

Meicha Hall

United Nations Representative to the International Center for Ethno Religious Mediation

Statement for the Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons

"Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market"

Age based discrimination is common in the work place and is commonly disguised as administration working to make a more “culturally fit” work environment. Older workers sometimes are fired, forced to do unpleasant duties, and offered buyouts in favor of younger workers and as the age of retirement continues to increase, these injustices are likely to occur at a greater frequency.

The ageing process has a profound impact on the pension system and economic stability in a country. As a result, some countries have started to reform their policies by raising the standards on age for retirement and placing restrictions on the possibility of early retirement for older persons. A study published by the United Nations on the *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean Education* showed that education has an impact on the retirement age and jobs occupied by older persons. Usually, older persons who are higher educated will stay within jobs connected to the labor market while some less educated older persons take up jobs in the agriculture sector when needed because they feel this is the only work they will be able to get. People with high education levels usually work longer because they feel that they can continue to make an important contribution to society and that their physical and mental health are such that they can continue to work beyond the normal or legal retirement age, as determined by social security systems, as outlined in the study.

The study also found that in Latin America and developing countries the leading contributor causing people to continue to work beyond retirement age is the lack of income, especially among women. On this the International Center of Ethno Religious Conflict suggests the promotion of non-contributory pension systems where the employer has a duty to add into an employee's pension even if they do not add into it immediately themselves. Data from eight countries in Latin America region show that, on average, 57.7% of people aged between 65 and 69 and 51.8% of people aged 70 or over still do not receive a pension from a contributory system, and these figures. are even higher among women.

Access to Justice

Governments can take huge steps towards creating inclusive environments that encourage seeking justice when rights against persecution are treaded on in the workplace. Policies must be implemented that guarantee proper working conditions for older persons such as overseeing accessibility initiatives that keep the needs of older people in the center. This could be in the form of enforcing wheelchair accessibility for differently abled individuals and offering flexible conditions such as part time work and accommodations for medical care.

It should also be mandatory for employees to undergo training on tips to noticing discrimination based on age and ways to attain justice if this happens to you or someone you know. Some common signs include, but are not limited to:

1. Being downgraded to a different job position
2. Recruitment policies that put age limits on a person's job eligibility (such as restricting the pool to those who have less than 20 years of experience)

3. Being turned down from a promotion, and the position given to someone younger outside the company, because your employer wants the company to have a younger appearance or be “culturally fit”
4. Firing mostly older workers during company layoffs
5. Being called old before being fired

Finally, creating or extending non-contributory systems is a necessary component to meeting the economic needs of older persons. When companies institute non-contributory systems it sends a message that the lives of their employees are important to them, thus boosting morale in the workplace. Workers in turn perform better knowing their employers take an active stance in ensuring their employers will be financially secure after they retire.