

## **Maryam's speech (Day of Mourning, April 2013)**

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Hello brothers and sisters, my name is Maryam. I am an injured worker, a former teacher. I am here on behalf of ONIWG, the Ontario Network of Injured Worker Groups. I am honoured to speak to you about issues so near and dear to injured workers and my heart.

Everyone who goes to work in the morning should leave at the end of the day in the same health. No one should sacrifice their health and well being for a paycheque. All Ontarians, and all workers across the globe deserve this basic right. Injured workers are mourning for the hundreds who died in Bangladesh to bring cheap textiles to Canada, we should be supporting worker's rights, not importing exploitation and disasters in the workplace. Those workers suffered horrible losses when the factory collapsed. And when someone is hurt or killed on the job it is a tragic event. One that should have never happened.

The injured worker is not the only one who feels the pain. It hurts the workers families; their spouses, their children; their parents, their friends. And society as a whole. Injury is not individualized.

Furthermore, when a worker suffers an injury or illness, there must be a social safety net to ensure they do not fall into poverty and further sickness. There must be a Workers Compensation system that offers fair and just compensation

for those injured at work. Or for their dependents. All workers deserve this basic right.

Unfortunately, one third of workers in Ontario are not covered by workers compensation laws. One third! This is a shame. Business has put much pressure on our government to not expand coverage to every worker in the province. This leaves millions without that security when an accident does occur. The majority of those not covered are women working in gendered jobs. This is a form of discrimination. This is shameful.

Only 55% of private sector employment has coverage from WC and this has very negative consequences for health and safety and our social fabric. So the WSIB is nearly irrelevant to the private sectors. The cost of an injury is shifted to the social assistance and OHIP system and employers get off the hook.

I was one of those without coverage. This not only shattered my dreams of personal achievement. This is not what I dreamt of- I experienced poverty, further sickness and pain, uncertainty, my loss of identity. I was never compensated while my employer continues to grow and get richer.

Brothers and sisters, much is happening at our compensation board now. However, all the changes are going to hurt injured workers. Increased poverty,

depression, illness, and committing suicide. Currently our workers compensation system is being torn apart by bankers who do not care about injured workers. This is part of Ontario's government's cutbacks. Shame on them!

We all have the potential to be injured workers-all it takes is one fall, one twist, one cut. This is why we need a fair and just compensation system-for those who have been hurt, and those who will be hurt in the future.

Brothers and sisters, injured workers, their advocates, social justice groups, labour unions and many others will be holding an overnight vigil on May 31<sup>st</sup> and a rally on June 1<sup>st</sup> at Queens Park, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Injured Workers Day, to demand a fair and just compensation system. I invite you all to join us. Our compensation system must be saved-not privatized.

Thank you.