
Present conditions and review on human rights of Indian workers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Mr. Khalid AA Makki, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi

Abstract

According to the United Nations, "The employment agent himself can be considered a trafficker if s/he knows or turns a blind eye to the fact that the employer is recruiting the worker for the purpose of exploitation, but is deceiving the worker about his intention."

Human Rights observe defends the rights of people worldwide. We carefully inspect abuses, expose the facts broadly, and pressure those with power to respect rights and secure justice. Human Rights Watch is an independent, international organization that works as part of a vibrant movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all.

Introduction

A large number of employers in Saudi Arabia treat migrant Indian workers like dirt. They hold the power to send them to jail with a litany of charges. Ironically, it is the responsibility of the government in India and authorities of the **Gulf countries** to protect the migrant worker. There are also non-state actors such as recruitment agents/visa brokers in India and the Gulf besides the sponsors in Saudi Arabia.

In a report released in July titled 'Exploited Dreams: Dispatches from Indian Migrate

Workers in Saudi Arabia', Amnesty International said recruiting agents and visa brokers remain beyond the pale of regulation.

Present conditions of Human Rights of Indian Workers

Saudi Arabia continued in 2015 to try, convict, and imprison political dissidents and human rights activists solely on account of their peaceful activities. Systematic discrimination against women and religious minorities

Present conditions and review on human rights of Indian workers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

continued. Authorities failed to enact systematic measures to protect the rights of 9 million foreign workers. As in past years, authorities subjected hundreds of people to unfair trials and arbitrary detention. New anti-terrorism regulations that took effect in 2014 can be used to criminalize almost any form of peaceful criticism of the authorities as terrorism.

Over 9 million migrant workers fill manual, clerical, and service jobs, constituting more than half the workforce. Many suffer abuses and exploitation, sometimes amounting to conditions of forced labor.

The *kafala* (sponsorship) system ties migrant workers' residency permits to "sponsoring" employers, whose written consent is required for workers to change employers or exit the country under normal circumstances. Some employers illegally confiscate passports, withhold wages, and force migrants to work against their will.

Saudi officials, wary that the domestic unemployment rate of 12 percent may grow as the domestic population increases, have issued a set of labor reforms since 2011 that create a tiered quota system for the employment of Saudi citizens in the private labor sector that differs according to the nature of the business.

As part of these reforms, Saudi labor authorities in 2015 began allowing foreigners working in firms that do not employ the required percentage of Saudis to change jobs without employer approval.

Police and labor authorities in 2015 continued a vigorous campaign to arrest and deport foreign workers found in violation of existing labor laws, targeting workers who did not have valid residency or work permits, or those found working for an employer other than his or her legal sponsor. According to the International Organization on Migration (IOM), Saudi Arabia deported 163,018 Ethiopians between November 2013 and March 2014, and 458,911 Yemenis between June 2013 and June 2015. There were reports that prior to deportation some deportees were placed in overcrowded detention conditions, denied adequate food and water, and physically abused by guards. Between December and March 2015, Saudi Arabia deported 40,235 Somalis to Mogadishu, including hundreds of women and children, without allowing any to make refugee claims.

Domestic workers, most of them women, frequently endure a range of abuses including overwork, forced confinement, non-payment of wages, food deprivation, and psychological, physical, and sexual abuse without the authorities holding their employers to account.

Present conditions and review on human rights of Indian workers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Workers who attempted to report employer abuses sometimes faced prosecution based on counterclaims of theft or “sorcery.”

Some Recent News headlines about the conditions of Workers:

- **Are Indian Domestic Less Attractive For Saudis?**
- **300 Stranded Indian Workers in Saudi Arabia to Return Home**
- **Indian Workers Accuse Saudi Company of Not Paying Salaries**
- **India warns women workers in Saudi against going on strike**
- **Unpaid Indian women workers sent home from Saudi Arabia**

Conclusion:

This report concluded the assessment of the variety of human rights abuses that Indian workers experience in Saudi Arabia. The voices of these migrants provide a window into a country whose hereditary, unelected rulers continue to choose secrecy over transparency at the expense of justice. The stories in this report illustrate why so many migrant workers, including Muslims, return to their home

countries deeply aggrieved by the lack of equality and due process of law in the kingdom. In an important sense, this report is an indictment of unprincipled private employers and sponsors as well as Saudi authorities, including interior ministry interrogators and *shari'a* court judges, who operate without respect for the rule of law and the inherent pride of all men and women, irrespective of gender, race, and religion.

It is based on information gathered from migrant workers and their families in muck block houses off dirt roads in tropical agricultural areas of southwest India, in apartments in tightly packed neighborhoods of metropolitan Manila, and in simple dwellings in rural villages of Bangladesh. The victims include skilled and unskilled workers; Muslims, Hindus, and Christians; young adults traveling outside their home countries for the first time; and married men, and single and divorced women, with children to support.