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Migrant workers living in a factory-converted dormitory collect meals donated by charities for their Eid-al-Fitr celebrations amid the coronavirus disease outbreak, in Singapore May 24, 2020/ Reuters

A large coalition of civil society organisations and global trade unions on Monday called on governments to urgently establish a transitional justice mechanism to address grievances, claims and labor disputes of repatriated workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic, more than 200,000 migrant workers have been repatriated to Asia from different parts of the world. This number is expected to climb exponentially over the next few months, says a press release.

Countries like India, Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines, anticipate the eventual return of a large number of their migrant workers population abroad. Without proper controls, employers might take advantage of mass repatriation programs to terminate and return workers who have not been paid their due compensation, wages and benefits.

Thus, without ensuring that companies and employers are doing their due diligence to protect and fulfil the human rights and labour rights of repatriated migrant workers, states across the migration corridor become complicit in overseeing procedures where millions of workers will be returning without their earned wages or workplace grievances being heard, nor seeing justice in their situation.

"Extraordinary times, call for extraordinary measures" said William Gois, Regional Coordinator of Migrant Forum in Asia adding, "millions will suffer if this crime goes unnoticed. We cannot see this as collateral damage brought by the pandemic".

It should be a priority to guarantee that all repatriated workers with legitimate claims are able to access justice and some kind of compensation, he added.