

Migrants Empowerment Network in Taiwan(MENT)

No Justice in Cross-Border Employment, where is the Responsibility of the Government?

2023/12/10 "Government, Wake Up! Brokers, Get Out!" Migrant Workers Rally

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The Migrant Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT) organized the biennial Migrant Rally today. The main theme of this year's rally is: "No Justice in Cross-Border Employment, where is the Responsibility of the Government¹? The government is urged to take up the responsibility of cross-border employment and abolish the private broker system. For many years, the Ministry of Labor has been using "Direct Hiring Service Center(DHSC 直聘中心)" and "diversified employment options" as a cover for the fact that "the private broker system has been monopolizing the migrant employment market for 30 years". Therefore, this year, we chose the "Ministry of Labor's DHSC" as the starting point of the march, and with the slogan of "Government Wake Up, Brokers Get Out", we marched all the way to the Ministry of Labor as the final destination.

"The abolition of private broker system" has been MENT's firm demand for many years. In particular, the rampant "job purchase fee (買工費)" in the past few years have fully revealed the nature of private employment agents in their bottomless pursuit of profits, and highlighted the government's indulgence and profit-making of private employment agents. The government has let the system deteriorate to such an extent that both workers and employers have been victimized by the government's indulgence. In this year's march, we put special emphasis on "justice in cross-border employment is the responsibility of the government". Therefore, one week before the march, on 12/4, we organized a press conference on "Government Responsibility Overall Review", focusing on the "public services" that should be provided to migrant workers by government agents at all levels, to comprehensively review them one by one, and to do a "Government Responsibility Overall Review".

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¹ <https://www.facebook.com/MigrantWorkersRally>

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Date	Theme	Location
2023/9/4	Pay Money to the Brokers and Agents, it's Better to Give it to our Ghost Sisters and Brothers. ³	Ministry of Labor
2023/10/29	NO TREAT ONLY TRICK! ⁴	Taipei Main Station
2023/11/13	Agents Have Got Worse Tactics! Both Labor and Employers Suffer! Direct Hiring Has Become a Cover-Up! ⁵	Ministry of Labor
2023/12/04	No Justice in Cross-Border Employment, where is the Responsibility of the Government? ⁶	DHSC

At the same time, we also collected "ghost stories of agents" from migrant workers, exposing the evil behavior of agents through the migrant workers' own words! These videos⁷ have been gradually released on the Internet, and nearly 30 videos have been accumulated so far. The victimized migrant workers in these cases are not only defeated by their ability to "prove" their case, but also by the fact that even if the Ministry of Labor helps them get back the fraudulent or illegal fees, they still cannot escape the clutches of the agency's monopoly, and end up with no job opportunities, and are subjected to "government malfeasance!"

² See attachment.

³ <https://ppt.cc/fUJ6Ux>

⁴ <https://ppt.cc/fuzBHx>

⁵ <https://ppt.cc/fnY7xx>

⁶ <https://ppt.cc/fnY7xx>

⁷ <http://tiktok.com/@migrantworkersrally>

The Ministry of Labor has been letting private agents monopolize the job market for 30 years.

Since 1992, when the government enacted the Employment Service Act to institutionalize the importation of migrant workers, it has established a system whereby "private employment service agents" (also known as "brokers") import and manage migrant workers. However, the profit-oriented nature of the agency's operation has led it to straddle the gap between employers and employees, and to capitalize on the migrant workers' eagerness to improve their livelihoods.

Since the Ministry of Labor opened its doors to migrants 30 years ago, there are now more than 700,000 migrant workers in Taiwan, and more than a thousand local intermediary firms, many of which even operate across the border in the migrant's home country, earning both intermediary fees from the home country and domestic intermediary fees. The result of the Taiwan government's 30 years of indulgence in the "privatization of cross-border job matchmaking for disadvantaged workers" has not only resulted in the "monopolization of the entire migrant job market by private agents," but has also used the blood and sweat of migrant workers to benefit private agents.

