



# International Migrants Alliance

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## Statement for the International Migrants Day, 18 December 2008

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### **Migrant workers shall suffer the brunt of globalization-induced crisis *Grassroots migrants shall be ready to intensify our struggle for our rights***

Neo-liberal globalization has forced us to migrate and become commodities for sale by sending countries and cheap laborers for the receiving ones. Now, as neoliberal policies induced another global recession, we are again made to carry the brunt of the crisis.

Slowly but surely, the crisis that started in the United States is spreading throughout the world. Considering the US' position as the global economic master, it is understandable that many of the countries where migrants are working right now and countries where they come from are starting to feel the impacts of the crisis that are expected to intensify in the coming months.

The current recession is but an explosion of the crisis brewing for years. The crisis of overproduction inherent in the economy of the global centers – US, European Union and Japan – and hastened by neoliberal globalization policies, has become more uncontrollable than before. Concentration of finance capital to a few multinational banks and corporations through massive speculation has become more intense and made the crisis imminent.

Even the wars of aggression and occupation that the US led and joined in by many capitalist countries have failed to salvage the capitalist system from collapsing. In fact, these wars justified in the name of “anti-terror” have further aggravated the condition in the world as profit became more highly-concentrated while more and more people were displaced.

Now, various countries scramble to save their failing economies with whipped up solutions that are evidently targeted to save big businesses at the expense of the people and the workers who have long been victims of the very roots of this crisis.

The oppressed and disadvantaged classes and sectors that include the migrants did not cause the global crunch and yet, will be forced into more hardships. Indeed, what is just and right has no place where imperialists rule.

### **Global crisis spells crisis for migrants' rights**

Job security and wage of migrants are the most immediate casualties of the economic crunch.

The more recent cases of these are as follows:

- More than 70 workers from Advanced Semi-Conductor Engineering Co. Ltd (ASE) in Taiwan were laid off. Reportedly, about 1,000 more are set to be sent home very soon.
- In Macau, 400 Filipinos have already been fired from their jobs in the construction industry while about 12,000 migrants working in casinos have been told that their contracts will not be renewed.
- In the property sector in the United Arab Emirates, about 500 migrants already lost their jobs while thousands more are set to lose theirs in the construction industry in various countries within the Gulf region.
- Member organizations of the IMA in Australia have reported that many temporary foreign workers are being made redundant.
- In Canada, 70 Mexican and Jamaican temporary foreign workers were fired by the Rol-Land Farms – a private industrial-agricultural corporation.
- In the US, immigrants are losing their jobs and the little properties they own. Who can forget June Reyno, a Filipino immigrant who tied herself to her house after being issued an eviction notice due to the property slump?

In addition to this, the wage of migrants shall surely again be attacked. This was exactly what happened during and after the 1997 Asian Financial crisis. Wage of migrants in Korea, for example, dropped from US\$750 to US\$300 while foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong suffered two wage cuts – US\$25 in 1999 and US\$52 in 2003.

Undocumented migrants shall also be gravely impacted by the recession. For the past years, many countries have conducted widespread and violent crackdowns such as in Malaysia and South Korea. The European Union is also poised to implement its return directive policy by next year that is expected to target tens of thousands of undocumented migrants in the region.

But the impacts of the global economic problems are not restricted to the host countries. In fact, it may even be more severe in sending countries like Philippines and Indonesia whose economies are very dependent on the advanced capitalist countries like the US.

For sure, the governments of sending countries shall again turn its eye to the very profitable business of labor export.

This is not surprising considering that labor export brings in billions of US dollars worth of remittance to these countries and billions more profit from government charges on top of curbing unemployment inside the country. Both the Philippine and Indonesian governments have already expressed their intention to double their target deployment of their nationals to other countries.

Just recently, the Philippine government has proposed to implement a mandatory psychiatric test. While hypocritically claiming that it's for protection of Filipino migrants, the truth is that it shall only be an additional financial burden to them and its ultimate goal is to make Filipino migrant workers more attractive to foreign businesses.

Governments of sending countries have tried to placate the restlessness of their people by promising their readiness to face the crisis. This, however, is mere bravado as the economies of these countries are highly-dependent to those of the capitalist centers. Their so-called readiness will soon be revealed as nothing but readiness to impose more severe taxation to the people, drastic cuts in the budget for social services, even more wanton implementation of neo-liberal globalization and more aggressive exportation of labor. In fact, what these countries, like Philippines and Indonesia, are doing now is to forge more bilateral agreements with labor-receiving countries to ensure the continued sale of migrants as cheap labourers.

## **The way forward for the migrants**

These developments and more that will surely come will be faced squarely by the organized grassroots migrants.

The rights of migrants have never been respected. The second Global Forum on Migration and Development held last October in Manila, Philippines showed the hypocrisy of sending and receiving countries as they tackle the so-called rights of migrants but are actually concretizing steps on how more income can be generated from migration and migrant labor.

The International Migrants Day is a most opportune time to expose the condition and concerns of migrant workers. The more than 110 members of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) from 25 countries are gearing up for various actions that will highlight issues of migrants of various nationalities as a sector.

In this light, the IMA calls on to its members and supporters to:

1. Launch actions that will highlight the issues of job security and wage of the migrants. Policies that make these rights vulnerable to attacks must be targeted while remaining vigilant over new ones that governments will cook up. Give particular attention also to the plight of undocumented migrants.
2. Conduct a massive education campaign among migrants on the roots and causes of the current global recession. Neoliberal globalization must be further exposed and concretized to the migrants to intensify our opposition against them.
3. Aggressively organize migrants in the grassroots. Only the collective will and actions of the migrants can be our effective weapons against the onslaught of attacks to our rights that are sure to come.
4. Gather the broadest unity with other migrant organizations and advocates for the campaigns that we shall conduct.
5. Unite in solidarity with the local workers and other oppressed classes and sectors in host countries by establishing coalitions with their unions and federations that will serve as shields against neoliberal globalization's attacks to our rights as workers and oppressed peoples in the host country.
6. Integrate our movement overseas with that in our respective home countries to advance the struggle against imperialism and for genuine democracy, human rights and social justice.

In the coming months, migrants are to face hardships never seen before. It will show how right the people are to oppose neoliberal globalization policies. It will show how imperative it is to do actions for social justice and human rights. It will show how migrants are part of the struggle for change.

Through militant struggles, we can overcome and build a world that we and our people deserve.#