

**Committee:** The Human Rights Council

**Issue:** Ensuring the protection of the human rights of factory workers

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## Introduction

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People who work in factories are common throughout every country and are the most common jobs that people choose for their careers. In the factory, people work mostly because of the reliable schedules and the benefits they receive, such as health care and retirement plans, that are offered in factory settings. According to an interview with a Korean factory worker in Hani.co.kr, the pitiful pay, dangerous working conditions, and the unsocial hours of work with a lack of break time, which is over 10 hours a day with low pay is a complicated issue faced to them, and most of the workers were also suffering from the perceptions of the factory workers in Korea. Not only in Korea but internationally, since January 2021, ‘210 workers died and over 800 were injured in garment, textile and related factories in Pakistan, India, Egypt, Morocco, China, Turkey, Jordan, and Cambodia’ according to cleanclothers.org. Also, ‘the rate of death in factories are, in some cases, unreported’. Therefore, internationally, factory workers are experiencing a lack of human rights.

Taking the importance of human rights, it is the responsibility of the United Nations and many countries to enhance the protection of the human rights of factory workers. Issues with factory workers are not an issue seen rarely. It has been seen as a common issue since the late 1700s, which was the start of the Industrial Revolution. To seek world peace between countries, being aware of this case is needed, and it needs to be addressed at an international conference. From this agenda, we would like to take a close look at how to ensure that factory workers and labour-management relations are provided with the conditions that are necessary for them to function effectively in the factory.

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## Definition of key terms

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### Human rights

Human rights are basic liberties and rights that are inherent in all human beings, regardless of ethnic background, race, sexual orientation, religion, or any other status. These rights are regarded as universal, indivisible, and inalienable, which means they cannot be taken away or denied. Human rights are recognised and protected by international law and founded on human dignity and equality principles. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on

December 10, 1948, is one of the most important papers in this regard. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an essential document for human rights.

### **Factory workers**

Factory workers are people employed in manufacturing plants or factories where goods and products are manufactured on a large scale. They play a key role in the production process and are responsible for operating machines, assembling products, conducting quality control checks, and performing various tasks related to the manufacturing process. Depending on the type of factory and industry, factory workers may be involved in various stages of production. They can work on assembly lines and operate special equipment and machines to assemble and manufacture products. In the various stages of production, there could be packaging, quality control, maintenance, and logistics in specific terms.

### **Developing countries**

Developing countries are sovereign states with relatively undeveloped industrial bases. It also has a low Human Development Index (HDI), a statistical composite index that emphasises that people and their skills should be the ultimate criteria for judging a country's development. The HDI shows not only the level of social wealth but also the well-being of the population. Unsurprisingly, developing countries have relatively low levels of human rights protection for workers. Migrant workers from other countries are also included.

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## **History**

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The Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries is where the history of factory employees begins. During this time, there was a move from handcrafted items to mass manufacturing, spurred by advances in equipment and the advent of steam power. This resulted in a significant shift in how things were produced, which eventually gave development to the factory system.

Initially, the majority of factory workers were engaged in textile mills, where they ran spinning wheels and power looms. As various fields of manufacturing were established over time, the rise of specialist professions increased, and the quality of life was enhanced as well. However, there were severe consequences of long work hours of 14-16 hours per day, the discrimination of wages where men got twice as much income compared with women, and water/ air pollution because of the factory's chemical substances.

The factory method eventually spread to others, including automobiles, consumer goods, electronics, and steel. Factory employees became an important portion of the workforce as industrialisation expanded, particularly in metropolitan areas. To find work in factories, many labourers moved from rural to urban regions.

Due to labour movements and governmental restrictions, industrial employees' working conditions and treatment have dramatically improved over time. Workers' rights and safety legislation were enacted to address concerns such as excessive working hours, poor salaries, child labour, and hazardous working conditions.

Better working conditions, fair pay, and worker safeguards were strongly supported by trade unions. The trade union is an organisation that works for employees' rights in their workplace. The Trade Union also bargains with employers to negotiate for a more appropriate income, working conditions, and benefits. Trade unions also offer several services to their members, such as legal consultation, training, and financial aid. They have pushed for better pay, shorter hours, benefits, and risk-free working conditions for manufacturing workers. In particular, in 2019, the 'United Auto Workers (UAW) secured a new contract with General Motors that includes a 4% salary boost, improved health care benefits, and job security assurances.' Also in 2020, the 'Service Employees International Union (SEIU) secured a new deal that includes a 3% pay raise, improved retirement policies, and affordable health care.' With recent challenges, unions have campaigned for more compensation, fewer hours, benefits, and finer working conditions for manufacturing employees.

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## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

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### International Organizations

#### International Labor Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization is an agency of the United Nations whose mission is to improve social and economic justice through the setting of international labour standards. Founded in October 1919, the ILO is the first and oldest United Nations organisation. It is made up of 187 member states and has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. ILO labour standards aim to ensure sustainable working conditions for freedom, justice, and dignity. With its 189 treaties and conventions, the ILO makes important contributions to international labour law, such as promoting the amount of decent work time, working conditions, and social protection or providing technical solutions to the member states.

