



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

Open letter

International Migrants Day 2008 **FIDH calls on EU Member States to ratify the** **UN Migrant Workers Convention**

Open Letter to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU Member States

18 December 2008

Dear Minister,

18 years ago today, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (« the Convention »), an instrument which seeks to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of some of the most vulnerable members of the population. On International Migrants Day, we call upon your government to ratify the Convention, thereby demonstrating your country's will to end the violations and exploitation suffered daily by migrant workers.

Today some 190 million people, or 3% of the world population, are migrants. Although for many migration is a positive experience, many migrate under duress and face severe hardships in their countries of destination. Migrants all over the world remain particular targets of abuse, discrimination and exploitation by traffickers, smugglers and employers. Yet an instrument is at your government's disposal to minimise this and to strengthen their legal protection.

The Convention recognises the specific vulnerabilities of migrant workers and promotes humane and lawful working and living conditions and the need for increased protection. It is a vital part of efforts to combat exploitation of migrant workers and members of their families.

The Convention forms one of the 9 core United Nations human rights instruments. It has now been ratified by 39 states, including several migrant-receiving countries, yet by no Member State of the European Union. Indeed the Convention is the only international treaty not to have been ratified by Member States of the EU.

This failure of EU member states to demonstrate their will to protect the human rights of migrants is all the more unacceptable, in view of the history of European countries, as countries primarily of emigration.

We have heard the argument that EU Member States cannot act alone, since migration policies are to a large extent set by the European Union and require coordination between the Member States. Yet, the European Union itself claims to be founded on the promotion and protection of human rights and human dignity. Non-ratification brings into question the value the Union attaches to the improvement of the situation of migrant workers and their families residing in the Union.

In order to become an effective instrument for fighting violations of migrants' human rights, all states, those of departure, transit and destination of migrants, must ratify. This year, as we mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, we call upon your government to lead by example and to demonstrate true commitment to universal human rights by recognising the fundamental human rights of migrant workers.

Yours sincerely,

Souhayr Belhassen
FIDH President

Cc.

Mr Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy

Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner on External Relations

Mr Hans-Gert Pötering, President European Parliament