

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

August 2006

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



MIGRANT GROUPS CALL FOR CEASEFIRE

(Statement issued by Migrant Forum in Asia, July 20, 2006, www.mfasia.org)

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), a regional network of more than 260 member-organizations, expresses its deep concern over the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. We lament the escalating violence committed by the Israeli government and the armed militias of Hezbollah and Hamas against the civilian population of Lebanon and Israel including the thousands of Asian migrant workers in those countries.

MFA condemns in the strongest terms the actions of Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas. Terrorism, in any kind and form, is barbaric, heinous and completely unacceptable. The potential humanitarian crisis is catastrophic if the crisis escalates further. The United Nations (UN) believes that more than 500,000 Lebanese are now internally displaced and scattered in various refugee camps along the borders of Lebanon. All freedom-loving governments and organizations must act now to stop this nonsensical show of brute might. MFA calls on the UN to call for an immediate ceasefire and show the whole world that it will not be intimidated by a superpower whose 'low-key' response to the crisis is fuelling Israel's frenzied and vicious attacks on its neighbours. Continuing apathy and inaction of the international community give Israel the 'diplomatic license' to continue its destruction of Lebanon. The UN, through the Security Council, must not allow this to go on. It should, likewise, reinforce security in the region by deploying a multinational peacekeeping force along the Israeli and Lebanese borders. It must push for sanctions (against) all those who are responsible for this conflict.

The collective punishment of the people of Lebanon by Israel affects the more than 200,000 migrant workers from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India, Bangladesh and (those) from the Northern African region. Thousands of migrant workers who wish to return to their respective countries are now trapped in the deadly pit that is Lebanon. We are worried over reports that many domestic migrant workers are left behind by their employers who also took their passports. Many of them are left with no money, food nor shelter. We must bear in mind that these migrant workers helped in the reconstruction of Lebanon after the devastating civil war years ago. They surely do not deserve to be treated as commodities only to be abandoned when their services are no longer necessary.

We are also appalled by the slow response of the governments of migrant-sending countries to the plight of their people. We cannot understand the delay in the immediate evacuation of those who are willing to leave. After propping up their economies with billions of dollars in remittances the least these countries can do is to ensure the safety of their nationals during crisis such as now. Conflicts do happen and these governments should have...prepared for this (eventuality) and... established an early warning mechanism to help the migrant workers. (Just) as in the 1990 Gulf War and US-led occupation of Iraq, sending countries seem to be always at a loss about what to do to evacuate their citizens. While it is true that some of the sending countries lack financial resources, there are charitable institutions that can be tapped for assistance such as the International Organization for Migration and the International Red Cross and Crescent.

This current conflict underscores the need for a quick-response mechanism to protect the rights and livelihoods of migrant workers. MFA recommends that relevant international organizations such as the IOM, Red Cross, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to work with the governments of sending countries and formulate measures that will ensure that the migrant workers are protected from harm and can be evacuated immediately during periods of upheavals and conflicts.

Attention:

There is no meeting this month of August

**Next meeting: September 10, 2006, 3-5 pm
Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.**

All Domestic/Caregiver workers, Newcomers and those on Temporary Work Permit are welcome to attend

Apply for/renew your membership - \$10.

"TAKE YOUR EMPLOYER TO DINNER"

INTERCEDE FUNDRAISER

Sunday October 1, 2006

7 pm

Bright Pearl Restaurant
346 Spadina Ave.

\$50 person

\$360 Table of ~~25~~

Prize draw and 60/40 raffle!

STORIES IN THE LCP

This is part of a series of stories by and about women in Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) names have been changed to safeguard privacy.

Nora arrived in Canada on January 2004 under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP). She was hired by her brother to take care of his children.

Since then her brother, has never paid her a single cent. He would tell her she should be grateful he had helped her come to Canada under the LCP and that eventually she could bring her family over. He also kept reminding her that he had put her through nursing school and now it was her turn to return the favor.

Nora did not have her own room, and slept on a mattress near a furnace. She had to be content with whatever food she was given to eat.

To raise money for her taxes, CPP and EI remittances every month, her sister-in law got co-workers and neighbors to occasionally bring their children to the house for Nora to care for. They paid \$20 a day and the money was used by the brother to remit her monthly taxes.

Nora's husband works as a seaman but barely sends money for the children they left behind. With three children to support, Nora decided she needed to look for another employer. But her brother threatened her with deportation if she left and changed employer. Her brother made her believe that she is not allowed to work for anyone other than employer named in her work permit.

