

Status for All Now!
Tell the Prime Minister
"Respect Your Commitments!"

– Diane Johnston –

December 16-18

Status for All National Days of Action



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Proposals for a Humanitarian Regularization Program**
 - **Migrants and Their Allies Expose and Condemn Surge in Deportations**

For Your Information

- **UN International Migrants Day -- December 18**
- **Current Information on the Condition of Migrants Worldwide**

Government's Superexploitation of International Visa Students

- **Trudeau Government Revises Monetary and Other Requirements for International Students**

- Immigration Minister Holds Press Conference on Changes
- Solidarity With and Support for International Students

Status for All Now!

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Action at Immigration Minister Marc Miller's Montreal office demanding Status for All!, September 17, 2023

Between December 16-18, the Migrant Rights Network (MRN), is organizing Canada-wide actions for a regularization program for undocumented people and permanent resident status for migrant students and workers.

"On December 16, 2021" says the MRN, "Prime Minister Trudeau made a mandate letter commitment that Immigration Ministers have repeated many times over since: a regularization program for undocumented people and permanent resident status for migrant students and workers. But we are still waiting!"[1]

The second anniversary of that commitment is fast upon us, with nothing to show. In his mandate letter to then Immigration Minister Sean Fraser, the Prime Minister wrote: "As Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, you will prioritize ongoing work to strengthen Canada's immigration and refugee system. ... As well, you will continue to strengthen family reunification and reduce application processing times, especially those impacted by COVID-19."[2]

To realize those objectives, he asked the Immigration Minister to achieve results for Canadians by delivering on certain commitments, one of which was to "[b]uild on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities."

The Prime Minister also tasked his Immigration Minister to make headway on leading the government's work on irregular migration and expanding pathways to Permanent Residence for international students and temporary foreign workers. With regard to work on irregular migration, what Canadians saw was the closing of the irregular border crossing at Roxham Road in Quebec, through which migrants could safely enter the country.

In early November, both the federal and Quebec governments announced their immigration

plans for the coming years. For 2025-2026, Canada announced its target of 500,000 new permanent residents. Quebec opted for the status quo, 50,000 per year, as well as those admitted under the Graduates component of its Quebec Experience Program (2024-2025).

Montreal's Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC), one of the main organizers and defenders of migrants in Quebec, noted that "no plan to improve the protection of the rights of people entering or already here with temporary or no immigration status has been presented, even though their numbers are constantly growing. Nor was there any announcement of the abolition of the closed permit, a demand made by a number of community and trade union organizations. And nothing on the regularization of undocumented immigrants, despite Justin Trudeau's promise to do so twenty-three months ago. These people are the lifeblood of an entire section of the economy, yet they are not recognized as having the same fundamental rights as any other citizen."^[3]



The Migrant Rights Network is calling upon everyone to take action this December 16-18, 2023 to mark that "promise, the holidays, International Migrants Day [December 18] and its five-year anniversary.

"Together, we will demand equal rights at work, universal access to services and family unity which is only possible through permanent resident status." The organization is calling on everyone to "make these actions a success" by participating massively in them.

It's a warm and compelling invitation to us all: "Join us: This Holiday, We Unite, Status for All Is Our Right!"



Toronto, September 17, 2023

Notes

1. The *Migrant Rights Network* is a cross-Canada alliance to combat racism and fight for migrant justice. It is a network of organizations of migrants including farmworkers, careworkers, international students, undocumented people as well as allies.
2. Office of the Prime Minister, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Mandate Letter, December 16, 2021.

Proposals for a Humanitarian Regularization Program



Montreal, July 17, 2022

In an October 22 Update, the Migrant Rights Network (MRN) explains that people become undocumented "because of the failures of immigration policy. There is no access to permanent residency for most low-wage migrants in Canada, and only 60 per cent of refugee claimants are accepted. Almost all undocumented immigrants in Canada were previously on a temporary authorization (work, study, refugee claimant permit). They reached a point where they could not get permanent residency and the federal government refused to renew their permits. They were faced with an impossible choice: either return to a country where they may face war, discrimination, climate catastrophe or no economic opportunities and leave communities, families and relationships in Canada OR stay without access to any rights and services and in daily fear of deportation. Those who stay become undocumented immigrants.

"Without permanent resident status, undocumented people are unable to assert rights at work or access basic health care. They face discrimination and exploitation because of the well-founded fear of deportation. Non-status people are part of communities. They are neighbours, classmates, parents, spouses, children, coworkers and caretakers. Because of lack of permanent resident status, undocumented people experience insecure housing, abuse at work, poverty and fear. The uncertainty about the future, constant stress of making ends meet and risks of detention and deportation negatively impacts our health. Living without status requires a tremendous amount of resilience."

