



Human Rights Now

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Speaker: Nicolás Torres Vieira

Thank you, [Mr. President/Madam Vice-President].

Human Rights Now is deeply concerned about serious labour and human rights violations in Thailand's poultry sector and will soon be releasing a report on the issue.

Thailand is the world's third largest poultry exporter. The sector's recent rapid expansion has worsened labour rights violations in farms and factories, creating modern slavery-like conditions. Migrant farm workers are especially vulnerable due to the language barrier and documented discrimination by employers. The Thai government has also identified widespread violations in the poultry sector in a 2016 internal review.

Our report highlights the Thammakaset Farm case, representative of violations in the sector, in which 14 migrant poultry farm workers brought labour claims against their employer. Workers we interviewed reported confiscation of their identity documents, preventing them from leaving the farm, threats of non-payment if they quit, underpayment, and a lack of required breaks and holidays. After their dispute began, the employer also used retaliatory private criminal prosecutions such as defamation to harass the workers and labour activists assisting them.

[Mr. President/Madam Vice-President],

Widespread violations such as these throughout Thailand's poultry sector call for structural reforms. We urge the Thailand government to facilitate the compliance of Thai poultry farms and factories with labour laws, to develop a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights based on the UN Guiding Principles on BHR, and to take measures preventing private criminal prosecutions harassing complaining workers and labour activists. We further request the governments of relevant states to adopt legislation strengthening companies' due diligence standards over suppliers, requiring transparency in their supply chains, and restricting the import of products of forced labour.

Thank you.