Neoliberal government policies, the collapse of self-employed entrepreneurs and the malfunctioning of the social welfare system have led to expanding low-income and a rising incidence of extreme poverty. While the informal work has a woman’s face – two thirds of female workers are non-regular workers – and there are abuses to the human rights of illegal-immigrant workers, the de-regularization of labour is depriving workers of any protection. For informal workers in South Korea being fired is comparable to receiving the death penalty.
**Immigrants**

By November 2007, about 502,000 immigrant workers, including at least 230,000 non-regular immigrant workers, moved to Korea. The Employment License System for Foreign Workers that took effect in 2003 did not adequately protect immigrant workers from discrimination. In August 2007, UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination expressed apprehension about the “employment license system for foreign workers” because of the impossibility of extending their 3-year contract term work period, the difficulty in transferring workplaces, and the lack of protection from discrimination and mistreatment.

Recently, many illegal-immigrant workers have been arrested, detained, and immediately sent back to their home countries. During this process, there were many human rights violations. Some workers had been detained for several months because of administrative reasons or unpaid salaries that employers did not pay them. The Korean Ministry of Justice has tried to minimize these problems through revising the immigration law and suggesting that immigration officers issue arrest warrants in advance or present identification.

In July and August 2007, the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) issued concerns about abuse within inter-racial marriages and, on a related note, human trafficking. CEDAW and the UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants pointed out that foreign women married to Korean men are often subject to domestic violence and are not protected by any laws.

In November 2001, the Constitutional Court said that “foreigners are also entitled to human dignity, human rights and the right to pursue happiness as a human being. The right to equality is also a human right, so there are only limited restrictions on the right to participation and some limitations according to mutualism”. In accordance with the above decision, the Government should provide better and fair treatment to immigrant workers and plan to reform immigration law.