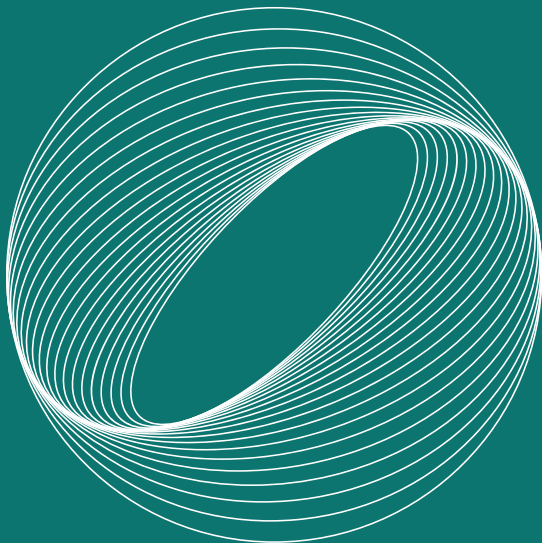




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THE PAN-ASIAN PUSH FOR PLATFORM WORKER RIGHTS

The gig economy's promise of flexibility is a carefully constructed illusion. Across Southeast Asian cities like Jakarta and Phnom Penh, platform work has devolved into a form of "digital forced labour," sustained not by worker autonomy but by opaque algorithmic control and gamified manipulation. This system is engineered to maximize platform profit by institutionalizing precarity at an unprecedented scale.

The mechanics of this coercion are sophisticated. Gamified incentives, such as point systems and performance rewards, function as "bonus traps" that compel workers to extend their hours far beyond sustainable limits. In Indonesia, drivers are compelled to work 12- to 14-hour days, often for earnings below the minimum wage, just to chase these elusive rewards (ITF, 2023). This creates a menacing environment of constant surveillance, where rejecting an order or taking a day off invites algorithmic punishment, and the threat of arbitrary account deactivation looms without due process (IAATW, 2025).

In response, a pan-Asian movement is rising. Workers are forming grassroots associations and cross-border solidarity networks to contest this exploitation. In Jakarta, for instance, thousands of drivers have staged mass protests demanding fair pay, while in Cambodia, the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) advocates for worker protections (IAATW, 2025). These local efforts are increasingly connected through transnational networks like the International Alliance of App-based Transport Workers. This collective action is a direct response to the failure of platforms and governments to provide basic protections like fair wages, social security, and safe working conditions. Workers fight to ensure decent work becomes the baseline, not the exception, in our digital future. (Gabriel Jovan Adidharma, Independent Researcher)

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EUROPEAN UNION'S CBAM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The issue of carbon leakage and global efforts to reduce carbon emissions have encouraged the European Union (EU) to introduce the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as part of its trade policy (Dechezlepretre & Haramboure, 2025). This policy imposes an import tariff on carbon-intensive products: aluminum, electricity, hydrogen, iron and steel, cement, and fertilizers (CSIS Indonesia, 2025). The amount of the tariff depends on the existing carbon pricing scheme in the exporting countries—the higher the carbon price, the lower the tariff, and vice versa. This policy potentially exacerbates inequality for Global South countries with less stringent emission regulations, such as Mozambique and South Africa, by reducing their competitiveness in the EU market.

The EU is the market for 97% of Mozambique's aluminum exports. However, as a developing country, Mozambique lacks strict regulations on carbon emissions. The implementation of CBAM is projected to shrink its economy by 2.5% due to the loss of export competitiveness as its commodities will face higher import tariffs (Munemo & Nyantakyi, 2024). Similarly, the EU is the largest trading partner for South Africa. Once CBAM is fully implemented in 2026, South Africa's total exports to the EU are expected to fall by 4%, reducing its GDP by 0.02% (Roelf & Abnett, 2024). The imposition of the EU's CBAM could be seen as a violation of WTO principles by creating an unfair trade barrier, especially for the Global South.

Without any efforts from the Global North to assist in green transition, the EU's CBAM risks generating injustice in international trade, undermining the competitiveness and overall welfare of the Global South. (Parama Kirti Wiyanto, International Relations 2021, Universitas Gadjah Mada)

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CHOLERA IN THE TIME OF WAR: HEALTH DISASTER RISKS IN SOUTH SUDAN AMIDST VIOLENT CONFLICT

In the one year since UNICEF declared a cholera outbreak in war-torn Sudan, the situation has now reached unprecedented urgency. The Sudan civil war that began in 2023 has destabilized the country's already fragile health ecosystem as well as destroyed sanitation infrastructure. As a result, Sudan has had nearly 100,000 possible cases of cholera and more than 2,400 deaths due to cholera since 2024, spreading to nearly all states, including crowded refugee camps (Sampson, 2025).

War and disease have long been intertwined, but it is especially concerning in a young country ill-equipped to handle both. The conflict has forced millions into overcrowded camps with little access to clean water or healthcare, while hospitals have been overwhelmed with the constant influx of cholera patients needing urgent care. The war has exacerbated endemic vulnerabilities in hard times, where humanitarian aid access has been severely limited. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (2025) has called for an international response to this looming disaster, appealing to humanitarian law and the tragic preventability of cholera.

However, it is also impossible to entangle the politics of aid in Sudan's crisis from its standing as a Global South country. One such example was U.S. aid cuts earlier this year, forcing local health and food services to close in Sudan, South Sudan and other high-conflict areas and leading to even more preventable deaths (Ross, 2025). Such decisions from the North potentially cost millions of lives in the Global South, an urgent call for a restructuring of the current aid-donor paradigm. (Nafisa Arya Alvita, Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada)

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THE PRECARIETY OF REPORTERS IN GAZA

The genocide of Palestinians by Israel is arguably one of the most well-documented conflicts of the 21st Century. From the national morning news to social media feeds, it seems like news regarding the conflict turned genocide is never out of reach to the audience beyond the Palestinian border. Several journalists are at the front line of reporting for various international news agencies. One news agency famous for its reporting is Al Jazeera, which, unfortunately, had its journalists murdered by Israel.

On August 11th, 2025, in the Gaza Strip, 28-year-old Anas Al-Sharif fell victim to a deliberate Israeli bombardment. Al-Sharif was with his colleagues seeking shelter outside the al-Shifa Hospital when they fell victim to the bombardment. Three of his colleagues also fell victim to the Israeli attack along with Al-Sharif (Al Jazeera, 2025). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, by the middle of August 2025, a total of 184 journalists have been killed by Israel since October 7th, 2023 (PBS, 2025). Due to the alarming number of journalists who fell victim to the genocide, the Gaza Genocide has been reported by Reporters Without Borders as the deadliest conflict for journalists (Al Jazeera, 2025).

On the international stage, UNESCO has condemned this deliberate murder of the Al Jazeera reporters, with its Director General Audrey Azoulay calling for “a thorough and transparent investigation” (UN News, 2025). The global attention over the precarity of reporters in Gaza signals the need for protection of civilians during a conflict, which means a total end to the genocide in Gaza. (Athaillah Arkan Triwahyu, International Relations UGM 2022)

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