

"Egyptians Abroad Under Pressures of Sponsor System, Means of Living," Rights Report



Egyptian Organization for Human Rights revealed in its report of Wednesday September 24, entitled "Egyptians abroad, under pressures of sponsor system and means of living," which tackled, through monitoring and documenting, the sponsor system applied in the Arab countries, the risks that Egyptian labor is exposed to under this system, and the most important criticisms against it in the light of its violation of the fundamental human rights and especially the right to work and transport.

The report emphasized that there is a great increase in the number of Egyptians in the Gulf Countries, as statistics confirmed that the number of Egyptians who are working in Saudi Arabia reached 923.600 by 48.29% of the total of Egyptian labor abroad, in Kuwait reached 190.550 by 9.96% , in the United Arab Emirates 95.000 by 4.97% , in Qatar 25.000 by 1.31%, in Oman 15.000 by 0.78%, and in Bahrain 4.000 by 0.21%; so it is clear that Saudi Arabia, UAE and Jordan are considered the most important Arab countries, and among 20 of the largest countries in the world in receiving Egyptian labor during 2005.

The report tackled the situation of Egyptians abroad and the violations against them as a result of working according to the sponsor system, this system which exposes Egyptians to illegal arrest, violates the right of transporting and travel, gives the authority to the sponsor to confiscate passports, to force the worker to waive his dues for fear of being exposed to the unjust imprisonment which violates his rights.

The report revealed the disadvantages of the sponsor system which is considered one of the most serious violations which Egyptians in the Arab countries are exposed to, as it violates many of the rights of citizens working in these

countries by violating one's right of transporting by reserving his passport, followed by forcing the worker, in some cases, to waive his wages and his financial dues to the sponsor for regaining his passport and departing.

While in the case of confronting the sponsor, the worker will expose to detention without legal justification, through the absolute powers granted to the sponsor which gives him the right to prevent the worker from transport and travel only with the sponsor's permission, and gives him the right to confiscate the worker's passport forcing him to waive his rights for travel for fear of being subjected to arbitrary detention.

The report confirmed the fact that applying the sponsor system is one of the worst systems in dealing with the newcomer labor, and it is also contrary to the most fundamental human rights; thus we must work together to compel those governments that apply this system to cancel this system because of the serious damage it exposes the newcomer labor to, and particularly because this system is contrary to the work and transport rights stated in all international agreements and documents which confirmed the link between labor rights or the rights related to working conditions and the right to work.

Those rights that ensure the protection of the worker, the right to choose the kind of work and to accept it freely, the right to receive enough wages, the right to work on a definite day, and paid breaks, the right to equal wages in the same work, the right to equal treatment, and the right to ensure healthy and safe working conditions.

The report called for establishing a public committee for caring of Egyptians all over the world, and a private one in those countries applying the sponsor system, with the condition of forming this committee of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interior Ministry, Ministry of Manpower and those organizations concerned of travel and migration of Egyptian workers abroad.

The report called the Ministry of Manpower to provide lectures mandatory for workers to make them aware of their rights before traveling, prepare and update the database for those who want to work abroad at the national level, and create new mechanisms for preparing and counting numbers of Egyptian workers and migrants abroad.

It also pointed out to take in account the necessary measures which are important for canceling this system and reinforcing equal opportunities and equal treatment for Egyptian labor abroad, to find ways that would get rid of all the negative points of that system, to find the necessary mechanisms for coordination with international, Arab and African organizations to preserve Egyptian workers' rights abroad as a result of regional or international emergency crises.

The report suggested developing the labor legislations in accordance with the international agreements, together with the technical departments incompatible to the international agreements and documents of human rights.