We have to point out here that the Government's allowing the private sector to monopolize the job market for migrant workers is not only a matter of migrant workers' rights and interests, but also an attempt by the Government to shirk its responsibility and dereliction of duty! If our society accepts that the government does nothing to protect the rights and interests of migrant workers, that migrant workers are exploited by the so-called "market mechanism", and that migrant workers are manipulated by private agents, then our government will time and again evade its responsibility and shift the blame to others! When the government doesn't need to expend its efforts to provide "public services" and actively protect the rights of the people, it will step back from its position, and the price will be paid by the entire Taiwanese society. In other words, the protection of the rights of the 700,000 migrant workers in Taiwan is like a litmus test of the government's commitment and accountability - every drop of blood and sweat of migrant workers exploited by private agents is a question to the Taiwanese government!

Private Agents Exploit Workers and Make More Money by Different Means

Before each migrant "comes to Taiwan", he/she has to pay a huge amount of money ranging from 80,000 to 200,000 dollars to the agency in his/her home country, and a large portion of this money goes into the pockets of the Taiwanese agency. In addition, the Taiwanese agency can "legally" charge the migrant a "service fee" every month while the migrant is in Taiwan. The accumulated "service fee" for a three-year contract can be as high as \$60,000, but the agents may not have provided any real "service" during this period.

After the repeal of the "Three-Year One-Day Leave Clause" in 2016, the agents lost the benefit of "collecting agency fees every three years," and in order to regain the lost ground, they began to collect the "job purchase fee" that the Ministry of Labor has already explicitly prohibited," which ranges from \$20,000 to \$90,000 for a single job, with no trace of the process, making it difficult to collect evidence. Migrants can choose not to pay, but the price is that they will not be able to find a job, and eventually they can only run away or be repatriated to their home countries.

Especially after the end of the epidemic in October last year, the border was lifted and reopened to migrant workers. In order to make up for the loss of agency fees during the epidemic, the agents have been using new and more aggressive methods to make money from migrants, including job purchase fees, processing fees, interview fees, conversion fees, deposits, final payments, and a variety of other illegal fees. Nowadays, the job market for migrant workers is flooded with illegal fees, especially for manufacturing migrant workers, to the extent that "every job requires a work purchase fee".

Migrant workers' situation worsening as the government continues to lose its ability and agents continue to monopolize

As long as the Government continues to choose not to take up the responsibility of providing employment services for migrant workers, private agents will be able to monopolize the job market for migrant workers forever. When the lifeline of migrants' employment opportunities is tightly pinched by them, the agents will always have a firm grip on the migrants. This kind of control structure will not only

remain at the stage of "illegal fees", but will also make the overall labor situation of migrant workers continue to deteriorate.

Since 2016, the Ministry of Labor has only responded vaguely to the illegal charging of work purchase fees by agents, saying that "it will be controlled" and "fines will be imposed if there is evidence", but in reality, it has put the burden of proof, which is known to all, on migrant workers, as "where the burden of proof lies, and where it will be lost". Today, seven years later, the illegal fees have gradually diversified from the simple work purchase fee to the piecework fee, interview fee, conversion fee, deposit, and final payment, and the fee items have become more and more detailed; the whole fee system has expanded to include introducers, messengers, drivers, and head accounts, and the division of labor has become more and more dense; an act that was strictly prohibited by the Ministry of Labor has almost become **"illegal fees have become a normal state of affairs in the migrant employment market"** today. The loss of credibility of the Ministry of Labor is not a big deal, but it also affects the control of agents over migrant workers, which has become even more unscrupulous and lawless.

When migrant workers face all kinds of unreasonable treatment by employers and agents, even if migrant workers have full evidence that employers and agents have violated the law, do they want to file a complaint? Should they fight for their rights? Many migrant workers are in a dilemma. Whether they are voluntarily changing jobs or being forced out of work, they have to pay for a new job, and if they have the money to pay for a new job, they may not be able to get a job because all the job opportunities are in the hands of the agents. If they are blacklisted by the agents because of a complaint, they will be "blocked" from finding a job in the future. **When migrant workers are forced to tolerate the control of agents, and when migrant workers are more and more afraid to fight for their rights, the agents are more and more emboldened, and there are more and more strange and bizarre "agents ghost stories"**. 9/4 and 11/13 press conferences, migrant workers and employers came forward to accuse the agents - both employees and employers were victimized, which is a sign of the deterioration of the overall structure.

