

## Press Release – NGOs denounce dangerous working conditions after four shipbreaking workers are killed

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### ***Greek and Russian shipping companies had both sold old vessels to the shipbreaking yard***



(Pictured: four of the eight workers

hospitalised for their burn injuries sustained on 5 September) **Brussels, 14 September 2015** - The NGO Shipbreaking Platform calls for urgent action to stop dangerous working conditions after four workers died following a gas cylinder explosion in a shipbreaking yard in Chittagong, Bangladesh. The condition of four more workers is still critical, after suffering severe burn injuries in the blast. The accident happened on 5 September 2015 at the Shital Ship Breaking yard, a yard that was only established in 2011 [1]. "This terrible accident and the deaths of the workers are painful reminders of the dangerous working conditions that are prevalent at the shipbreaking yards of Bangladesh," said Muhammed Ali Shahin, coordinator of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform in Bangladesh. "Continued lack of proper procedures, adequate infrastructure and equipment, and sufficient training, are the root causes for such deadly accidents. We demand that all yard owners and the relevant authorities push for drastic change and ensure a safe and sound working environment in the yards. The yard management must be held responsible." According to the yard management, the eight workers were hit by the cylinder blast when they were getting ready for work, reported local media. Three of the workers only received only basic care and were sent back home. Later they were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital when their condition had deteriorated. The five other were already being treated at the hospital; however, Khokon, Moksedul, Alamin and Shajahan succumbed to their injuries and died in hospital. Today, Nadim, Pasha, Abdur Rouf and Mannan are still fighting for their lives. It was only after local NGOs, trade union affiliates and member organisations of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, contacted the Bangladesh Shipbreakers Association (BSBA) that the workers received better treatment in the hospital. The Ship Breaking Workers Trade Union Forum and Platform member organisation BLS demanded proper care and treatment and reminded the yard owners about their obligation to provide compensation to the victims and their families. On 10 September, after three of the injured workers had already died in the hospital, activists and citizens formed a human chain in Chittagong to protest against the lack of response from the yard owners.



(Pictured: the human chain that

took place on 10 September 2015 in front of the Chittagong press club) Even though several shipping companies have already renounced selling their old ships to the breaking beaches of Bangladesh, as the working and environmental conditions are still unacceptable, others continue doing so without any remorse. At the time of the explosion, two ships were beached at Shital: the "Arctic", an LNG tanker whose last beneficial owner was the Russian state-owned tanker-giant **Sovcomflot**; and the "Aman Trader", which was sold for breaking by Greek **Universal Shipmanagement Corporation** and was operated by Greek **Enterprises Shipping & Trading S.A**. The latter has also sold three ships for breaking to South Asia in 2015 and has been listed by the Platform as a "global dumper" in

2014 [2]. *"It is irresponsible of ship owners to continue to ignore what is happening in Bangladesh and to perpetuate a situation of exploitation and unsafe working conditions by choosing these yards to maximize their profits instead of demanding responsible ship recycling yards,"* said Patrizia Heidegger, Executive Director of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform. The Daily Star, the leading English-speaking newspaper in Bangladesh, commented that *"it is unacceptable that an industry as huge and risk-prone as ship-breaking should still be in such a primitive state that allows these horrible accidents to occur. The apathy and negligence demonstrated by employers violate basic labour laws that make it mandatory for workplaces to maintain minimum safety standards"* [3]. Accidents remain common in the shipbreaking yards of Bangladesh. According to information gathered by the NGO Shipbreaking Platform and its member organisations, in 2015 alone 12 shipbreaking workers have died on the job, and 17 more were severely injured. Last year, 17 shipbreaking workers died in Bangladesh, and at least 37 were injured [4]. Explosions of gas cylinders, fires, steel plates crashing down in an uncontrolled manner and falls from heights are all too common risks for the shipbreaking workers of Chittagong. **CONTACT** Patrizia Heidegger Executive Director NGO Shipbreaking Platform [patrizia@shipbreakingplatform.org](mailto:patrizia@shipbreakingplatform.org) +32 2 6094419 Muhammed Ali (Shahin) Platform coordinator [shahinhelpsgreen@gmail.com](mailto:shahinhelpsgreen@gmail.com) **NOTES** [1] See for example [The Daily Star](#), the [Dhaka Tribune](#) and [World Maritime News](#) [2] See p28 of our ["global dumpers" 2013 list which we published in February 2014](#) [3] The Daily Star editorial can be read [here](#) [4] These are the deaths the NGO Shipbreaking Platform and its member organisations are aware of. The names of the workers who died in 2014 are: Babul Das, Md Jashim, Md Faruk, Md Arif Hasan, Gias Uddin, Sultan, Amjad Hossen, Saidur Rahman, Moshin, Md Mohiuddin, Sujon Babu, Uttam Nath, Afzal, Firoz, Asad Mia, Md Rafique, and Md Selim. The names of the workers who died so far in 2015 are: Md. Gafur, Enamul, Saddam Hossen, Nuruddin, Robiul, Borhan, Ali Hossein, Md. Elias, Shahjahan