



## FACT SHEET

# WIDESPREAD VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS AT WORK

At home and abroad, employers violate workers' rights daily. Too often the deck is stacked against working people, as governments ignore their own laws and agreements to pander to the demands of businesses seeking to maximize their profits. Here are just a few examples of the widespread violations of workers' rights that occur every day.

### **THE RIGHT TO FORM A UNION AND TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY**

- In 1999, 140 union activists throughout the world lost their lives for exercising this internationally recognized right. In the same year, 3,000 union supporters were arrested, 1,500 were injured, beaten or tortured and 700 received death threats.
- One in four employers in the United States fires workers who are active in union campaigns. In all, an estimated 10,000 American workers are fired each year for exercising the right to join a union.
- Half of American employers threaten to shut down if employees join together in a union.

### **THE RIGHT TO REFUSE FORCED LABOR**

- Trafficking in human beings as economic and sexual slaves is a \$7 billion business and is the third most lucrative international criminal activity, topped only by drug and arms trafficking.
- An ILO commission found that slave labor is pervasive in Burma. Children, the elderly and women commonly are forced into slavery by the military or private enterprise and often tortured and even murdered. Other fact-finding groups have estimated that one in four of Burma's 44 million citizens is subject to forced labor, often in the construction of military installations, roads and infrastructure for the tourist industry.

### **THE RIGHT TO REJECT CHILD LABOR**

- At least 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 work worldwide. Nearly half of them work full-time and at least one-third perform dangerous work.

### **THE RIGHT TO WORK FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION**

- Worldwide, women earn an average of 75 percent of men's pay in nonagricultural work.
- In the United States the wage gap is even greater—women earn, on average, 72 cents for every dollar earned by a man.