The Government has been pretending to be asleep for 30 years and has turned a blind eye to the plight of migrant workers

After the press conference on 9/4 and the Taipei Station demonstration on 10/29, the Ministry of Labor sent two separate official documents, which were brief and concise, and almost copied the content of the previous posting, and in short: "If there is evidence, then issue a penalty. Obviously, the Ministry of Labor only wants to deal with "case problems" and is not willing to deal with "system problems", or even **the Ministry of Labor is even deliberately distorting the general plight of migrant workers into "case problems"**.

What we have to question is whether the Ministry of Labor is so naive as to think that the agents are so stupid as to leave evidence of illegal fees for the migrant workers to report. Even if penalties can be imposed in a few cases, does it mean that the problem of monopolization of job opportunities by private agents does not need to be dealt with? When agents have the audacity to tell migrants⁸, "You want to be hired directly? I won't accept it! "I will not return your documents to you. Even if you find an employer, it is useless. I can even lie and report that you have fled." "I can also make the employer pay a large sum of money for breach of contract. If you choose to file a complaint, I will deport you! The private agency system has become so arrogant and deteriorated to such an extent that the Ministry of Labor's response is only a passive "fine if there is evidence", the Ministry of Labor's dereliction of duty and shirking of responsibility are clearly revealed!

What is the situation of migrant workers in Taiwan today? While officials from the Ministry of Labor are sitting in their offices, blowing the air-conditioning, and typing out these two documents⁹, how many migrant workers have borrowed money from all over the world, or have even been swindled by unscrupulous agents, in order to raise money to pay for the purchase of their jobs? How many migrant workers have been forced to run away or go back to their home countries to get into debt because they could not pay for their jobs? How many migrant workers dare not file a complaint because their employers are unable to pay the purchase price, so they have to continue to put up with unreasonable or even illegal treatments in the workplace? The root cause of these problems lies in the fact that **the government has failed to take up its responsibility for the past 30 years, and has never provided**

⁸ <https://pse.is/5ecj2r>

⁹ <https://pse.is/5dxs64>

public, adequate, and substantial "cross-border" and "in Taiwan" job-seeking services, and has allowed the private agency system to monopolize the job market for migrant workers!

It was not enough for the Ministry of Labor to issue the two documents distorting the issue, it continued to issue a press release on 10/30¹⁰: "The Ministry of Labor provides direct hiring and employer switching services, and proactively protects the rights and interests of migrant workers who have switched to other employers. Employers, agents and migrant workers who have gone to the DHSC for transfer business all said that the overall satisfaction rate is over 95%". 10/31¹¹ issued a second press release: "The Ministry of Labor announced the results of the evaluation of manpower agents, and of the 1,231 manpower agents evaluated, 795 (64.58%) received Grade A (90 points or above), and 372 (30.22%) received Grade B (70 points to less than 90 points). Grade B (70 to less than 90 points) totaled 372, accounting for 30.22%; Grade C (less than 70 points) totaled 64, accounting for 5.2%, and 64% of the manpower intermediary agents achieved Grade A".

Migrant Workers' Rally 2023: "Government Wake Up, Agents Get Out"

Since 2003, MENT has put forward the demands of "abolishing private agents" and "mandatory government-to-government (G to G) direct hiring"; 2019/3/3 MENT organized a forum¹² on "Abolish/Not Abolish the Migrant Workers' Agent System", inviting hundreds of migrant workers, academics, NGO workers, and agent practitioners from Thailand, India, Vietnam, and the Philippines to have a dialogue on the same topics; 2019/5/1¹³ Organized rally at the Ministry of Labor. Hundreds of A3 pieces of cloth with each migrant's complaint against the agents were put together to form a huge "Baina Quilt" - the oppression of migrants by the private agent system is no longer a problem that happens to a handful of people, but a collective memory of the 700,000 migrants in Taiwan; 2019/12/8¹⁴ Organized the biennial Migrant Workers' March. On December 8, 2019, a biannual migrant workers' march was organized, gathering at the Kuomintang Party headquarters and

¹⁰ <https://pse.is/5cpua7>

¹¹ <https://pse.is/5c2s2d>

¹² <https://pse.is/5ed5tr>

¹³ <https://pse.is/5e6unq>

¹⁴

passing by the Democratic Progressive Party headquarters in the hope that the candidates of the two major parties running for the presidency would see and understand the blood and tears that the migrant workers have to bear, and in the end, nearly 1,000 migrant workers walked to the end point of the Ministry of Labor, shouting, "Abolish the system of private intermediaries, and ask for government-to-government hiring directly.

