

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
ITUC OnLine

Give the gift of a day off for your domestic worker this holiday

Unions launch global campaign '12 by 12' to introduce decent laws for domestic workers

Brussels, 19 December 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Domestic workers from 12 countries in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East are taking to the streets on Monday 19th December to demand better rights including one day off a week and an eight-hour working day for the 53 million domestic workers worldwide.

The global campaign aims to put in place the ILO convention for domestic workers, which needs two countries to ratify the convention to bring it into force, and introduce decent laws in countries where domestic workers are most under threat.

"Domestic workers deserve the same rights as other workers. As millions of people prepare to take holidays, it's a stark reminder that some workers don't have the right to have one day off a week," said Sharan Burrow.

Domestic workers are campaigning for one day off a week, a minimum wage, an 8-hour day, the right to join a union, protection from exploitation and abuse, social protection and the regulation of employment agencies.

In front of parliaments and government offices in Jakarta, Capetown and Brussels domestic workers will be mopping the floor and cleaning the steps in a bid to get politicians to introduce decent laws.

The international trade unions year-long campaign, 12 by 12, aims at getting the first 12 countries to pass decent laws for domestic workers in 2012 and ratify ILO Convention 189 giving rights to domestic workers. ITUC is working in partnership with the ETUC, the International Domestic Workers Network, IUF, Solidar and national centres.

"If people, many of them government officials and ministers, will hire domestic workers and let them in to their house, why won't they let them into the law?," says Sharan Burrow.

83% of domestic workers are women, and many are migrant workers carrying out roles such as cooking, cleaning and caring for young children and the elderly.

The campaign launch follows International Migrants Day on Sunday 18th December. Many domestic workers are migrant workers, with no voice or rights in the countries where they are working. Hidden behind closed doors working in homes, they are also hidden from the law as migrant workers.

"For domestic workers, those caring for the elderly and children are never given a day off, and only rest after the people they care for go to bed," said Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the ITUC. "Governments should address the problem and create protective mechanisms to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are actually respected in their territory."

About the 12 by 12 Campaign:

12 by 12 is the campaign to ratify the ILO Convention 189 on domestic workers in 12 countries in 2012 led by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and with partners: the International Domestic Workers Network, IUF and the European Trade Union Confederation.

Two countries are needed to ratify the ILO Convention to bring it into force.

The campaign focuses on 12 countries representing 40% of the world's domestic workers industry.

Latin America: Brazil, Dominican Republic, Peru, Paraguay; Africa: Kenya, South Africa, Senegal; Asia/Pacific: Indonesia, India, Philippines; Europe: EU; Middle East: Saudi Arabia.

Actions by workers and campaigners in Asia/Pacific:

Indonesia – has launched a nation-wide petition which will culminate on 15 February, the Indonesian National Day for Domestic Workers.

India – is bringing together 50 domestic workers in New Delhi to spearhead the campaign with the Minister for Labour.

Philippines – have domestic workers participating in a Fun Run with 100s of balloons and road signs along the route saying 'Domestic work is work' and 'Domestic workers are not slaves'.

Actions by workers and campaigners in Africa and Latin America:

In Kenya, South African, Senegal, Dominican Republic, Colombia and Peru hundreds of domestic workers are rallying in front of parliaments to call on politicians to ratify the convention and introduce decent laws for domestic workers.

Actions by workers and campaigners in Europe:

In Brussels, hundreds of domestic workers are cleaning the steps and polishing the railings in front of the European Parliament.

Actions for the rights of domestic workers are also taking place in Ecuador, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Mozambique and Sri Lanka.

Photos of campaign actions are available at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ituc/>

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 308 national affiliates.

Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

For more information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 62 10 18.

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