



HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA



# HRAS

## Abandonment Case Study

A Family Update for Chief  
Engineer Gorropotu  
Venkatarao

**Abandonment.  
A Pattern of Human  
Rights Abuse.**

### **“Conditions onboard had been “tough” with a lack of proper food on a regular basis”**

**The Family of Chief Engineer Venkatarao**

## Background

Arriving in Sector 11 East Navi Mumbai, India, the Human Rights at Sea team were met by Bharath Bylapudi, the nephew of Chief Engineer Gorropotu Venkatarao of the (MT TAMIM) which at the time of writing, remains abandoned in Sharjah OPL anchorage offshore UAE after 23 months due to lack of charter.

Invited to the family apartment of the nearest family members to Mumbai during the Human Rights at Sea visit, Bharath outlined the situation faced by both the immediate, and wider family over the last 23 months.

The following is the review of the family testimony authorised through Mr. Bylapudi, as the family home is in Vishakhapatnam and Mrs. Venkatarao speaks only Telugu, the local language.



Chief Engineer Venkatarao



Family photo - Chief Engineer Venkatarao's wife, son and daughter with their extended family



Chief Engineer Venkatarao with two crew members

## The Family Perspective

Chief Engineer Venkatarao has a wife and two children. His son is 15 years old and his daughter is 22 years old. All are dependent upon him and his wage as a merchant marine officer.

The last time Chief Engineer Venkatarao was at home was 23 months ago. He has not seen his wife or children since then, though he has been able to speak with them via his personal What's App account and SIM, purchased by himself, though not through any communications channels provided for by his employer, Eliteway Marine Services Ltd.

**“His only link to the outside is through his personal mobile phones, which he bought SIMS for himself.”**

The family first became aware that there was an issue after 6 months had passed, when it became apparent that Chief Engineer Venkatarao has only received 5 months wages. To date, he has not been earning for 18 months. His Sign-off letter was submitted in his 7th month, prior

to 1 month of notice period. Even after the completion of his contract, sign off has not been granted.

Following the end of his wages being paid into the family account, after only one month the family savings had been used up, and the family started to fall into financial problems and debt. They were and continue to be personally unable to pay household bills and have a mortgage of over 30 Lakhs which cannot be properly repaid. The loan was taken for 7 years tenure and at the time of writing they still owe 7.50 lakhs until it is paid off.

The family learned that conditions onboard had been “tough”, with a lack of proper food on a regular basis, poor hygiene due to lack of regular washing and most recently, no working lights in the ship and a broken generator which has meant that every night they have been forced to stay blacked out. After a year stranded on board, the crew started to leave one by one and now the crew consists only of three seafarers one of them being my uncle.

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## Abandonment. A Pattern of Human Rights Abuse.

### Mortgage

Due to non-payment, the bank has added on the outstanding payments and the family debt has accrued. My uncle's wife has received calls from the bank demanding payment and threatening that the family will lose their home. Fortunately to date, this has not happened as the wider extended family has stepped in to help.

Mrs. Gorrepotu has been unable to fulfil the family needs. She cannot cover her son's education needs in Grade 10, her daughter has had to stop further education and she is not currently working due to lack of available jobs. The family is unable to afford new clothing and make any trips.

Three extended families have been collectively supporting the Venkatarao family for around 18 months, though this has put significant financial strain on them too. Their own income comes from agriculture and seafaring and individually they earn about 8 Lakhs a year.

Unfortunately, due to the accrued financial pressures, the extended family has had to reduce its support over the last 6 months, placing an even greater burden upon Mrs. Gorrepotu. She has had to take out another loan to support her family's day-to-day needs.

**"It has got to the point where our families have had to look to support themselves".**

#### Comment:

**In short, the circumstances amount to a second abandonment for the Chief Engineer and his family.**



### Manning Agency

Bharath highlighted that he has been to the local manning agency, Rassiya Shipping Services Private Ltd (RPSL - MUM - 270) on Navi Mumbai, on several occasions to see the Managing Director, Mr Saurabh Raj Sharma but there has been no change to their response for 18 months, that the issue would be solved. It is the agency's responsibility to see whether wages have been given, and signing-off was effected, but as a matter of fact there has been no response despite several visits to their office.

*Note: Human Rights at Sea attended the offices of Rassiya Shipping Services to speak with the Managing Director. They were told that he would arrive shortly, but a short while later were informed that he was busy and had "other business to deal with". HRAS left their details and asked to be contacted to discuss the case. At the time of writing and after email follow ups, no response has been received from Rassiya Shipping Services.*

Bharath stayed: **"We are just given false hope and false promises from the agents."**

### Mental Challenges

Bharath highlighted that:

**"My Uncle is a strong man, but he does not have any hope left. His only hope has been to stay sane and to get back some of the wages that are owed to him to take home."**

He further outlined that his Aunt **"has been struggling from the lack of contact from her husband and from her side of the family due to their poor financial position."**

He went on to say that: **"She is mentally upset. She is depressed, she does not work, she cannot work as there is no proper work and infrastructure where they live to support her."**

The children currently have no proper opportunities, so they remain at home and his daughter is now caring for her mother.

Both Mrs. Gorrepotu and her daughter have been protecting their son from the details of the case. Meantime, he is excelling in his studies, but he does not know what his father is going through. He only hopes for his father's return.



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Indian Family Stories  
of the Consequences  
of Seafarer Abandonment

Human Rights at Sea 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.

### Disclaimer

The content and detail within this Case Study has been provided to Human Rights at Sea by the families of the seafarers named. The contents of the submitted text have been checked, as best as is possible, for accuracy by the authors at the time of writing. Human Rights at Sea is not liable in anyway, whatsoever, in any jurisdiction, for the contents of this case study which has been translated and published in good faith following investigation by the Charity. All text and pictures have been acknowledged where able. Any omissions or factual inaccuracies may be alerted by writing to: [enquiries@humanrightsea.org](mailto:enquiries@humanrightsea.org). The opinions, perspectives and comments are solely those of the author supported by the evidence disclosed.



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