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## UN officials call for respect for rights of migrants and their crucial economic role



Refugees and migrants risk their lives travelling from Africa to Europe

18 December 2010 – With mounting unemployment spurring discrimination and the politics of polarization on the rise, United Nations officials have decried the human rights violations, xenophobia, and exploitation faced by many of the world's 214 million international migrants.

“It is important to recall, particularly in these turbulent times, the fundamental role that migrants play in strengthening the global economy,” [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said in a [message](#) marking International Migrants Day, calling on the very many States that have yet to do so to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.

“I also call on parties to the Convention to step up their efforts to help realize the rights guaranteed in the Convention. The irregular situation of many international migrants should not deprive them either of their humanity or their rights,” he declared.

“Migrants contribute to economic growth and human development they enrich societies through cultural diversity, knowledge and technology exchange and they improve demographic balance in ageing populations. While for many, migration is a positive and empowering experience, many others endure human rights violations, xenophobia, and exploitation.”

Mr. Ban stressed the plight of the tens of millions of migrants who are in “an irregular situation” and thus more likely to be denied basic labour protections, due process guarantees, personal security, and healthcare.

“They are vulnerable to suffering prolonged detention or ill-treatment, and in some cases enslavement, rape or even murder,” he said. “Clearly much more needs to be done to safeguard the rights of migrants.”

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay recalled the statement adopted in September by the Global Migration Group – a collective of 14 UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration and the World Bank – speaking out in one voice for the protection of the human rights of all migrants, especially the tens of millions of irregular and undocumented migrants.

“Human rights violations against migrants are often closely linked to discriminatory law and practice, and to deep-seated attitudes of prejudice and xenophobia,” Ms. Pillay said in a [news release](#). “This must not be allowed to continue. Discrimination against any group of human beings, including migrants, is unacceptable.”

In a [news release](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10605&LangID=E), the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Jorge Bustamante, and the Chairman of the UN Committee on Migrant Workers, Abdelhamid El Jamri, called on States to which have not yet done so to accede or ratify the Convention “and thus seize the opportunity to undertake an important step to ensure the human rights of every person, including those of millions of women, men and children who have abandoned their homes in search of a better life.”

They urged States parties to the Convention to make the rights guaranteed therein a reality on the ground through concerted action. “Civil society, international organisations, and all concerned stakeholders – individually and collectively, are also invited to make the rights guaranteed in the Convention a reality.”

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