In 2007, the MRN informs, "the RCMP estimated that there were between 200,000 to 500,000 undocumented people in Canada" and since then, no new analysis has been done. However, "the number of temporary work and study permits issued in Canada have increased at least four-fold, with a likely corresponding increase in the number of undocumented people. We believe that there are at least 500,000 non-status immigrants."

The MRN's proposal is that "[r]egularization should be considered a minimum floor of rights," because "when any group is excluded, the overall economy suffers. If the pandemic taught us anything, it is that everyone is connected and the exclusion of any person or group of people from equal rights and services is harmful to the whole.

"In order to ensure the most effective program is created," they say, "a permanent coordinating table must be established with the Migrant Rights Network so that undocumented people and refugees are involved from design to implementation to evaluation."

They propose "[a] simple broad program" that "[a]ll undocumented people residing in Canada must be able to apply for and receive permanent resident status." The residency requirement, they say, "should include all periods in Canada, including prior to being undocumented, and should be no more than two years in Canada."

"Dependents must be defined broadly to include all *de facto* family members and a wide range of documents must be allowed to prove family relations."

"There should be first-stage processing of work permits. Permits should be automatically renewed until the application is fully processed."

"The program should be permanent and available on an ongoing basis because the factors leading to people becoming undocumented will continue for the foreseeable future."

"Changes must also be made to immigration and refugee policy to ensure that all migrants including workers, refugees, international students and others are guaranteed permanent resident status so that they do not become undocumented."

For more information on the proposals for a regularization program, [click here](#).



Migrants and Their Allies Expose and Condemn Surge in Deportations



On December 7, during a virtual press conference, the Migrant Rights Network (MRN), a national network of 40 organizations fighting for migrant rights and justice, sounded the alarm over the steep increase in deportations taking place in Canada which "are tearing families apart." They report that data acquired through access to information show that 7,032 people were deported in just the first half of 2023, nearly double the deportations in either 2021 or 2022.

During the press conference, deported undocumented migrants and those facing deportation, along with family members of deportees, spoke of the terrible consequences of deportations. An average of 39 people, they said, were deported every day in the first half of 2023, compared with 23 in 2022 and 21 in 2021 (Canada placed a moratorium on deportations in March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic, which was lifted in November 2021).

"Many of these people could have avoided the horrendous experience of deportation if the government had moved on its 2021 promise to regularize undocumented people," Mary Gellatly, a community legal worker at Parkdale Community Legal Services, pointed out.

The Prime Minister "now oversees 39 deportations a day ... at a cost of nearly 50 million dollars a year -- it's unfair and absurd to rip families apart," said the MRN's Syed Hussan. "We need an end to deportations and full and permanent immigration status for all," said Hussan.

That same day and unrelated to the conference, and responding to the media about an expanded regularization program, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said he's "committed to addressing the issue [of a regularization program] in the months ahead." "The promise remains," he said. "I think that Canada needs to move forward with a path to regular migration and it's something that I've committed to take in front of cabinet in the spring. But it isn't a foregone conclusion and it is not one that comes without costs or without considerations of other factors."

Canada Border Services Agency, the MRN reports, receives at least \$46 million per year for deportations, "which averages out to \$4,750 to deport one person. In contrast, providing settlement and integration services for a permanent resident costs a lot less, approximately \$3,900."

The MRN added, "Migrants follow all the rules, but simply can't get their rights. Most low-wage migrant workers and students have no access to permanent residency; over 40 per cent of refugee claimants are denied. As a result, most migrants have to choose between leaving behind their friends, their jobs and their communities in Canada and potentially being forced to move to a country where they may face risk or live in Canada undocumented, exploited and in daily fear of deportation."

Rajan Gupta, one of the deportees, was removed from the country and returned to India on November 11, 2023. "I can't go back to my house due to life threats. I am living at an undisclosed place away from my city to save my life along with my sister. I have spent four years of my life working in Canada. Now in India, I have no money or income source and also unable to work outside due to life risks," he said.

Nineteen-year-old Tareq Abuznaid, who has been in Canada for eight years and as of December 7 was still facing deportation to the West Bank, Palestine, said: "It feels horrible and it's honestly heartbreaking that Canada wants to deport me back to a country that is being the victim of an active genocide. Israel doesn't recognize me as a citizen, and doesn't even want me on "their land." It's so disgusting and shameful that after all we've been through, and after all we've given, Canada is just willing to throw me and my family out into a death sentence. And I know we're not the only victims of this."

