

PRESS RELEASE

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Police to Escort Finnwatch Researcher Andy Hall to Public Prosecutor on 18th June (Natural Fruit Criminal Charges) as Industry Commits to Support Bail Out

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For background information on Andy Hall's case, see <http://finnwatch.org/en/news/190-finnwatch-researcher-andy-hall-to-face-public-prosecutor-on-18th-june-2014> and www.andyjhall.wordpress.com

On Wed. 18th June at 9am, British migrant rights activist Andy Hall, who campaigns to improve conditions for migrant workers in Thailand, will be escorted from Bangna police station, Bangna district, Bangkok by police officers to meet officials at the Prakanong Public Prosecutors Office, Bangkok to learn the public prosecutor's decision whether the latest criminal charges filed against him by Natural Fruit Co. Ltd. will be ordered prosecuted at Prakanong district court.

Meanwhile, Thailand's 2 leading seafood associations, the Thai Frozen Foods Association (TFFA) and Thai Tuna Industry Association (TTIA), have agreed to back Hall by guaranteeing his bail sureties so as to confirm the associations policies to support the work of human rights activists who carefully investigate rights abuses for the benefit of society. Hall recently requested the Thai food export industry to bail him out if the Prakanong Public Prosecutor orders the latest case Natural Fruit filed against him to be prosecuted in court and the Prakanong district court detains him during consideration of the case. Hall's rationale in his request to industry to bail him out was to enable association members to publicly support the fight using justice mechanisms of a migrant rights activist against companies suspected of labour rights violations.

- *'Finnwatch is delighted by the decision of TFFA and TTIA to guarantee bail for Hall so as to acknowledge his important work on migrant rights protection in Thailand', says Finnwatch Executive Director Sonja Vartiala*

Dr Chanintr Chalisarapong, President of TTIA said *'TTIA and TFFA are committed in our ethical standard policy to work with responsible NGOs like Finnwatch based on good faith and transparency. We shall support and assist the Finnwatch team in Thailand being able to work independently and efficiently with the objective to enhance and improve the migrant labour conditions in the tuna and shrimp industry in Thailand.'*

Natural Fruit Co. Ltd., a company based in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province of Thailand, began a series of civil and criminal prosecutions against Andy Hall in February 2013. Charges relate to his role in conducting interviews with migrants from Myanmar working in the pineapple and tuna export industry to assist Finnwatch to compile a report, [Cheap Has a High Price](#). This report, released in Jan 2013 and [updated in Jan 2014](#), outlined particularly poor labour conditions in Natural Fruit's factory, selling pineapple concentrate to Finnish supermarkets.

- *'Finnwatch awaits the public prosecutor's decision this week with concern. Hall explained he will again request for the Public Prosecutor to not further proceed with the charges against him. But should the prosecutor disagree, he may well face court the same day and be detained pending the courts approval of his temporary release during a trial'*, says Vartiala.

Legal action against Hall has raised international criticism. In addition to Finnwatch, numerous NGOs and global union federations have condemned the harassment. [5 UN Special Rapporteurs have sought clarifications](#) amidst concern Hall is being targeted for his work to promote migrant rights.

- *'Hall told us he will voluntary take part in all judicial processes. He has done nothing wrong and hopes his case will shed only further light on systematic migrant rights abuses in Thailand'*, says Vartiala.

Hall was questioned last month at Bangna police station by officials investigating Natural Fruit's latest and third criminal charge against him, criminal defamation, relating to an interview he gave in Myanmar to Aljazeera in early 2013. Previously in Sept. 2013, an officer at Bangna police station attempted to get Hall to sign a Thai language document stating he accepted guilt to all the accusations. A translator was arranged that was not certified by the Ministry of Justice and translation offered was poor. Hall refused to sign the document, requested an unused copy that was not part of the case files for keeping and left the police station. Following this, his treatment was raised with the Thai Government by the British Ambassador. Last month, a certified Ministry of Justice translator was organised by police during questioning but information surfaced lawyers for Natural Fruit had contacted this translator in advance of the appointment.

Together Natural Fruit has raised 4 charges against Hall. The initial 2 criminal charges relate to defamation by publication/propagation under the Thai Criminal Code and breach of the Computer Crimes Act, for which initial hearings have begun but the case awaits summons delivery confirmation by the Bangkok South Criminal Court. A third charge relates to civil defamation. The latest and fourth charge against Hall, Natural Fruit Company Ltd. filed additional criminal charges against Hall at Bangna Police Station for criminal defamation.

If found guilty of criminal charges laid against him at Bangkok South Criminal Court, Hall could face together seven years in prison per count. Natural Fruit are also claiming 300 million baht (\$10 million) in damages from Hall in the civil case filed at Nakhon Pathom Civil Court. The latest charges at Bangna Police Station carry a maximum sentence of one years imprisonment and a fine not exceeding 20, 000 Baht (US\$650).

Serious problems in Natural Fruit's labour conditions have been highlighted in several

other reports and research as well as the Finnwatch report, to which Hall assisted initially. According to Finnwatch's information, Thai authorities have not raised any legal actions against Natural Fruit.