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Street vendors in Kathmandu are mobilizing in mass to protest for access to public space and their right to work - we must support them in their struggle!

Kathmandu, January 5 - The Nepal Street Vendors' Unions (NEST) is mobilizing their members across Kathmandu to a **mass protest planned for January 9th** to push back against the evictions and harassment affecting 34,000 street vendors in the city who have been suffering for months from a "clean-up" operation by mayor Balendra Shah. **The global alliance of street vendors, StreetNet International, urges workers' organizations across the world to stand in solidarity with NEST and defend their right to work and their right to the city!**



Discriminatory urban policies against the working poor

In May 2022, a new mayor, Balendra Shah, was elected to rule the Metropolitan City of Kathmandu. He made his first priority to "clean the city" from the garbage, but that is not all: he also instructed the Metropolitan Police

to clear all areas from the presence of street vendors, which resulted in a **daily experience of violence for our members. In Kathmandu street vendors have been banned from their usual places of business and unable to work for months. This has resulted in loss of incomes and livelihoods.**

The international organization Human Rights Watch has [documented the assault on the rights of the urban poor taking place in Kathmandu](#), which are threatening up to 34,000 vendors in the city, many of which are women who have no other alternative source of income or employment.

International Council members

Lorraine Sibanda (Zimbabwe) (President), Alberto Santana (Dominican Republic) (Vice-President), Jamal Ismayilov (Azerbaijan) (Secretary), Annie Diouf (Senegal) (Treasurer), Comfort Doryen (Liberia), Jeanette Nyramasengesho (Rwanda), Gabriela Calandria (Uruguay), Maya Gurung (Nepal), Angélique Katani Kupulu (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Afiavi Anastasie Chodaton (Benin), Ken Williams Mhango (Malawi), Aaron Aiah Boima (Sierra Leone), Iryna Yaskevich (Belarus), Jose Herminio Diaz (El Salvador), Kaditou Barry (Guinea).



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Mass mobilization to secure workers' rights

In response, our affiliate NEST and the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) organized a public protest in September. After the demonstration in September, the leaders provided a memorandum to the Mayor and said that if nothing was done to ensure the right to work of street vendors in public spaces, more protests would follow.

The situation hasn't changed since. NEST is planning to rally a big mass of vendors in the streets of Kathmandu on Monday, January 9th to demand that authorities respect the right to work freely and to occupy public spaces as citizens!

"One of the various pressure strategies we put in place to protect the rights and interests of the street vendors is organizing a strong, public demonstration", says Maya Gurung, leader of NEST and member of StreetNet International Council. "In Nepal, many protests have been planned thanks to NEST for two decades, but the state has never been serious about the creation of policies and laws in favor of street vendors. **On January 9th, 2023, on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of the foundation of NEST, we will be protesting against the repressive behavior of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Everyone is welcome to participate!**"

We are urging all workers' organizations and coalitions defending the right to work and the right to the city to stand in solidarity with street vendors in Kathmandu and amplify their struggle and demands. There can be nothing for us without us!

About StreetNet International

StreetNet International is a global organization of committed informal traders, with the goal to promote and leverage an autonomous and democratic alliance of street vendors, hawkers, and cross-border traders in 50 countries. It was founded in Durban, South Africa, in 2002, and now represents over 600,000 traders worldwide.

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