

The Opinion Pages | LETTER

Ending Labor Abuses in Thailand's Seafood Industry

FEB. 29, 2016

To the Editor:

Re "Slave Labor on the High Seas" (editorial, Feb. 20), I wish to emphasize two points.

First, compared with this time last year, Thailand has made significant progress to combat human trafficking, illegal labor practices and illegal fishing. Laws have been toughened up, and enforcement has been beefed up. We are addressing labor abuses, protecting and rehabilitating victims, and bringing criminals to justice.

Thailand is working with the International Labor Organization and civil society groups to raise labor protection standards. No person under 18 is permitted to work in seafood processing factories or on fishing vessels. Shipowners are required by law to ensure minimum standards for the safety and well-being of seamen.

Migrant workers in the seafood industry are now free to change employers, and more than 2,000 have done so. So far, over 100,000 undocumented workers in sea fishery and seafood processing works have registered with the authorities, enabling them to work in Thailand legally and with protections. Over 5,000 fishing vessels have installed a satellite-tracking system. Our private-sector companies have pledged to rid their supply chains of illegal fishing and labor practices, as well as human trafficking.

Second, the legislation you cited in your editorial does not target any specific country or region, and should not. Attaining better labor standards is a global challenge, including here in the United States. Therefore American trading partners would hope that Washington will implement this legislation in a transparent, fair and nondiscriminatory manner. Thailand stands ready to work with the United States government and all stakeholders for better labor standards. Partnerships are the best way forward.

PISAN MANAWAPAT
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Washington

Source: New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/01/opinion/ending-labor-abuses-in-thailands-seafood-industry.html>