There is no Social Justice without Decent Work for Domestic Workers

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS’ DAY 2024

01/05/2024

IDWF STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL WORKER’S DAY 2024

The commemoration of International Workers’ Day originated from the bloody repression suffered by workers at a factory in Chicago (United States) in 1886, for demanding an eight-hour workday. Today, almost one hundred thirty years later, and when most sectors of workers have achieved the rights they deserve, domestic workers continue to fight for decent working and living conditions.

Every day, nearly 75.6 million domestic workers make the well-being of our societies possible, providing vital care for the maintenance of households and families worldwide. Thanks to their work, hundreds of millions of men and women enjoy clean homes, homemade food, and tidy clothing. Domestic workers also care for children, the elderly, and sick or disabled individuals, filling the gap in public care policies and allowing those hundreds of millions of people to go to work, generating the necessary income to sustain their lives.

However, domestic work continues to be undervalued, unrecognized, and inadequately protected. While domestic workers, most of whom are women, represent 25% of the care workforce, they are still considered unskilled workers or worse, not even considered workers. This dominant -and contradictory- narrative has justified for centuries the absence of decent working and living conditions for them. Labor precarity is a common denominator for workers in the sector, either due to their exclusion from labor legislation and social security or due to the lack of effective implementation of existing regulations.

The latest report from the IDWF, “The Centrality of Care and Support from a Human Rights Perspective,” as well as other reports from the International Labour Organization (ILO), exposes this harsh reality:

- 36.1% of DWs are wholly excluded from national labor legislation.
- 50.1% of DWs have no legal entitlement to social security.
- In practice, only 6% of DWs are covered by all social security branches (ILO, 2022)
- Almost half of DWs remain excluded from specific provisions limiting working hours.
- 46% of DWs are not legally entitled to a minimum wage / Globally, DWs earn about half of the average monthly wage of all other workers (ILO 2023).
- 81.2% of DWs (61.4 million) remain in informal employment.
- In some countries, DWs (especially migrants) are excluded from the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

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...There is no social justice without decent work for the workers who sustain the world with generous hands and resilient hearts. This May 1st, we honor and greet them warmly. Happy Workers’ Day, comrades!