## **Non-governmental Organizations (NGO)**

An NGO is a nonprofit group that operates independently of any government. They are sometimes called civil society organisations and operate at the established community, national, and international levels. Some NGOs have emerged to defend the rights of migrant workers. They reflect the growth of a social form of democracy that helps the authoritarian system adapt while helping to sustain it.

## **International Labour Rights Forum (ILRF)**

The International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) describes itself as "advocating for and with the working poor worldwide." It is a non-profit advocacy group with headquarters in Washington, D.C. ILRF (formerly the International Labor Rights Education and Research Fund) was founded in 1986, and its mission is that: "ILRF believes that all workers are entitled to a safe working environment, where they are treated with dignity and respect and are free to organise to defend and advance their rights and interests." In 2013, the ILRF published a report on labour issues in the textile industry in Bangladesh. Acknowledging their poor working conditions, the report ensured an improved environment for the workers, which led to new labour laws and the creation of a safety agency in Bangladesh.

## **Fair Labor Association (FLA)**

The FLA is a non-profit organisation that works to improve working conditions in factories around the world. It sets standards for factories to follow and audits factories to ensure that they are meeting those standards. The FLA also "provides training and tools to build expertise in companies and drive innovation in business practices, ultimately improving working conditions and the lives of the workers who make the products consumers buy." The FLA certified 1000 factories in 45 countries after it was made.

## **Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC)**

The CCC is a global network that aims to improve working conditions in the garment industry. It campaigns for brands to take responsibility for the working conditions in their supply chains and for governments to enforce labour laws. They also make sure that all workers in the manufacturing industry have decent workloads, wages, and environments and stimulate workers to make points about their rights by providing them with specific information. In 2017, CCC helped the negotiation of factory workers in Nike, Vietnam. The report contained improvements in wages and working environments.

## **Major Countries Involved**

## China

China is recognised as one of the developing nations despite having the second-biggest economy and the greatest military in the world owing to imbalanced and unsustainable development. About 292.5 million migrant labourers were present in China in 2021. While there are 171.7 million overseas employees, there are 120.84 domestic workers. However, because China places a strong emphasis on cost-effectiveness, the workers must endure poor and dangerous working conditions despite their massive numbers.

## United States of America

Factory employees in the United States play a crucial part in the manufacturing industry, which is a key component of the country's economy. Vehicles, electronics, machinery, fabrics, and other products are all part of the manufacturing industry. There are approximately 11.9 million manufacturing workers in the US, meaning that there are both pros and cons in the industry. However, the working industry in the US is considered better than in other developing countries, but there are consequences with working conditions and the low income of the factory workers.

## Japan

Factory employees in Japan play an important part in the manufacturing industry. They are highly competent and productive. Japanese factory employees are noted for their attention to detail, ability to work long hours, and enthusiasm to learn new skills. This has aided Japan's rise as a major manufacturing power. Japan's factory workers mostly received a good quality education. The average factory worker in Japan has a high school diploma or equivalent. This is a rate greater than the national average. However, there are problems that factory workers in Japan face, such as low wages, long hours, language barriers, and more.

## Korea

Korea has approximately 25 million manufacturing workers, which means they are playing an important role in the economy. Although the status of manufacturing workers in South Korea has improved in recent years, they still confront significant obstacles. Factory workers in South Korea continue to be paid less than their colleagues in industrialised countries. Also, the average monthly income for a manufacturing worker in South Korea is roughly \$2,000, which is significantly lower than the average wage in the United States or Japan. In South Korea, factory employees are frequently expected to work long hours, with overtime as the standard. Even though there are new policies that ensure a decrease in working time, this is

not being kept. The average factory worker in South Korea works over 50 hours per week, which is longer than the average working hours in many other countries.

### Germany

In the past few years, the standing of industry employees in Germany has dramatically improved. High earnings, pleasant working conditions, and substantial social protection are now available to factory employees in Germany. Germany's manufacturing workers receive some of the highest incomes in the world. In Germany, the average hourly compensation for a factory worker is about \$15, which is much more than the average wage in many other developed countries. Additionally, factory employees in Germany have favourable working conditions. The maximum working week is 40 hours, and there are rigorous rules limiting overtime and rest breaks. Factory workers are also entitled to paid sick leave, parental leave, and vacation time. (add challenges)

### India

In India, factory employees are still poorly paid. The average monthly income for a manufacturing industry worker in India is approximately 200 dollars, which is significantly lower than the average wage in many other developing countries. Also, in India, factory workers are frequently asked to work for an unsocial amount of hours, with overtime being the standard. Specifically, the average manufacturing worker in India works over 60 hours per week, which is longer than in many other developing countries. In addition, employees in India continue to face the danger of accidents and life-threatening consequences because they are working in contagious environments, and there is a lack of sources or regulations to protect them.

