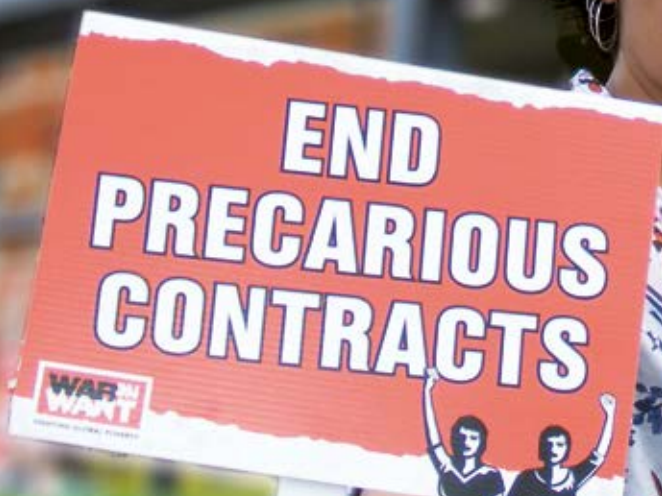


# STAND with MIGRANT WORKERS

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against underemployment.

Article 23 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

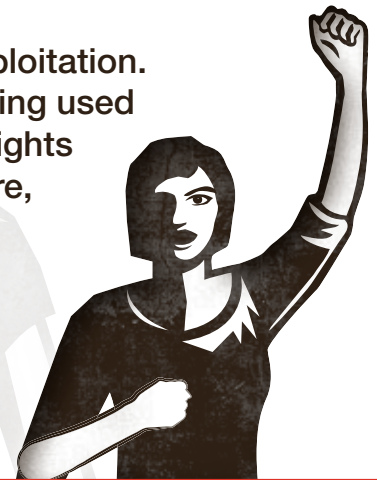




Globally, millions of workers face unsafe conditions, poverty pay and insecurity at work. In the race to increase profits and reduce costs, workers around the world suffer exploitation and precarious work. They often work in the supply chains of multinational companies producing goods for the UK high street. Governments are failing to protect workers' rights, including the rights of migrant workers, whilst at the same time attacking trade unions.

Migrant workers across the UK face prejudice, abuse and exploitation. In the wake of Brexit, the call to 'control our borders' risks being used to not only restrict freedom of movement but to weaken the rights of migrant workers. The rights of workers who are already here, as well as those who come in the future, are at risk.

**War on Want has always stood for human rights, internationalism, justice and solidarity. Today this means we must stand with migrant workers and end precarious contracts.**



**SURVIVAL UNDER  
NEW COLONIALISM**

RESTRICTED AREA  
NO ENTRY BEYOND THIS POINT  
YOU WILL BE SEARCHED, ARRESTED  
AND CHARGED.  
DIAMOND ACT OF 1959, SECTIONS 52, 53, 55 & 57

**NO ENTRY**

Photo: Jpoddane

Migration is a survival strategy in the face of global economic rules that create geographic inequality. These economic rules are often enforced through violence and war.

The global North takes advantage of a global economic system – made up of regional, bilateral and international trade agreements – that opens up countries in the global South for exploitation.

The scale and scope of the UK's involvement in the exploitation of resources and workers around the world is staggering, so too is the trail of social, environmental and human rights abuses left in its wake.

Migration is one strategy that workers use to survive and resist this exploitation.

### Migrant workers and wages

The UK's 'flexible' labour market of insecure work, together with restrictive trade union laws, is behind the UK's low wage economy, not migrant workers. Evidence indicates that the negative impact migration has on wages is really small.\* Restrictions on what work migrants can do leads to more irregular employment where workers are less able to challenge bosses that are paying them below the minimum wage. This can drive down standards for everyone.

### Migrant workers and public services

Migration does not undermine public services, it strengthens them. Years of cuts, privatisation and an aging population are causing services to be stretched. Migrant workers have long made an essential contribution to public services, such as the NHS and social care, where employers recruit migrants in order to keep services running. The breaking up of services, including through outsourcing and private providers focused on cutting costs, has meant that many public services are forced to rely on other countries' investment in education and staff training.

\* Economists estimate the effect as around 1p per hour for the eight years between 2004 and 2012, and only in some sectors. [The impact of immigration on occupational wages: evidence from Britain. Stephen Nickell and Jumana Saleheen, Bank of England Staff Working Paper No. 574, December 2015]

## EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL

War on Want believes in decent work and a living wage for all, regardless of immigration status. Only by protecting equal social and labour rights for all workers can we stop a race to the bottom where employers drive down working conditions for everyone.



### THE CASE OF BYRON: When bosses act as border guards



Byron, the hamburger chain with a £70 million turnover, invited some of its migrant workers to a 'training day' only to hand them over to the UK border agency for deportation. They were all too happy to make money off the back of migrant workers, but then betrayed them in a stitch-up with the Home Office.

Byron should be ashamed of its two-faced behaviour. When bosses act as border guards, exploitation and abuse will soon follow. Workers with the threat of deportation hanging over them will always struggle to challenge poor pay and appalling conditions. That is why everyone should be entitled to basic rights at work irrespective of their immigration status.

### Tackling racism, xenophobia and sexism in the workplace

Migrant, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and women workers often face the worst terms of employment through zero-hour contracts, agency work and employment with outsourced companies. This reinforces structural discrimination. Outsourcing and precarious contracts can mean that the work migrant and BAME workers do does not receive the same benefits as other workers. Migrant and BAME women workers face multiple layers of discrimination which results in deeper marginalisation within the labour market. For example, cleaners working for an outsourced company may work in the same office as other directly employed staff but receive less holiday, sick pay, and maternity benefits.

When work becomes racially divided, division can lead to discrimination. Workers on precarious contracts often feel unable to challenge abuse

for fear of losing future work. Yet even the most vulnerable workers are overcoming the odds and fighting back. They deserve our solidarity.

**The immigration system must not be allowed to create groups of workers with different sets of rights. Immigration status should not determine which rights workers have.**

### Stop criminalising communities

Border control is being extended well past the border as employers and private landlords now have to check the immigration status of workers and tenants, and doctors and nurses are being asked to check patients' immigration status before treatment. Immigration raids are increasing across the country. The extension of the border regime overwhelmingly affects BAME communities, and anyone unable to prove their status, far wider than the 'illegal' immigrants it is said to target. It creates suspicion, division and tension within workplaces and communities.





## War on Want demands:

### The right to work for all

Everyone in the UK must have the right to work to provide for their basic needs. When someone doesn't have the right to work legally, they often face no real choice but to work illegally. Migration controls make workers vulnerable to extreme exploitation including modern forms of slavery. Irregular workers are often afraid to approach the authorities to complain about exploitation through fear they will be detained or deported, and treated as criminals.

### Equal social and labour protection

Restrictions on social protections such as access to benefits, health care and education opportunities weaken the ability of workers to demand better conditions. The risks associated with losing future work are higher when workers challenge exploitative bosses without a safety net. The Brexit negotiations risk further restricting EU workers' rights to social protection.

### An end to precarious contracts

Precarious contracts mean workers face the constant threat of losing future work, as well as having to make themselves available with no guarantee of hours. Employers are given the power to withdraw workers' livelihoods without accountability. Faced with this imbalance of power, workers are less able to challenge abuse. New Zealand has passed legislation which ends zero-hour contracts, meaning workers have to be reasonably compensated when they are available for shifts. The same kind of law should be passed in the UK.



**TAKE ACTION TODAY**

[waronwant.org/StandWithMigrantWorkers](http://waronwant.org/StandWithMigrantWorkers)

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