

## A Backgrounder

### Towards the IMRF: A Feminist Manifesto for Structural Transformation in Migration Governance

The Women in Migration Network (WIMN), with critical contributions from members and partners, initiated the Feminist Manifesto for Structural Transformation in Migration Governance to provide a collective voice to urge states to act decisively as they undertake this important assessment of the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).

This is not a moment for complacency or diplomatic complacency—it is a moment for **honest reckoning, political courage, and concrete, rights-based action**. Now is the time for decisive action to address the injustices of harmful migration policies, implement rights-based approaches and ensure that the voices of all migrants and affected communities are heard and respected. Anything less, risks **undermining the credibility of the GCM and the integrity of multilateral commitments** at a time when they are needed most.

#### The Current Moment

From 5–8 May 2026, Member States will convene at the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) to assess progress on the implementation of the GCM at a time when migrants face an escalating, multidimensional crisis. This crisis is driven not only by conflict and climate impacts, but also by rising trade barriers, and deepening energy and cost-of-living pressures—compounded by blatant violations of international human rights law, including acts that may amount to genocide and crimes against humanity, which are accelerating displacement and undermining protection frameworks worldwide.

We are witnessing a profound erosion of multilateralism and the systematic undermining of international law, particularly in its capacity to protect the rights and dignity of people on the move. Rather than upholding their human rights obligations, States are accelerating a punitive and securitized approach to migration governance, marked by, the expansion of border externalization, of migration control, arbitrary and prolonged detention, mass deportations, and the proliferation of harmful deterrence-based policies that place lives at risk. While benefitting from labor and remittance flows, States are increasingly cooperating to restrict and contain many forms of migration with militarized enforcement measures and extraterritorial controls, treating human mobility as a security threat rather than a human reality.

These deterrence-based policies—often misleadingly framed as “root-based solutions” to a so-called migration crisis—do not reduce irregular migration; they instead render it more dangerous and, too often, deadly. Ultimately, they dehumanize people on the move, securing legal grounds and public legitimacy for systemic rights violations, institutional cruelty, and normalization of racism and hatred. They disproportionately harm women, gender-diverse people and racialized groups. States are increasingly circumventing both national and

international legal obligations, outsourcing responsibilities while evading accountability. These practices heighten the risk of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, arbitrary detention and other grave human rights violations, while forcing undocumented migrants into chronic precarity, invisibility and fear.

Too often States promote exploitative, employer-tied and strictly temporary labor migration schemes that restrict workers' mobility, rights, and access to justice. Such "regular" pathways treat migrant workers, particularly those in low wage, gendered, and undervalued sectors—such as domestic work—as a disposable workforce, denying their labour rights and exposing them to abuse and exploitation. This structural precarity becomes even more acute in times of war and crisis, when migrant workers are systematically excluded from protection, emergency aid, or assisted repatriation, leaving them among the most invisible and exposed populations.

States cannot come to UNHQ and pretend that all is well with the GCM and global migration governance at a time of egregious anti-migrant policies and rights violations, further impacted by war and conflict, environmental devastation, and the excessive, violatory extraction of natural resources.