

Migrant Forum in Asia, a regional network of non-government organizations, associations, grassroots organizations and trade unions of migrant workers and advocates working on the promotion and protection of the rights and well-being of migrant workers and their families in Asia, denounces the Bahraini government's decision to ban Bangladeshi migrant workers in the country, following the murder of a Bahraini national by a Bangladeshi migrant worker.

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights: The Bahraini authorities' commitment to human rights has been shown to be little more than a farce

Less than a week after taking its position (for the second consecutive sitting) of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Bahraini government has declared a blanket ban on reissuing work permits to Bangladeshi citizens. This decision follows the murder of a Bahraini man by a Bangladeshi mechanic in a dispute over financial matter.

The governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have already implemented decisions to stop hiring Bangladeshi workers in the past, allegedly due to the involvement of Bangladeshi individuals in criminal acts. Voices in the Bahraini Parliament are now urging the expulsion of Bangladeshi workers, which currently number over 90,000.

"The Bahrain government has to show its commitment to human rights standards in action, not simply words. And such an action completely contravenes its responsibilities and commitments to human rights," BCHR vice president Nabeel Rajab said.

Bahrain has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which should have been automatically incorporated to domestic law. Bahrain is also a signatory to numerous international conventions which address the matter of racial discrimination and has signed the following human rights treaties:

- International Convention on the Crime of Apartheid
- Anti-Slavery Convention
- International Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- International Convention on the Rights of the Child
- International Labour Convention on the Training and Employment of the Handicapped

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a further international accord that Bahrain has agreed to abide by.

To ban, or even worse, expel Bangladeshi workers from Bahrain because of certain crimes committed by Bangladeshi individuals is a blatant form of discrimination.

"A position on the UN HRC cannot be used as a pass to dispel criticisms made about the Bahraini government's human rights record. It is a commitment made by the government, and carries the responsibility of implementing human rights standards in the country.

"The first step towards this would be to reverse this ban.

"Civil society must also play its part," Mr. Rajab urged.

"We were very disappointed to see the head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry call for the ban to be implemented in a way that would not affect businesses. It is time for industry to take on corporate responsibility, and to speak against the government's decision. Part of this responsibility is to their workers, and a recognition of the contribution made by the tens of thousands of workers who are in no way guilty for the crime committed by one individual.

"We would also like to hear voices from the Bahraini community speaking against this move - to speak out against any racism on the government agenda, which exacerbates any tensions between local communities."

Recommendations:

- The murder incident involving the Bahraini and Bangladeshi nationals should be dealt with according to fair and honest legal proceedings. The family of the murder victim should see justice and be awarded compensation to avoid any socio-economic difficulties brought by the loss of their father
- The ban on Bangladeshi workers should be reversed immediately, and the government should put an end to policies which encourage discrimination, whether it is gender-based, racial, sectarian, or national.
- As a signatory to the International Labour Convention on Discrimination in Recruitment and Professions, which upholds the principle of equality in the workplace, Bahrain should reconfirm its stance against discrimination because of race or sex.
- The government should ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

For more information, contact:

William Gois
Regional Coordinator
Migrant Forum in Asia
Tel: +63920 9600916
Email: mfa@pacific.net.hk
Web: www.mfasia.org

Nabeel Rajab
Vice-President
Bahrain Center for Human Rights
Tel: +973 39633399
Email: nabeel.rajab@bahrainrights.org

ENDORSED BY:

Bahrain Human Rights Society, Bahrain
Youth society for Human Rights, Bahrain
Women petition Committee, Bahrain
IMA Research Foundation, Bangladesh
Human Rights Development Information Center (HRDIC), Bangladesh
Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program, Bangladesh
Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Bangladesh
Shikkha Shatha Unnayan Karzakram, Bangladesh

WARBE Development Foundation, Bangladesh
Women Solidarity for Human Rights, Bangladesh
Center for Indian Migrant Studies (CIMS), India
AMI Arunodhaya Migrant Initiatives, India
All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA), Nepal
Women Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), Nepal
Action Network for Migrant Workers (ACTFORM), Sri Lanka
Community Development Services, Sri Lanka

Federation of Trade Unions – Burma (FTUB), Burma
Center for Indonesian Migrant Workers (CIMW), Indonesia
Migrant Care, Indonesia
Caridad Sri Tharan, Malaysia
International Network on Labour and Development, Malaysia
Messrs. Charles Hector, Malaysia
UNI-Malaysian Liaison Council Migrant Help Desk, Malaysia
Center for Migrants Advocacy (CMA), Philippines
Kanlungan Center Foundation Inc., Philippines
Kapisanan ng Kamag-anakan ng Migranteng Manggagawang Pilipino (KAKAMMPI),
Philippines
Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), Singapore
Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2), Singapore
Committee on Asian Women (CAW), Thailand

Asian Migrant Center (AMC), Hong Kong
Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrant Workers Organizations (KOTKIHO)
Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), Hong Kong
St. John's Cathedral HIV Education Centre, Hong Kong
Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Mongolia
Hope Workers Center (HWC), Taiwan
Hsinchu Migrants and New Immigrants Service Center, Taiwan
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), USA
International Justice Network, USA
Solidarity Center, USA

Migrants Rights International (MRI)
Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW)