



Trade Union Statement:

Stop Violence Against Women Workers

ITUC says NO to violence against women by participating in 16 Days of Action to End Violence Against Women which is a global initiative and campaign against gender-based violence. The campaign runs between 25 November - UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - and 10 December - International Human Rights Day. *

The origin of the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November started with the adoption of a Declaration in 1993.

ITUC, PSI, EI, ITF, UNI, IFJ, ICEM, IUF and other Global Union Federations have joined together to mark the 16 days of action to stop violence against women and girls which is the most common but least punished crime in the world. Violence against women and girls is perhaps the most socially tolerated of human rights violations, and it occurs in every region, country and culture. It prevents women and girls from enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Globally:

- at least one in three women and girls has been beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime. Usually, the abuser is a member of her own family or someone known to her.
- women between the age of fifteen and forty-four are more likely to be maimed or die as a result of male violence than through cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war combined.

There is a growing awareness that domestic violence is also a workplace issue. Domestic violence will necessarily have an effect on a woman's ability to do her work and on her attendance record. There is equally a growing awareness that violence at work is not merely an individual problem but a structural, systemic problem rooted in wider social, economic, organizational and cultural factors. The power imbalance in the workplace and precarious employment conditions of numerous women increase their risk of being victims of sexual harassment, abuse and rape which also raises the risk of HIV/AIDS infection. Certain types of work situation increase this threat, such as women who travel for their work or who migrate to find work and female domestic workers. In addition:

- The largely female workforce in Export Processing Zones in Asia, Africa and Latin America face repression and exploitation: numerous instances of dismissal, refusal by employers to recognise the most fundamental rights of their employees, ranging from implementing preventative measures to stop sexual harassment at work to putting in place provisions for full maternity protection rights.
- Abuse of women domestic workers, amongst the most exploited of the world's 90 million migrant workers, is a prominent feature in several countries.
- Women migrant workers, including the great numbers of migrant healthcare workers, are especially vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and forced labor. The number of women forced or sold into prostitution is estimated worldwide at anywhere between 700,000 and 4,000,000 per year. Profits from sex slavery are estimated at seven to twelve billion US dollars per year.

Immediate intervention and preventative strategies, and a targeted, zero tolerance approach to stop violence against women at work and in society is needed. ITUC calls on governments and employers to make use of the 1993 Declaration to adopt, implement and enforce effective policies and practices which will put a halt to violence against women and girls, and end impunity for violence against women and girls.

* The 16 days of action against violence against women is a global initiative to raise awareness of and campaign against gender-based violence.