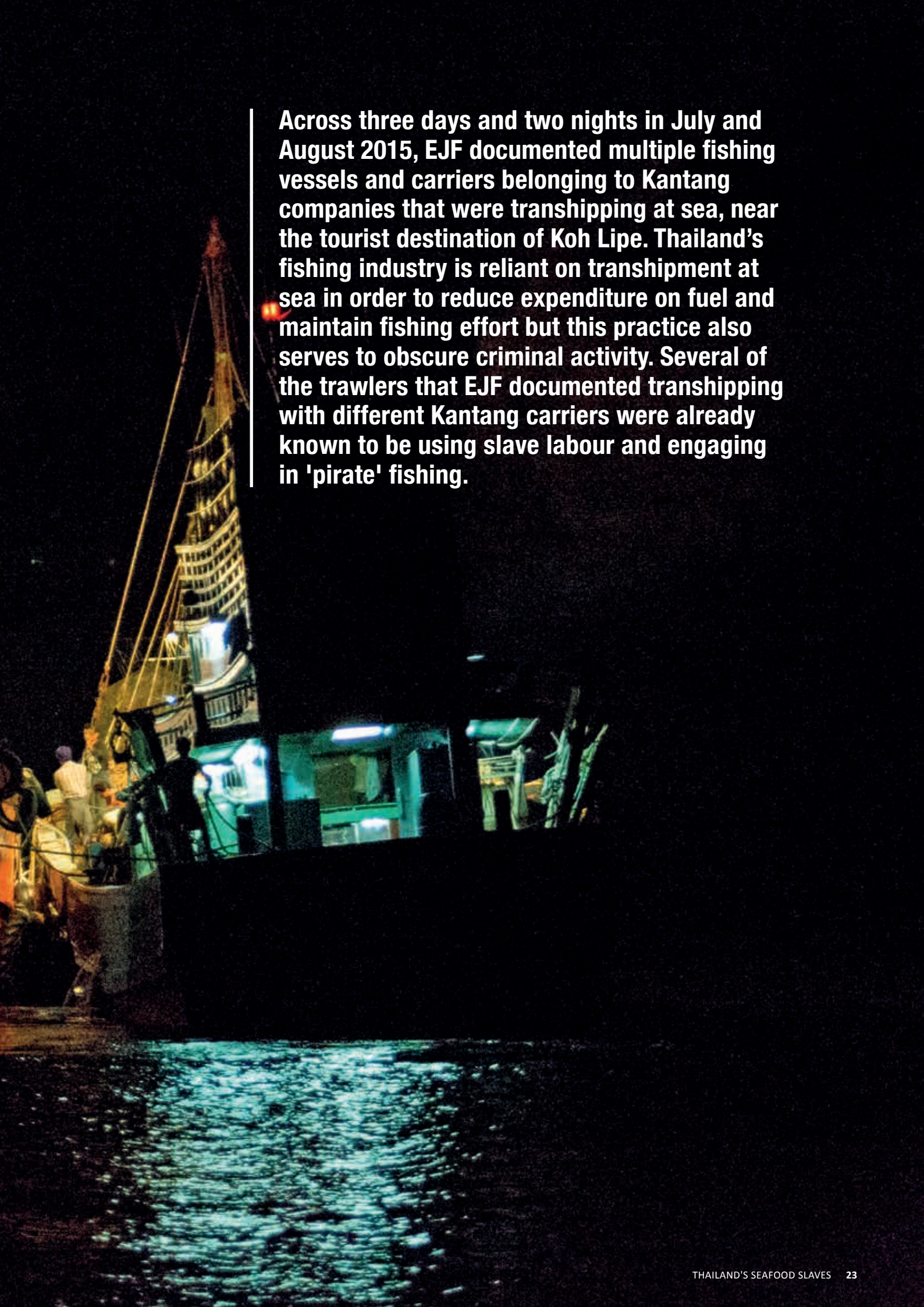


Some Thai officials are complicit in trafficking crimes and corruption continues to undermine anti-trafficking efforts.



US State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, 2015



A photograph of a fishing vessel at night. The vessel's deck is illuminated with bright blue lights, creating a strong contrast against the dark background. The vessel's mast and rigging are visible, and the water in the foreground is dark with some light reflections. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Across three days and two nights in July and August 2015, EJF documented multiple fishing vessels and carriers belonging to Kantang companies that were transshipping at sea, near the tourist destination of Koh Lipe. Thailand's fishing industry is reliant on transshipment at sea in order to reduce expenditure on fuel and maintain fishing effort but this practice also serves to obscure criminal activity. Several of the trawlers that EJF documented transshipping with different Kantang carriers were already known to be using slave labour and engaging in 'pirate' fishing.

MYO THANT KYAW'S ESCAPE¹³⁵

In 2010, Myo Thant Kyaw thought he was on his way to work at a furniture factory in Surat Thani. Instead, he had been tricked by a broker and was taken to Kantang and sold to Ko Myo for 35,000 baht (\$976). Ko Myo put Myo Thant Kyaw to work on a series of Boonlarp vessels and, after Ko Myo's arrest, he fell under Saw's control. Five years after first being forced to fish aboard Boonlarp vessels, on 21st July 2015, Myo Thant Kyaw and one other worker – who had recently been trafficked to Kantang and only been working under Saw for a few months – jumped off of *Phokasathaporn 20* as it made its way to the transhipment location.

Myo Thant Kyaw and the younger worker jumped off *Phokasthaporn 20* at 03:30 AM next to a scattering of small islands southeast of Koh Tong. As the sun rose, eight Boonlarp vessels started searching the area for them. By 09:00 AM, the captains had sent trusted crew onto Koh Tong to retrieve the escapees. The crew fired handguns into the undergrowth in an attempt to flush the fleeing workers out but Myo Thant Kyaw and his companion had already reached safety at the summit of a mountain on Koh Tong. With his mobile phone – their only source of communication – running low on battery, Myo Thant Kyaw started to make calls.

With the assistance of several organisations, including EJF, and an associate of Myo Thant Kyaw's working in a karaoke bar nearby to Saw's compound, the escapees were eventually picked up from Koh Tong by boat and taken to Koh Lipe. The next morning, Myo Thant Kyaw and his companion travelled to Pak Bara in Satun province by ferry where they were picked up by EJF staff. Declining to join other rescued and escaped Boonlarp victims in a nearby safehouse, the fishers decided to go to Phuket to stay with family members and find new jobs.

Several days later, Myo Thant Kyaw called for assistance. He had been drinking juice at a shop when two men pulled up on a motorbike and asked him who he was. The men left but then returned with two more men and began to glance at Myo Thant Kyaw suspiciously. Myo Thant Kyaw decided he was being followed by men sent by Saw and fled to find Burmese at the fishing port whom he could ask for help. However it seemed to Myo Thant Kyaw that the men at the port seemed to want to sell him back to a fishing boat. Desperate and penniless, he returned to the shop and informed the shopkeeper in Thai that he required assistance. The shopkeeper took him by motorbike to a local hospital, reasoning that the men pursuing Myo Thant Kyaw could not attack him in such a public place. After staying in the hospital grounds for one night, Myo Thant Kyaw was rescued by a local organisation and taken to a safehouse.



“

I thought that if I kept wandering, [the men sent by Saw] could kill me anytime. My life would be lost unfairly. But I didn't care about them, I was ready. I stayed under the balcony of the hospital and I gathered three bricks: I was waiting for them, I was ready to hit them. I called an organisation and the next morning they came to pick me up.

”

Myo Thant Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking

“

When I jumped into the sea, I'd decided that I would either escape or die trying.

