



HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA



MISSING SEAFARERS & FISHERS
REPORTING PROGRAMME



Human Rights at Sea

Case Study

**Missing Seafarers
& Fishers Reporting
Programme Case Study
May 2020 - Third Officer
Cristito M. Acosta**



“We are in deep anxiety and it pains us to think what could have happened to him.”

Felicidad Acosta



Human Rights at Sea

MISSING SEAFARERS & FISHERS REPORTING PROGRAMME
CASE STUDY MAY 2020 - THIRD OFFICER CRISTITO M. ACOSTA



OVERVIEW

THE CASE OF CRISTITO "CRIS" ACOSTA HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF HRAS' MISSING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS REPORTING PROGRAMME.

Name:	Cristito "Cris" Montemayor Acosta
Date Of Birth:	20 May xxxx
Nationality:	Filipino
Place Of Residence:	Bail Sto. Tomas, La Union
Vessel Name/IMO:	Jiaolong Spirit / 9379208
Employer:	Teekay Shipping Philippines Inc
Rank:	Junior 3rd Officer
Last Seen/Heard From:	1845L 23 April 2020

BACKGROUND

Cris was two months into a six-month contract onboard the JIAOLONG SPIRIT. The vessel is owned by Jiaolong Spirit LLC and operated by Teekay Shipping. He had joined the vessel on 22 February 2020 in New Orleans, FL, USA. He was employed in the capacity of Junior 3rd Officer. He was undertaking his third contract with the company whom he joined as a deck cadet in June 2017. This was the first time he had worked onboard the JIAOLONG SPIRIT. Previous contracts had been onboard the BEIJING SPIRIT and ERIK SPIRIT.

At sea, Mr. Acosta would normally work the following hours:

- 0800 - 1200 - Navigation Watches
- 1500 - 1700 - Maintenance of FFA/LSA
- 2000 - 2400 - Navigation Watches

EVENTS LEADING UP TO HIS DISAPPEARANCE

On 10 April 2020 Cris posted some photographs to his Facebook account. The photos showed injuries he had sustained to his face. Cris did not elaborate as to how he had received these injuries, and at the time of writing it is not clear whether they are related to his subsequent disappearance.

Since joining the vessel in late February, Cris was in touch with his family and friends on a regular basis.

The vessel was 155nm off the coast off the Dominican Republic and underway bound for South Africa after completing a ship to ship operation in US waters near Florida, when, on the evening of 23 April 2020, Cris was reported missing.

That evening at approximately 1800L, Cris was called to the bridge to relieve the Chief Officer for dinner. The Chief Officer returned at approximately 1845L after which Cris left the bridge. Cris was due to commence his watch duties at 2000L that evening. When he did not show up on time those on watch telephoned his cabin. There was no response. A cabin search was subsequently initiated, but he was nowhere to be found.

It is presumed that after an extensive search of the vessel relevant authorities were notified of Cris' disappearance. A search and rescue (SAR) operation ensued. This was conducted by the United States Coastguard. SAR operations ceased after three days. **Cris' whereabouts remain unknown.**

Human Rights at Sea

MISSING SEAFARERS & FISHERS REPORTING PROGRAMME
CASE STUDY MAY 2020 - THIRD OFFICER CRISTITO M. ACOSTA



“We cannot afford to lose this precious soul and we still believe that he is alive out there.”

Felicidad Acosta

EVENTS SINCE CRIS' DISAPPEARANCE

The Acosta family have corresponded directly with the Managing Director of Teekay Shipping Philippines Inc, Mr Alex Verchez. It is via Mr Verchez that the family have obtained the detailed account of the events leading up to Cris' disappearance. They have been advised that further investigation into Cris' disappearance will be conducted when the vessel arrives in South Africa. At the time of writing, it is currently reported that the vessel is off the coast of South Africa, waiting to go alongside.

The family have also engaged in a strong social media campaign to raise awareness about Cris' case and put pressure on relevant authorities to thoroughly investigate the circumstances surrounding his disappearance. The campaign to date has mainly been coordinated via the medium of Facebook and in Tagalog, the principle language of the Philippines.

The family have asked Teekay Shipping Philippines Inc if they can be present for the investigation scheduled to take place in South Africa upon the vessel's arrival, which is subject to any travel restrictions due to the Corona virus pandemic.



Human Rights at Sea

MISSING SEAFARERS & FISHERS REPORTING PROGRAMME
CASE STUDY MAY 2020 - THIRD OFFICER CRISTITO M. ACOSTA



FAMILY IMPACT STATEMENT

The family have answered questions from Human Rights at Sea via email and telephone calls, and provided a statement highlighting their main concerns via WhatsApp messenger and updates via Facebook video link.

