

# DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers, and Newcomers

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554

JULY 2000



## END HARSH SECRETIVE "JUSTICE" SYSTEM AFFECTING MIGRANTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Philippine migrant and human rights groups are asking the government of Saudi Arabia to institute a more humane and fair justice system where procedures will be less secretive, more accessible and impartial.

Over the past nine years, there have been 767 executions in Saudi Arabia, over half of this number were migrant workers! Today 300 Filipino prisoners languish in Riyadh and Jeddah jails, more than 20 face execution.

Up to 80 per cent of Saudi Arabia's workforce consists of migrant workers, yet they take a "100 per cent risk of arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and execution" while in that country.

A statement issued by the groups during a vigil held June 27 in front of the Saudi Arabian embassy

in Makati describes Saudi Arabia's judicial and legal procedures as:

"gravely violative of universal human rights, especially the minimum standards of humane treatment for prisoners and detained persons. Families of prisoners have no means to communicate with, and assist their loved ones. Prisoners have no means by which they can avail of the best defense under the law. Remedies for miscarriage of justice are non-existent, especially for foreigners and religious minorities. Moreover, torture has been a standard practice to force the signing of confessions, often written in Arabic, which are totally incomprehensible to foreign prisoners. Daily hazards of psychological, physical and sexual abuse, particularly threaten women in Saudi prisons."

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### ***Readers, please write us: How Are We Serving You?***

INTERCEDE needs your help. We are in the process of evaluating our services and activities and we are counting on our members to help us improve and meet your needs.

What do you think about:

- Our counselling services?
- Our monthly information meetings?
- Your contact with our staff?
- Our fundraising events and other socials?
- this newsletter?

Also, tell us what other services you want INTERCEDE to offer. Please write us today. Don't miss your chance to tell us how we are doing and how we can serve you better.

*All Domestic/Caregiver Workers, All Newcomers and Women on Temporary Work Permit*

*Welcome to*

### **INTERCEDE MEETING EVERY FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH**

**(If a holiday, meeting is on second Sunday)**

**Sunday, July 9, 2000**

3-5 p.m. at Cecil Community Center  
58 Cecil Street, South of College/Spadina

**Topic: Bill C-31 - WILL IT BE A BETTER IMMIGRATION LAW?**

Renew or Apply for New Membership



The sad case of Sarah Jane Dematera exemplifies the arbitrary, secretive, inaccessible, and harsh system of justice that terrify foreigners and religious minorities in Saudi Arabia. Just four days after she arrived in 1992, Dematera was accused of murdering her female employer. Since then she has appeared in court only twice; she is without any legal assistance and her "trial remains shrouded in secrecy". A death sentence hangs on her head and will remain pending for 10 years, until a grown son of the victim pronounces forgiveness or confirmation of her sentence.

The statement continues:

"Saudi Arabia shares its record of worst human rights violator, with countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the United States. It has not ratified the International Bill of Human Rights. It has not made significant steps to realize the human rights instruments which it ratified. It remains a dangerous country for women, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and other ethnic minorities."

Philippine-based migrant groups who are now part of a campaign to End Secrecy, Suffering and Fear in Saudi Arabia. KAIBIGAN, KANLUNGAN, KAKAMMPI, PAHRA and other organizations have joined Amnesty International in a global movement to establish a fair, impartial and humane justice system in the closed state. Their statement concludes:

"We call on the Saudi government to declare a moratorium on all executions, adopt mechanisms for fair and impartial trials, end discrimination of religious, racial and ethnic minorities, stop torture and forced confessions, adhere to internationally recognized legal procedures of criminal justice, ratify and enforce human rights among and within Saudi Arabian society.

**YOU MIGHT BE MISSING SOMETHING  
IF YOU HAVEN'T JOINED YET.....**

**INTERCEDE CAREGIVERS COOPERATIVE, INC.**  
Your Employment Agency

The INTERCEDE Caregivers Cooperative has been established to provide employment services, benefits and better work conditions for domestic/caregiver workers.

*For details call 486-0548 for Annie*

## A CALL TO OVERSEAS FILIPINOS

The year 2000 has been proclaimed the Year of Overseas Filipino Workers by the Philippine government and annually, June 7 is designated Migrant Workers' Day.

Apart from naming migrant workers as the Philippines' modern-day heroes and setting aside a day and a year to honour them, much more substantial effort is required of the Philippine government and of Filipinos and their communities around the globe to render genuine homage to the more than seven million Filipino migrants working abroad who send more than US\$5,000,000 each year to boost foreign exchange and keep the economy afloat.

To begin with, rooting out the causes of poverty and building a strong economy will give Filipinos more viable options of working and staying in the country. But such an economy must be one that serves the interest of all the people, not just of the powerful few members of our ruling elite. Otherwise, we will never solve the historic problem of inequality in society nor will we ever close the yawning gap between the minority rich and majority poor. And therefore we will not solve the issue of forced migration from poor countries like the Philippines.

While all of that is easier said than done, we know something must be done. Of course, in the short term we must continue to advocate for migrant workers' rights and demand adequate services and benefits for them, from both the Philippine and the Canadian governments, for example. We must support demands to recognize, respect and promote the human rights of migrants and migrant workers everywhere.