After the "Abolish or not to abolish the Migrant Employment Agency System" forum in 2019, various parties have put forward their views against the abolition of the agency system, such as: "The agency system can be improved and does not need to be abolished", "If the information is transparent, migrant workers can identify good agencies, and the bad ones will be eliminated by the market naturally", "Migrant employment agencies are like housing and travel agencies, which is a market mechanism", and "NGOs can set up a non-profit employment service organization", "The government has diversified employment options for people to choose freely.

However, after five years, the agent system has not improved; bad agencies have not been eliminated by the market, but have grown stronger; the market mechanism has made it even more difficult for good agencies to survive; the diversified employment channels are only a cover for the Ministry of Labor; and the non-profit-making agencies have become an excuse for the government to shirk its responsibility. **Five years have passed, but not only the situation of migrant workers has not changed, on the contrary, what we see is: the government's selective malfunctioning, agencies still monopolize the market, illegal fees have become more and more serious, ghost stories of agencies are rampant, and the situation of migrant workers is getting worse and worse.**

At the end of 2023, it is time for the biennial migrant workers' march. MENT and all the migrant workers have been traveling along the long road of abolishing private agents, but we still do not see any other feasible way out. Therefore, we still insist on our demand in the past few years: **"Abolish the private agent system and hire directly from the government"**.

The transnational labor of migrant workers not only improves the economy of their home countries, but also supports countless industries in Taiwan, making Taiwan's

society work. Therefore, we advocate that **the justice of transnational employment is absolutely the responsibility of the government!** The so-called "government responsibility" of course includes direct government-to-government hiring, hiring of full-time bilingual staff at service stations, provision of adequate and substantial cross-border and in-Taiwan job-seeking services by the government, streamlining of the documentation process, and multi-language information in the form of letters and regulations, etc. It also includes the ways in which government agencies at various levels, such as the Bureau of Labor Insurance, the Bureau of Health Care, and the Office of the Supervisors, can make it possible for an immigrant worker who has crossed the sea and come to Taiwan to get information conveniently and without the need to rely on an agent, to receive friendly services, and to complete the work alone.

How to enable a migrant who comes to Taiwan from across the Taiwan Strait to get information conveniently, receive friendly services, and complete all kinds of work and life procedures independently without relying on an agent; and at the same time, it is absolutely necessary to include the "abolition of the system of private agents". **"Abolishing private agent" and "strengthening public services" are both "governmental responsibilities". Only when both are implemented can every migrant worker who comes to work in Taiwan truly become a "human being", and the justice of transnational employment can be realized one day!**

Government, Wake Up! Brokers, Get Out!

Organizers:

台灣移工聯盟 Migrant Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT)

天主教會新竹教區移民及移工服務中心 Hsinchu Diocese Migrants and Immigrants Service Center (HMISC)

天主教明愛會 (Caritas)

台灣基督長老教會勞工關懷中心 THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TAIWAN LABOUR CONCERN CENTER (Lcc)

海星國際服務中心 STELLA MARIS INTERNATIONAL SERVICE CENTER (Stella)

天主教希望職工中心 HOPE WORKER `CENTER (HWC)

桃園市家庭看護工職業工會 Domestic Caretaker Union (DCU)

台灣國際勞工協會 Taiwan International Workers Association (TIWA)

Migrant Workers' Rally Solidarity Units: (Continuing to increase)

國際家務工工會聯合會 International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)

日本外国人労働サポートセンター(POSSE)

韓國金屬工會城西工業園區地區分會 금속노조 성서공단지역지회 부지회장(STU)

在台印尼勞工組織 Ikatan Pekerja Indonesia di Taiwan (IPIT)

印尼勞工團結組織 Gabungan Tenagakerja bersolidaritas (GANAS Community)

菲律賓團結組織 Kapulungan ng Samahang Pilipino (KASAPI)

台灣人權促進會 Taiwan Association for Human Rights

越在嘉文化棧 Khuôn viên văn hoá Việt Nam

婦女新知基金會 Awakening Foundation

地球公民基金會 Citizen of the Earth, Taiwan

新事社會服務中心 Rerum Novarum Center

民間司法改革基金會 Judicial Reform Foundation

勞動人權協會 Labor Rights Association

人權公約施行監督聯盟 Covenants Watch

桃園市群眾服務協會 Serve the People Association

新二代留聲機：移民青年倡議陣線 The Newbies Alliance

境外生權益小組 Taiwan International Student Movement (TISM)

