



International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)

c/o
**International Union of Food, Agricultural, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied
Workers' Associations (IUF)**
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IDWF Statement

on the occasion of the 2-year-anniversary of the Tied-Visa system in the UK, 6th April 2014

No tied-visa system in the UK – Respect and Rights for domestic workers!

On April 6th 2014, we join domestic workers in the UK in commemorating a very sad anniversary: two years earlier, on 6 April 2012, the British Government re-introduced a visa-system, which ties a migrant domestic worker to her/his employer.

This is linkened to the situation of domestic workers in the Arab States of the Persian Gulf. Every day, we receive terrible news from that region on the exploitative conditions of domestic workers, including physical and sexual abuse and even torture, sometimes leading to the death of a worker. Under no circumstances these conditions can be justified. The only solution to stop exploitative employers is to end such a visa system and to replace it by a rights-based system for the workers, which is enforced by state authorities.

In the UK, during the years 1980-1997, the tied-visa system led to more than 4000 cases of migrant domestic workers escaping from their abusive employers. It is a shame that a country with a long democratic tradition would introduce a visa regime that denies workers the most fundamental liberties: human and labour rights.

David Cameron said in his speech to the European Court of Human Rights (25 January 2012): *“Human rights is a cause that runs deep in the British heart and long in British history... “We are not and never will be a country that walks on by while human rights are trampled into the dust. This has a lot to do with Britain’s national character – a love of freedom and an instinctive loathing of over-mighty authority.”*

How is it possible then for a system to exist in today’s Great Britain that enables employers to treat their workers like slaves?

We call on Mr. Cameron to take his country's history of democracy and his own words seriously and to remove the tied-visa system.

Furthermore Britain should ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, No 189, which was adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2011 with an overwhelming majority. This Convention provides for domestic workers to enjoy the same rights and protections as other workers in a country, once the country ratifies it and implements the provisions. Last week, Argentina became the 13th country to ratify the Convention. Britain should ensure that it swiftly follows suit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Wibooi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Myrtle Wibooi
(President IDWF)