”

Myo Thant Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking



OVERFISHING AND 'PIRATE' FISHING IN KANTANG'S FISHING INDUSTRY

During interviews with EJF in 2014 and 2015, Mr. Jirotmontree – owner of Boonlarp Fishing L.P.– highlighted how, over the last few decades, declining yields of marine fish in Thai territorial waters and rising operational costs had prompted him to ground a significant portion of the Boonlarp fleet. Government statistics broadly agree with Mr. Jirotmontree. As detailed in EJF's 2015 report *Pirates and Slaves*, Thailand's fisheries have been in crisis for decades. Nationally, catches of marine fish have plummeted by 86 per cent since the late 1960s, as measured by kilograms of fish caught in one hour of fishing or 'catch per unit effort' (CPUE). The area in which Boonlarp and Chon Sin 'pirate' fishing vessels operate is actually one of the least overfished in the country – Department of Fisheries statistics rank this southernmost fishery of the Andaman coast as having the fourth highest yield among Thailand's 13 survey zones.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, environmental degradation drives 'pirate' fishing and slavery in Kantang's fishing industry just as it does elsewhere in Thailand and other regions of the world.

“

If you compare with many years ago, or three or five years ago, [trash fish] yields are going down just the same.

”

Sompon Jirotmontree, owner of Boonlarp Fishing L.P.

Between 2011 and 2012, marine fish yields in the region where Boonlarp and Chon Sin vessels operate dropped by 32 per cent and trash fish yields in the Andaman Sea almost halved in the two years to 2012.^{137/138} As revenues from catches decline, vessel operators are not only seeking to slash labour costs through the use of slavery but also to increase profits by fishing illegally in areas where yields are better. According to local sources and crew interviewed by EJF over the last two and a half years, Kantang's fishing companies have long been engaged in Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in Thai, Malaysian and Indonesian waters.

During a 10- to 12-day trip, Boonlarp fishing vessels can range beyond 350 kilometres from the transshipment location nearby to Thailand's tourist destination of Koh Lipe. The transshipment location itself is less than 150 kilometres from the tri-border area between the Thai, Malaysian and Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). By crossing into another EEZ and fishing illegally, Boonlarp vessels are able to significantly increase the value of their catches. One Boonlarp crew member estimated that while 70 to 80 per cent of a typical catch in Thai waters might be comprised of trash fish, a catch from trawling illegally in Indonesia would contain around only 40 per cent trash fish – with bigger and better economic fish too.¹³⁹

The overall CPUE in both the Gulf and Andaman Seas has plummeted by more than 86 per cent since 1966, making Thai waters among the most overfished regions on the planet.¹⁴⁰

“

When the [Indonesian] Navy came to catch us, we just moved to fishing zone five [in Thailand] or went to Malaysian waters to steal fish.

”

Aung Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking

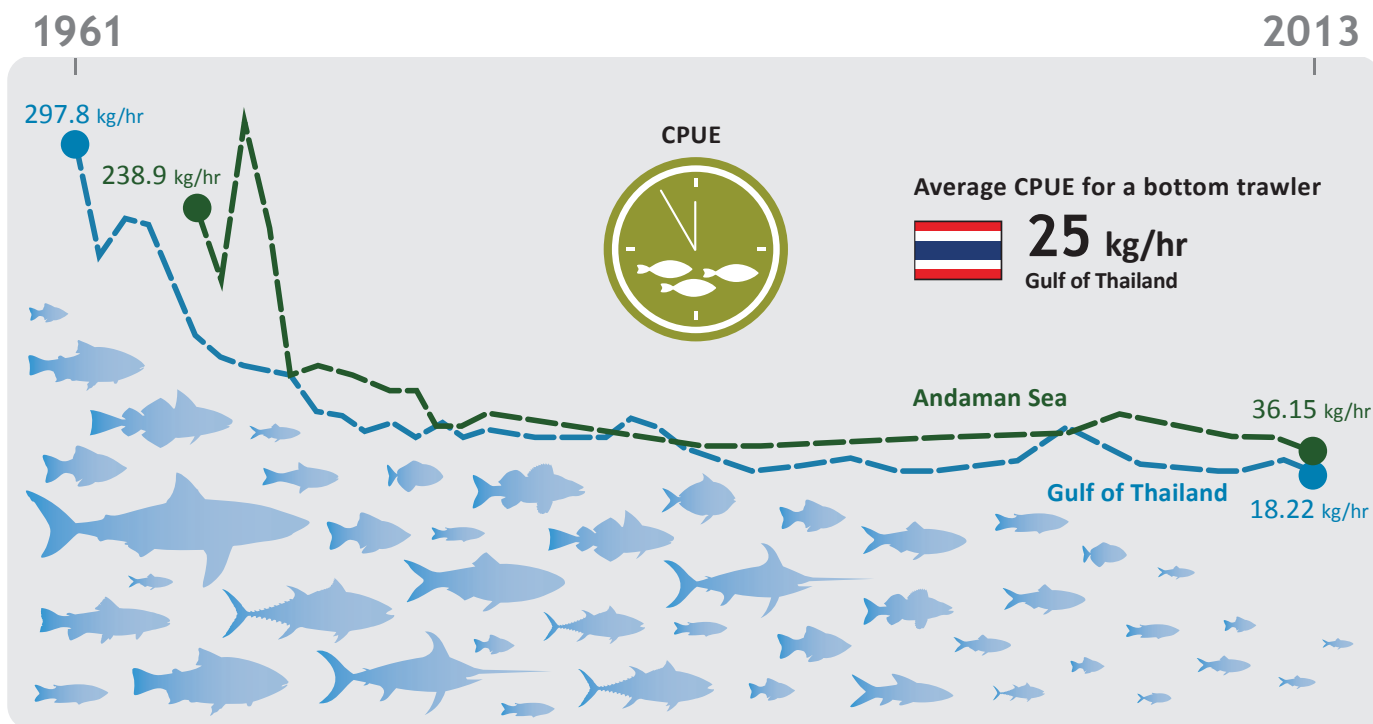
“

All of the [Boonlarp] boats that I worked on fished illegally. All nine of them.

”

Aung Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking

Up to 10-12% of raw material in Thai fishmeal is from 'pirate' fishing vessels¹⁴¹



In 2013 and 2015, EJF interviewed trafficking victims from Boonlarp fishing vessels who described trawling illegally in Indonesian and Malaysian waters. All six of the victims from Boonlarp vessels who were interviewed in 2015 explained to EJF in detail how the various Kantang fishing vessels they had worked on had fished illegally in foreign waters.¹⁴² One common observation was how fishing nets would be released or cut as soon as vessels from the Malaysian or Indonesian Navies were sighted. Captains would flee across into a neighbouring EEZ to escape authorities – only to return later to retrieve the expensive nets, still floating in the water from the pre-attached buoys. Fishing boat captains would also often change flags when entering another country's waters to ensure, for example, that they were using a Thai flag in Thai waters and a Malaysian flag in Malaysian waters. One fisher reported the concealment of his vessel's name and number during its last illegal incursion into foreign waters shortly before his escape in May 2015.¹⁴³

All six escaped victims interviewed by EJF in 2015 reported a drastic reduction in illegal incursions into Indonesian waters since the end of 2014. This testimony coincides with the hard-line approach against IUU fishing introduced in late 2014 by Indonesia's newly-appointed Minister for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Susi Pudjiastuti.¹⁴⁴ Enhanced monitoring, control and surveillance and the high-profile seizure and scuttling of multiple foreign IUU vessels by Indonesian authorities no doubt acted as an effective deterrent to Kantang's 'pirate' fishing fleets – local informants and victims informed EJF in 2015 that six Boonlarp and ten Chon Sin boats had been seized by Indonesian authorities for illegal fishing.¹⁴⁵ Indonesia's uncompromising approach to IUU fishing in its waters has nevertheless been unable to halt illegal fishing by Kantang fishing vessels throughout 2015. According to interviews with the group of escapees, at least two Boonlarp vessels, *Phokasathaporn 23* and *Phokasathaporn 35*, had fished illegally in Malaysian waters within the three months prior to their escape in May 2015.¹⁴⁶

