August 2025 Public Statement

WAITING FOR JUSTICE:

Taiwan's Failure to Prosecute the *You-Fu* Human Trafficking Case Does Not Meet International Legal Standards

Next >

1

ABOUT THE *YOU-FU* CRIMINAL CASE

In August 2024, the prolonged withholding of wages of 10 Indonesian fishers onboard the Taiwanese-flagged distant-water fishing vessel *You-Fu* came to light.

The fishers had been working without pay for 15 months. They were owed a total of US$80,850 in unpaid wages.

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August 2024: The fishers, civil society and legislators held a press conference. Afterwards, vessel owners paid the withheld wages and additionally provided each fisher with about US$60. Later, Taiwan's Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau identified 8 members of the Indonesian crew as victims of human trafficking.

📷 TAHR 台灣人權促進會

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April 2025: Pingtung prosecutors decided NOT to lodge a criminal lawsuit. Reportedly, it found no objective evidence that the Indonesian fishers were engaged in labour where their remuneration was disproportionate - therefore not meeting the threshold to constitute a human trafficking offense.

This prosecutorial decision was made in April 2025, but civil society only received word in June 2025, past the appeal period. The fishers did not know of this decision.

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We are disappointed in the decision of the Pingtung District prosecutors.

We **regret** the deep knowledge gap between what is internationally understood to be the crimes of forced labour and human trafficking **versus an out-dated and unrealistic judicial understanding of what constitutes the worst of human exploitation, falling drastically short of international standards.**

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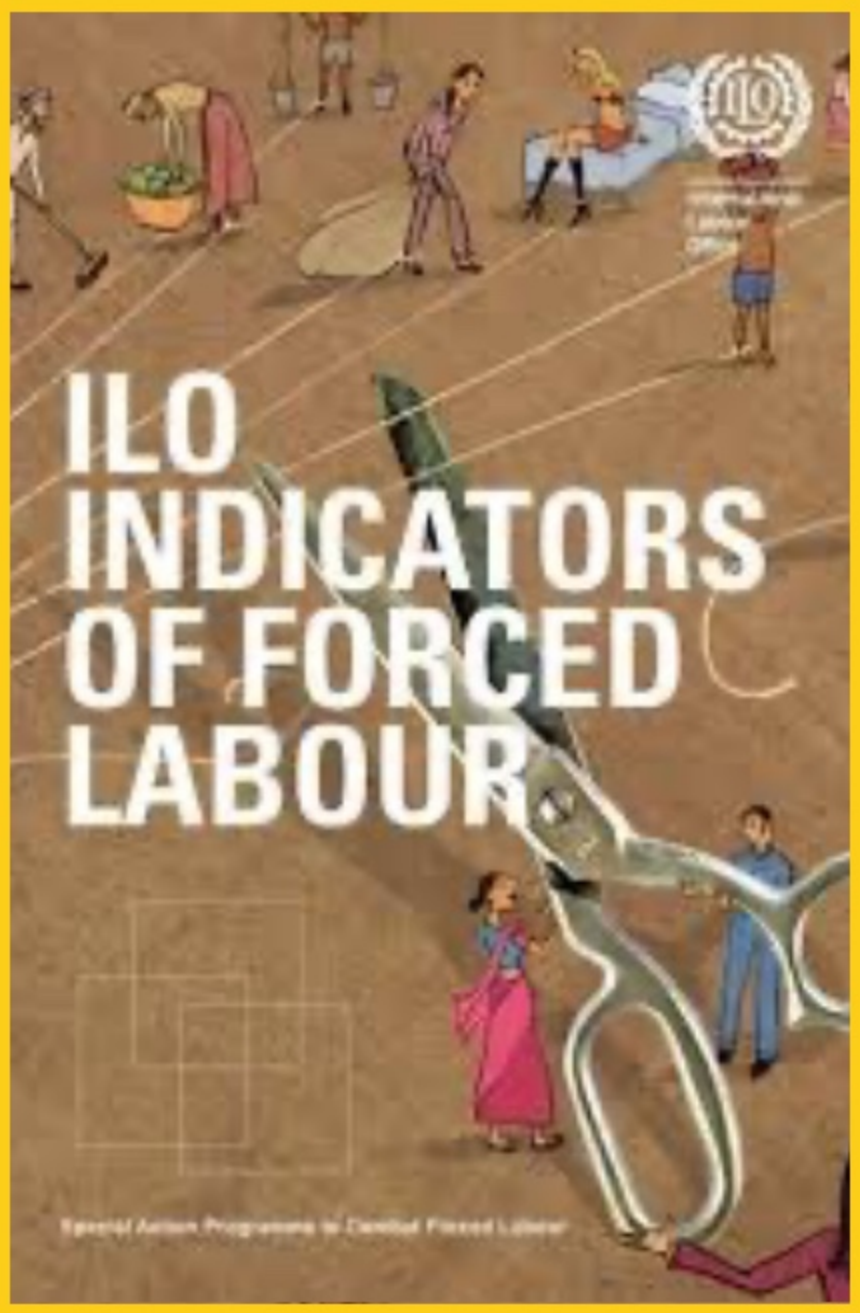
It fails to protect victims of forced labour in Taiwan & does not deter similar incidents from occurring. Our reasons are:



First, prosecutors misaligned with international law on what constitutes work without voluntary consent.

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Second, even if consent can be taken into account in this case of prolonged wage withholding, the terms of payment violate the Taiwanese employment contract.

🖌️ Graphic by Stellina

7

Third, local prosecutors failed to properly investigate fishers' working conditions to establish labour exploitation.

Instead, prosecutors relied on a formulaic and superficial view of labour abuses as mainly wage disputes.

READ OUR PUBLIC STATEMENT & COMMENTARY

The failure of the prosecutors to charge the offenders and proceed with a criminal lawsuit is a **missed opportunity** for Taiwan to protect victims of forced labour and prevent similar future abuses.

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