



Global Unions Call for Respect for Migrants

International Migrants' Day, December 18, is an occasion to celebrate the many contributions, economic, social, and cultural, that migrants make to their countries of destination as well as to their countries of origin.

Yet, too many migrants, rather than finding recognition of their contributions, are rebuffed and fall victim to racism and xenophobia. In host countries, they often face hostility rather than hospitality. And, they become popular scapegoats for failures of governments and societies.

Rather than address global imbalances and inequality, oppression and grinding poverty, which force the majority of the world's migrants to become uprooted, too many politicians are complicit in the vilification of migrants, "talking tough" on immigration and introducing ever more restrictive or punitive migration policies.

Migration can also produce humanitarian disasters. The most recent tragedy in Lampedusa, in which, amongst others, 270 Syrian migrants perished, is only one example of what is happening in all regions of the world. Such incidents are not only shocking due to the loss of life and, in some cases, local indifference, but because they show just how frantic many migrants are to escape regardless of the cost. Drowning for them was the last chapter in a history of degradation, misery, and desperation. Their migration was not chosen, but dictated by the consequences of global and local policy failures in many areas, including development, jobs, human rights, social protection, and quality public services, which have robbed people of opportunity and hope. Those failures have meant the loss, for far too many, of their effective right not to migrate.

Ninety percent of the world's 232 million migrants leave home in search of work. That is why workers' rights are so central to migration. The lives of migrant workers are often constant struggles for respect and human dignity. They are subject to serial rights violations, from recruitment agencies, to local agents, to government agencies, to employers, to local citizens. This chain of oppression often places migrant women, who make up nearly fifty per cent of international migrants, in particularly cruel and humiliating circumstances.

Global Unions draw particular attention to the situation in Gulf countries, such as Qatar, where migrant workers form the majority of the workforce, yet are denied the most basic of rights, including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

However, even in countries that, on paper, respect human rights, including trade union rights, migrants are often concentrated in precarious work. For such "disposable" workers, even the right to struggle is beyond reach. Freedom from fear and access to basic human rights is often difficult or impossible to obtain.

On International Migrants' Day, Global Unions call on Governments to:

- Recognise the contributions of migrants to all forms of development (social, economic, cultural, etc.), including quality public services;
- Ensure equal treatment of migrant and local workers, including equal working conditions and access to social protection ;



- Provide that all work is performed under an appropriate legal framework where the rights of workers can be protected and where workers have access to justice;
- Ensure that the right of migrant workers to form or join trade unions and to bargain collectively is provided for by law and respected in practice;
- Provide decent work for all;
- Act to counter racism and xenophobia.
- Ratify and implement the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 97 and 143 and ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, , the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and all other human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and
- Support a leading role of the ILO in the development of a system of coherent, global governance of migration.

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