



**Respect Migrants' Rights
Ratify the Migrant Workers Convention**

20th Anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Migrant Workers Convention :

Call for ratification by the Republic of South Africa

Open Letter to President Jacob Zuma

Geneva, 3 June 2010

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Migrant Workers Convention), a global campaign has been launched calling on governments to act immediately to end widespread human rights violations, suffered daily by migrants around the world, by ratifying this Convention.

As yet, South Africa has not ratified this core international human rights instrument. Today, we are writing to call upon your government to do so, thereby demonstrating your commitment to ending abuse of migrants by protecting their human rights.

As of 2010 it is estimated that 214 million persons are migrants, representing just over 3 percent of the world population. Almost all states are affected by migration either as origin, destination or transit countries and are thus confronted with the challenges of developing effective migration policies with human rights at their core.

South Africa is a major destination for migrants from surrounding Southern African countries and the wider African continent. The economy of South Africa benefits from migrant workers within the country as well as from remittances sent by South Africans working abroad. Yet, recent violent attacks against migrant workers, including events in Polokwane and De Doorns, illustrate the need for increased protection.

Although for many persons migration is a positive experience, many others migrate under duress and face severe hardships in their countries of destination. Migrant workers all over the world remain particular targets of abuse, discrimination and exploitation by smugglers, recruitment agents and employers. Yet an instrument is at your Government's disposal to eradicate these human rights violations, to improve the working and living conditions of migrants and to strengthen their legal protection.

Since its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1990, the Migrant Workers Convention has been ratified by 42 states and signed by a further 16 states. 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 provides guidance on the elaboration of national migration policies, which can only be effective if they are based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. It sets out provisions to combat exploitation of migrant workers and members of their families in countries of arrival, transit and departure of migrants.

We urge the Government of South Africa to seize the occasion of the 20th anniversary to ratify the Migrant Workers Convention and thereby send a strong message of its commitment to protect

effectively the human rights of migrant workers. We strongly hope that on 18 December 2010, we can also celebrate the ratification of the Convention by South Africa.

We would be very interested to receive your Government's views on the matters raised in this letter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President
On behalf of the International Steering Committee of the Campaign



The Campaign Steering Committee : The Campaign was launched by the International Steering Committee for the Campaign for Ratification of the Migrants Workers Convention, a unique network of UN agencies, international organizations and global civil society organizations. Steering Committee members include the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Labour Office (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Amnesty International (AI), International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC), December 18, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Migrants Rights International (MRI), Public Services International (PSI) and the World Council of Churches (WCC).