



Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)

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Standing Members

Bangladesh

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK);
Refugee and Migratory Movements
Research Unit (RMMRU);
Welfare Association of Repatriated
Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE)
Association for Community
Development (ACD)

India

Center for Education and
Communication (CEC);
Migrant Forum India (MFI)
Center for Indian Migrant Studies
(CIMS)

Migrants Trade Union - India

Nepal

All Nepal's Women Association
(ANWA);
Women Rehabilitation Center
(WOREC)
POURAKHI
Youth Action Nepal

Sri Lanka

Action Network for Migrant Workers
(ACTFORM);
Migrant Services Centre (MSC);
Women and Media Collective
(WMC)

Burma

Federation of Trade Unions – Burma
(FTUB)

Indonesia

Center for Indonesian Migrant
Workers (CIMW);
Jamas Pekabumi;
KOPBUMI;
Migrant Care;
Solidaritas Perempuan;
Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia
(SBMI)

Malaysia

Charles Hector & Co.;
Tenaganita

Philippines

Batis Center for Women;
Center for Migrants Advocacy
(CMA-Phils);
Kapisanan ng mga Kamag-anakan
ng Migranteng Mangagawang
Pilipino(KAKAMMPI);
Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc.
(KCFI);
Unlad Kabayan Migrants Services
Foundation, Inc.
ATIKHA

Singapore

St. Francis Workers Centre (SFWC)
Humanitarian Organization for
Migration Economics (HOME)
Transient Workers Count 2

Hong Kong

Asian Migrant Centre (AMC);
Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR);
Indonesian Migrant Workers Union
(IMWU)

Japan

Solidarity for Migrants – Japan
(SMJ)

Korea

Joint Committee with Migrants in
Korea (JCMK)

Taiwan

Hope Workers Center (HWC)

Mongolia

Center for Human Rights and
Development (CHRD)

14 April 2008

Protect the Peoples of Burma in Thailand and Malaysia

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) is extremely concerned about the poor protection of the peoples of Burma in Southeast Asia.

The peoples of Burma have been driven by persecution, conflict, state-sanctioned violence, and desperate poverty into neighboring countries. More than a million people reside in Thailand and Malaysia alone. As large numbers have not been able to secure official legal status – whether as migrant workers or refugees – they face tremendous risks working and living as an undocumented population.

While their labor contributes to the economies of Thailand and Malaysia, they are seen as a threat to national security because of their irregular status. They are therefore under constant threat of arrest, detention, and deportation. In order to survive, they are forced to seek informal means of traveling and searching for work. This increases their vulnerability to exploitation. There are many who work under dangerous conditions, are not compensated for accidents in the workplace, and suffer from unpaid wages. Many are trafficked for sex and labor.

Their vulnerability is widely known but has not been adequately addressed by governments in the ASEAN region. In Thailand, on 10th April 2008, 54 people from Burma died from suffocation while being smuggled in a truck on the way to Phuket for work. Since 2007, numerous ‘boat people’, making their way from Bangladesh to Thailand and Malaysia, have perished as their vessels capsized at sea. In Malaysia, operations by the People’s Volunteers Corps (*Ikatan Relawan Rakyat*, RELA) and the Immigration Department continue to wreak havoc in the lives of Burmese asylum seekers and refugees, who are arrested, imprisoned, whipped and deported. Information from the communities indicates that they are handed over to human smugglers at the Thai border and forced to pay money for their own release.

We call for ASEAN governments to recognize the plight of the peoples of Burma in the region, and to find solutions that extend them protection and assistance. In particular, they should:

1. Conduct refugee status determination and ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are protected while durable solutions are being worked out
2. Facilitate the regularization of undocumented persons, making the process more directly accessible by migrants themselves

We also call on the government of Thailand to recognize the rights of all migrant workers specifically:

1. For the migrants who survived the Phuket tragedy to receive proper medical care, counseling and legal assistance;

2. For the families of the migrants who perished in the tragedy to receive compensation for death and injuries;
3. For the government of Thailand to stop the criminalization of undocumented migrant workers and uphold the labor and human rights of all migrant workers in Thailand;
4. For the government of Thailand to improve its registration system for migrants to allow them to register in areas along the border region; and
5. To facilitate safe and decent means of transportation for workers coming from the border region.

Courage, Peace and Power in a Life full of Meaning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Gois', with a large, stylized initial 'W' and 'G'.

William Gois
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