### **Newcomer Youth ages 15-29**

### **Looking for a summer job?**

INTERCEDE can help you:

- Find job leads
- Write an effective resume
- Conduct successful job interviews
- Use internet resource in your job search

**Call Jo for an appointment**

**(416) 483-4554 ext. 25**



But at the same time, we must also begin choosing leaders who represent and will strive to achieve the changes we want in our political and economic life. If we want equality in society – equal distribution of wealth, equal treatment, equal access to services and employment, equality between men and women, an end to all kinds of discrimination – then our decision-makers must be those who also want that equality. In an electoral system such as practiced in Canada or the Philippines, these decision-makers are chosen through the ballot.

Filipino immigrants and temporary workers in Canada and other parts of the world have been denied their right to vote and choose the leaders – the decision-makers – of their government since the Aquino Constitution took effect. Only now has the Congress come close to righting this wrong.

For this reason, migrant organizations in the Philippines and abroad are persuading overseas Filipinos to have their voices heard and sign a petition to enact the “Absentee Voting Bill” addressed to the Congress and the Executive.

The petition favours an absentee voting law that will include all Filipino citizens in all countries abroad and in all national elections and referenda; it calls for voter registration abroad or by mail but counting of ballots must be in the embassies/consulates abroad; and asks for participation of Filipino organizations to assist in these election activities.

With enactment of an Absentee Voting Bill, the estimated seven million Filipinos living and working overseas will be able to elect national leaders whose decisions will spell the end or the continuation of forced migration.

*(This statement was issued at Toronto's Philippine National Day)*

**Join us at:**

***Women's World March in  
Ottawa***

**on October 15, 2000**

**Call: 483-4554  
to reserve bus seats**

**Register NOW!**

**INTERCEDE 6<sup>TH</sup> Annual National  
Conference of Domestic Workers**

This meeting will consist of discussion and feedback on the initial findings from the participatory action research INTERCEDE is now conducting on the abuse and violence, including the impact of family separation on women in the Live-in Caregiver Program.

**September 8, 9, 10, 2000**

**Ramada Hotel, Toronto**

**Call 416-483-4554 to register**

**Sexual harassment in the workplace**

For years I have counselled and supported women who work in a place many consider a safe place: “HOME”. But this has not exempted them from becoming victims of Sexual Harassment from their male employers and other male members of the household.

The following excerpts are testimonies from live-in caregivers and babysitters about their experiences:

- Maria was called to bring up extra rolls of toilet paper to put in the bathroom and found her male employer waiting there for her - naked!
- Cecilia was carrying the baby when her male employer came closer, hugged and kissed the baby then declared that the baby smelled good but preferred the smell of the nanny, followed by a long eye contact.
- Patricia was sound asleep at around 1:30 am and thought that she was dreaming when she suddenly awoke and found her male employer standing close to her bed staring at her. Her bedroom is in the basement with no lock and serves as a sewing room.

Sexual harassment occurs because of social beliefs and attitudes that promote the image of women as inferior or subordinate beings; that women are mere objects of sexual pleasure or property of men. These ideas condone the inequality of women in society and tolerates violence against women.

Workplace harassment is a form of violence against women. It is form of power and control violated by men and rooted in patriarchy.



Migrant women who leave their countries to seek jobs abroad are vulnerable to sexual harassment and other forms of abuse and violence because of their lack of rights as non-citizens and the insecurity of their temporary status. Consequently, domestic workers and caregivers who are migrants in Canada on temporary work permits under the Live-in Caregiver Program face a higher risk of sexual harassment. These women are silenced by their Immigration status, because they do not want to jeopardize their chance of remaining in Canada and maintaining the live-in work that they do.

Sexual Harassment can be very harmful to a woman's health and well-being and no woman should have to tolerate it. The psychological and physical impact of sexual harassment has a negative effect on her job performance and often, quitting is her last recourse.

There is urgent need to educate women about sexual harassment and ways to protect themselves and stop sexual harassment in the workplace.

We must impose strong penalty against male harassers. There must be Zero tolerance for workplace harassment.

*(Presented by Coco Diaz for Sexual Harassment Awareness Week on June 1, 2000 at Metro Convention Hall.)*

## Get your tickets now for the Annual Conference Dance

**Saturday, Sept. 9, 2000**  
**7 pm to 1 am**

**Ramada Hotel, Toronto**  
**\$20.00**

*We wish to thank Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) and Job Search Program With COSTI-OCASI: Status of Women, Ontario; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture & Recreation (NSP) and the Municipality of Toronto for their financial support.*

## FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP PROGRAM

### Learn how to:

- job search effectively
- develop network and linkages in the community for jobs
- use computer job search
- develop self esteem and confidence
- write an effective resume
- conduct a successful interview

***A certificate of completion will be issued  
by George Brown College***

Classes start from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every  
Sunday on July 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2000

At George Brown College, St. James Campus,  
200 King St. East, Rm 544-E

**Call now to register, space still available  
Call (416) 483-4554 ext 25**

## Emergency First Aid with

### \*Infant Child CPR or \*Adult CPR

Sunday, July 30, 2000

10 am to 6 pm

St. John Ambulance

46 Wellesley Street East

*Register Now, Space is limited*

**To register send a cheque of \$ 51.00**

**payable to St. John Ambulance**

**and mail to INTERCEDE at:**

**234 Eglinton Avenue East, S-205**

**Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5**

**Tel. (416) 483-4554 ext 21**

### INTERCEDE SERVICE UNIT

**Place:** 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 205,  
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