



Press statement:

01 May 2025.

Workers Day 2025: “Workers’ Rights Knows No Border”

Every year on May 1st, South Africa joins the international community in honouring the resilience and contributions of its working-class community. Observed nationally as Workers' Day and globally as International Workers' Day, or May Day. This significant public holiday commemorates the historic struggles of workers and trade unions in their pursuit of solidarity, fair labour practices, and decent working conditions.

This year marks the 134th anniversary of May Day, a visible testament to the enduring legacy of the global labour movement and the working class. The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) joins in commemorating this important day, recognising the vital contributions of all workers, including migrants, to the country's economy. Migrant labour continues to play a significant role in addressing labour shortages, boosting GDP per capita, and driving economic growth. As many have noted, immigration is deeply woven into South Africa's history, and the contributions of migrant workers to the nation's development are both visible and undeniable.

South Africa is one of the few middle-income countries where the impact of immigration has been extensively studied and documented. On this day, CoRMSA, an organisation dedicated to advocating for the human rights of refugees and migrants in South Africa, including migrant workers, reaffirms its commitment to promoting dignity, equality, and justice for all. This Day provides an important opportunity to highlight the need for respect and protection of the labour rights of migrants, and to acknowledge their significant contributions to the South African economy as well as to their countries of origin through remittances and skills development.

Since South Africa's inaugural democratic elections in 1994, Workers' Day has been officially recognised and commemorated as a national holiday. This milestone was accompanied by the enshrinement of labour rights in Section 23 of the South African Constitution, which states that *everyone* has the right to fair labour practices. These rights include the ability to form and join trade unions, participate in their activities and programmes, and strike. Importantly, the use of the term *everyone* reaffirms the inclusion and protection of all workers in South Africa, regardless of nationality status.

It is for the above reasons and affirmation that CoRMSA calls on government, employers, trade unions, civil society, and all South Africans to uphold and protect the rights of all workers, especially migrant workers who are too often excluded, exploited, or overlooked. Let us ensure that South Africa's labour laws and constitutional protections are applied equally to everyone, regardless of nationality or documentation status. Migrant workers have the right to fulfil their labour rights regardless without discrimination.

True progress lies in building a labour system rooted in fairness, inclusion, and shared dignity for all who contribute to our society and economy.

For more information contact CoRMSA at communications@cornsa.org.za