

January 7, 2010, 7pm - 8:30pm

2757 Kipling Avenue

Buses leave 252 Bloor St. West at 5:15 sharp.

RSVP by Noon, Jan 6, migrantworkervigil@gmail.com

Four construction workers with precarious immigration status fell to their deaths on Christmas Eve in one of the worst workplace disasters that Toronto has seen in decades. The swing stage scaffolding they were working on broke into two pieces, plummeting the four workers over 13 stories to the concrete below at 2757 Kipling Avenue. A fifth man is in critical condition and will need medical attention for the rest of his life.

We mourn the deaths of these workers. We are enraged that such injustice can take place. Migrant workers take care of children, feed communities, construct housing, clean offices, and take up many other occupations in almost all industries but are treated like second-class workers and denied even the most basic protections.

The workers who died were provided insufficient safety harnesses and forced to work on a site where a cease and desist order had been issued. Workers without full status work the most dangerous jobs in the country and are systemically prevented from being able to assert their rights. These workers died because Canada denied them full status.

Fifty years ago, five Italian construction workers including Pasquale Allegrezza, Giovanni Correglio, Giovanni Fusillo, and Alessandro and Guido Mantella, died while working in a dangerous tunnel near Yonge Street in Toronto, remembered as the Hoggs Hollow disaster. Knowing that workers without full status were facing flagrant workplace violations, negligent employers and little legislative protection from occupational hazards, workers across the city rose up, and carried out a series of actions and strikes in a fight to organize the building trades.

Today, fifty years later, racialized communities, immigrants, migrants and undocumented people continue to work in dangerous and sometimes murderous conditions. Not having full status means lax enforcement of health and safety legislation, absence of meaningful laws to protect workers, and negligent employers and recruiters who sacrifice health and safety of workers to gain further profit for themselves. This long-term negligence reveals the lack of social and political will in Canada to ensure justice and protection of all workers.

Workers without full status are often denied just compensation when they get injured or ill due to their labour. They are prevented from access to healthcare and translation services. They get deported because they are considered a burden on the health care system, and their injury is named a "breached employment contract." They are unable to access full care in countries they are deported to.. Like all injured workers, compensation by Workplace Safety and Insurance (WSIB) is inadequate.

Four men died on Christmas Eve, but every day, countless workers are killed or maimed on the job, while those responsible, employers, recruiters and government officials, do not face media or public scrutiny.

In 2008, 488 workers were reported killed because of their labour in Ontario alone. Many more deaths went unreported. Thousands more workers were injured, many of whom have to learn to live with their injuries permanently. How many will have to die or be injured before this government ensures that our communities are meaningfully protected?

Government officials, recruiters and employers need to be persecuted while those precariously employed need to be protected at work! While we commemorate and celebrate the lives of these workers, we also demand justice for the workers, their families and all migrant workers across this province. Broad and far reaching changes are needed.

Dilshod Mamurov, Aleksey Blumberg, Fayzulla, Vladimir Korostin, and all injured and killed workers demand this.

This is the first in a series of actions, please keep checking:

toronto.nooneisillegal.org and

www.justicia4migrantworkers.org for updates.