

Drop The Charges Against Andy Hall

Andy Hall is a migration researcher who defends the rights of migrants in Thailand, including migrants from Burma.

He documented exploitation of migrant workers at a factory owned by the Natural Fruit company in Thailand.

Instead of the Natural Fruit company taking action to end human rights violations against its workers, it is taking legal action against Andy Hall. They are suing him for defamation, saying that he was “broadcasting false statements to public media” and also demanding damages.

If convicted, Andy Hall could be imprisoned for seven or more years and fined more than £6.6m (around \$10m).

Abuses Against Migrant Workers

Andy Hall managed a team of researchers producing a report on labour conditions for migrant workers in factories in Thailand.

The report, ‘Cheap Has A High Price’, was published by the Finnish organisation Finnwatch, on 21st January 2013.

It is available online here:
<http://www.finnwatch.org/uutiset/80-serious-human-rights-violations-behind-european-food-brands>

“Our emphasis is on...active human resource development” Chairman, Natural Fruit.

“I think it’s a malicious case and I think it’s an attempt to silence me.”
Andy Hall



The report exposed human rights abuses at a Natural Fruit company factory in Thailand which processes pineapple products. The vast majority of the workers are migrants from Burma.

The abuses include workers being hit by security staff and managers, dangerous working conditions with heatstroke and fainting common due to high temperatures, and electric shocks and other injuries, compulsory overtime, illegally low wages, unfair deductions and charges from salaries, seizure of passports and ID papers and which are not returned on request and child labour.

The Natural Fruit company was approached many times during the preparation of the report, but did not agree to meet with researchers.

The Charges Against Andy Hall

“My legal strategy is simply to tell the truth, to prove that everything we said is true and maybe to countersue people who are maliciously prosecuting me.” Andy Hall

Defamation laws exist in many countries, but rather than being used to protect reputations, they are often used to try to silence critics.

Andy Hall has been charged under the Thai Criminal Code sections 90, 91, 326, 328 and 332, and under the Computer Crimes Act 2007 sections 3 and 4. At court hearings which have taken place so far the company has not presented any evidence.

Migrant Workers In Thailand

There are an estimated 2-3 million migrant workers in Thailand, mostly from Burma, Laos and Cambodia. Around eighty-percent of all migrants in Thailand are thought to be from Burma. Thailand is currently going through a process of registering all migrants.

Migrants typically work in industries with harsh or difficult working conditions, such as fishing boats, factories, agricultural and construction work. Many also work as domestic labour.

Abuses against migrant workers are rife in all these industries, and unregistered migrants are also subject to additional threats, extortion and exploitation.

About Natural Fruit

The Natural Fruit company produces canned pineapple and pineapple juice concentrate. It's part of NatGroup, which also produces hydrated fruit under the company name Prafic 2005 and canned, pouch and aseptic aloe vera under the name Prafic. NatGroup also owns packaging and logistic companies.

The company also has strong political connections in Thailand. Nai Wirat is a major shareholder, and is the older brother of Chalermchai Sri-on, who is General Secretary of the Democratic Party.

About Andy Hall

“I think it's a malicious case and I think it's an attempt to silence me.” Andy Hall

Andy Hall is a British citizen who has lived in Thailand for ten years. He worked as a researcher for Mahidol University in Bangkok. He has spent ten years researching and exposing exploitation and abuses against migrant workers.

Many media organisations including the BBC have reported on abuses he has exposed. In January 2013, his contract with Mahidol University was not extended. He is currently residing in Burma.

Drop the Charges!

The charges against Andy Hall are a clear attempt by Natural Fruit and NatGroup to silence its critics.

By targeting Andy Hall they are also trying to threaten others who try to expose their illegal behaviour. It is an attack on free speech, and threatens work to improve the rights of migrant workers in Thailand, the majority of whom are from Burma.

Natural Fruit/NatGroup should immediately drop all charges, and instead ensure that their workers are treated fairly and are able to work in a safe environment. Thai police should investigate illegal activities in Natural Fruit's factory, and prosecute those responsible for violating the law.

Take action

Visit www.burmacampaign.org.uk/andy-hall to take action now.

Here you can send an email to Natural Fruit company and NatGroup demanding they drop the prosecution, and respect workers rights.

You can also email the Thai Embassy in London to express concern about the case, and call on the Thai government to investigate abuses against migrant workers at Natural Fruit and all factories in Thailand.

More information

More information is also available at Andy Hall's website at:

<http://andyjhall.wordpress.com/>

Read the Human Rights Watch media release about the case here:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/04/09/thailand-defamation-charges-chill-labor-rights-inquiries>



A Natural Fruit company factory in Thailand

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& Development in Burma**