



International Transport Workers' Federation-Australia

Dean Summers ITF Co-ordinator

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German FOC operator Orion threatens legal sledgehammer against the Maritime Union and the ITF for pursuing wage, safety and medical claims for it's Filipino crew loading Australian wheat in Newcastle.

The ITF were called to investigate a series of claims against the German owned Liberian flagged, bulk ship Columbia from the largely Filipino crew yesterday after hearing alleged breaches of international convention and human rights from the Church based welfare organisation in Newcastle.

ITF National Coordinator Dean Summers said that he had been refused access into the ship by the Ukrainian master who repeatedly claimed that there was no problems on board. " Instead of trying to fix problems the German shipping company has threatened through its lawyers the most severe penalties under the section 45D of the Australian Trades Practices Act against those organisations who are trying to protect the rights of visiting seafarers taking Australian exports to international markets.

"If there is nothing to hide then why wouldn't the captain and indeed the owners want us to investigate? We were however successful in getting the two Filipino crew off the ship and to a doctor for the first time since a serious shipboard accident one month earlier. All seafarers have rights to access medical treatment and all have rights to go offshore when in port"

The ITF repeated its call for the Federal government to fast track the introduction of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention which would give the Australian government officers the rights to investigate claims like this and to detain any ship found to have breached seafarers rights in any Australian port.

The ship is due to stay alongside for another 36 hours after the loading is completed to enable fumigation.

Contact Dean Summers 0419934648