

## Human Rights Council

*Re-evaluating controversial migrant labor rights and conditions in countries with low production costs*

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**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue:** Re-evaluating controversial migrant labor rights and conditions in countries with low production costs

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## Introduction

Migrant labor rights are the set of regulations that protect the basic needs of people who have immigrated to a country, most commonly for better job options. As the world industrializes, the need for labor, especially unskilled work, grows. As a result, hundreds of millions of people travel to countries in search of manpower, aiming for higher incomes and better living standards. However, countries with high populations and manpower, thus low production costs struggle to meet these standards. Migrants around the world are forced to live in unacceptable circumstances in order to earn money. Since jobs in these regions include human trafficking, heavy labor, and long hours of work, which harms the workers' minds and bodies, the basic human rights of millions of migrants are violated. There are several reasons for these violations, and the main reason is the high population. As the population grows in countries such as China and India, the manpower increases proportionally. For example, there are an estimated number of 300 million migrant workers in China. This results in the number of workers, and thus the production and the hours of work to increase and the wages to drop. So, as the population of these countries grows, the living standards of workers fall because they are forced to work long hours of physical labor in return for low incomes.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Production Cost:** The term refers to the total money spent, direct or indirect, during the process of manufacturing a product. This cost usually consists of raw material, labor, supplies and equipment and general overhead. In developing countries, where most of the productions are based, manufacturing costs usually drop as the amount of production increases.

**Migrant Worker Rights:** Migrant workers are people who have immigrated from another country aiming to find employment, especially temporary or seasonal. These groups of workers are protected with a unique set of regulations called "Migrant Worker Rights". These regulations include the freedom of life, which prohibits any kind of inhumane treatment to workers, such as torture, human trafficking, and slavery.

**Human Trafficking:** The phrase “human trafficking” refers to the illegal transportation or coercion of people, mainly to obtain physical labor or benefit from sexual exploitation. Traffickers generally force people of any age or gender in order to benefit from their manpower in illegitimate labor industries.

**Life Standards:** The level of comfort in which a person lives, which depends on factors such as wealth, medical care, education, and job options.

**Overpopulation:** The exceeding of a certain limit of population density, which results in the environmental resources failing to meet the requirements of people regarding health, shelter and nutrition.

## General Overview

Millions of people working for a living or searching for paid employment outside of their state of origin are suffering from the lack of protection of their rights and low living standards. Migrant workers are the backbone of many sectors around the globe, and yet they are often treated in inhumane manners.

With the industrialization of countries, the importance of the labor force increases. Productions in countries such as China, India, and Pakistan grow from day to day, and the factories fill up with the billions of people these countries host. The highest volume of manufacturing is in the Far East since around one-third of the world population is in China and India. Naturally, the production costs are the lowest too, since the factories buy their raw materials and equipment in larger amounts. This creates a variety of job options for people, so these countries attract hundreds of millions of migrant workers, looking for employment. People leave their states of origin in order to work in better living standards, however, this is not always the scenario.

Overpopulation is a huge issue in China and India. Not only do the Chinese and Indians add up to more than 2 billion, but a significant number of migrant workers also live there. Due to the immense amount of migrant workers and the high demand for jobs due to overpopulation, factories have no issue providing very little wages to these workers. In other words, since there is a high demand for jobs, companies can easily find workers who are willing to work for less money and dangerous working conditions. The lack of worker’s rights laws and proper regulation of worker’s rights laws also pave way for factories to subject their employees to such conditions.

Aside from allowing for dangerous working conditions, overpopulation also results in the exhaustion of environmental resources, unemployment, and pollution. In populated cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Mumbai, the air is so polluted that people sell bottles of fresh oxygen. Half of Beijing is considered dangerously unhealthy due to air pollution, %15 very unhealthy and %5 hazardous. Workplaces and schools are canceled often because of pollution, which according to research kill 4400 people every day in China. Also, the high rates of unemployment cause the country to become more dangerous. As people struggle to find jobs, they look for other options for earning money, which include theft. Crimes like robbery, smuggling, drugs are a problem yet to be solved. A migrant with the income of a low-class

worker is likely to encounter criminals in a large city. All these factors affect migrants' living conditions negatively, especially in countries with low production costs.