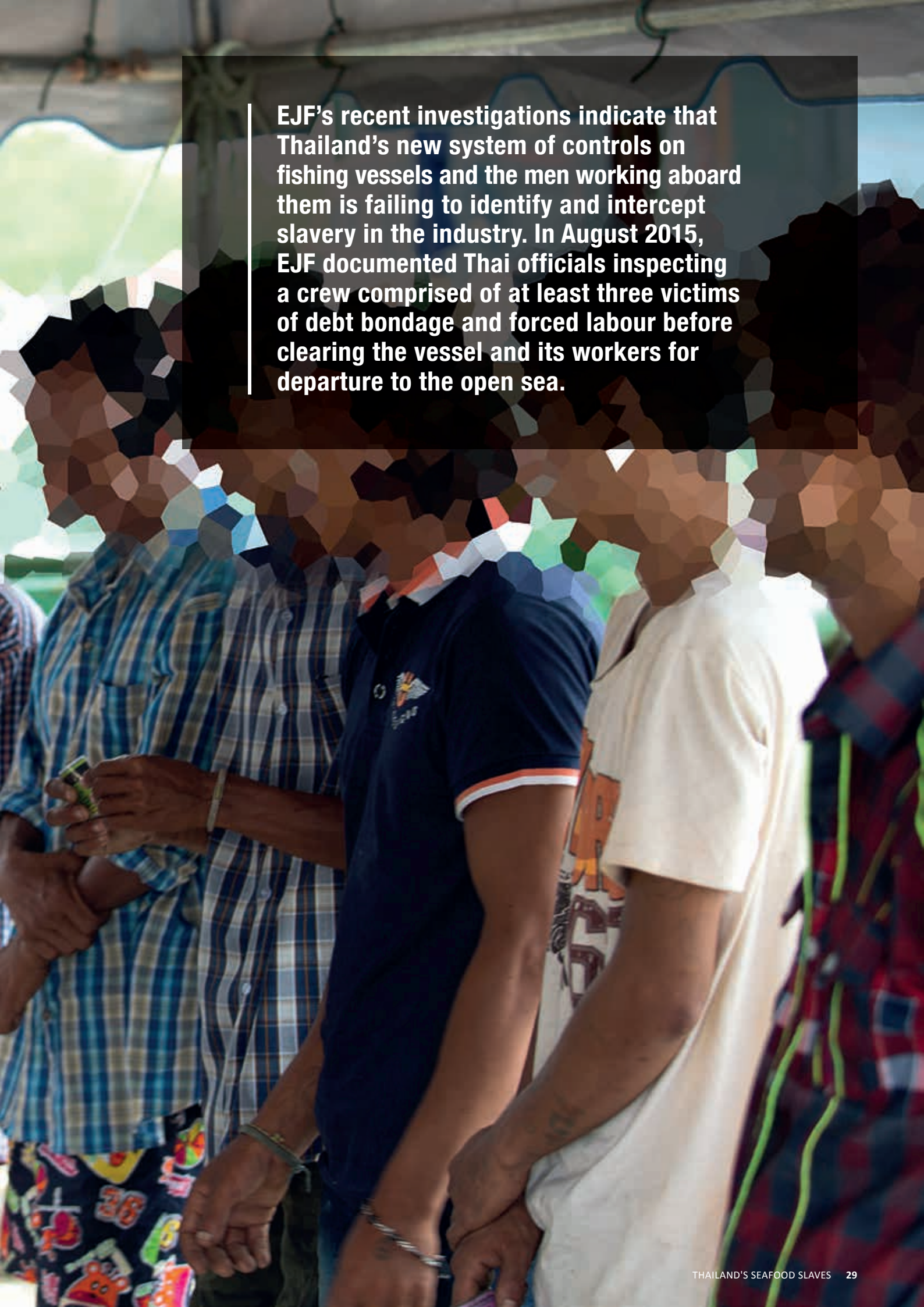
“

We used Malaysian and Indonesian flags occasionally. We didn't change flags when we were fishing in Thai waters, where we'd only use a Thai flag. The Indonesian flag was used when we were fishing in Indonesian waters. Then we'd remove the Indonesian flag on return to Thai waters and replace it with the Thai one.

”

Tun Thet Soe, escaped victim of trafficking





EJF's recent investigations indicate that Thailand's new system of controls on fishing vessels and the men working aboard them is failing to identify and intercept slavery in the industry. In August 2015, EJF documented Thai officials inspecting a crew comprised of at least three victims of debt bondage and forced labour before clearing the vessel and its workers for departure to the open sea.

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS SLAVERY IN KANTANG

In late 2014, and in anticipation of the 'yellow card' issued by the EU in April 2015, Thailand prepared to embark on an ambitious plan of action to reform its fisheries sector.¹⁴⁷ As the July deadline for compliance with multiple policies mandated under Thailand's new Fisheries Act, B.E. 2558 (2015) approached, vessel operators across the country rose up in protest – with stoppages from over 3,000 non-compliant fishing boats supposedly costing the Thai economy more than \$400 million a month.¹⁴⁸ Kantang fishing vessels were among those grounded. In late June 2015, Boonlarp owner Mr. Jirotmontree – in his capacity as President of the Trang Fishing Association – stated that 57 and then “almost 100” of Kantang's 192 operational boats over 30 gross tonnes (GT) had stopped fishing due to not having the correct licences for their fishing equipment.^{149/150}

As industry pressure against the Thai Government mounted, Prime Minister Gen. Prayuth Chan-o-cha accused elements within the National Fisheries Association of Thailand of persuading legal operators to join the stoppages in order to manipulate official policy.¹⁵¹ The Fisheries Association in Trang, according to Mr. Jirotmontree, had engaged in no such thing, explaining that although legal operators had returned to port it was only for a brief stay of five days and this was not part of an attempt to pressurise the Government.¹⁵² Barely one week after refusing to delay the new requirements despite the stoppages, the Prime Minister performed an embarrassing U-turn and granted a two-month extension of the deadline to vessel operators across the country.^{153/154}

One of the cornerstones of the country's new raft of controls and regulations rests on the implementation of its Port in – Port out (PIPO) system, piloted across four provinces in April and rolled out nationwide in May.¹⁵⁵ An inter-agency collaboration under Royal Thai Navy coordination, Thailand's PIPO checkpoints reportedly inspect every fishing vessel weighing 30 or more GT each time they enter and depart port. PIPO officials check 15 different aspects of each boat, from the vessel registration and engineer's certificate to the crew manifest and safety equipment. By the end of October 2015, PIPO officials had performed over 100,000 inspections of vessels including almost two million inspections of crew members.¹⁵⁶

Recent EJF investigations bring into question the extent to which Thailand's PIPO system is controlling illegal fishing and slavery. EJF was able to determine that, since the implementation of the new PIPO checks in June 2015, two Kantang carriers had only been inspected on half the occasions when they arrived back in port.¹⁵⁷ These carriers, transferring catch from fishing vessels associated with 'pirate' fishing and slavery, represent a severe supply chain risk to purchasers of Thai seafood products.

Evidence gathered from the nearby town of Songkhla, site of one of the country's biggest and most notorious ports, corroborates this, with a Department of Fisheries PIPO official confirming that vessels are not always inspected on arrival in port.¹⁵⁸ In June, EJF witnessed one carrier land fish in Songkhla's public port without transferring the required documentation to PIPO officials; carriers are meant to receive physical copies of fishing logbooks from the vessels that they tranship with and then complete what is known as a Marine Catch Transhipment Document (MCTD).