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### Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

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| 1760- 1840 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industrial Revolution: The automation of manufacturing and the emergence of factories were the results of the Industrial Revolution, which started in the late 18th century. Significant innovations in manufacturing procedures during this period marked the shift from production based on manual labour to production based on machines.</li> </ul> |
| 1904       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IWW (International Workers of the World) Founded in 1904: The</li> </ul>  |

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|      | <p>Industrial Workers of the World, usually referred to as the ‘Wobblies’, was founded as a ‘radical labour organisation that promoted industrial unionism and workers' rights’. Throughout the early 20th century, it was heavily involved in many labour conflicts.</p>   |
| 1919 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ILO founded: The ILO was founded with the goal of promoting rights at work and enhancing working conditions.</li> </ul>  |
| 1948 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The UN General Assembly ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This contains Article 23, which affirms that everyone has the right to a job, fair compensation, and secure working conditions.</li> </ul>  |
| 1966 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UN General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)</li> <li>- ICESCR is a ‘global human rights agreement that became law in 1966’. In 1976, the UK decided to abide by ICESCR. It guarantees the ‘enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to an education and reasonable and fair working conditions.</li> </ul> |
| 1981 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ILO Convention No. 155 -Occupational Safety and Health</li> <li>- The Occupational Safety and Health Convention No. 155 calls on governments and businesses to take measures to advance occupational safety and health and enhance working conditions. It also calls for the establishment of a ‘comprehensive national occupational safety and health strategy’.</li> </ul>                           |
| 1998 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: 1998 These fundamental labour rights, such as freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of forced labour, and the prohibition of child labour, were emphasised in the ILO's adoption of this proclamation.</li> </ul>  |
| 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Essential Workers and the COVID-19 Pandemic: The worldwide</li> </ul>  |

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|      | epidemic made clear how important factory workers are because lots of factories stopped manufacturing products due to the low sales caused by quarantine. The overall COVID issue raised awareness about workplace safety, worker protections, and the need to treat vital employees fairly.  |
| 2021 | - International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor: The United Nations designated 2021 as the ‘International Year for the Abolition of Child Labor’ to raise awareness and organise global efforts to eradicate child labour. It highlights the significance of safeguarding children's rights and encouraging access to high-quality education. |

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### Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

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To address the issue of labourers' human rights, there have been or are still being made several approaches, for instance, the creation of labour laws and standards. To safeguard employees' rights and enhance working conditions, governments have developed labour laws and regulations. These regulations deal with things like minimum wages, working hours, occupational health and safety, child labour, and the right to organise. Inspections and fines are used to enforce adherence to these criteria. Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) offer another option. The ILO, a specialised agency of the United Nations, has created agreements such as the International Labor Conventions and Recommendations and global labour standards. For instance, the freedom of association and collective bargaining, standards related to forced labour, child labour, discrimination, health, the safety of employees, and more. Although these standards are not imposed on governments, they are widely accepted as the international standard for labour rights. Countries that sign these agreements have a responsibility to incorporate them into their legislation.

Initiatives for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Many businesses now implement CSR programs to enhance working conditions and uphold workers' rights.

To add detail, there are programs such as ‘Fairtrade’, which assure that farmers and workers in developing nations receive a fair amount of profit for their goods, and ETL (<https://www.ethicaltrade.org/>), which is a combination of companies such as ASOS, The body shop, H&M group and more, NGO (non-governmental organisations), and trade unions which aim for improving working conditions globally. Not only these programs but other programs include regulations for responsible sourcing, supplier compliance protocols,

and codes of behaviour. They encourage corporations to monitor and address labour issues in the supply chain.

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## Possible Solutions

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Our committee’s goal is to enhance the quality of factory workers, as well as improve their human rights, and find solutions to solve this case. Strong legal actions, for example, are one potential answer to the problem of industrial employees’ human rights. Governments have the power to adopt and enforce strict labour laws and regulations that protect employees’ rights, such as the right to a living wage, safe working conditions, and the ability to form unions. Laws ought to handle concerns, including discrimination and forced labour. Governments should provide appropriate funding for labour inspections by giving labour inspection organisations enough funding and giving priority to labour inspections in high-risk industries, including manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. The Government should also make sure that there are strong enforcement procedures in place by imposing penalties against companies that go against labour laws and should prevent companies from manufacturing if they consistently break labour rules.

Another option would be to strengthen international labour standards. To be precise, global institutions like the International Labour Organization (ILO) may keep creating and promoting labour standards. To specify, to ensure conformity across sectors and nations, governments, businesses, and employees may collaborate to approve and implement these standards. Also, investigating new labour-related issues, analysing changes in the labour market in various nations and areas, and discussing the most recent changes in the job market with experts and stakeholders.

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