

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AUTHORIZATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL CLASS ACTION FOR MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHT TO CHANGE EMPLOYERS

MONTREAL, November 7th, 2024 – DTMF's *End Unfree Work for Migrants* legal action's certification has not been appealed by the Attorney General of Canada. This historic action for the right of (im)migrant workers to change employers is therefore officially authorized as a constitutional class action.

The case brought by DTMF challenges specific restrictions placed on workers admitted through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the International Mobility Program (IMP). DTMF argues that the restrictions on changing employers perpetuate a system that keeps workers in conditions akin to servitude and makes them vulnerable to abuse – concerns that have been denounced by the current UN Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and by four parliamentary committees since 2009.

"Working in Canada with a closed work permit was marked by repeated violations of my rights. I was forced to work in unhealthy and dangerous conditions without the necessary protective equipment. Often, I was not fully paid, paid late, or paid less than Quebec workers for the same job. I had to endure racist and discriminatory harassment, and the laws that were supposed to protect me seemed not to apply. This experience had a major impact on my mental and physical well-being, and to this day, I still feel the negative effects."

- Byron Acevedo, group representative of the *End Migrant Worker Unfreedom* action and member of DTMF

"I consider myself to have experienced modern-day slavery. My closed work permit for agricultural work in Quebec made me especially vulnerable. Recruited from Cameroon with false promises of a better life for my family and me, I was forced to work 80 to 90 hours a week for almost two years without any days off. I was isolated, threatened, monitored, and prevented

from communicating with the outside world. This led to severe depression and physical illness. If I had been able to change employers, I might have been able to protect myself. After escaping, I obtained permanent residency because I worked as an orderly during the pandemic. I had to go through hell to get here."

- Bénédicte Carole Ze, socially engaged mother, healthcare worker, nursing student, former closed work permit holder, and education and mobilization officer of DTMF

"Canada has denied migrant workers their fundamental human rights by tying them to employers. Today, we seek justice for the severe harms caused by these carefully designed laws, programs, and policies that have dehumanized and exploited people for decades."

- Gabriel Allahdua, author, migrant justice advocate, former closed work permit holder, and education and mobilization officer of DTMF

"I hope today we take a step forward in recognizing and obtaining redress for temporary foreign workers who, like me, have been subjected to abuse for decades. I still suffer physically from my experience working under a closed permit. I will never regain the health I once had. I have the right to be compensated for the harm I have endured, and I want the system that made me vulnerable to come to an end."

- Rudy Samayao, former closed permit holder and member of the consultative committee of DTMF

"After four decades of policy recommendations to update Canada's work permit system, our association has launched a legal action to end the violation of migrant workers' rights to life, liberty, security, dignity, and equality. Despite ample evidence of the disastrous impact of restrictions on the right to change employers, the federal government continues to make superficial reforms to these restrictive measures and continues to add ineffective measures to minimize abuse. Our action aims to address the root of the problem, compensate the thousands of workers who have suffered, and deter any future government from reinstating a system of unfree labour."

- Me Lauriane Palardy, Executive Director of DTMF

Source: [Association for the Rights of Household and Farm Workers \(DTMF\)](#)

DTMF is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1977. Through research, education, advocacy and legal action, DTMF aims to promote and defend the fundamental rights of domestic and farm workers in Quebec and Canada, particularly those employed under precarious immigration status.

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