

Appeal on the responsibility of the G8 nations to respect the rights of migrants, especially women and children victims of trafficking and smuggling

On the occasion of this year's G8 Summit Meeting held in Heiligendam, Germany, three of IMADR's officers based in Asia and Africa issued the following statement on the responsibility of the G8 nations to respect the rights of migrants, including trafficked women and children:

Appeal on the responsibility of the G8 nations to respect the rights to socio-economic security of migrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America, especially women and children victims of trafficking and smuggling

We call upon the G8 Summit to take into consideration the responsibility of the industrialized nations to protect migrant workers from the harmful effects of exploitative migration including trafficking and smuggling. The leaders of the industrialized democratic states must agree among themselves about their responsibility as countries of destination of the migrants from the South. An increasing number of undocumented migrants, especially women and children, have their socio-economic security deeply affected by the G8 policies of immigration, as well as policies of anti-criminal and anti-terrorist surveillance and control.

As the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants has pointed out, "migration is a rational and reasonable behaviour; people move to where opportunities are and where they can find a better life. It is also an inherently international issue. Thus, any policy that relies on unilateral means to curb natural migration will never be successful". Combating terrorism and organized crime through the control of international migration, combined with the criminalization of irregular migration through a highly selective immigration policy that only benefits skilled migrant workers, will aggravate the human insecurity of undocumented migrants.

This is why we call upon the G8 nations to avoid unexpected harmful effects of their policies on undocumented migrants, especially victims of trafficking and smuggling. We do not question their resolution to fight against terrorists and against organized crime. Nevertheless, they must be aware of the danger that undocumented migrants, especially the victims of trafficking and smuggling, may become the victims of collateral damages of the war on terror and organized crime,

such as being treated as “illegal” migrants and sometimes even as potential terrorists.

The G8 nations must not develop an international regime aimed only at preventing terrorism and organized crime, ignoring the rights, security and the development of all the people participating in what the Special Rapporteur calls “natural migration”. A discussion among the G8 leaders in the absence of the migrants themselves and of the representatives of the sending countries may end up in encouraging exploitative migration by increasing restrictions on unskilled labor migration while helping terrorists and criminal organizations to go further underground by a sweeping control of informal sectors.

We call upon the G8 leaders to bear in mind the fundamental human rights of the undocumented migrants, including especially the victims of trafficking and smuggling.

1. The countries of destination of the migrants must recognize that the violation of the right to live in peace, free from fear and want, constitutes one major cause for the decision to migrate, even without proper documents, and even incurring the exploitative terms imposed on them by the traffickers and smugglers. Their countries of destination should develop economic cooperation projects supporting potential migrants and the returnees in their efforts to live in peace in their own native communities.
2. The countries of destination of the undocumented migrants must modify their immigration policies and their campaign against terrorism and criminal-organizations, in such a way that the undocumented migrants, especially the victims of trafficking and smuggling, receive fair treatment and have their rights respected, not only as minorities or foreign migrants but also as workers, protected from all kinds of gender violence and racism.
3. The foreign migrant communities in all countries of destination of global migration must be guaranteed their right to development. Women migrant workers must not be treated as commodities but as human beings with reproductive rights. Their children must not be the object of any kind of discrimination, and must be recognized as children with human rights and the right to development, as full members of the country they migrated into in search of security and prosperity.

It is our belief that the countries of destination and of origin can develop together schemes of co-development mutually beneficial to them, only if the migrants themselves are invited to share with the benefits of the co-development of their countries of origin and of destination. We call upon the G8 nations to assume full responsibility in dealing with the above issues in their deliberations, which touch upon the socio-economic security of the migrant workers from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

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