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March 26, 2024

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2

Hon. Marc Miller  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Hon. Randy Boissonnault  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

**RE: Regularization and Permanent Residency for all Migrant Workers**

Dear Prime Minister, Minister Miller and Minister Boissonnault, In December 2022, my predecessor wrote to you and members of the Cabinet Committee on Economy, Inclusion and Climate “B” urging the regularization of undocumented people. KAIROS was one of many organizations to do so.

Specifically, we called on Canada to support a program that is uncapped; includes all undocumented people and their families; and is a one-step program where all undocumented people can apply for permanent residency.

More than a year later, the wait for this important call continues.

And each day we wait, undocumented people continue to live in fear of abuse and deportation, are denied healthcare, and are separated from their families, all of which undermine their mental health.

Most undocumented workers lawfully entered Canada through its Temporary Foreign Workers’ Program but fall out of status when they struggle to meet near impossible requirements. Many workers run out of time and find themselves undocumented. It is estimated that half a million-people in Canada are without status.

Documented migrant workers are hardly better off. The TFWP intrenches indentured labour in our country, fostering conditions of exploitation and workplace abuses that have been well documented, including during the pandemic. Last September, the UN’s special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, said that Canada’s TFWP is a “breeding ground” for modern forms of slavery.



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Prime Minister and Minister Miller – this assessment from the special rapporteur must be treated as a five-alarm fire!

And yet – as with the undocumented - we continue to wait for a meaningful government response.

Canada states that it is committed to human rights. Why does it uphold a program that subjects people who are racialized to indentured labour, treating them as disposable?

The retirement of the “Temporary” Foreign Workers Program – now more than a half century old - is long overdue.

For decades, KAIROS and other migrant justice advocates have urged the federal government to grant all migrant and undocumented workers permanent residency as an effective and efficient solution to address racism within the system and to help safeguard the wellbeing of workers and communities.

This action would empower workers to leave abusive employers and dangerous workplaces; and facilitate access to health and other benefits such as Employment Insurance, which they contribute to but cannot access if they work less than 12 months in a calendar year. A proposed class action lawsuit is challenging this unfair situation. Permanent residency must also be granted without unfair rules and expiration dates that make it nearly impossible for caregivers and other migrant workers to meet.

Despite Canada's bid to make some improvements to the TFWP, it can never be enough. The program is inherently racist. It is designed to make it difficult to impossible for workers from overseas to become permanent residents – driving many to become undocumented.

Well over half a million people in this country are suffering from this unacceptable situation.

Prime Minister and Minister Miller, please, we call on you to end the wait now. Regularize the undocumented and end indentured labour and slavery by closing the Temporary Foreign Worker Program as soon as possible and by granting status for all as the strategy to strengthen the country, including meeting labour market demands and immigration targets.

Sincerely,

Leah Reesor-Keller  
Interim Executive Director