The Prime Minister and his coterie always choose their words ever so carefully. On October 24, as Israeli aggression and crimes continued in occupied Palestine, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said that Palestinians would not be sent back to Gaza if their visas expired. With 20,000

plus killed already, how is it that as of December 7, Tareq was still facing deportation to the West Bank, with Israel's deadly raids there? Canada's travel advisory for Gaza and the West Bank, last updated December 11, says only that for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip "AVOID NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL."

The MRN also notes that Canada is deporting individuals "who would likely obtain permanent resident status once a regularization program is established," one that "would be accompanied by a moratorium on deportations." It also informs that the network, "along with almost all civil society, labour and environmental organizations have called for immediate implementation of a comprehensive regularization program, through which most undocumented people would get permanent resident status."

Exposing the fact that there is no credible reason why Canada would not implement a regularization program, the Network gave examples of such programs in other countries. "Between 1996 and 2008," it informs, "24 of the 27 EU Member States implemented regularization programs, and some several times. An estimated 5.5 to 6 million people were regularized in that time. The largest programs were the Italian 2002 program that regularized 634,000 people and the Spanish 2005 program that regularized 578,375 people. In 2021, Ireland regularized most undocumented people in the country who met a basic residency requirement."

(With files from the Migrant Rights Network, CTV News and The Globe and Mail)

For Your Information

UN International Migrants Day -- December 18

On December 4, 2000, the UN General Assembly, taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world and recognizing the enormous contribution that migrants make in the global economy, to the societies they migrate to and the huge financial contributions they make to the countries they come from through remittances and other ways, proclaimed December 18 International Migrants Day. A decade earlier, on December 18, 1990, the Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

It is noteworthy that Canada has never signed nor acceded to this International Convention.

In 2006, 132 member countries of the UN participated in the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in which they acknowledged that international migration was a growing phenomenon and that such migration could be beneficial if supported by the right social and political policies. The Dialogue also emphasized the need for respect and protection for the rights of migrants as the essential condition for their flourishing and contributions to society. Finally, the Dialogue recognized the importance of strengthening international cooperation locally, regionally and globally to protect the rights and well-being of migrants on a global scale.

In June 2023, under the heading "Canada's Approach to Advancing Human Rights," the country proclaimed: "Canada proudly upholds its commitments, respects its obligations, and champions at home and abroad the human rights of people who are displaced, persecuted, and in need of protection." But it is not the case that Canada does any of these things. On the contrary, it is proud of its ability to speak about high ideals while in life itself it violates the human rights of people who are displaced, persecuted and in need of protection. This has been confirmed by the UN itself.

In September 2023, following a visit to Canada to investigate the conditions of migrant workers,

Tomoya Obakata, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, its causes and consequences, expressed that he was "deeply disturbed by accounts of exploitation and abuse shared by migrant workers in reference to the risks of modern slavery posed by Canada's temporary foreign worker programmes," as well as by discriminatory immigration and refugee policies that target people of African origin and other vulnerable people. Professor Obakata called on Canada to sign the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and to actively prevent and address contemporary forms of slavery.

Current Information on the Condition of Migrants Worldwide

The World Migration Report produced by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an office of the United Nations, updated to November 2023, noted that in 2022 there were 281 million migrants in the world and that this number is growing. It cites that the number of international migrants represented 2.3 per cent of the global population in 1980 and 40 years later in 2020 represents 3.5 per cent of the global population.

The UN defines a migrant as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of the person's legal status." It cites the main reasons for migration as "search of work or economic opportunity, to join family, or to study. Others move to escape conflict, persecution or large-scale human rights violations."

It is noted that at the end of 2022, "an estimated total of 71.1 million people remained displaced within the borders of their own country -- 62.5 million as a result of conflict and violence and 8.7 million as a result of disasters."

The IOM states that in 2022, 48 per cent of migrants were women and girls. A further 13 per cent were children under the age of 18. Youth between the ages of 18 and 24 represented 11 per cent of global migrants.

It reports that in 2019, 167 million migrants were workers, representing five per cent of the total number of workers globally, and comprised 62 per cent of all migrants that year. It is also noted that in 2022, international migrant workers remitted to their homelands, the majority low and middle income countries, a total of U.S. \$647 billion, an increase of eight per cent compared to 2021, and more than Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) or Official Development Assistance (ODA) to these countries.