Below, is a copy of the Family Impact Statement, and their main concerns about the case:

Felicidad Acosta (Mother)

“I am not sure if this sad and heart-breaking news has been brought to your attention. My son, Cristito “Cris” Montemayor Acosta, 23 and a Filipino citizen was found missing in the evening of April 23. Cris is a seafarer and a Junior 3rd Officer of Teekay Shipping Philippines Inc. and was onboard the vessel JIAOLONG SPIRIT (crude oil tanker) with IMO:9379208 sailing under the flag of Bahamas. They said vessel was 155nm off the coast of Dominican Republic and underway bound to South Africa from a ship to ship operation in the US waters (Florida).

On April 23rd around 1800H he was called to relieve his Indian Chief Officer on duty for dinner time. He was then relieved by the Chief Officer around 1845H and Cris left the bridge thereafter. When it was already Cris’ turn for duty which was 200H-2400H, Cris wasn’t able to relieve anymore the Chief Officer. He was called up in his cabin but nobody answers the phone so they initiated a cabin search but he was nowhere to be found.

An extensive search and rescue effort was made by the USCG involving multiple vessels and helicopter support and guided by other maritime bodies and authorities. The search and rescue was ceased after three days and Cris is still missing.

We don’t have any exact and accurate information or news of what exactly happened onboard and the internet /wifi connection was switched off. The company have communicated with us but still no development or updates and were told to wait because further investigation will be conducted on May 16 or after the vessel’s arrival in South Africa. We are afraid that this might cause delay in the investigation.

I hope that you can help us find our missing loved one, my son. Please help us in seeking justice and honest immediate investigation results. We cannot afford to lose this precious soul and we still believe that he is alive out there. We are in deep anxiety and it pains us to think what could have happened to him. Please let us know if you will conduct immediate necessary actions and thorough investigation. Please include the entire crew in the investigation for there have been negative rumours about the attitude of other crew towards Cris. You may reach me throu this email or via mobile number [Personal contact details have been redacted].

We are looking forward that you may be able to help us regarding this concern. ”

1st May 2020

From Family Video Upload to Facebook

“We don’t have any exact and accurate information or news of what exactly happened onboard and the internet/wifi connection was switched off.¹”

From Family Video Upload to Facebook

“The company have communicated with us but still no development or updates and were told to wait because further investigation will be conducted on May 16 or after the vessel’s arrival in South Africa. We are afraid that this might cause delay in the investigation.²”

^{1,2} <https://m.facebook.com/cristalyn.acosta?tsid=0.3838665716952282&source=result>

Human Rights at Sea

MISSING SEAFARERS & FISHERS REPORTING PROGRAMME
CASE STUDY MAY 2020 - THIRD OFFICER CRISTITO M. ACOSTA



FAMILY IMPACT STATEMENT

Cristalyn Acosta (Sister)

“The family would like to go to South Africa to join the authorities in conducting the investigation on May 15...would it be possible for us to go there...we have been asking the Teekay Shipping about it, but they did not grant our request....please help us make some other ways in order for us to be able to go onboard their ship.... It is very painful to us about what happened to him.. and because of this incident, we always think the good things he have done to us. We need to be strong so that we can get the justice to him and we want to know the reason of his sudden disappearance of my brother.

That’s why we ask justice for my brother because we want to know the TRUTH about what happened to my brother and we know and feel that there was a foul play happened about him. Because it’s really a big question to us, How it happened? How he just disappeared easily? That’s why we are seeking for justice.

Sir, please help us, I think they are unfair. According to the investigator, they think that the bruises and scratches on the face and neck of my brother is just goggles but sir in my opinion, it’s impossible. How come that the goggles caused that bruises and scratches in his. My brother know how to use it. And even he use that goggles, it won’t caused bruises and scratches, it will just cause red marks. Maybe they just covering someone or something inside the vessel. We believe that it’s not the goggles. We want to know the truth.”

7th May 2020



TEEKAY SHIPPING RESPONSE 16 MAY 2020

Teekay Shipping have engaged directly with Human Rights at Sea in this matter as between the respective CEOs having been offered the right of reply. Human Rights at Sea is pleased to publish the response.

“This is a hugely sad matter for all of us to have lost our colleague Mr. Acosta and we deeply sympathise with Mr. Acosta’s family.

