

Human Rights Council - 45th Session

Item 6: Adoption of Universal Periodic Review - Kyrgyzstan

September 28, 2020

Thank you, President

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of Tais Plus NGO and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

While we welcome the outcome of Kyrgyzstan's UPR and the many recommendations accepted which call on the government to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of persons facing multiple forms of discrimination, we are gravely concerned by the inattention to the rights of sex workers.

Even in the absence of a legal article criminalizing sex work, police operate as if sex work is criminalised. Sex workers experience systematic arbitrary detention, with fingerprinting and recording into a database, and this is accompanied by humiliation, extortion and other types of violence. New legislation from 2019 has made it worse for sex workers. Police extort money from sex workers for so-called "permission to work." Sex workers do not trust the complaints mechanisms for reporting police violations against them, fearing further violence and threats.

Sex workers are often stigmatised as 'vectors of disease'. Simultaneously, sex workers face barriers accessing sexual & reproductive health services. They are discriminated against during the provision of these services and often forced to disclose personal information in state medical facilities.

Sex workers' living conditions are increasingly precarious because of the COVID-19 crisis. Quarantine and other COVID-19 related restrictions have curtailed their ability to work and there is no financial support for sex workers from the state.

We urge the Government to:

- Review and amend all existing laws and policies that directly and indirectly negatively impact sex workers' right to work free from violence, discrimination and extortion.
- Implement the CEDAW recommendation from 2015 to establish an oversight mechanism to monitor police violence against sex workers, and ensure safety and security to file complaints on illegal police actions.
- Ensure affordable, high quality and non-discriminatory sexual & reproductive health and rights services for sex workers
- Extend social security safety nets, including financial aid, to sex workers particularly affected by COVID-19 related restrictions