Human trafficking is another aspect to consider while evaluating the conditions of migrant workers. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that more than 25 million people are trapped in forced labor, most of them being migrants. In many countries, industries like textile, construction, and agriculture run with forced laborers. Many private economies prefer profit over human rights, so they force people to work for them under extreme conditions in return of minimal payments. In occasions where people are threatened and forced to work against their will, it is sometimes considered as slavery. These occasions are mostly done by transporting people from countries with less security, such as African and Asian nations or kidnapping newly-immigrated people, especially if they are undocumented. Undocumented migrants are kidnapped more commonly because the government does not even know they are in the country let alone realizing they are gone, and also they generally do not inform the law enforcement because of the fear of being arrested from undocumented. Because of these reasons, human traffickers target migrants and benefit from their differences.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

**United States of America:** In this issue, the United States is mostly known for owning many factories and workers in the Far East. Companies in the US benefit from the low production costs in China, Vietnam, India etc. and have migrants work for them in harsh conditions. As the powerful and rich figure of industrialization, The United States is the key country in resolving this issue. Also, USA has not ratified the Forced Labor Convention in 1930, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, or the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention.

**China:** China is the leader in industrial manufacturing with %20 of all production in the world. They are also the country with the lowest production costs, which shows that they have the most labor. As stated before, the high demand for jobs due to overpopulation and insufficient workers safety laws also allows for hazardous working conditions. The country is also known for handling the manufacturing for nations like the USA. China has not ratified the Forced Labor Convention in 1930, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families or the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention.

**International Labor Organization:** The International Labor Organization is a United Nations agency founded in 1919, consisting of 187 member states. Its original aim is to end slavery and human trafficking. Today, they are one of the most important organizations helping migrant workers.

## Timeline of Events

Date of Event (Entry into Force)	Description of Event
1 May 1932	<i>No. 29, Forced Labor Convention, 1930</i>
1 July 2003	<i>A/RES/45/158, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families</i>
9 November 2016	<i>Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930</i>

## Treaties and Events

### [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families \(A/RES/45/158\)](#)

Adopted by the General Assembly, this convention targets establishing the freedom of migrant workers and their families. Article 1 states that these rights apply to all migrants, without any distinction. Article 9, 10 protects them from slavery and their freedom to life just like any person. Article 11 prohibits any kind of forced labor. Articles 12, 13, 14 refers to their freedom of expression such as religion, speech, and thought.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Organizations like the United Nations (UN), ILO, and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have been working to resolve the issue once and for all for many years. These solution attempts were mostly conventions and resolutions. However, the numbers show that the population of migrant workers increase, and their living standards decrease annually. This means that the previous efforts were mostly planned, but not put into action enough. The proposed ideas could resolve the issue if they were applied as written on resolutions, but it seems like the plans stayed on paper. Therefore, more thorough checks on the implementation of these laws is needed.

## Possible Solutions

This issue has been a problem for many decades, yet to be solved. There are several key factors causing migrants to work under such inhumane conditions, such as financial benefit, overpopulation and the unsafety of migrants. A report from ILO states that forced labor generates \$150 billion in illegal profits per year. To prevent this countries should check the financial records of companies more often and thoroughly, form investigation teams to inspect regions with the most migrant labor reported, and add more strict laws regarding forced labor. Migrant labor due to overpopulation could be handled by overpopulated countries like China and India supporting their citizens financially, socially and mentally. The financial help, possibly from the member nations, could result in people moving to less populated areas. Such supports would increase the living standards, keeping people above the poverty line. The safety of migrants is the most important theme of this issue. Hazardous working conditions should be routinely checked by independent organizations and the implementation of laws against dangerous working conditions should be monitored to make sure that factories are up to standard. Moreover, This could be solved by raising awareness about human trafficking, creating hotlines in every area and having more careful border controls. Human trafficking victims are from every age, gender and race, so kids should be informed about this in school. Also, better job options and equality should be served to migrants, since they have a hard time finding jobs and are discriminated against often. Another idea could be promising immunity to undocumented migrants informing their governments about human trafficking.

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