

SA's most exploited workers seek protective legislation

Own Correspondent

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DURBAN — A campaign for legislation to cover domestic workers, "the most oppressed and exploited of all workers", will kick off on June 1 when a delegation from the South African Domestic Workers' Union meets the acting Minister of Manpower to present wide-ranging demands.

Ms Merciful Ngidi, chairperson of the 50 000-strong Cosatu affiliate, said: "Sadwu feels very strongly that the reason domestic workers are working under such bad conditions is due to the fact that they are not covered by legislation."

She said domestic workers in South Africa were among the most oppressed and exploited of all workers, earning about R80 in most areas.

Ms Ngidi said conditions for domestic and farm workers had worsened since the first attempt in 1982 to get legislation.

"Rentals and bus fares have gone up, food prices are increasing daily, education fees as well as medical fees are remarkable, yet the wages of domestic workers still remain below the breadline," she said.

Sadwu will present the following demands to the acting Minister, Mr Eli Louw:

- A minimum wage of R450 a month, an eight-hour day for five days and full meals for a full-time skilled worker and R350 a month for a full-time semi-skilled worker.
 - A R175 wage for fortnightly-paid workers and R80 for weekly-paid workers.
 - Part-time workers to be paid R3,50 an hour.
 - The abolition of child labour.
 - Maternity leave eight weeks before giving birth and six weeks after giving birth, as well as time off to attend ante-natal clinics.
 - Paid leave of 21 days for every year of service.
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