

Human Trafficking in the Maritime Industry

The fishing and aquaculture industry is among the most important economic sectors in the world. It employs a high number of migrant workers vulnerable to trafficking and forced labor. Trafficking and forced labor in the fishing industry is modern slavery at sea. It occurs at all stages of the seafood supply chain, from catching the fish to processing and shipping it for export. The virtually unregulated fishing industry in many countries, coupled with the global demand for cheap seafood, create the lawless conditions under which trafficking at sea flourishes.

How Does the Trafficking Start?

- Vulnerable people are deceived, forced, and kidnapped because of a shortage of fishing crews.
- Migrants are recruited by false promises of a living-wage and incur crippling debts that then become their trafficking situation.

At Sea

- Workers endure inhumane working hours, often working 18-20 hour days, 7 days a week.
- They work in unsafe, hazardous, and life-threatening conditions, often on the verge of starvation, and facing a blatant disregard for their basic medical needs and injuries.
- Beatings and torture are routinely used to ensure compliance. Disobeying orders or asking for a rest can result in death.
- Workers can be held at seas for years on large fishing vessels because of a lack of regulation.

On Land

- Men, women, and children are often enslaved in the seafood processing and canning facilities.
- They are subjected to long hours, horrendous and unsafe conditions, physical abuse, and neglect of injuries.

What You Can Do to Help

- Learn how to be an ethical consumer at: <http://www.seafoodwatch.org/>
- Visit Apostleship of the Sea to learn more about mariners: <http://www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk/>
- Visit USCCB/MRS' Anti-Trafficking page to learn about their efforts in the maritime industry: www.usccb.org/stopslavery
- Pray:

“In my experience storage of fish was more important to the captain and senior officers on a vessel than the accommodation provided to the crew. That really tells you something, dead, fish were more important and more valuable than the crew themselves.”

—Fr. Bruno Ciceri,
Representative of the Apostleship
of the Sea International at the
Holy See's Pontifical Council for
the Pastoral Care of Migrants and
Itinerant People

Our Lady, Star of the Sea, Mother of God and our Mother, you know all the dangers of soul and body that threaten mariners. Protect your sons and daughters who work and travel on the waters of the world, and protect also their families that await their return. Star of the Sea, Mother of the Church, give light and strength to those chaplains and lay ministers who bring the love of your Divine Son among mariners. Fill their hearts with a supernatural and life-giving zeal for the apostolate. Star of the Sea, light shining in the darkness, be a guide to those who sail amid the storms and dangers of life. Enlighten the hearts of ardent disciples and bring us all to the safety of heaven's port. —Amen” -Apostleship of the Sea