

Declaration for “International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers”
Review the existing law immediately, prepare for decriminalizing sex work and regulate and penalize the abuse of police power

Responding to the appeal of Ziteng, Action for REACH OUT and 15 sex workers and supporters participated in the demonstration of the “International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers” today (17/12/2008).

17th December every year is the “International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers”. To sex workers and organizations concerning sex workers, this year is full of sorrow. This is because there were 5 sex workers in “one-woman-apartments” being murdered just in 2008. At the same time, sex workers are under the threat of numerous criminal offenses including rape, robbery, threat, blackmail, theft and violence, which shadow their days with fear.

In the past, we have been emphasizing abuse of police power (including unreasonable arrests, unreasonable strip-search, receiving sexual services during undercover action, rude attitude and foul languages, etc.) as well as the ignorance and discrimination of the general public. All these resist workers from calling the police when they face criminal offenses (according to the research conducted by Action for REACH OUT in 2007, 80% of the respondents are reluctant to call for the police). As a result, criminals can escape from the regulation of the law and commit crimes again and again.

The police force has already established the “divisional contact mechanism” so that sex workers can call the police when they encounter problems, and the new Panel of Security of the Legislative Council will establish the “Subcommittee on Police's Handling of Sex Workers and Searches of Detainees”. Despite all these, the standard of law enforcement of frontline police officers varies a lot and some of the police officers still discriminate sex workers. These are factors hindering sex workers from calling the police. Even though they are willing to call, they would still face lots of unreasonable and impolite treatment from the police force.

We think that situations faced by sex workers like arrestment and prosecution for performing sex work, abuse of police power and infringement of human rights of sex workers could be improved only if sex work is decriminalized. On 25th November 2008, Action for REACH OUT sent a letter to Mr. LAU Kong-wah, the Chairperson of the Panel of Security of the Legislative Council concerning the problems of violence long faced by sex workers. We requested the Panel:

- **To call a meeting immediately** and continue the discussion last year to review the personal safety of sex workers working in “one-woman-apartments” as well as the constraints of the sex workers brought by the existing law. Moreover, the Panel should discuss and prepare for decriminalizing at least two sex workers

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我們認同性工作為工作，並以倡議性工作者權益及性工作非刑事化為目標。

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working in one apartment so that the sex workers can work under a more secured environment.

- **To continuously supervise measures of the Police Force for protecting the personal safety of sex workers**, ensure a fair and serious treatment to sex workers as a victim of crime, and further strengthen the communication with organizations concerning sex workers, so that criminals are clearly warned that sex workers, just like other citizens in Hong Kong, are protected by the law and the police.

However, after 3 weeks, we have received no reply from the Panel. And one of the members of the Panel Mr. Raymond WONG Yuk Man expressed that he did not receive any letters from the Chairperson or the secretary.

We hereby strongly express the aforementioned requests, and ask the Chairperson of the Panel of Security of the Legislative Council Mr. LAU Kong-wah to stop ignoring the lessons from the lives and blood of sex workers, neglecting the threats of personal safety faced by sex workers everyday and defying the requests of organizations concerning sex workers to improve the situation. He should respond immediately!

Action for REACH OUT

17th December 2008

Hotline: 2770 1002

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