Regarding refugees and asylum seekers, the IOM notes, by mid 2023 there were an estimated total of 36.4 million refugees and 6.1 million asylum seekers worldwide and that in the first half of 2023, only three per cent or 59,500 refugees were resettled by the receiving countries.

The IOM notes that a significant portion of international migration is "irregular" as people seek to escape desperate circumstances and conditions and that, between 2014 and 2023, close to 60,000 people lost their lives in transit. Additionally, the IOM's Missing Migrants Project notes that tens of thousands of migrants are killed on the job every year as a result of doing "hazardous jobs in industries such as construction, manufacturing, mining and agriculture" as well as working in the informal economy where the risks are even greater. The IOM notes that migrant deaths on the job are very difficult to quantify and it is very likely that many more migrant workers are killed working overseas than is reported.

In June 26, 2023, Felipe González Morales, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, informed the Human Rights Council that "many undocumented migrants continue to struggle due to the lack of regular migration status: they live and work in critical circumstances and may be disproportionately subjected to discrimination, abuse, exploitation and marginalization. The lack of a regular status often prevents them from reporting violations for fear of deportation." He urged members of the UN to regularize the status of migrants so as to "improve migrants' access to social protection, health care, decent work, education, adequate living conditions and family reunification -- empowering migrants to lead more secure and dignified lives." "I urge governments to end the criminalization of irregular migrants and promote solidarity and change the narrative on migration and combat xenophobia, racism and discrimination," González stressed.

(Source: UN, International Organization for Migration)

Government's Superexploitation of International Visa Students

Trudeau Government Revises Monetary and Other Requirements for International Students



Protest by international students outside immigration headquarters in Toronto, April 23, 2022.

Federal Immigration Minister Marc Miller announced on December 7 that beginning January 1, 2024, the cost-of-living financial requirement for new study permit applicants will be raised and that moving forward, this threshold will be adjusted yearly when Statistics Canada updates the low-income cut-off (LICO). LICO represents the "minimum income necessary to ensure that an individual does not have to spend a greater than average portion of income on necessities." The cost-of-living requirement for study permit applicants is presently set at \$10,000 and has not changed since the early 2000s.

This means that for 2024, new study permit applicants will need to show they have \$20,635, representing 75 per cent of LICO, in addition to their first year of tuition and travel costs. The change will apply to new study permit applications received on or after January 1, 2024.

As reported by Statistics Canada, the average undergraduate annual tuition and additional compulsory fees for Canadian students was \$7,076 for the 2023-2024 school year. Nationally, in 2022/2023, international undergraduate students paid \$36,123 on average.

The announcement follows on the heels of other reforms to the International Student Program

announced by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on October 27 "regarding the development of a new framework to recognize learning institutions that provide top-quality services and support, including housing, to international students." [1]

An update was also provided on three temporary policies that were set to expire by the end of 2023:

"- The waiver on the 20-hour-per-week limit on the number of hours international students are allowed to work off campus while class is in session will be extended to April 30, 2024. International students already in Canada, as well as applicants who have already submitted an application for a study permit as of December 7, 2023 will be able to work off campus more than 20 hours per week until that time.



"- The facilitative measure that has allowed international students to count time spent studying online towards the length of a future post-graduation work permit, as long as it constitutes less than 50 per cent of the program of study, will continue to be in place for students who begin a study program before September 1, 2024. This measure will no longer apply to students who begin a study program on or after that date.

"- In response to labour market disruptions during the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery, a temporary policy was introduced on three occasions to provide an additional 18-month work permit to post-graduation work permit holders as their initial work permit was expiring. Foreign nationals with a post-graduation work permit expiring up to December 31, 2023, remain eligible to apply. However, this temporary policy will not be extended further." [2]

The IRCC also notes:

"International education accounts for more than \$22 billion in economic activity annually, greater than Canada's exports of auto parts, lumber or aircraft, and supports more than 200,000 jobs in Canada.

"Quebec establishes its own cost-of-living threshold for international students destined for Quebec's learning institutions and has continued to raise this threshold periodically.

"The new financial guidelines are also being applied to the Student Direct Stream, a special study permit application process available to residents of 14 countries that requires additional up-front information from the applicant and provides priority processing." [3][4]

Notes

1. "Changes to International Student Program aim to protect students, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada," October 27, 2023.
2. "Revised requirements to better protect international students," Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, December 7, 2023.
3. Student Direct Stream: Who can apply, Government of Canada
4. The 14 countries are: Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Senega, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vietnam.