The brother was lying of course: he does not have the power to deport anyone and it is not true that LCP workers are not allowed to change employers anytime they need to! Still, the thought of deportation and not being able to bring her family over scared Nora to the extent that she tolerated her situation as long as she could. She just hoped and prayed for a brighter future knowing her sacrifices would end after she received her permanent residence.

After completing two years of this work, Nora applied for permanent residence and an open work permit. She looked forward to being able to work with any employer and occupation of her choice once she received an open work permit.

However, just when her future was looking brighter, she learned that her husband had taken up another woman. She also learned that their children had been out school for years because of financial constraints.

Nora was so devastated by the news. She begun feeling strange mentally and emotionally. She would smell gas coming from the furnace and wake up, feeling numbness in her legs, arms and face.

Scared for her health, Nora decided to leave her brother's house. However, she had no other relatives and no friends, she had nowhere to go. She was found sleeping at a Tim Horton's by police who brought her to a community center in the city. She found her way later to the office of INTERCEDE.

A counselor referred her to a women's shelter where she could stay until she got a new work permit for a new employer. A follow-up of her application for open work permit was decided but when advised that she could claim for all unpaid wages Nora refused to file a complaint against her brother at the Ministry of Labor. She could not endure shaming her brother this way, she said.

It is really sad to hear caregivers' accounts of abuse at the hands of their employer, but sadder still when the abuser is family. Helping a caregiver come to Canada by employing her through the LCP cannot justify the treatment such as Nora got.

How many more abuses must caregivers tolerate to meet the requirements for permanent residency? How long do they have to suffer separation from their families? When will Canada's government realize the effect of this LCP on women's lives? It's time the government gave value to women's caregiving work, and to LCP workers' contribution to Canada's economy.

CARIBBEAN CONNECTION

If you are a Caregiver or a domestic worker and are interested in attending a Caribbean Connection Meeting please call Bernice Small at (416) 483-4554 ext 22.

Next Meeting: Saturday, August 12, 2006, 2— 4 p.m. at INTERCEDE's office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E. Ste. 405

REMINDERS

Make an appointment first

Please call for an appointment before you decide to visit INTERCEDE and have your appointment confirmed by a counselor you want to see. Otherwise, counselors will not be able to talk to you as they may already be booked for other appointments and they will just give you an appointment for another day. To avoid being sent home and wasting your day, do confirm your appointment before coming to INTERCEDE.

COCO'S CORNER:**Finally a family will be re-united after 16 years**

Alicia was overwhelmed with joy when the judge told her that she had shown exceptional effort to provide a better life for her children with whom she will be reunited in Canada.

Alicia was a victim of circumstances beyond her control which kept her separated from her children for all of 16 years. When she completed the requirements for Permanent Residence, Alicia had requested for a concurrent processing of her children. Because of her husband had been abusive, she opted not to include him in her application. This caused delay in the approval of her permanent residence and that of her children.

After a long delay, Alicia got approved for Permanent Residence but not her children who, at that time, were still minors and needed the permission of their father. Alicia continued providing financial support, paying for their studies until they reached the age of consent to be able to travel freely.

Alicia had maintained a full time job as a domestic worker and saved some of her earnings, investing and contributing to her RRSP. She took upgrading courses in accounting and took part-time jobs to gain experience in the field. She again filed to sponsor her two children, now adults with children on their own, but who remained single and attended school full-time. While there was no doubt that they were fully dependent on their mother, CIC again refused the sponsorship on the grounds that Alicia did not have sufficient income to support them in Canada. She felt completely devastated with this result.

She then filed an Appeal before the Immigration Appeal Board. At the time of hearing, Alicia came well-prepared to reverse the negative decision. Her current employer went to ask the Judge to give Alicia's request a re-consideration. She described how her health condition was stabilized because of Alicia's special skills and caregiving. She said that in the past year Alicia's salary was increased because she performed the work of a health care provider and not just a domestic worker and that she is prepared to employ the daughter of Alicia who was training as a Personal Support Worker. Also, because of Alicia's network in the community, her son has been recommended for employment in a car manufacturing company which he has been preparing for with appropriate skills training.

Alicia won her battle with Immigration without hiring Immigration lawyers or consultants but by working closely with her INTERCEDE counselor.

Our congratulations to Alicia! We look forward to meeting her children and scheduling an Orientation session with them.

INTERCEDE and Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights (CDWCR) convey our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of Marilou Tabuno, (of Urdaneta City, Pangasinan), Mirasol Mariano, (of Piat, Cagayan Valley) and Mary Grace Sioco, (of General Santos City, Mindanao), Isabelita "Bobby" Malejana, (of Manila).

