



International Migrants Alliance

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As 2nd Great Depression ushers in crackdown and attacks, migrants' struggle builds up

Migrant workers and refugees strengthen movement against crisis

This May Day, we will walk up in arms with our local brothers and sisters.

Migrant workers and refugees in countries like the United States, Hong Kong and those in Europe will march with our host's peoples in demanding for the recognition, respect and protection of our rights, dignity and life especially at these most trying times.

When the global financial crisis is said to cost US\$4.1 trillion (IMF) and the growth of several economies in Asia to slow down tremendously (ADB), we expect no less than the most brutal attacks on the rights and welfare of workers, both local and migrant, and other oppressed peoples to salvage this failing economy.

Already, governments are coughing up millions of people's money to revive banks and companies at the people's expense. While imperialist countries revert to pump-priming, they force poor nations to liberalize their markets, privatize services and export cheaper labor through bilateral agreements.

The crisis worsens and it is the down-trodden, including migrants, who are made to suffer the impacts.

We are under attack!

We are the first to go as big businesses make migrant workers as easy targets for immediate retrenchment.

- In Singapore, analysts forecast 50,000 foreign workers to lose their jobs in manufacturing and construction. Already, many migrant workers are complaining against unclaimed salaries and "no work, no pay" conditions.
- In Malaysia, massive termination of temporary foreign workers and fast-tracked deportation of undocumented migrants have been noted. In September 2008, around 6,000 migrant workers, many of whom are in manufacturing, have been retrenched.
- In Poland, Libya and the Middle East, thousands of migrant workers in factories, ships and construction have been fired.
- In Korea, 6,707 foreign workers have been laid off as of December 2008. The government has likewise suspended the issuance of work visas (also known as the E-9 visa) until 2010.

Aside from the threat to job security, migrant workers' wages are also attacked. Foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, for example, are being pronouncedly excluded by the Labor Department itself in the proposed statutory minimum wage.

Undocumented migrants experience the harshest conditions as receiving governments criminalize and maltreat them as the crackdown is heightened:

- In Korea, more than 8,000 have been deported as of November 2008. Who will not forget the maltreatment by the Korean immigration police on an undocumented Chinese migrant whom they dragged to the van and jabbed in the chest while questioning her?
- In the United States, elements of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement have raided several Guatemala and Latin American migrant areas, falsely charged those arrested with identity theft and made them to wear GPS devices wherever they go.
- In Canada, the Canadian Border Services Agency has rounded up and arrested more than 100 undocumented workers in Ontario in March 2009 as immigration policies are tightened. Those arrested have been denied contact with their immediate families.
- In Europe, the EU Return Directive has been imposed targeting to deport 12 million undocumented migrants and refugees. Already, 1,097 in 2007 alone have died trying to get into the so-called *Fortress Europe*.

Refugees themselves are not spared from this flurry of attacks. As Palestinians, Iraqis and Afghans continue to languish under the harsh conditions of direct occupation by Israeli and US imperialist's forces, political refugees in Germany, The Netherlands and the United States have been harassed, intimidated and treated as criminals.

Hurting the most from the crisis, it is the labor-exporting governments who will do anything to sell their human resources at the cheapest possible price to anywhere just to gather remittances for their already bankrupt economies. The Philippines and Indonesia lead many developing countries in signing agreements that shall ensure cheap and docile labor with no regard for rights protection of their exported workers.

As the crisis reaches rock-bottom, unemployment in host countries reach sky-high, with a phenomenal 25 per cent in the US and 6.7 in United Kingdom. Racism and xenophobia have been delivered not only in words but in actions by governments.

Local and migrant workers being pitted against each other is an old, trite cliché used time and again. Yet in the final analysis, both are victims of the imperialist schema that has depressed their wages, diminish their rights as workers and put into precarious working conditions. As they employ temporary migrant workers, imperialist countries only create an artificial surplus as these migrants are made into a subclass of slaves.

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) is only aimed for imperialism to legitimize the exaction of super profits through labor migration while completely disregarding the rights of migrant workers. The GFMD's third session, happening in Athens, Greece this November 2009, is designed to impose policies that will ultimately contractualize migrant labor at a global scale and further tighten border control as they spew out the unwanted (undocumented workers and refugees) out of their countries. This is what we aim to expose and oppose when we launch the 2nd International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees exactly at the same time as the 3rd GFMD in Greece.

As stimulus packages are dangled, governments cut their subsidies on services like health and education. As the military industrial complex proves to be an effective solution to alleviate imperialism's ills, the prospects of wars of aggression and occupation are not nil.

We demand social justice! Resist imperialist globalization and war!

As migrants were the first to reel from the impacts of the First Great Depression, so are the migrant workers and refugees to suffer from today's Second.

Yet we refuse to be cowed and we are fighting back.

We demand that immediate relief be given to all peoples, local and migrant alike. From immediate unemployment benefits to food provisions, it is the working peoples, not big business, who need to be cushioned from the harsh effects of the crisis.

We stress that social justice goes beyond the protection of wages and jobs. It is the state provision of genuine services such as health, shelter and other basic needs. It is actively rooting out the real causes of this crisis and implementing alternatives and strategies that are people and make our economies more self-reliant.

The all-round design of imperialism to plunder our peoples and economies should be resisted. We can start by exposing and calling for the abrogation of all neoliberal multilateral and bilateral trade agreements. We should thwart all their attempts to implement neoliberal policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization as well as any planned wars of aggression and occupation under the US' *war on terror* mantra.

During these trying times, migrant workers, refugees and our families should remain vigilant against the onslaught of imperialism. Creating stronger relations and coalitions with local workers and disadvantaged peoples in our host countries will contribute to the strengthening of our movement. Integrating our movement and campaign with the national struggles back in our respective home countries will be crucial.

As we battle against imperialism, we strive not only for our rights and welfare but for genuine democracy, national sovereignty and social justice. #