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His Majesty King Abdallah ben Abdelaziz
Al Saoud

EQ/CC

7th March 2012

Open Letter to King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia

Your Majesty,

On the occasion of this International Women's Day, I am writing on behalf of the 175 million workers affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to ask Saudi Arabia to ratify the international Convention on domestic workers recently adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The situation of domestic workers, mainly migrant women, in your country is well known. It is appalling. Dozens of serious investigation reports have denounced the intolerable level of economic exploitation and physical abuse they face. Cases of employers treating their domestic workers with abject cruelty, forcing nails and needles into their bodies, cutting their ears with scissors or burning them with iron, are not isolated. Too often, these crimes are not even seriously investigated.

Following the adoption of the ILO Convention last year, the ITUC is currently running the 12 x 12 campaign which aims to get 12 ratifications of this Convention by the end of 2012. By ratifying and implementing this Convention, Saudi Arabia can put an end to modern day slavery and restore the human dignity of the 1.5 million women domestic workers employed with no rights and no voice.

In your country, domestic workers are excluded from labour legislation. The migratory sponsorship system in place puts foreign workers at the mercy of their employer or sponsor who hold their passports and process their residence permits. Saudi Arabia does not protect the rights of workers to form and join trade unions and to bargaining collectively, and independent labour unions do not exist.

Working people around the world, and especially domestic workers, urge you to make Saudi Arabia the first country to ratify the ILO Convention on domestic workers.

There is no genuine international recognition for a country that does not protect the most fundamental human rights of individuals, whatever its economic success might be.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary