



BANGLADESHI RETURNEE MIGRANT WORKERS CALL FOR GOVERNMENT HELP TO RETRIEVE THEIR UNPAID WAGES

Migrant workers from Bangladesh fight wage theft following forced returns, a new report calls for urgent action on sexual violence in South Asia, and Médecins Sans Frontières highlights the harsh immigration policies putting migrants' lives at risk.



(c) Migrant Forum in Asia.

Hundreds of migrant women domestic workers previously based in the Gulf area have been subjected to wage theft and exploitation amid the COVID-19 crisis, according to Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Samik Association (BOMSA), a Dhaka

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Over 400,000 Bangladeshi migrants have come home amid the COVID-19 pandemic since April 2020, according to official data from the Bangladeshi government. Of this number, around 350,000 were male and 50,000 were female migrant workers who were forced to return. Many of BOMSA's clients have complained that they were either denied several months' wages or were underpaid in destination countries, where they also experienced exploitative working conditions. These returnees don't know how to recoup what is due to them, or how to pay back the loans they owe to agents and money lenders now they have left their overseas employment.

Migration experts and rights organizations have called on the government of Bangladesh to take immediate steps to recover these unpaid wages, pointing out that India and the Philippines are dealing with similar issues and have taken practical steps to help retrieve the money owed. They say that immediate action should be taken, such as the appointment of lawyers and translators at Bangladeshi embassies in destination countries; commitment to the discussion of wage theft at the upcoming International Labour Conference (ILC) at which employers and other stakeholders will be present; and practical assistance for migrant workers from recruiting agencies and the government to retrieve their unpaid earnings. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment secretary, Dr Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, has said that the government is trying to get around-level information about

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remain anonymous, which makes it extremely difficult to ensure they are held accountable for any offences they commit.

Since 2001, the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of the University of Dhaka has been advocating for the regularization of middlemen to ensure a transparent and accountable recruitment process. Over the past few months there have been some positive developments, with a parliamentary standing committee strongly recommending that procedures for regularization are set up; the Prime Minister giving instructions for the issuance of identity cards to middlemen; and the ministry announcing the creation of a committee to bring middlemen within legal frameworks. The parliamentary Caucus on Migration and Development has also called for regularization.

Campaigners have asked that the responsibilities and liabilities of recruiting agencies also be clarified, particularly regarding their relationship with middlemen. RMMRU has suggested three opportunities for the registration of middlemen: with BMET (the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training), with the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), and with individual recruitment agencies. The matter requires detailed deliberation among migration stakeholders, including government, the private sector, NGOs, intermediaries and migrant workers.

Here's a round up of other noteworthy

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principles, social identity and inclusion, and their perspectives on the successes and

challenges in identity-informed practice. Register here to join!

Released jointly by international women’s rights organizations Equality Now and Dignity Alliance International, *Sexual Violence in South Asia: Legal and Other Barriers to Justice for Survivors*, reveals how laws on rape in South Asian countries are insufficient, inconsistent, and not systematically enforced, putting women and girls at heightened risk of sexual violence. The report focuses on six countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, India and Sri Lanka – and calls on their governments to take urgent action to address sexual violence, improve access to justice for survivors, and end impunity for perpetrators.

Harsh immigration policies from the United States, Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala leave people on the move more exposed to the double threats posed by organized crime and COVID-19, says medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). “We have seen these harmful migration policies in the past,” says MSF’s migration project coordinator, “We know that they do not discourage migrants, but only push them to hide and go down more dangerous roads, where they may be more exposed to organized crime, turn to human traffickers and risk their lives.”

A new GBH News investigative series looks

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Do No Harm: A Fresh Perspective on Anti-Human Trafficking Work is a webinar series by Canada's Collaborative Network To End Exploitation that focuses on the voices of frontline workers, survivors, and other experts to help uncover blind spots and tensions within anti-human trafficking work. The six sessions look at new practices that center the words and experiences of those most affected by this work.

This new opinion piece asks whether the Palermo Protocol provides a building block for a more just world or serves as a barrier to political transformation. The article draws upon material from two recently published ebooks, *What is Exploitation?* and *Are We Better Off on the Inside?* published by openDemocracy.

Do Bold and Rain Collective, two anti-trafficking organizations working in the Gulf, have recently launched a crowdfunding campaign to repatriate more than 200 at-risk domestic workers from Oman to Sierra Leone.

Unseen is hiring two project managers to help accelerate anti-trafficking work by producing effective marketing materials Unseen partners use to connect with donors, raise funds, and grow their work.

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