



## Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Eric Kingma, HLA Executive Director  
(808) 389-2653 or [eric.k.kingma@gmail.com](mailto:eric.k.kingma@gmail.com)

---

### Hawaii Longline Association Supports Federal Agency Recommendations Regarding Human Trafficking in the Seafood Supply Chain

HONOLULU (4 February 2021) Human trafficking, including forced labor in fisheries and the seafood supply chain, has rightfully garnered attention in recent years. This unconscionable activity is not condoned by the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA) and other responsible fishing organizations, and has led to seafood industry-developed standards and social responsibility auditing mechanisms. Recent reports to U.S. Congress present government actions to further prevent and respond to such labor abuses including: 1) [Department of Commerce and Department of State Report to Congress on Human Trafficking in the Seafood Supply Chain, Section 3563 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 \(P.L. 116-92\)](#) and 2) [Federal Agency Task Force on Human Trafficking in Fishing in International Waters](#).

“The Hawaii Longline Association commends the work of federal agencies to address this important topic and supports many of the recommendations made in these reports,” said HLA Executive Director Eric Kingma.

Paramount among the recommendations covering domestic fisheries is the development of a temporary visa program for foreign fishing crews. “Providing foreign crews temporary work visas, as recommended in the Task Force report, is an important measure that would benefit foreign workers in our fishery, allowing them to go home and visit family and friends and then return to Hawaii via air travel in an efficient, humane manner,” Kingma said.

Currently, foreign fishermen employed in the fishery are ineligible to obtain a visa and thus are prohibited from flying into Honolulu. Rather, these fishermen must board their employer’s Hawaii-based longline vessel in a foreign port (e.g., Mexico or Canada) or U.S. Territory (e.g., American Samoa) and transit nearly two weeks to Honolulu to begin their legal employment, which is authorized under U.S. law (46 USC 8103(2)(b)). However, despite being legally employed to fish on U.S. vessels fishing for highly migratory species in the U.S. EEZ and high seas, without visas they are required to stay within the Honolulu Harbor port area. The only exception to leave the port area is for medical visits or to depart from Honolulu International Airport with permission from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

The majority of the 140 active longline vessels operating out of Honolulu Harbor have legally employed foreign crew for over 30 years. Like migrant farm and food processing workers employed across the nation, these skilled fishermen temporarily leave their countries to seek higher paying jobs in the United States, to support their families back home. Other U.S. tuna fleets that fish on the high seas also employ foreign crew, including U.S. distant water purse seine vessels, West Coast-based albacore vessels, and East Coast-based longline vessels. Hawaii longline crew are mainly from Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, and Pacific Island countries.

Approximately 700 foreign crewmen are employed in the Hawaii longline fishery under two-year contracts. Hawaii longline vessels principally operate in international waters, with fishing trips typically lasting 3 weeks, and land high quality, ice-chilled fish in Honolulu Harbor. Foreign crew

employed in the fleet are paid a monthly salary plus incentives based on catch value. Time in port is usually 6 days. While in port, crew use shoreside facilities, connect with relatives and friends online and by phone, enjoy fellowship with other crew and visiting local community contacts, and receive medical/dental care. Watch Hawaii longline crew profile videos here: ["Hooked" | Hawaii Longliners | Fishermen](#)

While the Task Force and U.S. CBP confirm that there have been no cases of human trafficking/forced labor in the Hawaii longline fleet, disparaging allegations have damaged the reputation of the Hawaii fishery and the continued employment of these skilled fishermen in the fishery. CBP works with Hawaii longline vessel owners to document foreign crew prior to arrival, and has continued oversight of crew while employed in the fishery.

Cognizant of the important role these crewmen play in the fishery, HLA undertook an assessment of the risk of human trafficking and forced labor through an extensive program of internal investigations and crew interviews. While no evidence to support the allegations were found, HLA developed an employer Code of Conduct, a crew handbook including grievance procedures and a universal crew contract. These materials are all made available and translated in the native languages of crewmembers. Letters of Assurance are signed by crew, captains, and vessel owners acknowledging receipt of the handbook and individual understanding of Code of Conduct, contract provisions, and crew rights. HLA established a crew grievance mechanism with a designated process to follow and local numbers to call including consulates, local community contacts, CBP and other authorities. HLA also formed a "Crew Matters" committee comprised of local crew community contacts, Seafarers Ministry, medical service volunteers, vessel owners, and subject matter experts that meet quarterly.

