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North Korean workers used by Chinese seafood suppliers, **Outlaw Ocean Project finds**

Latest report details physical, sexual abuse at seafood processing plants connected to prominent seafood suppliers and retailers





way into international seafood supply chains, according to a new Outlaw Ocean report published in The New Yorker magazine.

eafood processed by Chinese companies using labor from North Korea has made its

evidence of Uyghur labor in the supply chains of prominent seafood companies, retailers, and distributors. The new report details evidence gathered over several months suggesting Chinese seafood processors use North Korean labor to cut costs. That seafood has entered the supply chains of seafood companies in the U.S., Canada, and

Europe, in violation of United Nations sanctions and laws in the respective countries.

The Outlaw Ocean Project said its team of researchers partnered with investigators and

advocates in South Korea and China to obtain evidence of North Korean workers -

The latest story builds on previous work by the Outlaw Ocean Project that discovered

primarily women – being forced to work long hours for little pay in long-term contracts. Additionally, it conducted interviews with North Koreans, kept anonymous out of fear of persecution, who detailed the coercion they faced, including threats against their family members if they refused to work, as well as sexual and physical assaults by managers and staff. "They called me in as if something happened in the room, and then coerced me into sex. They threatened me that, if I don't comply, then they will send me back, or they will take

out money from my living expenses," one woman told the Outlaw Ocean Project.

Dalian Haiqing Food, Dandong Galicia Seafood, Dandong Hailong Foodstuff, Dandong Omeca Food, Dandong Taifeng Foodstuff, Dandong Taihua Foodstuff, Dandong Yuanyi Refined Seafoods, Donggang Haimeng Foodstuff, Donggang Jinhui Foodstuff, and Donggang Luyuan Food. Most of the companies are located in Dandong, which borders

North Korea and is connected to the country by the "Sino-Korean Friendship Bridge," one

of the few land links to North Korea.

equivalent of billions of U.S. dollars annually.

with as many as 30 women per room.

certifications.

Border Protection.

About the Author

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openly.

The report named multiple Chinese processing companies as using North Korean labor:

Canada, and Europe – from seafood companies like High Liner Foods - which cut ties to a Chinese company after the earlier Outlaw Ocean report - and Trident Seafoods, to retailers including Albertsons and Walmart. Outlaw Ocean said it discovered the violations through interviews with North Koreans who worked in China, conducted by third-parties in places like open fields to avoid

government detection. The interview questions were written out by hand, and

encrypted phones were used to send photos of the answers to Outlaw Ocean

the Chinese version of TikTok, where videos of North Korean laborers were posted

Those companies are, in turn, linked to over 100 companies and agencies in the U.S.,

One video, posted of Donggang Jinhui Foodstuff, had drone footage of a celebration showcasing North Korean laborers and songs and flags.

The Chinese companies, Outlaw Ocean said, have "significant incentives" to use North

are also excluded from mandatory social welfare programs, further reducing costs.

Workers from North Korea are screened by the government, and applicants to the

in North Korea can "be punished if they try to defect," according to a report from the

program are required to either have a living parent or be married, so that the person still

South Korean government. Applicants selected for the programs are then sent through

Korean workers, as they are usually only paid a quarter of what local workers earn. They

researchers to further avoid detection. Other information was collected through Douyin,

According to the report, North Korea has engaged in programs to send its laborers to other countries in state-sanctioned groups. In return, the North Korean government receives some of the workers' pay as compensation, potentially adding up to the

"pre-departure training" which could last up to a year to ensure compliance. According to Outlaw Ocean, workers sign up for the programs because they offer significantly more pay than what they would receive working in North Korea - some offer salaries of up to USD 270 (EUR 248) a month, compared to similar work in North Korea paying USD 3.00 (EUR 2.76) per month. When the workers, almost all women,

arrive in China to carry out their two- or three-year contracts, managers confiscate their

passports so they cannot leave, force them to work shifts as long as 16 hours with as few

as one day off a month, and require them to sleep in bunk beds in locked dormitories

"At first, I almost vomited at how bad it was, and, just when I got used to it, the

supervisors would tell us to shut up, and curse if we talked," an anonymous North Korean worker said. The presence of North Korean laborers, despite violating international laws, has remained undetected even by companies using third-party social audits, Outlaw Ocean said. Half of the companies listed by Outlaw Ocean are Marine Stewardship Councilcertified, which includes a labor component, and several had other third-party labor

Previous Outlaw Ocean reporting revealing the use of Uyghur labor in Chinese seafood

processing led U.S. lawmakers to call for sanctions against the companies named in the

report, and resulted in a filing of a withhold-release order petition with U.S. Customs and

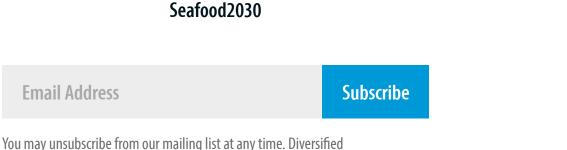
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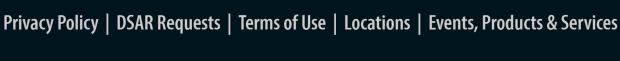
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