

Fisherman being abused at sea



Early one morning, I saw 9 fishermen, poorly dressed; bags packed and anxious at the Seaman's club (Mission to Seafarers). Cassiem Augustus (ITF inspector) was busy chatting with them. Before I went upstairs, I decided to get myself involved in what might have been going on. I heard that 30 Indonesian and Filipino Fisherman were being

physically punched and kicked on board a fishing vessel by a Taiwanese captain. They informed us, that only nine of them have come to seek help as the others were too afraid to leave the vessel; afraid they may make the captain suspicious. Immediately, I instruct one of the Filipinos to call the other fishermen to inform them that I will be picking them up immediately. The owners of the vessel suggest that the Captain, write a letter of apology assuring everyone that he will never* do it again. Cassiem (being 35 years in the business, and having heard it all), infuriated by the situation, demanded that the captain be taken off the vessel and be put on immediate suspension. Eventually the Captain was placed on retirement, and that very same day the crew, 22 of them, were sent to a safe house, with tickets being booked for them back home.

Abuse occurs on board fishing vessels when owners put a Captains on board who doesn't understand the language or culture of the crew, in this case, it was the a Taiwanese Captain. When I interviewed one of the Filipino crew members and asked if he would ever go back to sea, his response was, "yes, but never with Taiwanese captain"

Seeing that they were poorly dressed, I provided them with some clothes, sadly I didn't have enough.

Mistreatment of fishermen has become common practice. I ask myself constantly, "Where does it end, when will it stop"? Besides the long hours, and pathetic pay, they are abused. Something has to be done about it.