



# International Domestic Workers Federation

[www.idwfed.org](http://www.idwfed.org)

*The IDWF is affiliated to the IUF and WIEGO*



14<sup>th</sup> May, 2020

His Excellency Muhyiddin Yassin  
Prime Minister of Malaysia  
Prime Minister's Office  
Federal Government Administration Center  
Bangunan Perdana Putra, Putrajaya 62502  
Malaysia

Dear Prime Minister,

## **Protect Migrant Domestic Worker from the Extreme Abuse and Exploitation, Justice for the Victim!**

We are the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), is a membership-based global organization of domestic and household workers, consists of 74 affiliates in 57 countries, representing over 500,000 domestic workers worldwide. We are outraged to learn of a recent case involving extreme abuse and exploitation of a 44-year-old Indonesian domestic worker in Malaysia rescued by Manjung police in 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The worker is suspected of being locked up and fed with food scraps, and had not been paid salary in the last two years by her employer, a 48-year-old woman and her 25-year-old daughter. The case is being investigated under Section 12 Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007 (ATIPSOM).

This case is a reminiscent of several previous severe abuses suffered by Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia, such as Nirmala Bonat (2004) and Adelina (2018). It proves how the protection of migrant domestic workers' rights is still a major homework that needs to be done by the Malaysian authorities.

In the absence of legal protection, the MDWs in your country do not enjoy the rights as other workers. They are excluded from minimum wage, social security, maternity protection and other rights stipulated under labor laws. They often caught up under poor working condition and abuse and have no access to seek protection. Many have no choice but to run away and become undocumented.

During the Movement Control Order (MCO), IDWF conducted survey of 103 Indonesian and Filipino MDWs in Malaysia. The survey revealed that most of live-in MDWs have to work for longer hours, no rest and no day off. Many are facing salary reductions of up to 50%. Meanwhile part-timers / live-out DWs have lost their jobs and have little means to survive. 69% have no health insurance.

Despite of this humanitarian crisis under Covid-19, the Malaysian immigration authority continues the crack-down of undocumented migrant workers since early May, resulting to 4000 migrant workers, women, children and refugees being arrested. We join with activists condemn such harsh and violent immigration measure. It only deepens the pervasive racism against migrants in the country, heighten the



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vulnerability of the migrant workers due to the fear of detention and deportation. The end result is increase of violence and abuse faced by them and detriment to your effort to curb the coronavirus spread in the communities including the over-crowded migrants' shelters.

The prevalence of violence and harassment against migrant domestic workers happening at different spheres in your country is shocking and direct violation to international standards and norms. The IDWF strongly urge you to take the following actions to remedy the situation immediately.

1. Enforce the law ensuring that the employers and perpetrator are brought to justice
2. Provide comprehensive protection for the victim, including access to claim for her 2-year unpaid salary, restitutions, safe shelter, and treatment for her physical and mental recovery.
3. Improve the justice system for easy access by the migrant workers, create effective mechanism that enables MDWs to report abuses, such as MDWs help-desks, accessible telephone help-line and labor inspection.
4. Ratify and implement the ILO Convention 189 to recognize domestic works as work, include DWs both local and migrants under the labor laws and enact Domestic Workers Act.
5. Ratify Convention 190 on Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.
6. Stop any forms of racism and human rights violation against all migrants, including raids and crackdowns in Malaysia.
7. Include all MDWs, irrespective of their identities and status in all health and safety policies and measures for their protection under the Covid-19 pandemic.

Domestic workers are in the frontline to keep our employers and communities healthy and safe under the Covid-19. They deserve our respect and protection. The IDWF will continue to monitor the situation of MDWs in Malaysia and remain ready to assist wherever we can.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth Tang

General Secretary, IDWF



Cc: Mr. Saravanan Murugan, Minister of Human Resource, Malaysia