



We Stand With Gilyr

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council has a proud history of fighting for human rights, including women's right to take pregnancy and maternity leave without fear of losing their jobs. For decades, the labour movement has fought alongside the women's movement to earn and protect these rights because they are fundamental to creating a just and equitable society.

Gilyr Massa, an employee of the Ryerson Students Union and CUPE member, was fired while on maternity leave in December 2015. Her dismissal was a blatant violation of workers' rights and human rights and must be remedied immediately. The Ryerson Students' Union should take swift action to resolve this injustice. Maternity leave is meant to be a time of recovery and bonding for parents with their new child; it should not be marked by precariousness and fear.

Gilyr has filed a human rights complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario against her employer for discrimination on the basis of gender and family status. In her own words, the case is about "the fundamental right of Canadian women (and men) to balance their desires for a career and a family without reprimand." Shamefully, women in Ontario continue to be fired regularly while on pregnancy or maternity leave. Last year, the Human Rights Legal Support Centre received 1,126 calls about this issue – that amounts to three a day.

Supporting Gilyr is also about defending a woman who has inspired many and tirelessly fights for justice on behalf of others. Gilyr is a black Muslim woman; her active and highly visible leadership is important for those who fight for equity against oppression. Gilyr is also a pillar of the Toronto social justice community, and has been a solid ally of Labour Council starting with the \$10 Minimum Wage fight and on numerous other campaigns. She is an active member of CUPE and served on CUPE Ontario's Women's Committee. She is well known for her community activism for women's rights, against war, and challenging Islamophobia.

For years, Labour Council has been proud to work together with students, including the Ryerson Students' Union (RSU), towards shared goals of ending racism, sexism, homophobia and islamophobia, as well as fighting for accessible postsecondary education. This is foundational work that must continue. Workers and students cannot afford to be pulled apart or fragmented. In this spirit, it is imperative that the RSU move quickly to deliver justice for Gilyr.

The Executive recommends that the Toronto and York Region Labour Council:

- Calls for Gilyr Massa's immediate reinstatement and compensation for the violation of her human rights.

- Support the “I Stand with Gilary” campaign in their efforts to protect every woman’s right to maternity leave.
- Encourage members to attend the upcoming Mother’s Day Rally in defence of a women’s right to maternity leave on Sunday, May 8 at 12pm at Yonge-Dundas Square.

May 2016

Cope343