Q & A

Q: *My employer for 4 months requested me to take First Aid training on my off days in order to be more knowledgeable and capable of taking care of her two children in case of emergency. Is this mandatory, do I need to pay for this training?*

A: It is an excellent idea for you to be trained and upgrade your skills in First Aid. Your employer will have more confidence leaving small children with a capable, reliable and skilled caregiver. Also, you yourself will be more confident with this asset. You can arrange with your employer to take the training during your work days and negotiate that she pays your training fee.

Q: *I am filing my application for Permanent Residence under the LCP and would like to maintain the information that I am single with two children. The truth is I was married but separated for more than 10 years. I filed for a divorce and expect approval before the year ends. Will it be correct to declare my marital status as single? Or as separated?*

A: You are not single because you were legally married although now ten years separated. When you fill up your application state your marital status as separated. You may request for a certification from your lawyer on the status of your divorce. Then, you can inform Immigration of your Divorce once it is granted.

Q: *My husband and three daughters were processed concurrently when I filed my application for permanent residence. They arrived recently and two of my children wanted to go back to the Philippines to finish their last year university studies. Is this allowed or will they lose their permanent residence status? What will guarantee that they can come back in Canada?*

A: Before your daughters go back to the Philippines, make sure they have their Permanent Residence Cards and are back no later than the end of a continuous three years outside Canada with in the next five-year period. They have reasonable grounds to leave Canada temporarily and have the intention to return. Once they finish school they can come back and resume residency and may even apply for citizenship once they have completed the required number period.

Q: *I am confused about my sponsorship plans. I am alone with no family in Canada. My 30 year old single son who is teaching in the Philippines wants to be with me. However, I now have a boyfriend who is recently divorced from his wife of 27 years. He was refused permanent residence. He wants to marry me so I can sponsor him as my spouse. If I do so, will I still be allowed to sponsor my son?*

A: You are in a very tough position. The fact is that your son can no longer be considered as a dependent, but you can file for sponsorship with special consideration because you are alone, no siblings, nor close relatives and have not sponsored anybody. You have a good chance with your son. Marrying your boyfriend, however, may lose the chance to get your son to Canada. There is no guarantee that if you marry you will succeed in sponsoring your boyfriend. Make sure this is a genuine relationship and he is not just interested in being sponsored by you. Call INTERCEDE and we will be happy to discuss these consequences with you.

TOP WAYS TO FIND WORK

(Excerpts from A.C.C.E.S by Shawn Mintz)

Are you Internationally Educated? If so you should congratulate yourself. You are brave and courageous. It takes a very special person who can leave their country and start over in Canada. The following are the top ten ways to find work in Canada:

1. A good way to learn about your occupation in Canada is to have information interviews with people who are working in your field, associations and licensing bodies. An information interview is when you meet with someone and ask them questions about what they like about their job, dislike and the future potential to name a few.
This will help you become better informed about the industry. There are other ways to find out about your field such as websites and printed reports. However, talking to an expert or someone already employed will give you a greater insight.
2. Certain terminology in your occupation may be different in Canada. You may want to go to the library and the Internet to learn the language your industry uses.
3. Start to reformat your résumé to a Canadian style. Information that may have been relevant in your own country may not be relevant in Canada. In some other countries it's normal to write your marital status, age and religion. In Canada this should not be mentioned. We have the Ontario Human Rights Code, which protects us against discrimination. Also, have someone look over your résumé before you send it out. You can go to a non-profit employment service and have your résumé critiqued for free.
4. Only one out of five jobs is advertised on the internet, newspapers or trade magazines. All other jobs are in the 'Hidden Job Market', which means they are not advertised. The best ways to find out about these jobs are networking and making cold calls. "Networking" is a word for getting to know people in the industry. A "cold call" is when you go to a company that is not advertising any jobs, to ask if they are hiring. This can be scary, but since not as many people apply for these jobs, you will have a better chance to be hired.
5. In your own country you probably had a big network of contacts; however in Canada your network may be small. I have a challenge for you. It's time to re-build your network in Canada. Socialize with people, attend job search workshops offered by your community, volunteer, attend job fairs and join associations. Talk to everyone! Your family doctor, your children's teacher or a priest may be able to help connect you to people. Remember that people like to help other people.

FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS & NEWCOMERS

WHEN: SUNDAY
August 6, 13, 20 & 27, 2006
September 3, 10, 17 & 24, 2006
October 1, 15, 22 & 29, 2006

TIME : 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: PROLEGAL
164 Eglinton Ave. E., 3rd Floor
(West of Redpath, Walking distance from Eglinton Subway station)

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up.
Seating is limited.
Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

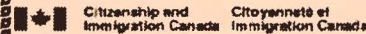
INTERCEDE

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