

UNI COMMERCE DECLARATION ON VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

WE CALL ON GOVERNMENTS AND RETAILERS TO ACT TO PROTECT RETAIL WORKERS: “STOP VIOLENCE, RESPECT WORKERS”

For years violence, abuse and harassment has plagued the commerce sector. Third party violence from customers is commonplace—ranging from rude comments and disrespectful gestures to verbal assault, violent threats, physical attacks, and sexual harassment.

However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation has become even worse. While commerce workers around the globe continue to keep people supplied with their vital needs, even during the strictest of lockdowns, they have been deliberately coughed on, spat at, verbally attacked, emotionally harmed, racially abused, threatened, struck by goods, physically attacked, stabbed, and even shot to death by customers. Often because they simply asked customers to comply with security measures or they are bearing the blame if the store has run out of items.

Gender-based violence targeting female retail workers has also increased during the pandemic. Lack of proper and safe transportation deprived many women commerce workers of the right to a safe commute to and from work, leading to women being attacked. Some managers even took advantage of precarious employment and fewer available working hours to offer women more shifts in exchange for sexual relations.

Today, as affiliates of UNI Global Union representing millions of retail workers around the world, we demand an end to violence and harassment in the commerce sector.

We join UNI Global Union in its call to the International Labour Organization (ILO) to designate health and safety as a fundamental right. Violence and harassment is a health and safety issue and all workers deserve to be protected.



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We call on our governments to:

- Ratify ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 on violence and harassment.
- Consult with trade unions to introduce and implement effective legislation, penalties and sanctions (including creating a new criminal offence if necessary) to stop commerce workers being harassed, attacked, or abused.
- Recognize the impact of domestic violence on all workers -including those in commerce- in their jobs and take necessary actions to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment.

And we call on all retailers, wholesalers, and e-commerce companies to take immediate action to address increasing violence and harassment during the pandemic by:

- Consulting and negotiating with UNI Commerce and its affiliates across the globe on the policies and measures to protect commerce workers; and putting them into practice.
- Incorporating the prevention of violence and harassment into their vigilance plans and taking measures to combat violence and harassment throughout their whole operations.
- Replacing the “customer is always right” policy - that encourages customers to engage in abusive and violent behaviour and discourages workers from reporting it - with a “zero-tolerance” policy against violence and harassment making it clear that this kind of behaviour will not be tolerated and will be sanctioned.
- Ensuring a safe commute for workers to and from work.
- Providing specific training for workers on handling abusive customer situations and equip them with the necessary tools, procedures, and supportive measures so they can put their training into practice.
- Addressing gender-based violence with specific safety measures for female commerce workers.
- Taking all necessary precautions to avoid different forms of violence which can manifest itself through discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, colour, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, among others.

With this declaration we highlight our commitment to stand united against all forms of violence and harassment in the commerce sector and to fight together until we eliminate all forms of violence and harassment.

There is No Store for Violence and Harassment in Commerce!