



Press Release

Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) Ship Insurance and Liability Committee (SILC)

“End the Unjust Detention of Seafarers! Shipowners Demand Action”

Hong Kong, 19 November 2024 — In a powerful call to action, the Asian Shipowners Association's Ship Insurance and Liability Committee, meeting in Hong Kong, focused on the critical issue of unjust seafarer detention. The committee highlighted a growing crisis that threatens the foundation of the global shipping industry and the rights of those who keep it afloat.

Every day, hundreds of thousands of seafarers navigate the world's oceans, ensuring the smooth flow of goods and commodities. Yet, despite their crucial role, these maritime workers are increasingly finding themselves caught in a web of legal uncertainties. Accused of crimes without compelling evidence, many are detained for extended periods, facing severe emotional and financial distress.

Recent incidents have underscored the vulnerability of seafarers, particularly in countries with limited experience in maritime law. The committee noted with concern that detentions often occur in places where legal systems are ill-equipped to handle complex maritime cases, leading to prolonged and unfair treatment of crew members.

For example, a Chinese Master Mariner was imprisoned in Honduras for over two years with no charges brought against him.

The committee outlined three proactive steps to address this alarming trend:

Global Awareness Campaigns: It is essential to raise the profile of these incidents on international platforms. By sharing these stories, we can galvanize public opinion and pressure governments to act.

Advocacy for Equitable Legal Processes: International maritime organizations must champion the cause of fair legal treatment for seafarers.

Building Robust Support Networks: Comprehensive support systems for seafarers are crucial.

Behind every case of detention is a human story of hardship and uncertainty. Families are torn apart, children are left without parents, and livelihoods are jeopardized. The psychological toll on seafarers, who often endure harsh working conditions, is immense. This situation is not just a legal issue but a profound human rights concern that demands immediate attention.



Industry leaders shared poignant testimonies from affected seafarers and their families during the meeting. These stories highlight the pervasive fear and anxiety that grip seafarers, knowing they could be detained without cause at any moment. This is a fear that no worker should have to live with, especially those who are integral to the global economy.

The Asian Shipowners Association is not alone in this mission. We call upon all stakeholders in the maritime industry to unite in defence of seafarers' rights. Shipping companies, international organisations, and governments must collaborate to create a safer and more just environment for maritime workers.

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Editor's Note:

The Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) is a voluntary organisation of the shipowners' associations of China, Cook Islands, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations comprising shipping associations of ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASA are to promote the interests of Asian shipowners. Between ASA AGM meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by five Standing Committees: Seafarers Committee (SC) Ship Insurance and Liability Committee (SILC) Safe Navigation and Environment Committee (SNEC) Shipping Policy Committee (SPC) Ship Recycling Committee (SRC). It has been estimated that ASA shipowners and managers control and operate around 50% of the world's cargo-carrying fleet.
