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**LERA Session Title:** Transformation of the World of Work and Labor Movements in Asia

**Paper Title: US Sanctions, the Solidarity Center and the Labor Movement in the Shrimp Processing Sectors of Thailand and Bangladesh**

**Paper Abstract:**

The shrimp processing industries of Thailand and Bangladesh have recently received extensive coverage in the international media for alleged rampant abuse of labor. It is no coincidence that the American Solidarity Center, a US-government funded labor group with field offices around the world, has been active in both countries. Recently, evidence of labor abuse in the shrimp processing sectors presented by the Solidarity Center contributed to the decision of the U.S. government to level largely symbolic sanctions first against Bangladesh (June 2013) and then against Thailand (June 2014). In both countries, the state and industry bodies are currently working to restore the industries' respective reputations in part through the involvement of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

This paper seeks to understand the influence of the American Solidarity Center in the development of the labor movement in the shrimp processing sectors of Bangladesh and Thailand. First, I offer an overview of the labor movement in the shrimp processing sectors of both countries. In each national context, I describe the development of the labor movement with respect to: (a) the larger national context of labor organizing and governance (b) the role of the Solidarity Center (c) the primary focus of organizing activity. Second, this paper attempts to assess how the evolving institutional context after the imposition of US sanctions will influence the future development of the labor movement in the shrimp processing industries in both national contexts.