半路咖啡 Halfway Cafe

社團法人台灣綠色公民行動聯盟協會 Green Citizens' Action Alliance, Taiwan

性別人權協會 Gender/Sexuality Rights Association, Taiwan

南洋姐妹會 TransAsia Sisters Association, Taiwan

TASA 台灣勞動歷史與文化學會 Taiwan Labor History and Culture Society

同志諮詢熱線 Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association

手天使 Hand Angel Organization

中央大學性/別研究室 center for the study of sexualities

中正大學社福系 Department of Social Welfare National CHUNG CHENG UNIVERSITY

台灣社會研究季刊 Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies

台灣社會研究學會 Association for Taiwan Social Studies

RUMAHKU

印刻部 Print & Carve Dept.

平行政府 Parallel Government

秋鬥 Autumn Struggle

竹東閒人工作室 Zhudong Free Man

國道收費員自救會 Highway toll collectors mutual aid association

桃園市產業總工會 Taoyuan Confederation of Trade Unions (TYCTU)

消防員工作權益促進會 National Association for Firefighters' Rights (NAFR)

桃園市空服員職業工會 Taoyuan Flight Attendants Union

新高市產業總工會 New Kaohsiung City Federation of Trade Unions

華碩電腦股份有限公司關係企業工會 Asus Group Labor Union (AGLU)

亞旭電腦股份有限公司企業工會 Askey Labor Union (ALU)

台灣非營利組織產業工會 (NGO工會) Taiwan Not-for-profit Organization Industrial Union

臺北市紀錄片從業人員職業工會 Taipei Documentary Filmmakers' Union

台灣高等教育產業工會 Taiwan Higher Education Union

新海瓦斯工會 Shin Hai Gas Union

台灣工作傷害受害人協會 Taiwan Association for Victims of Occupational Injuries (TAVOI)

臺北市立聯合醫院企業工會 Taipei City Hospital Union

台灣電子電機資訊產業工會 Taiwan Industrial Union of Electronics, Electric and Information Technology

可以自由巴 (For Peace Taiwan)

新活力自立生活協會 New Vitality Independent Living Association

Attachment

Where is the Government's responsibility when there is a shortage of public services?

Government Responsibility Overall Review		
Organizations	Business related to migrant labors	Results
Taiwan Jobs (就業站)	Procedures for changing employers	1. Inconsistency in local operations 2. Unfriendly language and non-transparent information 3. No substantive matchmaking functions

DHSC	Assisting in the direct hire process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The DHSC only receives documents on behalf of workers, and does not integrate the processes required for direct hiring (including procedures of the Immigration Department, health care, and notification), which creates barriers to direct hiring. 2. There is only one such center in the whole of Taiwan, which is not convenient for the public. 3. The Ministry of Labor claimed that laborers can download the relevant documents for hiring on their own, and that the technological thresholds are too high (e.g., card readers, computers, and printers are required).
Immigration Agency (移民署)	Application for Residence Permit and Re-entry Permit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All regulations and forms are not multilingual and the information is not transparent 2. No official bilingual staff 3. No telephone bilingual counseling 4. No cross-district service 5. Online application service excludes blue-collar migrants.
National Health Insurance Administration (健保署)	Health insurance enrollment and disenrollment, card issuing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The forms, telephone numbers, website, and counters of the Health Insurance Bureau are not multilingual. 2. Employers canceled the health insurance without informing the migrant workers. 3. Unemployed migrant workers did not take the initiative to transfer to the sixth type of additional insurance.
Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (疾管署)	Regular checkups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The lack of multilingual services in the hospitals and procedures of medical check-ups makes it difficult for migrants to go through the process on their own. 2. Regular medical check-ups are not proactively notified to migrants, which may lead to significant damage to migrants' rights (repatriation).

