

we need a global labour movement charter



The right of all workers to organise collectively without being subjected to violence, intimidation or legal harassment

The right to organise unions and take collective action including industrial action and solidarity actions

Secure employment

Health & Safety at work, compensation, rehabilitation

A living wage for all workers in all industries

Decent work, with appropriate hours of work proposed by workers, paid leave and paid holidays

Full rights for women workers

Indigenous workers' rights & Land Rights

Permanent residence with full employment rights for all refugees and all migrant workers in all countries

No child labour

Education, housing, health and childcare provisions

Social security and adequate welfare benefits



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Global Labour Movement Charter - Presented by AAWL

What is the Global Labour Movement Charter?

The Global Labour Movement Charter is a document that was originally developed at the Latin America & Asia Pacific International Solidarity Conference in October 2007 in Melbourne. It has since been amended through collective discussion at other international meetings with many genuine labour movement organisations, in the Asia Pacific region and globally. The Global Labour Movement Charter is a series of demands aiming to develop a global labour movement platform to help genuine labour movement organisations coordinate their campaigns and improve their organising strategies.

We have national campaigns; Why a global charter?

Capitalists have a global reach through their companies. Capitalists place production where it is cheapest - that is where the relevant skilled workers have the lowest wages and conditions, and where governments assist companies with infrastructure and financial incentives. To keep production costs down, capitalists and governments introduce anti-union laws and repress genuine unions in the production zones. These are some of the factors taken into account by capitalists when deciding where their companies will establish production. If workers manage to organise in one country, and improve their wages and conditions, this will make production more costly. Capitalists will re-evaluate their costs and profits, and may shift production to another area where labour costs are cheaper. Sometimes capitalists find it easier to shift workers instead of shifting production, so they request governments to establish a temporary migrant workforce with few rights in order to continue profitable production. What we need to recognise is that there is a global labour market, and that industrial campaigns and agreements at a national level are now inadequate to protect workers' living standards because jobs and even workforces can be shifted.

So what can workers do?

Workers in each industry can protect themselves against this capitalist strategy if they coordinate their wages and conditions demands in all production zones, and support each other when attempts are made to reduce wages or conditions anywhere. This would make it unprofitable for companies to relocate production or relocate workforces.

But how can that be achieved?

To achieve the highest wages and conditions workers organise genuine unions in all countries. Organising efforts by newly established genuine unions in unorganised industries need to be assisted by already established genuine unions, in the same country and in other countries. Genuine unions internationally will then be able to develop campaigns and struggles to achieve enforceable international agreements that improve wages and conditions for workers in all countries.

Isn't that utopian?

This is now necessary in the current economy. There are international union agreements already, the most well known are the agreements for international sea-farers. There are a number of companies that have production and sales in more than 100 countries. Toyota, Nestle and Unilever are the best known, but there are many others. They are harsh union-busting companies, but many of their workplaces in many countries are organised by genuine militant unions. There are campaigns and solidarity campaigns taking place. Many industries, like finance, transport, vehicle manufacturing, food manufacturing and distribution, or communication are part of a global production chain across many companies. Industrial action at one point has immediate effects throughout the world. What is required is a common understanding of the needs of workers, and more communication and more coordination to achieve our demands.

So what's next?

To develop these plans, genuine labour movement activists working in the same industry who agree with the concept of a Global Labour Movement Charter need to meet together to develop clear demands, aimed at particular companies, across particular industries or aimed at governments. We will need to develop campaigns and strategies and proposals for actions that will involve workers in different countries to put coordinated pressure on companies and force them to accept our demands and agree to enforceable global industrial agreements. To develop this discussion we will need a global labour movement meeting. Because travel is so expensive, we propose that initially regional meetings should take place, each to discuss the concept and content of the Global Labour Movement Charter, and draw up proposals for campaigns and strategies to achieve our demands in each industry.

What can I do to support this?

The Global Labour Movement Charter is a proposal that does not belong to AAWL. It belongs to the genuine labour movement. We would like genuine unions to discuss this project, and promote it. We would like the concept of the Global Labour Movement Charter to be discussed at union meetings, particularly international labour movement meetings, and that organisations should begin to consider their ability to support hosting or participating in future regional labour movement meeting that will develop these plans.



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