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## Migrant workers exploited in Thai tourist paradise

**Laundry workers who clean the Swedish tourists' bed sheets in Thailand work 17 hour shifts. The fresh bread at the breakfast buffet is baked by workers who have not had vacation in a year. These are some of the results from Fair Action and Schyst resande's (Fair Travel network) report "No Holidays for the Burmese." In the study, it is also clear that the tour operators have not taken action to hinder the illegally low wages of hotel housekeepers and waiters, although the problem has been known since 2012.**

This winter, about 300 000 Swedes will go to Thailand for vacation. The tour operators promise luxurious pool areas, pure white beaches and relaxation for the whole family in the "land of smiles". But behind the scenes at the hotels in Thailand, a different reality is found: Wages below the statutory minimum wage, discrimination and no paid leave is everyday life for Burmese migrants.

The seven hotels concerned are used by Apollo (REWE Group), Fritidsresor (TUI Group) and Ving (Thomas Cook Group). Half of the 18 hotel workers that Fair Action and Schyst resande interviewed state that their salary is lower than the minimum wage, making it difficult to support their families. In addition, 15 of them do not get the leave they are entitled to. In contrast to the workers' stories, the tour operators claim that they have checked the salary levels at several hotels in Thailand, and found no deviations from the stipulated minimum wage.

*- We highlighted the issue of illegally low wages in Thai hotels already in 2012. However, the tour operators have not taken their responsibility, says Amanda Söderlund, author of the report at Fair Action. She also states that the companies' lack of action is a violation of the UN Guiding Principles.*

Fair Action and Schyst resande have also talked to employees of companies that wash linen and supply food to the hotels. Out of the eleven interviewed Burmese who work for the hotel suppliers, nine earn less than the minimum wage, despite extremely long working hours. In a laundry, employees describe how they work 17-19 hours per day during peak season with only two days off per month and no vacation, although this is illegal according to Thai law.

*- I have never been on leave. The boss told us clearly that we were not allowed to take any leave, says a worker who has been employed for more than two years in a meat-processing unit that supplies the hotels with meat.*

Based on the findings in the report, Schyst resande and Fair Action recommend the tour operators to ensure that the hotels comply with Thai legislation regarding wages, working hours and leave, and to prevent discrimination of Burmese workers. Apollo, Fritidsresor and Ving should also investigate the working conditions at the hotels' suppliers, and address abuses. In addition, the tour operators should promote freedom of association, so that the employees themselves can demand improvements of working conditions.

Read the full report here: [http://fairaction.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/No-holidays-for-the-burmese\\_9-december-2015.pdf](http://fairaction.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/No-holidays-for-the-burmese_9-december-2015.pdf)

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