Interviews with captains in Songkhla revealed that, despite the fact that the completion of fishing logbooks has been a requirement for several years, many captains are still unable or unwilling to complete them and instead rely on taking rough notes which Government officials then transcribe into logbooks over the phone or on the carrier's return to port.¹⁵⁹

During interviews with EJF between June and August 2015, PIPO officials in both Kantang and Songkhla were confident that the vessel screenings they undertake have eliminated trafficking, forced and bonded labour from local fishing fleets.^{160/161} Similar claims have been made by senior Government figures and official documents.¹⁶² High-ranking Royal Thai Police and Ministry of Labour officials have recently visited major ports in central and southern Thailand and declared them free of trafficking and exploitation.^{163/164} In late May 2015, the chief of Kantang's PIPO taskforce and a Department of Labour Protection and Welfare official claimed that no instances of human trafficking or child labour had been identified during inspections of 478 crew on vessels belonging to 11 fishing piers.¹⁶⁵ EJF's investigations directly contradict such optimistic assessments.

On 20 July 2015, EJF documented Boonlarp vessel *Phokasathaporn 19* go through the PIPO system as it departed Kantang for the open sea. The previous week – with help from others who escaped from Boonlarp boats earlier in the year – Yu Win¹⁶⁶ had fled from *Phokasathaporn 19* one night whilst it was moored at the pier.¹⁶⁷ Yu Win had originally been sold to Boonlarp under Ko Myo for 40,000 baht (\$1,116) in 2012. Later, he was transferred to Saw. Yu Win described having his freedom of movement restricted and being forcibly confined while he was onshore. He had met fishers who had been beaten and tortured after being re-captured during escape attempts. In mid-July 2015, in between trips to the hospital because he was sick, Yu Win was told to wait out a spell of bad weather aboard the *Phokasathaporn 19*. He seized his chance and fled from the boat that night.



“

We just want to go back home. We have no future here, nothing has changed. We are working like slaves.

”

Ko Ko Soe, victim of trafficking working aboard *Phokasathaporn 19*

In early August 2015, EJF spoke by phone with Ko Ko Soe¹⁶⁸, a fisher aboard *Phokasathaporn 19* while it was at sea. Ko Ko Soe reported that he and three other Burmese crew aboard the vessel were victims of debt bondage and forced labour.¹⁶⁹ They had all been on the vessel for three to four years and did not understand how they were in constant debt to Saw, which resulted in them receiving less than 10 per cent of the wages due to them. These men, who had gone through the PIPO system less than two weeks before, told EJF that they wanted to jump off the boat in order to escape their ordeal. They are not the only victims that Thailand’s new systems are failing to identify and assist.

In late July 2015, another Boonlarp vessel, *Phokasathaporn 34*, returned to port in Kantang. Like the *Phokasathaporn 19*, this vessel had also recently lost a crew member – when one victim of trafficking decided to risk escaping from port earlier in the year.¹⁷⁰ Multiple confidential sources informed EJF that, once the crew came ashore, Saw confiscated the mobile phones of three workers and confined them to her compound – suspecting that the men were using phones to coordinate an escape.¹⁷¹ Several days later, on 2nd August 2015, at least one of the men did indeed attempt to escape. He was caught by Saw’s informants and enforcers and returned to Liam, the security guard at Boonlarp pier, who proceeded to beat him. Two days later, Saw forced the fisher back on the *Phokasathaporn 34* as it prepared to depart Kantang.



The *Phokasathaporn 19* arrives at the PIPO checkpoint in August 2015. EJF’s recent investigation uncovered severe shortcomings in this cornerstone initiative of new Government controls © EJF

“

The Thai Navy, the police and other authorities inspect [the workers], who all have ID cards, without asking how they arrived there. Simply by possessing an ID card, they are cleared. But the truth is that many who were trafficked by the brokers are still at sea.

”

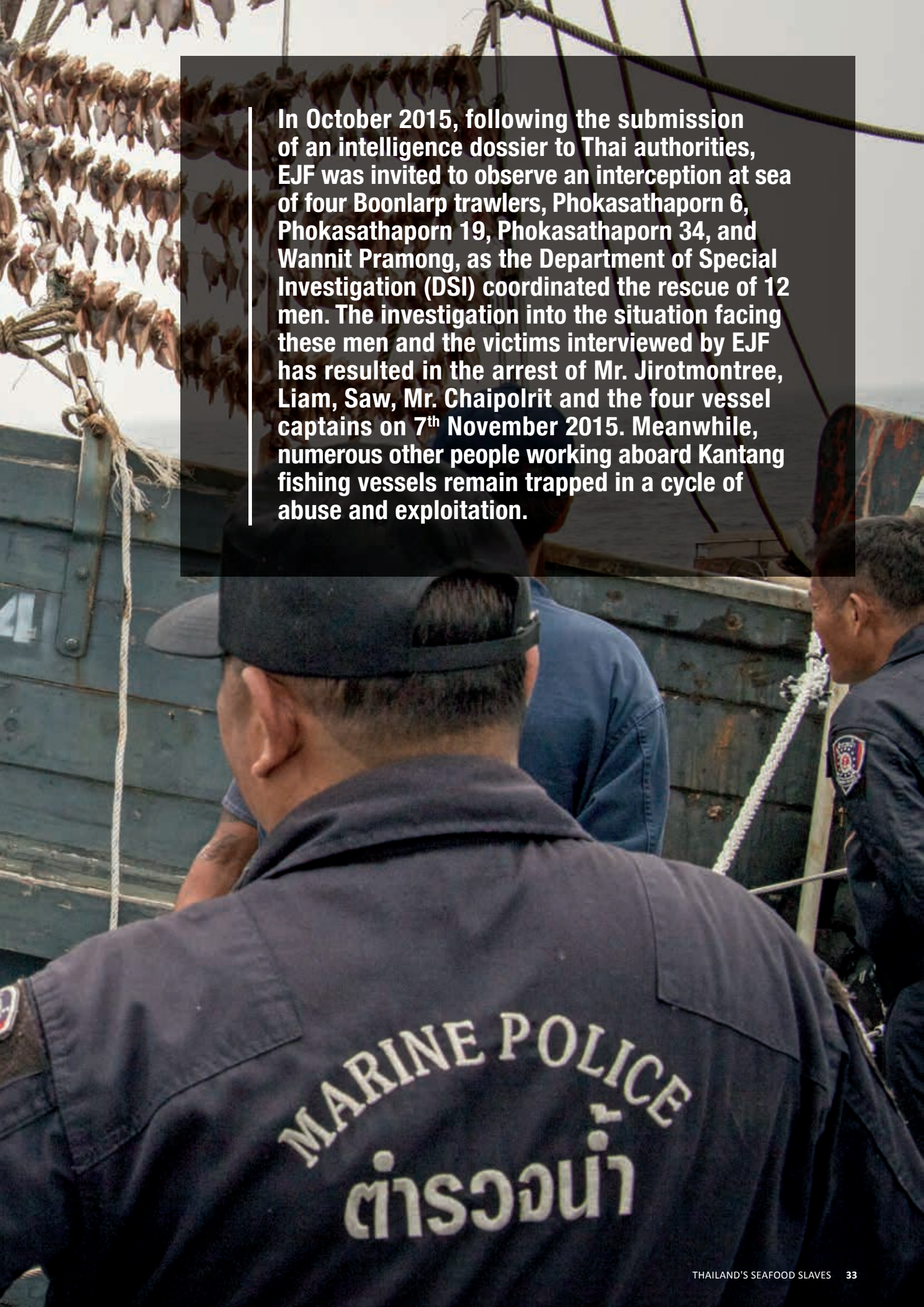
Confidential informant

On 4th August 2015, EJF watched the *Phokasathaporn 34* arrive at Kantang’s PIPO checkpoint and documented the inspection process as it unfolded. As the vessel’s documentation was reviewed by the multi-agency team, the crew left the vessel and came ashore to the checkpoint. Without a Burmese-Thai interpreter to assist communication, the men were guided by simple, curt instructions from a local army officer and proceeded to line up and present their migrant worker identification cards (บัตรสีชมพู) for inspection.