Immigration Minister Holds Press Conference on Changes



International students organized protests in Mississauga against unjust deportations in June 2023.

During a press conference on December 7, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said that "it would be a mistake to blame international students for the housing crisis, but it [would] also be a mistake to invite them to come to Canada with no support, including how to put a roof over their heads." This was presented as justification for the increase in the cost-of-living requirement for new study permit applicants from \$10,000 to \$20,635.

"That's why we expect learning institutions to only accept a number of [international] students that they're able to provide for -- able to house, or assist in finding off-campus housing." No mention of going after the landlords who gouge students by charging exorbitant rents and even demanding a full semester's rent up front.

The Ministry of Immigration announced that ahead of the September 2024 semester, "we are prepared to take necessary measures, including limiting visas, to ensure that designated learning institutions provide adequate and sufficient student supports as part of the academic experience."

The Immigration Minister said there will need to be more conversations with provinces before any visa caps are introduced.

"Enough is enough. If provinces and territories cannot do this, we will do it for them, and they will not like the bluntness of the instruments that we use," he said.

"We could potentially miss the mark," he said, adding that "[p]rovinces have a number of tools at their disposal -- namely the regulation of the designated learning institutions, that in some cases just need actually to be shut down."

Minister Miller says the government is also reviewing how many hours students should be allowed to work, saying that capping it at 20 hours a week would be "on the draconian end of the spectrum" but allowing 40 working hours per week would give people reason to come to Canada and not focus on their studies. The Minister really takes the cake since it was long since established that a full time student should not work more than ten hours a week max if they hope to keep up with their studies.

"Our data shows us that 80 per cent of international students work more than 20 hours per week," Miller informed.

With the same nasty air of innocence, the Minister denied that international students are already reduced to poverty which is why they work more than twenty hours a week to sustain the lowest paid jobs in many cases. Allowing them to now work more than twenty hours a week is a nasty piece of work on the minister's part.

Clearly, he only wants international students from relatively wealthy backgrounds to study in Canada because those with modest means have to borrow or sell their land and possessions just to pay current visa fees. Once these are doubled, the situation facing international students and their parents will become very much worse.

The lengths Canada goes to to justify superexploiting international students is despicable.

(With files from *CBC News*, *The Canadian Press*, *CTV News*)

Solidarity With and Support for International Students

"From being blamed for the housing crisis to being banned from local food banks, international students have been making headlines recently," writes Elizabeth Berman of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in the organization's online bulletin. "Once a small minority, international students -- and the high tuition they pay -- are now a driving force on some Canadian college and university campuses."

"It's not the educational value of international students, though, that's motivating governments and post-secondary institutions to recruit more and more of them," she notes, adding that the Legault government announced in October "that it would claw back about \$17,000 of tuition from each international student."

"[E]xcept for students from France and Belgium, countries that have reciprocal agreements with Quebec, international tuition would rise dramatically in the province, hampering recruitment," Berman informs.

"In the face of challenges like public funding and affordable housing," she says "academic staff associations at colleges and universities may feel powerless to effect change. Working together with other unions and organizations, however, can create collective power."

In Quebec, "unions are working together through the Quebec Federation of University Professors (FQPPU), which strongly opposes the proposed tuition fee policy of the Legault government," Berman reports. As well, "[a]cademic staff associations and their members in the province are encouraged to sign an *official petition* calling on the government to cancel the tuition changes."

Sarom Rho, an organizer with the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, which includes Migrant Students United, says: "When one section of our society has fewer rights, and is denied the same protections, it actually pushes the floor down for everybody" and "[in] colleges and universities, when international students are denied rights, it hurts domestic students, it hurts faculty, it hurts the other workers on campus, because I don't think any of us want a financialized model of education."

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, the Canadian Federation of Students, and CAUT worked together earlier this year to help stop the deportation of Indian students who were issued fraudulent acceptance letters by an unregulated education recruiter. Rho explained that "[t]o

prevent other students from being tricked by unscrupulous recruiters, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change has proposed an International Students Recruiter Regulatory Regime, which they presented to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The federal government introduced changes to the International Student Program in October to better protect genuine students from fraud."

Rho concludes: "Our solution is to call for a system where everybody has the same rights and protections, not only because this is fair, and we want to live in a fair society, but also it would increase our collective bargaining power to build the kind of public education system and society that we want."



International students protest outside Canada Border Services Agency office in Mississauga against unjust deportations in June 2023.

(Fostering solidarity with and support for international students," Elizabeth Berman, Canadian Association of University Teachers, December 2023.)

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