

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Nepal Earthquake: ITUC Calls for Huge International Effort: Gulf States Must Allow Migrant Workers to Return Home

Brussels, 27 April 2015 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has appealed to the international community to mount a huge relief effort for Nepal following Saturday's huge earthquake, which has cost over 3,000 lives, left more than 6,000 injured and destroyed homes, buildings and infrastructure across the country.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, "Our thoughts are first and foremost with the bereaved and those who have been injured. Thousands of people have lost their homes, and are without other essentials. The world must mount a major aid effort to tackle the immediate crisis, and to help the people of Nepal reconstruct their country."

The ITUC has sent letters to the governments of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, calling for an emergency suspension of the kafala sponsorship system by Gulf States to allow Nepalese migrant workers to return home. Hundreds of thousands of Nepalese migrant workers in the Gulf can only leave the country if their employer decides to allow them to go under the notorious kafala system. Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, "We call upon the Gulf States, which rely so heavily on cheap and exploited labour from Nepal, to show compassion and immediately suspend the kafala restrictions which are stopping Nepalese people returning home for bereavement and to help reconstruct the country. The Gulf countries and others such as Malaysia, which have profited so much from the sweat and toil of Nepalese people, should also contribute generously to the international aid effort."

In letters to the three Gulf States, which impose the most severe restrictions on migrant workers, the ITUC has called on them to ensure that exit permits and other restrictions are waived for Nepalese workers who want to return home, that payment of salaries continues for workers on bereavement leave and that those who wish to leave their Gulf employer be allowed to do so and leave the country with end-of-service benefits.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 328 national affiliates.

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