



**report**

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# WHY UNIONS MUST TAKE THE LEAD TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



**IndustriALL Global Union's campaign to end violence in the workplace has been embraced by affiliates all over the world since it launched in November 2017. More than 55 unions from the USA to Turkey, and South Africa to the Philippines have taken IndustriALL's pledge to end violence against women, recognizing their role in preventing abuse in the workplace and in unions.**

## Violence and harassment against women is widespread

According to the World Health Organization 35 per cent of women globally – 818 million women – over the age of 15 have experienced sexual or physical violence at home, in their communities, or in the workplace. Unions need to keep raising awareness that violence against women is real, and it is happening everywhere.

IndustriALL affiliates around the globe are taking action to prevent this violation of human rights, through measures such as education campaigns with their membership, including provisions to protect women from violence in collective bargaining agreements, and providing paid leave for women who have suffered from violence and harassment.

By taking **IndustriALL's pledge**, affiliates commit to continue and reinforce their actions to stop violence against women in the workplace and in unions.

"This is an issue that unions can work on in their own structures; it is not only a demand towards employers," says IndustriALL assistant general secretary Jenny Holdcroft. "It's difficult for unions to make demands to employers on issues

they are not adequately addressing, and addressing it will put them in a stronger position."

## Violence against women is a violation of human rights

According to the **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women**, "Violence against women" is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." This Declaration recognizes that violence against women violates women's rights and fundamental freedoms, while the **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action** recognizes that the elimination of violence against women in public and private life is a human rights obligation.

## Violence against women is an obstacle to gender equality at work

Women are less likely to enter the labour market than men. Sexual violence and harassment remains a barrier for women to enter and evolve in the labour market, or to perform certain jobs. At the same time, the continued segregation of

women in precarious, low paid and low status jobs and positions, increases the risks for these women workers.

**Trade unions have a fundamental role in preventing and eliminating violence against women in the workplace**

The ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities' report on violence against men and women in the world of work shows there is a strong connection between access to decent work, non-discrimination and being protected by a trade union in preventing violence against women and men at work. Unions play a key role in raising awareness about sexual harassment among their members, negotiating policies and agreements that establish procedures for making and processing complaints, as well as preventing sexual harassment.

"Unions have a huge role to play, and it is more than a question of equality. It is about the survival of unions and the capacity to present themselves as organizations representing women in their specific struggles with gender discrimination and harassment in the workplace," says Jenny Holdcroft.

**We need an ILO convention on Gender Based Violence**

There is still no law at the international level that sets a baseline for taking action to eradicate violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, in the world of work. There is a **need for a comprehensive**

**ILO Convention**, supplemented by a Recommendation, with a strong focus on preventing, addressing and remedying gender-based violence at work.

"Having international recognition at the ILO will strengthen the hand of the trade unions and give the issue greater prominence and urgency," says Jenny Holdcroft.

"Trade unions need to take action on violence against women and advocate for a binding international law on gender-based violence."



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Action taken by IndustriALL affiliates on International Women's Day, 8 March 2018.

- 1 South Africa
- 2 South Africa
- 3 Indonesia
- 4 Mozambique
- 5 Mauritius
- 6 Germany
- 7 Spain
- 8 India
- 9 Pakistan
- 10 Philippines
- 11 Spain
- 12 Spain
- 13 Nigeria
- 14 Japan