National Taxation Bureau of Taipei (國稅局)	Filing tax and claiming tax refunds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The information of local bureaux, tax information and tax return filing process are not concise and multilingual. 2. All forms, telephone, counter and online filing system are not multilingual. 3. Migrant workers' tax refunds can't be directly remitted to their home countries' accounts, which makes migrant workers' tax refunds often encroached on by intermediaries.
Bureau of Labor Insurance (勞保局)	Labor insurance enrollment and withdrawal, application for various benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Labor Insurance and Disaster Insurance benefit information and forms are not multilingual, so migrant workers can only rely on agents or scalpers, which is easy to jeopardize their rights and interests. 2. The Labor Insurance Bureau does not have multi-language consultation services on the phone, over the counter, or online.

From the above "**Overall Government Accountability Checklist**", we can clearly see the following problems: First, the related offices "**do not have any bilingual staff**". The forms, online systems, counter counseling, and telephone counseling are all "not in the native language of the migrant workers. The business of these government agencies is closely related to migrant workers, which may result in migrant workers losing their rights and benefits, such as tax rebates, labor insurance, and disaster insurance; or in serious cases, migrant workers may be fined, or even forcibly repatriated from the country, such as residence permits, and regular medical checkups. With such a significant impact on the rights of migrant workers, how come there is not even a basic "**mother tongue**" for migrant workers? Is the right of migrant workers to "know" completely disregarded? In the absence of adequate information and services provided by the government, how can migrants complete these procedures on their own without relying on agents?"

Second, looking back at the history of the DHSC, the Ministry of Labor set it up in 2008 after advocacy by migrant worker groups. In the 15 years of the direct hiring system, the highest ratio was only 11.9% in the year, and it dropped to 1.13% in 2018. The survey report of the Control Yuan in 2019¹⁵ pointed out that "the

¹⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/vwftx56>

proportion of foreign workers introduced through direct hiring has never exceeded 10% because the procedural documents are still not simple enough". Even the Direct Hire Transnational Worker Management Service Network (直接聘僱跨國選工管理服務網), established in 2012, has only brought in two home care workers in the same year, and zero since then. The DHSC has also shrunk from dozens of locations to just one in Taipei.

The Ministry of Labor, in response to questions about the monopolization of the job market by the private agency system, has always used the phrase "there are DHSC" and "there are diversified employment options" as its official response, which has remained unchanged for many years. In fact, the current "DHSC" is completely unable to assist migrant workers in "any procedures" from their home countries to Taiwan, because the current "Direct Hiring Center" can only assist in "domestic direct hiring", and cannot solve the problem of monopolization by private intermediaries. Even in the case of "domestic hiring," the DHSC has not integrated the documents and procedures required for direct hiring, resulting in employers still having to go through the Immigration Department, the Health Insurance Bureau, and the Bureau of Labor Affairs on their own to complete the notification process.

While private agents allow employers to bring in migrant workers at a low cost, the cumbersome process of the DHSC makes employers less willing to use direct hire. Although DHSC are one of the few public agencies that provide bilingual services for forms, counters, and telephone consultations, and employ bilingual staff, the existence and monopoly of the private agent system has ultimately led to the function of DHSC being reduced to "receiving documents from the Department of Labor," and has become a cover for the Department of Labor's **"fake pluralism and true shirking of responsibilities"**.

Third, for the past 30 years, public employment service stations throughout Taiwan, which have been responsible for migrant workers seeking employment and changing employers, have organized "migrant employment matchmaking sessions" every Thursday. The so-called matchmaking, however, involves a group of migrant workers randomly selected by computer every week who are mandatorily required to show up at the meeting to "sign in", and if they fail to do so, they are deemed to have given up their right to change jobs, and the migrant workers will be forcibly

repatriated. Regardless of the unreasonableness of the requirement, when these chosen migrants asked the staff at the service station, "Where is the employer who is going to interview me today? The worker replied, "There may not be an employer here, you have to find an agent on your own". Moreover, the only language that migrant workers can hear is "simple English" because there are no bilingual workers in all the service centers in Taiwan, so they cannot answer migrant workers' questions about finding jobs or introduce them to jobs. Over the past 30 years, **"service has become control" and has not performed any real "matchmaking function" at all.**

In February and September of this year, the Ministry of Labor set up the "Employer Employment Migrant Transfer Service Centers (雇主聘僱移工轉換服務中心)" in Changhua and Taoyuan respectively. In Taoyuan, the location is the same as the original "Taoyuan Employment Service Station", the service is the same as the weekly "computer-selected" matchmaking meetings, the same requirement for migrant workers to show up and sign in, and even the point that "the matchmaking site is full of migrant workers, with no employers at all" is the same. It seems that the Ministry of Labor intends to use this center to replace the function of the original public service centers.

Regardless of its name, why is it not a "Migrant-to-Employer Service Center"? The only change that should be encouraged is that "we finally have bilingual staff". However, after 30 years of waiting for migrants to be able to communicate in their mother tongue at the public service centers, they are still waiting for job opportunities at the matchmaking meetings every Thursday, even after filling out the resumes provided by the bilingual staff, because even the staff at the service centers know that migrants who want to look for a job will have to go to an agent, because they have no jobs that they can refer to migrants for matchmaking. Even the workers know that the agents have violated the law by charging "job purchase fees", but there is nothing they can do about it. From this, we can see how serious the monopolization of the migrant job market by private intermediaries is.

At present, this newly established **"Employer Employment Migrant Transfer Service Centers"** still does not have the function of actual matchmaking, which is far

different from the Ministry of Labor's press release¹⁶ claiming that "the center accelerates the transfer of employers or jobs through three major functions: "matchmaking", "information provision", and "information exchange", and that the center will provide services such as "one case to the end", "employment information", "in-depth consultation", and "matchmaking appointments".

We call on the Ministry of Labor to seriously face the problem of monopolization by private agents, and not to let it become another "DHSC that can only receive documents from the Department of Labor", because no amount of shibboleths can cover the truth that the Ministry of Labor has shirked its responsibility for 30 years, and has allowed private agents to monopolize the migrant employment market.

[Speech by Indonesian Labor Representative]

I am a factory worker from Indonesia and I have been working in Taiwan for more than 5 years. Today I would like to share with you my experience as a victim who was persecuted in an inhumane way by the bad agency system. In February 2021, I had an occupational accident at work, and my leg was so badly injured that it required several operations and long rehabilitation. However, during my 8 months of treatment, the agency did not help me to get the salary compensation and related rights that I should have gotten.

On April 1, 2021, before I went to the hospital for my second surgery, the agent forced me to sign a letter of repatriation, asking me to agree that from now on, I would be responsible for my own medical treatment, accommodation and food; the agent threatened me that if I did not sign the letter, he would not help me to go to the hospital for surgery, and I still refused to sign the letter; the agent also threatened to deport me back to Indonesia immediately, and I was under great pressure.

I was under a lot of pressure, and my leg was in urgent need of another operation, so I had no choice but to sign the affidavit. I had no choice but to sign the autopsy form. After I had signed the autopsy form, the agent sent me to the hospital for surgery.

¹⁶ <https://pse.is/5cpua7>

After I was discharged from the hospital, the agency immediately sent me to a nursing center and told me that I had to pay for my own expenses at the nursing center because I had no money on me. Therefore, as soon as I was able to move my body slowly, I decided to go back to the company's dormitory to live. The agency left me in the company's dormitory with limited mobility and did not care about me.

I remember it took me almost an hour just to move from my bed to the washroom. Because of my limited mobility, I couldn't go out to buy three meals, nor could I cook for myself. I had to rely on my roommate's kindness and support, and if he had extra food to cook, he was willing to share it with me so that I could have food to eat, which made me feel very miserable and helpless.

I don't know what the point of the agency system is. The agency doesn't care about my employment case, and it doesn't care about my life and death. The agency only treats me as an object that can be thrown away when it is used up. I was lucky to find HMISC to help me with the help of a friend.

When I arrived at HMISC, I realized that I was not the only victim of persecution by the agency. Many migrant workers were treated badly by the agency, just like me: they were forced to do extra work, work overtime every day without any rest, and if they got sick and couldn't work, they would be deported back to Indonesia, and they were forced to terminate their contracts and were required to pay liquidated damages; they were subjected to sexual harassment at work, treated violently, and in the case of occupational accidents, it was completely useless to seek help from the agency.

In case of sexual harassment at work, violent treatment, or workplace accidents, it is useless to ask for help from an agent, who will either tell them to be patient or to go back to Indonesia; or if they are lucky enough to have the opportunity to change employers, they will be forced by the agent to pay for the purchase of a job.

The agents are just a bunch of vampires who keep on collecting money from us without providing any service at all. Because of this vampire system, many migrant workers have no choice but to run away when they encounter problems and lose all their legal rights in Taiwan.

