

The Safe work environment Perspectives from Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)

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Gohoud to Support Human Rights Defenders

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Introduction:

Marking the International Labor Day, a group of Egyptian feminist organizations and initiatives launched the “My Safe Work is a Priority” campaign. The campaign aims to urge the Egyptian government to adopt policies and procedures that enhance a safe work environment for women and to ratify ILO Convention No. 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.

Given that most Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) are also employees, whether within various economic and service activities or within human rights, developmental, or humanitarian aid organizations, “Gohoud to Support Human Rights Defenders” joined the campaign to stand in solidarity with the demands of WHRDs/HRDs and emphasize their right to healthy and safe work environments. As part of our participation in the “My Safe Work is a Priority” campaign, we asked a group of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) about their perspectives on what a safe work environment means to them. We received various responses, and we are pleased to share them with you, contributing to the efforts to promote safety and protection in all our work environments.

A safe and healthy work environment means providing integrated and comprehensive support for employees, while minimizing risks and threats that may affect their physical and mental health during their job duties.

This environment also encourages diversity, supports the rights to expression, effective communication, collaboration, creativity, empowerment, and the sharing of power and knowledge, and is free from violence, discrimination, exploitation, and bullying.

TASK 2

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A safe work environment can be achieved by developing and adopting safety and security policies through a participatory approach that allows for continuous discussion, evaluation, development, and learning. In this environment, employees feel secure with job stability and fairness, considering individual differences and diverse identities, enabling them to develop, innovate, and perform their tasks efficiently with no harm.

TASK 2

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For me, a safe work environment is free from all forms of discrimination, violence, and abuse, making me feel safe and accepted. It encourages me to work, develop, and learn. Just as the workplace provides me with all of this, in turn, I will devote my energy and effort to supporting its growth and achieving its goals. A safe work environment also has regulations, policies, and management that guarantee my rights in case I am exposed to any injustice or abuse.

TASK 2

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In my opinion, a safe work environment is one that respects the rights of employees, considering their humanity above all other things. It also preserves their mental and physical well-being. In addition, it develops their capacities and skills without any gender discrimination.

TASK 2

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A safe work environment is the one where the mental and physical safety and well-being of employees are prioritized, based on a clear foundation of rights and obligations. It includes fair working hours, fair wages, clear job descriptions, and risk assessments, accompanied by a clear contract that protects all parties, along with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as clear procedures for complaints and investigation. Additionally, management should be participatory.

TASK 2

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Honestly, I've never experienced a safe work environment, but perhaps this environment has clear mechanisms for complaints, a system to provide employees with psychological support, and social and medical insurance. It should be an environment which is free from manipulation, bullying, and harassment of women. In short, it should guarantee employees' basic rights.

TASK 2

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A safe work environment is one that acknowledges personal and professional diversity. Not everyone thinks, feels, or works alike, and not everyone has the same personal circumstances or ideological beliefs, nor even the same aspirations or professional ambitions. In my opinion, a safe work environment is one that allows for flexibility to accommodate these differences and leverage them for the benefit of the work, as the interest of the work is inseparable from that of the employees.

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The safe work environment adopts effective anti-violence policies, conducts fair and confidential investigations, respects the privacy of survivors, and fosters a motivating work environment for both women and men.

TASK 2

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A safe work environment is one free from power imbalances. It is inclusive, fair, and just, without discrimination or gender-based violence. It includes clear mechanisms and legal frameworks to protect women workers. In this environment, women can express their opinions and advocate for their rights without fear of stigma, rejection, or loss of job opportunities. A safe work environment is a human right for everyone.

TASK 2

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For me, a safe work environment is one that considers my situation as a woman and being responsible for a child, ensuring I am not excluded from any learning or advancement opportunities because I am a mother. It should offer flexibility in working hours and be free of all forms of violence. Moreover, the more effective and enforced internal policies are, the more secure I will feel, not only in terms of protection from violence but also regarding job security, with no risk of sudden termination. Additionally, a safe work environment means that the workplace practices what it preaches; if it claims to be inclusive and diverse, it truly is, promoting diversity and responding to the varied needs of employees.

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For me, a safe work environment is one that promotes creativity and respects differences, with rules that apply to everyone without discrimination. In this environment, I don't need to be friends with someone or have special connections with others to work comfortably.

It's important that the dress code isn't overly restrictive as long as we don't deal directly with the audience, and that there's a culture of allowing remote work when conditions prevent going to the office. The most crucial thing is to have specific working hours with no pressure to work all day under the guise of flexibility.

It's also important that the workplace invests in its employees, whether through courses or training. I find it very comfortable when there's diversity in the workplace, including people from different backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, etc. And absolutely, there should be contracts for employees and anti-violence and discrimination policies in place.

For me, a safe work environment is governed by three main principles. Firstly, there must be policies and regulations in place to protect women from violence and discrimination, ensuring a holistic protection framework that leaves no room for ambiguity or vagueness. Secondly, wages should be fair and proportional to the workload, with healthcare and mental health coverage. Thirdly, there should be respect for diversity, with genuine ethical practices that truly respect different sexual orientations, colors, and ethnicities. Any violation of these principles should be subject to accountability.

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A safe work environment is one that adopts policies to protect individuals' personal space and does not violate it, whether inside or outside the workplace. There should be professional and transparent reporting and investigation mechanisms in place as well as clear regulations that define rights and responsibilities of employees towards the workplace and vice versa. The workplace should also consider gender-based needs during working hours, whether inside or outside the institution. Wages should be fair and determined based on clear and comprehensive criteria, with no discrimination based on gender, race, social gender, or educational and social background.

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A safe work environment for me is a place where I can express myself with no fear! where I don't lose my rights because I'm not a man. It's a place where I won't be subjected to violence, and if it happens, there should be policies that guarantee a fair investigation, especially if the violence comes from someone in a position of power. I believe it's also important to raise the staff's awareness about their rights and how to claim them.

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A safe work environment is where I feel I can learn new things within a place that supports me to learn and develop myself. It's where everyone can express their opinions and share ideas without restrictions, with clear channels for communication with decision-makers. It is where efforts are appreciated and acknowledged, and persons' circumstances are considered.

In a safe work environment, there are clear policies and procedures for everything related to work, these policies are well-informed and accessible. I shouldn't have to ask about every detail to be told that these are the rules without ever seeing them.

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