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Indonesia: Parliament must pass domestic workers bill

Amnesty International is calling on Indonesia's House of People's Representatives to provide legal protection to women and girl domestic workers in accordance with international human rights law and standards.

An estimated 2.6 million women and girl domestic workers are currently not protected by legislation safeguarding workers' rights, in particular the 2003 Manpower Act. The Manpower Act itself discriminates against domestic workers - virtually all of whom are women and girls - and leaves them without workers' rights protection under law, such as reasonable limitation on working hours; remuneration adequate to secure a life with dignity; and provisions for rest and holidays. The result is that women and girl domestic workers live and work in abusive conditions.

Amnesty International urges the Indonesian parliament to acknowledge that, like every other human being, domestic workers have rights. Female domestic workers should be granted equal protection along with other workers. Such a move would help ensure they are no longer vulnerable to exploitation and abuses.

The enactment of the domestic workers legislation should be a priority for parliament. Amnesty International welcomes the inclusion by Indonesia's Legislation Council (Baleg) of the drafting and passing of a Domestic Workers Protection law in the 2010 legislative agenda. Parliamentary Commission IX, which is overseeing the bill, should ensure that domestic workers and their representatives can provide input into the formulation of the bill and that it remains consistent with international law.

Amnesty International documented abuses against domestic workers in a 2007 report entitled "*Exploitation and abuse: the plight of women domestic workers*". The report highlighted how domestic workers in Indonesia are frequently subjected to human rights abuses in their place of work. They experience economic exploitation, and physical, psychological and sexual violence on a regular basis. Some are even killed. They are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to the lack of legal protection of their rights; because their work takes place out of the public eye; and due to their low status in society

The Domestic Workers Advocacy Network (Jala-PRT), a national coalition working for the rights of domestic workers, has called for a nationwide strike by domestic workers on 1-3 May 2010 to push for the passing of the domestic worker law. They are also calling on the Indonesian government to support a new international instrument on the protection of domestic workers which is due to be discussed in June 2010 at the 99th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC).