Locked Up in Malaysia’s Lockdown

**21 CSOs call to investigate mistreatment of migrants
and sought protection of Raihan Kabir in Malaysia**

Dhaka: 11 July 2020

The Bangladeshi civil society organizations working on migration and development express deep concern over Malaysian government’s harassment of journalists and migrant workers following the broadcast of an investigative documentary published by the international media Al Jazeera about the mistreatment of migrant workers in Malaysia. Summoning the journalists and the reported manhunt for the Bangladeshi migrant worker interviewed by Al Jazeera for the documentary, is a blatant attempt to muzzle the freedom of press and human rights abuse by the Malaysian authorities.

We call on the Malaysian government not to harass the journalists and expatriates, and instead investigate and take action against those who have been treating the migrants unjustly. We also request the Bangladesh High Commission of Malaysia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) in Dhaka and international organizations to take necessary actions in this regard.

The investigative documentary titled ‘Locked Up in Malaysia’s Lockdown’ was broadcasted on July 3 2020 as part of Al Jazeera’s “101 East” documentary strand. It shows that the Malaysian government is discriminating against migrants during the epidemic through the Movement Control Order (MCO). The evidence shown in the documentary on Malaysia's crackdown on immigrants is reprehensible and deeply troubling. There have been similar allegations in the past against Malaysian law enforcement. The Malaysian government should investigate these incidents.

We note with deep concern that six media workers of Al Jazeera were called to Malaysia Central Police Headquarters on July 10 for questioning. They are also being investigated for alleged defamation and sedition by Malaysian police. We stand by various international journalists' organizations who have also condemned this incident.

The Immigration Department of Malaysia has issued a search warrant for the young Bangladeshi migrant Raihan Kabir (25) who were interviewed in the documentary. The local administration has issued a summon to seek his personal information and issued a notice in the newspaper which is a matter of deep concern. We have also noticed that the police and immigration department has already issued statements to the media seeking information about the Bangladeshi migrant for giving the interview.

We want to make it clear that giving an interview to the media is not a crime and Raihan Kabir did not commit any crime. He is staying there legally, although the Malaysian authority has launched a manhunt as if he is a big criminal. We have learned that several Bangladeshis are also being harassed during this unethical manhunt. We are concerned about the safety of this young Bangladeshi migrant.

We are grateful to the human rights organizations in Malaysia who have stood by the expatriates and urged the lawyers, journalists and human rights activists there to keep an eye on the issue. We also call on the Malaysian government and law enforcement agencies to investigate the harassment of the expatriate workers in Malaysia which has been shown in the Report. In this regard, we request the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Bangladesh High Commission of Malaysia to take appropriate measures to protect the rights and dignity of expatriates including the security Raihan Kabir and other Bangladeshi migrants.

This joint statement is being made by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), WARBE Development Foundation, Brac, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP), Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendro (BNSK), IID Migration Policy Unit, Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA), BASUG, INAFI Bangladesh, Karmojibi Nari, Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), Devcom, IMA, Awaj Foundation, Rights Jessore, BILS, Bastob, Film for Peace Foundation, and Migration News.

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