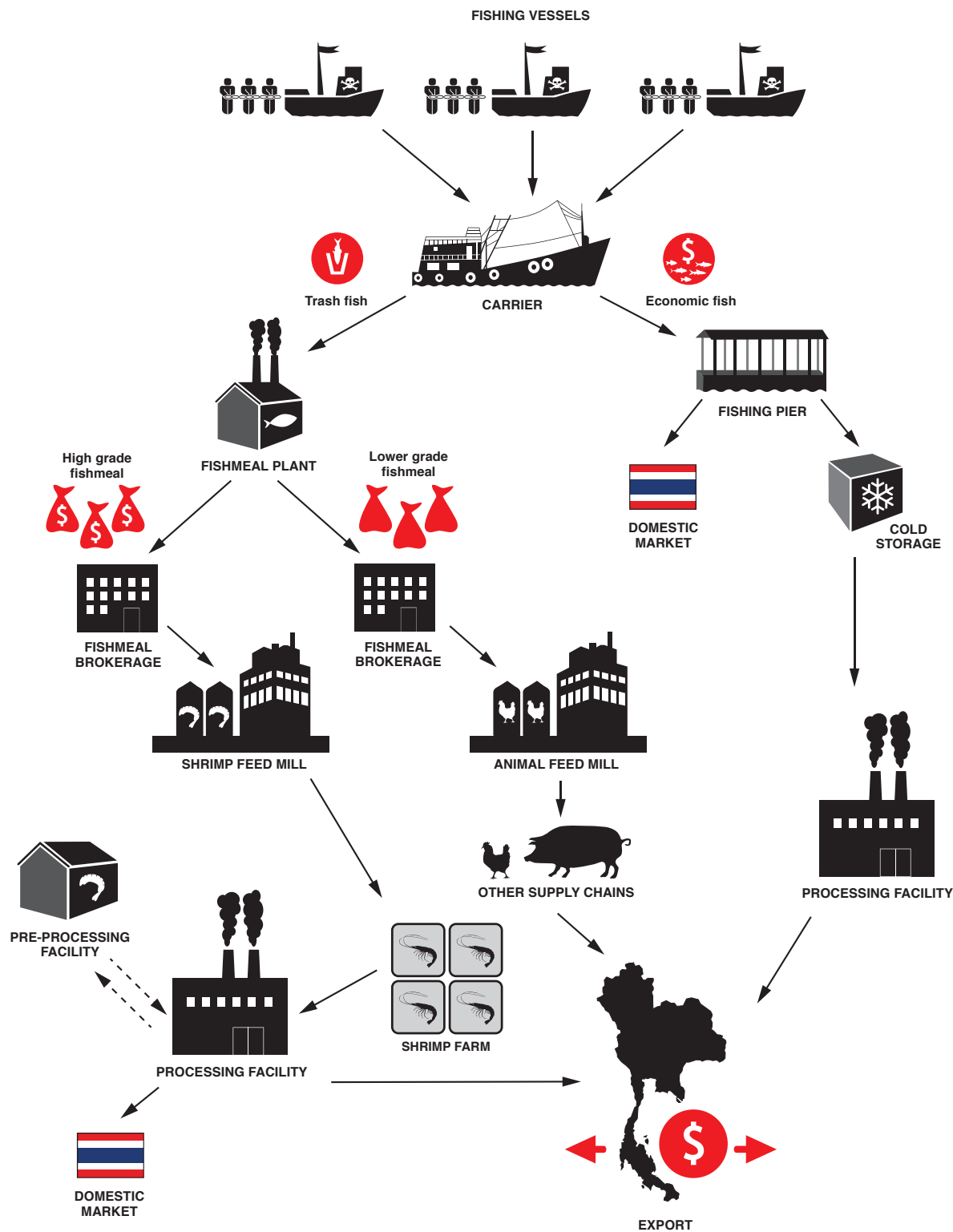
Ministry of Labour officials checked the name, number and pictures on the ID cards against details recorded on the vessel’s crew manifest. No attempt was made to enquire as to whether any of the men were working willingly, how they came to be working aboard the vessel or whether they required any assistance. Several of the victims of exploitation and abuse interviewed by EJF in 2015 were in possession of migrant worker ID cards; a source in the community informed EJF how Kantang’s brokers had made an effort to regularise the fishers under their control.¹⁷² Moments before the *Phokasathaporn 34* left, the captain of the vessel – Tawon Jantarak¹⁷³, notorious among workers for his vicious temper, physical abuse and reputation for murder – informed EJF that the PIPO system had eliminated slavery and ‘pirate’ fishing from Thailand’s fishing fleets.¹⁷⁴ Mr. Jantarak was subsequently arrested by the Thai authorities in an operation on the 7th November.¹⁷⁵

In late August 2015, EJF submitted a detailed package of intelligence on Kantang to senior Thai authorities. During the three days prior to this submission, and unknown to EJF, an enforcement action against Boonlarp was carried out by the Royal Thai Police’s Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTD) in partnership with a local Bangkok-based civil society group.¹⁷⁶ This action resolutely failed to provide assistance to workers aboard both *Phokasathaporn 19* and *Phokasathaporn 34* or any other fishing vessels. Before the AHTD had even acted on intelligence received by the civil society group, and despite departing Kantang less than a month previously, *Phokasathaporn 19* and *Phokasathaporn 34* mysteriously returned to port – likely as a result of leaks to corrupt local law enforcement. The Thai media reported that five fishers from the two vessels had denied requesting assistance and claimed that they were not victims of exploitation or abuse.¹⁷⁷ EJF has reason to believe that some of these statements were false and made under duress. During a meeting with EJF in September 2015, a senior officer in the AHTD reported that they had been unable to gather any evidence of trafficking, forced or bonded labour from interviews with workers while information from local residents, specifically brokers, suggested that Saw was a fish sorter at a local pier.¹⁷⁸





In October 2015, following the submission of an intelligence dossier to Thai authorities, EJF was invited to observe an interception at sea of four Boonlarp trawlers, Phokasathaporn 6, Phokasathaporn 19, Phokasathaporn 34, and Wannit Pramong, as the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) coordinated the rescue of 12 men. The investigation into the situation facing these men and the victims interviewed by EJF has resulted in the arrest of Mr. Jirotmontree, Liam, Saw, Mr. Chaipolrit and the four vessel captains on 7th November 2015. Meanwhile, numerous other people working aboard Kantang fishing vessels remain trapped in a cycle of abuse and exploitation.



THE SUPPLY CHAINS OF KANTANG FISHING COMPANIES

In May 2013, EJF staff working undercover spoke with Suban Setaworaphan the Vice-President of Kantang Group, an export-oriented conglomerate comprised of four Kantang-based companies and other facilities in southern Thailand.¹⁷⁹ During a recorded phone conversation and subsequent email exchange, Mr. Setaworaphan claimed that Kantang Group had purchased raw material from Boonlarp vessels for over a decade in order to produce fishmeal sold to one of Thailand's largest agribusiness and food conglomerates and a key supplier to retailers across North America and Europe. Mr. Setaworaphan also claimed that frozen seafood, including squid and cuttlefish, sourced from Boonlarp vessels was supplied to Azuma Foods International Inc. for distribution and sale in Canada and the United States.¹⁸⁰

In 2015, EJF continued investigating the supply chain of companies buying fish caught by Boonlarp vessels. The complex chain starts with fish caught by 'pirate' fishing vessels using slave labour being transhipped at sea to carrier vessels destined for Kantang. Before any fish lands in Kantang, it is sorted aboard the fishing vessel. Crew work to separate the high-value and larger species from the low-value and smaller species and from the messy entanglement of mashed-up marine life that coats the back end of the net after a four- to six-hour trawl.

