

Women Workers Demand Governments address Gender-based violence in All Workplaces and Ratify ILO Convention 190 (C190)

Women workers, particularly in the Global South, have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout. Now, more than ever, governments need to ratify ILO Convention 190 (C190) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 (R206), as a pathway to end violence and harassment in all workplaces and rebuild society with justice and equality at the center.

Across the world, women have long been concentrated in low paid, insecure and informal employment, with limited income security and social protection, including health care. Violence against women and the exploitation of their unpaid labor, has seen a marked escalation, in the last four decades of neoliberal capitalism. Women's bodies are objectified and commodified, and there is a growing delegitimation of women's rights, even while women continue to be over-represented in many essential and frontline occupations.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on the health and livelihoods of millions of women workers, and has exacerbated the persistent risk factors for violence that predate Covid-19. In garment supply chains, suppliers have used the Covid-19 crisis as a pretext to [terminate women trade unionists](#), which is blatant union busting. In the healthcare sector, where women comprise 70 percent of the workforce, they have been [exposed to higher rates of GBVH at work, with women workers reporting that they have been forced to provide sexual favours to access personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#). Also, migrant domestic workers have experienced a [wave of sexual and physical abuse and assaults](#) including beatings, groping, rape, sleep deprivation and long working hours.

Gender-based violence affects women in all workplaces, including people who are confronting injustice and inequality. There has been an increase in intense threat to labour rights, women human rights and environmental defenders, especially in countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Philippines, where sexual and physical violence, along with raids and arrests, have been used as a tactic to silence them.

The ratification of C190, which recognises the fundamental right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, is extremely important to meet the challenges to worker safety and health, gender and socioeconomic inequalities, that have worsened under the Covid-19 pandemic. C190, recognises economic harm as a form of violence and addresses risks associated with discrimination and unequal relationships of power, which leaves women workers, especially those with other marginalised identities, particularly

migrants, LGBTQ+, indigeneous women, women with disabilities and other marginalised workers, at increased risk of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH).

ILO C190 recognises the changing ways work is organised and performed, by protecting workers, including those in non-standard work arrangements, against all GBVH linked to work, including during commutes to work, migration for employment, work related communications, volunteering and private homes when work is conducted there. The provisions outlined by C190, would help governments devise an inclusive, integrated and gender responsive approach to addressing violence at work, by increasing women workers' agency, economic stability, and collective power. It can help end the continuing violence against women and impunity for femicide, which has led to murders like that of [21 year old garment worker, Jeyasre Kathiravel](#).

The ILO Convention 190, by affirming the fundamental role of freedom of association and collective bargaining in eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work, also has the potential to aid women workers in their efforts towards systemic change. The ratification and implementation of C190 is the important step to create a new era where exploitative labor practices and occupational sex segregation are ended, gender pay gaps are closed, workers are paid living wages and workplace democracies are built and strengthened to ensure justice for all workers.

Preventing violence at work is fundamental to ensuring decent work and a life of dignity for women and all workers. Governments must ratify C190 as a matter of urgency, especially in the Covid-19 context, to ensure everyone has a right to a world of work, free from violence and harassment.

Endorsed by:

1. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
2. Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA)
3. International Migrants Alliance Asia Pacific (IMA Asia Pacific)
4. Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar (STUM), Burma/Myanmar
5. Chemical Workers Union Alliance (CWUA), Thailand
6. Nurses' Union of Thailand (NUOT), Thailand
7. Labour Rights Foundation (LRF), Thailand
8. Naripokkho, Bangladesh
9. Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong (ATKI-HK)
10. Filipino Migrant Workers' Union (FMWU)
11. Indonesian Migrants Muslim Alliance (GAMMI)

12. Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union (IMWU)
13. League of Indonesian Migrant Workers (LiPMI)
14. Overseas Nepali Workers' Association (ONWA)
15. Thai Regional Alliance (TRA-HK)
16. United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK)
17. United Indonesians Against Overcharging (PILAR)
18. GABRIELA, Hong Kong
19. International Migrants Alliance (Hong Kong and Macau Chapter)
20. Seruni, Indonesia
21. Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB-IMA HK and Macau)
22. HomeNet Pakistan
23. Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA)
24. Commercial & Industrial Workers' Union (CIWU), Sri Lanka
25. BIEN, Philippines
26. Solidarity of Trade Union Myanmar, Burma/Myanmar
27. Women's League of Burma, Burma/Myanmar
28. Women's Centre, Sri Lanka
29. Women Wise Three, Philippines
30. Angona, Bangladesh
31. Fiji Women's Rights Movement
32. Palangkaraya Ecological and Human Rights Studies (PROGRESS Kalimantan), Indonesia
33. Women for Social Development (WSD), Nepal
34. Tamilnadu Textile and Common Labour Union-TTCU, India
35. Thivyarakini, TTCU, India (individual sign on)