We have listened to the family’s concerns that Mr. Acosta may still be onboard the Vessel and held against his will. In light of their concerns, we are committed to a thorough and fully transparent investigation of the matter. We have appointed a forensic consultant to attend the vessel at her first port of call and conduct an investigation. We have also invited both the Flag State of the Vessel (The Bahamas) and the Philippines Embassy to send a representative to join the investigation.

From the outset we have been in close contact with Mr. Acosta’s family. The President of our operation in the Philippines has personally travelled to meet Mr. Acosta’s family and we are pleased to remain in close contact to this date, responding to all their queries. We have also put the family in touch with our appointed investigators so that their concerns can be heard and understood.

We do understand the family’s desire to attend the vessel themselves to search for Mr. Acosta. We have not refused this request but given the travel restrictions in place in both the Philippines and in the country where the Vessel is headed, we are not sure how the family anticipate attendance.”

ABOUT: The Missing Seafarers and Fishers Reporting Programme

Human Rights at Sea runs the Missing Seafarers and Fishers Reporting Programme. The aim is to build an accurate international database of the numbers and status of seafarers and fishermen missing or lost at sea on a global basis. www.missingseafarers.org

Who We Are

BACKGROUND

Human Rights at Sea was established in April 2014. It was founded as an initiative to explore issues of maritime human rights development, review associated policies and legislation, and to undertake independent investigation of abuses at sea. It rapidly grew beyond all expectations and for reasons of governance it became a registered charity under the UK Charity Commission in 2015.

Today, the charity is an established, regulated and independent registered non-profit organisation based on the south coast of the United Kingdom. It undertakes **R**esearch, **A**dvocacy, **I**nvestigation and **L**obbying specifically for human rights issues in the maritime environment, including contributing to support for the human element that underpins the global maritime and fishing industries.

The charity works internationally with all individuals, commercial and maritime community organisations that have similar objectives as ourselves, including all the principal maritime welfare organisations.

OUR MISSION

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.



STAY IN CONTACT



We welcome any questions, comments or suggestions. Please send your feedback to:
Human Rights at Sea, VBS Langstone Technology Park, Langstone Road, Havant. PO9 1SA. UK



Email: enquiries@humanrightsatsea.org



www.humanrightsatsea.org



As an independent charity, Human Rights at Sea relies on public donations, commercial philanthropy and grant support to continue delivering its work globally. Was this publication of use to you? Would you have paid a consultant to provide the same information? If so, please consider a donation to us, or engage directly with us.



www.justgiving.com/hras/donate



ONLINE DEDICATED NEWS
www.humanrightsatsea.org/news/



CASE STUDIES
www.humanrightsatsea.org/case-studies/



PUBLICATIONS
www.humanrightsatsea.org/publications/

OUR CONSULTANCY. INSTRUCT US



We are promoting and supporting:



Human Rights at Sea™
6,988 Tweets

HRAS
HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA

Human Rights at Sea™
@hrasatsea

Con. 2013 Est. 2014 Founder of Human Rights at Sea concept & web platform. Independent NGO raising global awareness of HR abuses at sea. #humanrightsatsea

United Kingdom & Global humanrightsatsea.org Joined April 2014
1,933 Following 20.8K Followers



Proud to be 'Green'

All of our publications are printed on FSC certified paper so you can be confident that we aren't harming the world's forests. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting responsible forestry all over the world to ensure they meet the highest environmental and social standards by protecting wildlife habitat and respecting the rights of indigenous local communities.



World Map: and the locations relating to this case study



Disclaimer

The content of this independent missing seafarer case study has been provided to Human Rights at Sea through first-hand testimony and interviews received from affected family members and third parties, as available. 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 document which has been published in good faith and with the express permission of the family as part of the charity's day-to-day work. All text and pictures have been acknowledged where able. Any opinions, perspectives and comments are solely those of the authors supported by the evidence disclosed. Any omissions or factual inaccuracies may be alerted by writing to: enquiries@humanrightsea.org.



**Human Rights at Sea
Case Study**

**Missing Seafarers
& Fishers Reporting
Programme Case Study
May 2020 - Third Officer
Cristito M. Acosta**

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.

-  enquiries@humanrightsatsea.org
-  www.facebook.com/humanrightsatsea/
-  twitter.com/hratsea
-  www.linkedin.com/company/human-rights-at-sea/
-  [Human Rights at Sea](https://www.youtube.com/HumanRightsatSea)

www.humanrightsatsea.org
www.humanrightsatsea.org/case-studies/
VBS Langstone Technology Park, Langstone Road
HAVANT PO9 1SA, United Kingdom