The higher value catch is headed for Boonlarp and Chon Sin fishing piers, where it will either be purchased directly by regional buyers or placed in cold storage for sale to processing plants. Some of the low-value and smaller species – typically referred to as by-catch or trash fish by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and other international literature – is sold to Kantang facilities which produce a form of processed fish paste known as surimi. However, Thai trash fish (ปลาเนื้ด) refers only to the putrefied or damaged fish and mashed-up detritus that is deemed unfit for human consumption.^{181/182} Carrier vessels land this portion of the catch separately, unloading at private piers operated by Kantang's fishmeal plants.

After observing the Boonlarp carrier vessel *Choklarp 1* tranship at sea with four trawlers also owned by Boonlarp Fishing L.P., EJF documented *Choklarp 1* as it returned to Kantang to unload trash fish at Union Fishmeal L.P. on the morning of 3rd August 2015. Union Fishmeal is a cooperative venture among Kantang's three oldest Sino-Thai fishing companies (Boonlarp, Chon Sin and Wor Supharn), jointly owned and operated along with Union Ice L.P. – a factory supplying ice to these companies' fishing fleets.

The barrels of trash fish regularly unloaded at Union Fishmeal by *Choklarp 1* and other carriers belonging to Kantang-based fishing companies are cooked, dehydrated and ground up to produce sacks of fishmeal. The quality or grade of fishmeal is determined by the protein content, odour, freshness and humidity of the powder. Union Fishmeal mainly produces Grade B as well as some Grade C fishmeal, which is sold to several brokerage firms in central Thailand. Union Fishmeal's plant manager, Noppadon Boonroht¹⁸³, informed EJF that the poor quality of the fish landed in Kantang over the last three years has meant that his plant can no longer produce Grade A fishmeal, the quality preferred by Thai shrimp producers for its higher protein content.¹⁸⁴ In recorded interviews with EJF, Mr. Boonroht and Mr. Jirotmontree suggested that a major Thai agribusiness and food conglomerate previously bought Grade A fishmeal directly from Union Fishmeal. Both claimed that this company continued to be supplied fishmeal produced from Boonlarp vessels by brokerage firms purchasing material from the Union Fishmeal plant.¹⁸⁵

In August 2015, a shipment of over 10 tonnes of fishmeal produced from fish caught by Boonlarp boats was tracked more than 800 kilometres by EJF to a facility in Bangkok owned by Everest Intertrading Co. Ltd., a fishmeal brokerage and distribution company.¹⁸⁶ The assistant to the manager and son of Everest Intertrading's owner, Pracha, informed EJF that the facility blends different shipments of fishmeal to process orders to just a few large purchasers requiring high volumes of material.¹⁸⁷ In Thailand, lower grades of fishmeal are mixed with high protein fishmeal to upgrade the protein content and achieve better prices.¹⁸⁸ Pracha claimed that Everest Intertrading remained an occasional supplier to the same major Thai agribusiness and food conglomerate referenced by Mr. Boonroht and Mr. Jirotmontree, although the brokerage had not processed an order to this company for some time. Pracha also stated that Everest Intertrading's customers included Grobest Corporation Co. Ltd., one of the top five Asian feed companies,

and Thai Luxe Enterprises PLC¹⁸⁹, a leading Thai feed producer. Both companies produce and export aquafeeds for multiple species of shrimp and fish, operate shrimp hatcheries and export frozen seafood products, including shrimp.¹⁹⁰

EJF tracked shipments of as much as 72 tonnes of fishmeal from Everest Intertrading over several nights, during which trucks transported fishmeal to three facilities. The first was a warehouse in Samut Sakhon owned by Thai Spring Day Co. Ltd.¹⁹¹, a wholesale firm trading ready-made animal feed mixtures. The second was Grobest Corporation's shrimp feed factory in Samut Songkhram. The third was a shrimp feed manufacturing plant owned by the Thailand-arm of one of the largest privately-held corporations in the world.¹⁹² The mixing and upgrading processes within brokerage firms like Everest Intertrading present severe supply chain risks to companies using fishmeal as a feed input or raw material. Without transparent, documented chains of custody backed up by effective third party audits, companies buying from brokerage firms cannot be certain that their fishmeal is free from human rights abuse and 'pirate' fishing.

EJF's research into the supply chains of Kantang fishing companies over the last two years underscores the findings of recent investigations conducted by The Guardian, Associated Press and The New York Times.^{193/194/195} These high-profile reports have alleged that slavery and 'pirate' fishing exists at the root of the supply chains of global companies which are putting seafood and other products on the shelves of retailers around the world. In August 2015, US law firms initiated class action lawsuits against Costco, Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF), Thai Union Group and Nestlé alleging that these companies knowingly sold seafood and pet food produced through forced labour in the Thai fishing industry.^{196/197/198} However, Boonlarp Fishing L.P. is not the only abusive Kantang company with possible links to international seafood supply chains.

In July 2014, a publicly-available report from CPF listed Kantang-based JDP Co. Ltd. as a fishmeal supplier engaged in CPF's corporate strategy aimed at phasing out the use of fishmeal produced from trash fish in its shrimp aquaculture holdings.¹⁹⁹ In 2009, Thai authorities rescued 56 victims of trafficking, forced labour, physical abuse and forcible confinement from JDP's fishing boats, fishmeal and ice factories.^{200/201} In March 2014, four months prior to the release of CPF's report, another group of victims of trafficking were rescued from Kantang's fishing industry.²⁰² According to Myanmar Association Thailand (MAT), an organisation directly involved in the operation, these individuals were rescued from both Boonlarp Fishing L.P. and Ouway Meng (JDP Co. Ltd.) vessels.²⁰³

At the same time, wild-caught seafood and farmed shrimp are not the only Thai food products tainted by criminal activities including slavery and 'pirate' fishing. Trash fish and fishmeal are used within a variety of industries producing livestock, poultry, fertiliser, pet food and fish sauce. In 2015, Ananya Limsakul – a former vessel operator who identified herself as the current Vice-President of the Trang Fishing Association – and her husband, a former fishmeal plant owner, informed EJF that fishmeal from Kantang companies was sold to feed mills across Thailand owned by several major domestic agro-industrial and food conglomerates, including Betagro PLC.²⁰⁴ Betagro is one of the dominant purchasers of Thai fishmeal and produces a variety of animal feeds and food products, including – according to industry sources – frozen and cooked chicken supplied to major international retail chains.^{205/206}

CONCLUSION

Since mid-2014, Thailand's response to both slavery and illegal fishing has been characterised by the kind of bold rhetoric and ambitious plans of action that were lacking in previous years. However, despite strong commitments and some notionally impressive policies, Thailand has yet to begin to confront some of the structural factors driving the environmentally unsustainable and socially unacceptable business model of its seafood sector. The country's critically overfished marine resources continue to exert downward and outward economic pressures on vessel operators. A lack of a coherent national migration policy as well as formal avenues for recruitment into the fishing industry continue to undermine progress in other areas. Company owners and other beneficiaries of criminal activity continue to escape conviction for trafficking crimes while corrupt officials throughout the ranks of the civil service, enforcement agencies and armed forces act as bottlenecks to reform.