I hope that the Taiwanese Government will not continue to turn a blind eye to all these ghost stories of agents, but will bravely shoulder its responsibilities and do the work that the Government is supposed to do. For example, the DHSC is supposed to be a place to assist migrant workers in finding jobs, but we have never received any assistance from this place. The only service provided by the it to us is to inform us that we have to sign in every week, and if we do not sign in on time, we will be repatriated.

All job opportunities in Taiwan are in the hands of agents. If we want to find a job, we can only look at the face of the agents and pay high fees for buying jobs. I sincerely hope that the Taiwanese government will take up the responsibility to abolish the private agency system that only sucks our hard-earned money, so that we can be treated with the dignity we deserve as human beings. Government Wake Up! Brokers Get out!

[Speech by Filipino Labor Representative]

Good Day! I'm Carmela from Domestic Caretakers Union.

Where is DEMOCRACY in Taiwan? Taiwan would like the continued support from western and advanced countries because of the political power they want! They want the power and support of these powerful countries by showing HIGH RESPECT OF DEMOCRACY and HIGH RESPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS! But, migrant worker's rights are Human Rights! Taiwan's brokerage system made migrant workers vulnerable and the majority of Taiwan Manpower Agencies, violates our basic rights by exploiting us! Earning from us but treated us like a SCUM OF THE EARTH!! Taiwan democracy is far from perfect but the government should take actions to implement LABOR PROTECTION for all migrant workers!

What are Direct Hiring Service Centers for? If this is just an existing name only? Just to show people that the government is doing something for the betterment of all migrant workers!? or for the betterment of all Taiwan Manpower Agencies??!!

Migrant Workers are no political power because we cannot vote, that is why our labor issues and human rights having been neglected intentionally by the Taiwanese Legislators and Politicians for so long, our issues to abolish brokerage system should be included in all government political agendas for democratic practices, because Taiwan economy is more and more dependent on foreign labors.

We are human, but brokers treated us like disposable commodities. We need a day off, visit our homeland, complain about workload and overwork, seek half-pay sick leave when ill, or even ask for a decent bed, they often have to negotiate with our employers through brokers. However, until now migrant workers fate remains in the hands of brokers who sometimes treat us like damaged goods, leading to either dismissal or deportation.

Abolish brokerage system! We want g to g! because most brokers are like evil blood suckers. They are just after our hard-earned money, they earn from us who worked hard but we never get any concern on our welfare when we encounter problems with our employer. Brokers mostly kept our important documents: especially our employment and transferring permit, with these documents we can have our freedom to transfer. But it's too hard to have it because brokers are not allowing workers to have it. Workers are the one paying the service of brokers but workers are still being controlled by brokers.

Please hear us: Workers are human, not commodities. Abolish brokerage system!
Brokers get out! Government Wake up!

[Speech by Vietnam Labor Representative]

We are foreign migrant workers coming to Taiwan to work, and we all have a common request: "Abolish intermediaries and hire directly from government to government" because in order to come to Taiwan to work, we have to pay a huge foreign intermediary fee of US\$6,000 to US\$7,200 (about NT\$180,000 to NT\$210,000) to the intermediary company, and the government only charges US\$4,000 to US\$4,500. So why do the agencies charge so much money? Because of the existence of the private agency system, we have to spend such a large amount of

money. When recruiting, foreign agencies advertise good companies in Taiwan. etc., etc., etc., etc. etc...

But when we arrived in Taiwan, it was all a scam, the agencies lied to us. The agency charged us NT\$1,500 to NT\$1,800 per month for their services, but the agency did not come to see us or care for us even once in the whole year. When we were sick, we asked an agent to come and help us, but the agent did not come, so we had to go to the doctor by ourselves. When we changed employers, we had to pay a large sum of NT\$30,000 to NT\$80,000 to the agency to buy a job.

Therefore, we demand that private agents be abolished and that the two governments take responsibility for ensuring that we migrant workers do not remain in debt and that we are able to live a comfortable life. Private agencies are oppressing migrant workers. There is so much more to say about the bad intermediaries, I can't say it all, but I'm going to stop here because I don't have enough time. Please join me in chanting the slogan: "Abolish agents, abolish agents, abolish agents". Thank you all!