

## **UN experts deeply concerned by alleged trafficking of Vietnamese migrant workers to Serbia**

GENEVA (21 January 2022) – UN human rights experts\* today raised serious concerns about the alleged forced labour of a group of approximately 400 Vietnamese migrant workers, who are reported to be victims of trafficking in Serbia.

According to information received, eight companies, including Vietnamese labour recruitment agencies and Chinese construction companies registered in Serbia, have allegedly been implicated in serious human rights abuses against Vietnamese migrant workers.

“We are deeply concerned that these migrant workers may have been trafficked for purposes of forced labour, and have been living and working in appalling conditions in Serbia, at serious risk to their lives and health,” the independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council said.

“We are also very disturbed by allegations that civil society organizations have not been allowed to access to locations where workers are accommodated in order to provide assistance.

“Urgent action is required to assist and protect the workers at risk, and to prevent further human rights abuses,” they said, adding States have an obligation to protect trafficked persons and those at risk of trafficking.

“Partnerships and cooperation with civil society, including trade unions, NGOs, and human rights defenders, are essential to ensure protection of trafficked persons.”

The experts urged the Governments of Serbia, Viet Nam and China to ensure that businesses based in their territory or operating under their jurisdiction respect the human rights of all workers. “This includes not only the businesses who rely on migrant labour but also labour recruitment agencies,” they said. The regulation and monitoring of labour recruitment agencies is also critical for the effective prevention of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour.

As part of their duty to protect against business-related human rights abuses, States must also take appropriate steps to ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims, and to ensure ongoing assistance and protection, including against refoulement in any return procedures for victims of trafficking, the experts said.

They also highlighted the obligations of businesses to exercise due diligence in ensuring that the rights of all workers are protected, without discrimination, recognising the particular needs and rights of migrant workers.

The experts have written to eight businesses implicated in the serious human rights allegations in connection with this case, recalling their obligations of due diligence under the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#).

The experts are also in contact with the Serbian, Vietnamese and Chinese authorities.  
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**\* The experts: Ms. Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Mr. Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Mr. Felipe González Morales, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Ms. Elżbieta Karska (Chairperson), Mr. Githu Muigai (Vice Chairperson) Mr. Surya Deva, Ms. Fernanda Hopenhaym Ms. Anita Ramasastry Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.**

Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity

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