At the same time, the country has failed key tests of its resolve. In September 2015, the Government granted one of the most-wanted IUU fishing vessels in the world – the Interpol Purple-listed boat Taishan (MV Kunlun) – permission to re-fuel after it had paid a 51,000 baht (\$1,434) fine to the Customs

Department for attempting to fraudulently offload 179 million baht (\$5 million) worth of illegally caught Atlantic toothfish as grouper.^{207/208} A senior Customs official recalled how they had “blinked and the ship was gone”.²⁰⁹ More than two months after the vessel's escape from Thai custody, the Thai Government has failed to prosecute any individuals involved and only initiated the transfer of three Custom officials from Phuket to another posting.²¹⁰ In July 2015, the Government missed a key opportunity to reduce fishing capacity and remove illegal operators from the sector when it backtracked in the face of industry pressure on a deadline requiring boat owners to comply with a basic set of port controls.^{211/212} From September 2014, the high-level commitments to repatriate multiple groups of Thai nationals rescued from and stranded by abusive Thai operators in Indonesian waters has starkly contrasted with the Government's steadfast resistance to assist any of the thousands of Burmese, Cambodian and Laos men in similar circumstances – or holding the Thai companies to account.^{213/214/215}

The brutal system of trafficking, forced labour and debt bondage that continues to pervade Kantang's fishing industry is emblematic of the broader failures of both Government and



the industry at the national level. Slavery in Kantang – and across Thailand – is the direct result of collusion between company owners, senior crew, labour brokers and corrupt elements within local enforcement agencies. Some of these criminal actors are also complicit in the intimidation, physical abuse, forcible confinement, torture and murder of migrant workers in order to keep vulnerable men enslaved on fishing boats. Underpinning this cycle of exploitation and violence are the inadequate monitoring, control, and surveillance systems, and weak regulatory environments under which Thailand’s fishing fleets continue to operate, and the failure of producers, buyers and retailers of Thai seafood to clean up their supply chains. All of which enables criminals to fish illegally with relative impunity, thereby degrading marine ecosystems and further contributing to the vicious cycle exacerbating slavery aboard Thai fishing boats.²¹⁶

As multiple reports from EJF and others have highlighted, efforts by the Thai authorities to rescue victims of trafficking from fishing vessels and prosecute those responsible for their ordeal are undermined by enforcement efforts that systematically fail to move up the criminal justice chain towards

the company owners and other Thai nationals who directly benefit from abuse and exploitation. This approach has been further weakened by the marginalisation of victims pursuing criminal cases in Thai courts and perversions of the course of justice in the form of the coercion and bribery of both witnesses and plaintiffs.²¹⁷ Taken together, these failures have meant that many of the men trapped on fishing vessels when EJF first visited Kantang in early 2013 still remain at sea, while companies and businesspeople responsible for abuse continue to operate. With time running out for Thailand to demonstrate to the international community that it is serious about tackling both slavery and 'pirate' fishing, the Government must act now to bring Thailand’s seafood slaves to safety and abusive company owners and other beneficiaries of criminal activity to justice. Similarly, the retailers, buyers and producers who continue to source from Thai fishing vessels must demonstrate to consumers that they are taking actions to ensure that their products are free of unsustainably-caught fish and are not the result of slavery at sea.

The continued prevalence of slavery in Thailand and the unchanged scale of abuses make it clear that existing measures and schemes to combat human trafficking, forced labour and slavery in supply chains are inadequate and need to be drastically improved. Unless fundamental measures to improve supply chains are introduced, proportionate to the structural abuses they aim to combat, any efforts will remain ineffective. Addressing the systematic exploitation and deep-rooted norm of slavery in Thai supply chains requires a forensic and risk-based approach that combines the comprehensive implementation of zero-tolerance policies and contracts with expert – and above all, independent and unannounced – audits. This approach needs to be supported by a well-structured, organised and adequately resourced programme to support whistleblowers, capable of sharing the information with all relevant stakeholders and able to guarantee the safety and security of individuals coming forward with information on abuses in supply chains.



Fishing trawlers tranship at sea with a carrier vessel. Kantang is symptomatic of wider problems existing across the country. © EJF

“

I want to tell [consumers] about our troubles. We sacrificed our blood, sweat and energy. I really would like to let them know about our nightmares.

”

Yu Win, escaped victim of trafficking

RECOMMENDATIONS

EJF believes that solutions to 'pirate' fishing and slavery in Thailand's fishing sector are available, practical and achievable through a multi-track approach emphasising leadership, coordinated joint action and genuine commitment from all stakeholders. This report recalls and builds on the recommendations made in EJF's 2015 report *Pirates and Slaves*. EJF also acknowledges and reiterates all recommendations made to Thailand in the 2015 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons report.²¹⁸

THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIC REQUIREMENTS

The Royal Thai Government must:

1. Adopt a nationwide programme of intelligence-led enforcement, employing a highly targeted, forensic risk-based approach. It must ensure effective inter-agency cooperation and that security breaches are eradicated.
2. Target the major beneficiaries – explicitly among Thai nationals – and those controlling businesses responsible for trafficking, slavery and IUU fishing.
3. Ensure that effective enforcement is matched by swift, transparent and appropriate action in Thai courts, to secure convictions and apply meaningful deterrent penalties.
4. Employ a victim-centred approach to trafficking, forced, bonded and slave labour.
5. Ensure the full, even and nationwide implementation of new fisheries laws and effective application of a new fisheries management regime, that is fit-for-purpose. This must include the swift roll-out of new measures to ensure transparency and traceability in the sector (specifically including VMS systems, an effective inspection regime and the rapid adoption of digital fishing licence, catch and landing certification, together with digital ships log and crew manifest); the programme of – permanent – vessel decommissioning; and the delivery of the necessary financial and human resources.

Producers, Retailers and all business interests must:

1. Engage a targeted, forensic, risk-based approach to the scrutiny of their supply chains and work to implement full 'net-to-plate' traceability in product supply chains.
2. Adopt a publicly declared zero-tolerance policy to IUU fishing and human rights abuses, making this clear and giving near-term, time-bound targets for this with all suppliers before the end of 2015.
3. Support and require as a condition of engagement mandatory transparency and traceability as a minimum including the elements highlighted in point 5 above.
4. Collectively and in public communicate to the Royal Thai Government the requirement for the proper implementation and enforcement of its own laws and the measures listed here as necessary for ongoing engagement with the Thai seafood sector.

Consumers should:

1. Ask their retailers to guarantee that seafood products are free from human rights abuses, are demonstrably sustainable and legal. If they can't, they should seek retailers who can and will provide such assurances.

THE THAI GOVERNMENT MUST

- Take immediate action against all Kantang fishing companies allegedly involved in criminal activities by recalling the entire fleet and screening all crew for indicators of trafficking, forced and bonded labour, applying a victim-centred approach, designed to protect victims of trafficking and abuse at the core of these actions.
- Undertake intelligence-led, forensic enforcement actions designed to gather data and evidence over time with the specific aim of initiating prosecutions and successful convictions against fishing companies across the country engaged in illegal fishing and trafficking, forced, bonded and slave labour or other human rights abuses. Operational practice must be fundamentally revised to ensure security of intelligence, maximise inter-agency cooperation and provide clear, transparent lines of authority and responsibility.
- Substantially enhance and improve steps to investigate, prosecute and convict company owners, officials and other Thai nationals complicit in trafficking, forced and bonded labour. Punishments which are commensurate with the severity of the crime must be routinely applied, such that these act as clear, powerful deterrents. Revoke the clause in Article 9 of the 2015 amendment to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, B.E. 2551 (2008) allowing prosecutors to seek the death penalty. Expand the legal definition of who and under what circumstances a person can be considered a beneficiary of trafficking, forced or bonded labour and record and publicise all arrests, prosecutions and convictions of those involved in facilitating these crimes.
- Substantially and urgently improve understanding of indicators of trafficking, forced and bonded labour amongst inspectors and law enforcement officers. Conduct specialist training for Ministry of

Labour, Marine Police and Navy units to enable them to inspect fishing vessels and intercept suspected cases of exploitation and abuse at sea. Ensure adequate assets and human and financial resources are in place to enable routine inspections at sea. Improve efforts to realise a victim-centred approach during enforcement actions, including towards persons suspected of being victims. Enforce a strict separation between fishers and senior crew at all times during inspections at sea.

