

MEDIA



International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations

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Geneva, October 27, 2016

The hospitality industry's dirty secret: workers who clean the rooms suffer physical damage and abuse

International trade union body launches world-wide week of action

The hospitality industry rests on the backs of housekeepers – which guest would return to a hotel whose rooms are not clean? But their near-invisible status means that housekeepers' contribution to the global tourism industry is hugely undervalued. Through the IUF's 'Make my workplace safe' initiative, housekeepers around the world have been speaking out against abusive working conditions and organizing to demand that the global hotel industry recognize their dignity, their rights and their trade unions.

Housekeepers perform exhausting daily tasks for low pay and little or no employment security. The vast majority are women, often migrants. Their vulnerability exposes them to a multitude of health, safety and security risks: risks to their bodies from repetitive, heavy tasks, sexual harassment and abuse, exploitation by unscrupulous employers who often fiercely resist union organization, outsourcing schemes that shield employers from responsibility and further degrade working conditions and insufficient or a total lack of legal and social security. Few guests would imagine that housekeepers have one of the highest rates of work-related injuries and sickness of any occupational group.

This year, housekeepers in dozens of countries around the world will again be taking action through the IUF's 'Make my workplace safe' initiative for healthy, safe and dignified working conditions for housekeepers everywhere.

From October 31 to November 6, housekeepers will be calling on hotel employers to address the ubiquitous threat of sexual harassment. Unions will be meeting with members and employers to highlight the need for concrete measures to protect housekeepers' health and safety. And everywhere, unions will be highlighting the right of housekeepers to negotiate, through their trade unions, their conditions of employment – a fundamental human right.

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The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international trade union federation composed of 419 trade unions in 127 countries representing over 10 million workers. It is based in Geneva, Switzerland.