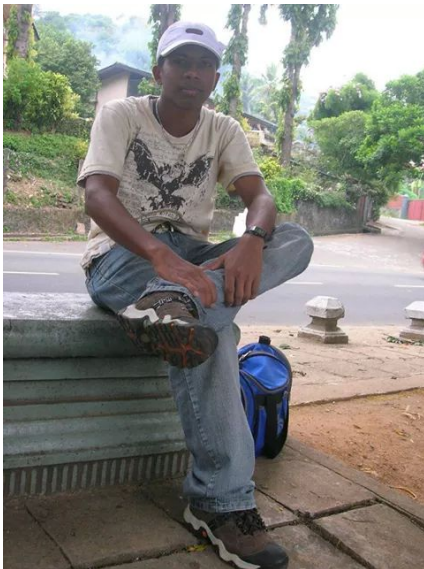


CASE STUDY



HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA

Missing Seafarers Reporting Programme Investigative Case Study



Disappearance of W. Harshaka Srimal Fernando: A Sri Lankan employee from a Taiwanese vessel

Words direct from the family and family priest reproduced with express permission, Some personal details redacted.

“W. Harshaka Srimal Fernando, a Sri Lankan national holding had been working on a two year contract of a vessel belong to Taiwan since November 13, 2013. The vessel has been flying under the flag of Oman. Harshaka had found this employment through a Sri Lankan foreign recruitment agent.

Along with Harshaka three other Sri Lankans had been working in the vessel and they had been complaining about severe hardships including not providing sufficient food, water, bad working conditions and extensive long hour work sometimes more than 20 hours at a stretch.

On August 13 Harshaka had worked for 21 hours at a stretch. On the following day he had been scolded by Bosun (senior crewman of the deck department) an Indonesian national for getting delayed to report to work. There, the Bosun had pushed Harshaka on several times and Harshaka had refused to work anymore in the ship and returned to his cabin. He also had said that he did not want to work anymore in the vessel and that he wanted to return to Sri Lanka.

At this stage, the three Sri Lankan workers had seen the captain and Bosun going to Harshaka’s cabin several times. After about one and half hours the captain had informed three other Sri Lankan workers that Harshaka was not to be seen and instructed to search for him. The fellow Sri Lankans had done a thorough search within the ship and a fax sent to the families on August 23 revealed that on the second day the captain or the others had made no effort to engage in further search operations.

But Harshaka was not to be found and the three co-Sri Lankans in a letter to their family had informed that how Harshaka Srimal disappeared and while they were searching for him, others in the vessel took no note of it. They had further said that nobody had seen Harshaka jumping from the vessel and he was not a mental condition to resort to such action. Thereafter they had never seen him and they suspect that something might have had happened to Harshaka in the hand of the captain and Bosun of the ship.

Since that day they too had refused to work and demanded that they be returned to Sri Lanka and in a letter they stated that they too feared for their lives. Even though Harshaka had gone missing on August 14 it had been kept as a secret by the agent and the vessel company and his family had only come to know about it on August 20.”



Human Rights at Sea has many cases like this submitted to the Missing Seafarers Register. These need proper investigation. Please support.

HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA

Human Rights at Sea (HRAS) is a Registered Charity in England and Wales No. 1161673. The organisation has been independently developed for the benefit of the international community for matters and issues concerning human rights in the maritime environment. Its aim is to explicitly raise awareness, implementation and accountability of human rights provisions throughout the maritime environment, especially where they are currently absent, ignored or being abused.

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