- Cultivate partnerships with civil society organisations to improve the intelligence base on which to undertake enforcement actions, increase the effectiveness of victim screening and identification procedures and enhance the provision of post-trafficking services and aftercare.
- Strengthen the capacity of Port in – Port out (PIPO) officials to identify and screen victims of exploitation and abuse. Embed interpreters in multi-agency inspection teams interacting with fishing crew and establish a plan for building the linguistic capacity of key Government departments (e.g. Department for Labour Protection and Welfare). Swiftly establish a transparent, publicly-accessible digital system for the collection and storage of all data obtained during vessel inspections at PIPO Control Centres.
- Strengthen the regulation of labour recruitment practices within Thailand’s fishing industry and monitor the usage and involvement of informal brokers in the process. Amend The Recruitment and Job-Seekers Protection Act, B.E. 2528 (1985) to regulate the recruitment practices of brokers, sub-contracting and manning agencies supplying migrant workers to Thai businesses.



The carrier *Choklarp 1* unloads trash fish at the Union Fishmeal plant. EJF tracked fish tainted by forced labour from the vessels at sea through to global companies producing animal feeds. © EJF

- Centralise recruitment of crew under the re-established Fishing Industry Labour Coordination Centres (ศูนย์ประสานแรงงานประมง) and make it mandatory for companies to engage Centre services. Reduce the costs involved in regularising undocumented migrant fishers. Ensure that sufficient financial and human resources are in place to make the Centres the permanent and principal mechanisms for coordinating: recruitment of workers; inspection of crew and working conditions; reporting of and acting on violations; and provision of pre-departure and in-work training and services to fishers.
- Integrate confidential interviews and victim identification and screening procedures into the migrant fisher registration process. Ensure that regularised migrant fishers are regularly interviewed and screened by competent authorities.
- Commit to improving working conditions aboard fishing vessels by ratifying and implementing the 2007 International Labour Organization Work in Fishing Convention (C.188). Ensure that the 2014 Ministerial Regulation Concerning the Protection of Workers in the Marine Fisheries is consistently and robustly enforced.
- Strengthen the proactive capacity of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate the involvement of local and senior officials in trafficking crimes. Use powers under the new Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on Measures to Prevent Public Officials' Involvement in Human Trafficking B.E. 2558 (2015) and Article 13 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, B.E. 2551 (2008) to identify and sanction Government officials facilitating trafficking, forced and bonded labour in the seafood sector.
- Revise the Fisheries Act B.E. 2558 (2015), which currently provides only a partial basis for improving Thailand's fisheries. Amendments should focus on reducing excess fishing capacity by implementing an ecosystems-based approach to managing commercial fishing operations and protecting marine biodiversity. Planning and implementation should proactively involve and empower Thailand's coastal and artisanal fishing communities.
- Take urgent steps to control and reduce transshipment at sea in Thai territorial waters, with a time-bound plan of action for its elimination under law. Consider introducing immediate requirements such as authorisation and on-board observers, under the mandate of the Maritime Enforcement Coordination Centres (MECC or ศรสล). Strengthen the process around the completion and submission of Marine Catch Transshipment Documents (MCTD).
- Ensure that the installation of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) aboard fishing vessels proceeds using appropriate and cost-effective technology and is expanded to include all commercial fishing vessels and vessels associated with fishing activities (e.g. carriers). It must ensure that punitive sanctions are in place for failing to comply with VMS regulations; for example, withdrawal of fishing licence and barring entry into port for vessels that switch off their VMS system while at sea. Crucially, effective mechanisms to scrutinise VMS data and convey detailed intelligence to enforcement agencies must be central to the Thai Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) of its fleet.
- Ensure the rapid ratification and full implementation of the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (PSMA).
- Declare clear and ongoing support for a Global Record of fishing vessels and the mandatory adoption of International Maritime Organisation (IMO) numbers as Unique Vessel Identifiers (UVI) in order to increase transparency of fishing operations throughout the supply chain.
- Work quickly toward the adoption of fully digital systems within the seafood sector and specifically to require digital crew manifests and ship's log, alongside digital licence, catch and landing documentation: to be collated, stored and open to scrutiny by enforcement agencies, in a centrally managed database. In the immediate near-term steps must be taken to improve systems for catch certification, documentation and traceability to improve compliance with EC Regulation No. 1005/2008.

PRODUCERS, RETAILERS AND ALL BUSINESS INTERESTS MUST

- Acknowledge the interlinked nature of overfishing, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and slavery in Thailand and the requirement for a joint and coordinated approach that addresses both the environmental and human rights dimensions.
- Acknowledge that serious human rights abuses, including slavery and murder continue to occur in Thailand's fishing industry and disclose time-bound plans and existing steps taken to radically improve supply chains, including information on limits and success of the measures and auditing procedures to allow for development of best practice.
- Zero-tolerance policies must be implemented and enforced, responding to non-compliance with the immediate suspensions of purchases (and the revoking of industry association membership where applicable) for any supplier found to be associated with or linked to human rights abuses and IUU fishing. Work with suppliers to move towards compliance under time-bound plans of action listing clear indicators of improvement. Where suppliers fail to demonstrate improvement under such plans, terminate all trading. Exert pressure on industry and trade associations to revoke the membership of non-compliant suppliers.
- Implement full 'net to plate' traceability in product supply chains, down to the level of fishing vessels and with a particular focus on feed inputs. Efforts to drive down traceability and ensure socially and environmentally responsible practice at the vessel level must acknowledge and address the role of by-catch as a raw material in non-seafood supply chains. Introduce policies to address non-compliance with required traceability and transparency standards. Mandatory Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) systems must be fitted on all vessels in the supply chain with a requirement for these to be fully operational at all times and for VMS data to be open to independent, unannounced spot checks and independent scrutiny.
- Where audits conclude that a supplier cannot confirm full transparency and traceability, a temporary suspension should be initiated and the supplier supported to improve the transparency and traceability to the required standard. Where the supplier is not able to demonstrate comprehensive improvements, the suspension should be made permanent.

CONSUMERS SHOULD

- Support international initiatives designed to increase the transparency and traceability of seafood supply chains and specifically a Global Record of fishing vessels using International Maritime Organisation (IMO) numbers as appropriate Unique Vessel Identifiers (UVI).
 - Larger businesses should use their leverage throughout the supply chain to encourage States to ratify and implement the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) to improve port controls to strengthen inspections and monitoring measures as well as the International Labour Organization's C188 Work in Fishing Convention to improve labour standards.
 - Support the implementation of electronic systems for the digital collection of catch certificates, crew manifests, ship logbooks and vessel data, and a centrally coordinated electronic database available to fisheries management and enforcement agencies.
 - Collectively and in public communicate to the Royal Thai Government the requirement for the proper implementation and enforcement of its own laws and the measures listed here as necessary for ongoing engagement with the Thai seafood sector.
- Demand that retailers and producers deliver on commitments to ensure that their supply chains are free of IUU fishing and trafficking, forced or bonded labour.
 - Demand detailed information on the steps retailers and producers take to improve their supply chains includes detailed data on successful measures and auditing procedures to enable consumers to monitor the impacts of supply chain measures.
 - Use the information provided by retailers to make a conscious decision on which seafood and other products to purchase; rewarding retailers that commit to effective reporting and undertake all possible measures to clean up their supply chains.
 - As a last resort, if retailers cannot or will not provide these guarantees, consumers should cease to purchase their products.



Until meaningful and systematic action is taken by both the public and private sectors, human trafficking and slavery will remain a structural part of Thailand's seafood industry. © EJJ

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“

*We were sold to those owners in Kantang: Boonlarp pier, Chon Sin pier,
Wor Suphaporn pier, Ouway Meng [JDP Co. Ltd.] pier.
Go and ask any Burmese – there’s not one who was not sold.*

*We sacrificed ourselves by struggling in the rain, the wind and the waves.
We worked for nothing. If everybody in the world could do something to help make
the brokers and traffickers disappear, I would be so proud. These are words
from the bottom of my heart.*

”

Myo Thant Kyaw, escaped victim of trafficking



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