The HLA Code of Conduct, universal contract, and associated materials are based on international law such as the Work in Fishing Convention 2007 (No. 188), International Labor Organization, and U.S. law including the Federal Acquisition Regulation, titled Ending Trafficking in Persons, as well as international and U.S. standards such as the Department of State's Responsible Sourcing Tool for the Seafood Industry.

HLA agrees that additional actions by the U.S. government listed in the Dept. of State/Commerce report would help further prevent and respond to human trafficking abuses such as:

- 1) Develop a whole of government response to combating human trafficking in the seafood supply chain, both domestically and internationally.
- 2) Establish a subsidiary working group under the Maritime SAFE Act IUU Fishing Working Group with a focus on combating human trafficking, including forced labor, in the seafood industry.
- 3) Develop an integrated global governance response through strengthening the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), and International Labor Organization (ILO) Joint Working Group on IUU Fishing and Other Related Matters.
- 4) Promote measures to combat human trafficking, including forced labor, in RFMOs.
- 5) Support development of FAO guidance for fish value chain actors on labor in fishing.
- 6) Strengthen existing efforts between NOAA and DHS/CBP to support CBP's efforts to block products caught or processed using forced labor from reaching U.S. markets.
- 7) Examine the implications of human trafficking, including forced labor, as a possible risk factor if, and when, additional species are considered for Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) list.

HLA also agrees that additional actions by the U.S. government listed in the Task Force report would further prevent and respond to human trafficking abuses including but not limited to:

- 1) That Congress extend civil forfeiture to vessels that are used to facilitate forced labor, consistent with international law.
- 2) That Congress enact legislation to authorize federal agencies to penalize employers found to have engaged in abusive practices.
- 3) That the Administration consider a legislative proposal to create access to a temporary worker visa program, including a prohibition on worker-paid recruitment fees, for fishing workers on U.S. vessels fishing only in international waters but entering U.S. ports (worker-paid recruitment fees are prohibited under HLA's Code of Conduct).
- 4) That Congress consider legislation that would require employers of U.S. fishing vessel workers to provide written contracts in a language the worker understands prior to the worker traveling to the point of embarkment (translated crew contracts are a key component of HLA's Code of Conduct and Crew Handbook).
- 5) That Congress consider legislation that would require U.S. fishing vessel operators to provide workers with "Know Your Rights" information, including information on grievance mechanisms, in a language workers can understand, subject to inspection by CBP (this is consistent with HLA's Code of Conduct and Crew Handbook).
- 6) That the U.S. Coast Guard will take steps to adopt a human trafficking screening tool for use at sea in order to strengthen its efforts to recognize indicators of human trafficking.
- 7) That in future potential bilateral and multilateral arrangements, including but not limited to maritime law enforcement agreements and RFMO measures or resolutions that may be negotiated, the Administration will explore opportunities to strengthen prohibitions against forced labor on fishing vessels and improve enforcement of any such prohibitions, including improving protections for potential human trafficking victims among crew of all fishing vessels.
- 8) That Congress consider legislation incorporating forced labor due diligence into the criteria for an expanded "trusted trader" program to imports from foreign fisheries.
- 9) That the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) should negotiate future agreements to include a prohibition on the importation of goods produced by forced labor.
- 10) The U.S. government should continue to strengthen and coordinate its engagement with foreign governments on forced labor issues by strategically deploying a range of mechanisms to promote improved anti-trafficking efforts, including trade negotiations, customs enforcement, diplomacy, and law enforcement collaboration and training.

*The Hawaii Longline Association represents the Hawaii longline fishery, the largest food producing industry in the State of Hawaii. A major fishery of the United States, the industry is managed under federal regulations and does not fish in waters under the jurisdiction of the State of Hawaii. The fleet supplies highly monitored, fully traceable fresh, ice-chilled, premium quality fish to Hawaii and U.S. mainland markets. The Hawaii longline fishery is comprehensively managed and subject to high levels of monitoring and strict enforcement.*

For further information, contact Eric Kingma, Ph.D., HLA Executive Director at (808) 389-2653 or [Eric.K.Kingma@gmail.com](mailto:Eric.K.Kingma@gmail.com). Please visit HLA's website: [Home](#) | [Hawaii Longliners](#) | [Fishermen](#)



Hawaii longline vessel crew reviewing crew rights and grievance procedures in Honolulu Harbor  
Photo: Jerry Saludez



Hawaii longline foreign crew playing basketball at Honolulu Harbor  
Photo: Jerry Saludez



Hawaii longline crew from Indonesia celebrating Eid al-Fitr holiday with Indonesian community in Honolulu Harbor (2019)  
Photo: Cathy Swindell



Hawaii longline vessels tied up in Honolulu Harbor  
Photo: HLA

#####