



**Executive Summary of a study on
“Palestinian wage workers in Israeli settlements in the West Bank –
Characteristics and Work Circumstances”,**

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The study is based on the analysis of a questionnaire-based survey with a purposive sample of 485 workers from the north, middle and south West Bank. Women constituted 14% of the study sample. This percentage is high compared to overall statistics regarding Palestinian women working in the Israeli labor market, and might be due to the fact that the commuting time is much lower than for Palestinian workers, who have to commute back and forth from their workplaces inside Israel.

The study reached a number of findings regarding Palestinian wage workers in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, of which the most prominent are as follows:

1. Social characteristics

- Most of the survey group were married due to Israeli security restrictions imposed on Palestinian workers in settlements
- The average age of wage workers in settlements is high, at 35.2 years, with a standard deviation of 9.5 years, which also reflects the Israeli security restrictions imposed on Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements
- Most of Palestinian wage workers in settlements have a work permit (93%), while 7% are working without a work permit, which departs from the commonly held view that half of these workers work without permit; the high number of workers with work permits is most probably due to the fact that these settlements are akin to military compounds
- Workers in Israeli settlements have a high educational level, as 43.5% of the workers employed in Israeli settlements have a second level education or higher

2. Economic characteristics

- 50.9% of Palestinian wage workers in Israeli settlements work in the construction sector, 19% in the services sector, 16.5% in industry, 9.9% in agriculture while 3.5% have no specific economic sector
- 59.4% of men work in the construction sector, while 61.8% of women work in the services sector, 27.9% in agriculture, and 10% in industry
- 41.9% of Palestinian workers in settlements work on a monthly basis, on the contrary of Palestinian workers employed inside Israel, while 43.1% work as day wage workers. In the construction sector, day wage workers constitute 55.1%



- The majority of Palestinian agricultural workers in settlements (77.1%) work on a monthly basis (they are paid monthly), while 14.6% are paid on a daily basis. This the opposite of what is expected, compared to Palestinian agricultural workers inside Israel, who are mostly day laborers
- The majority of Palestinian wage workers in settlements are permanent workers, ie, working throughout the year (60.4%). This suggests that the nature of their work in the settlements is regular and stable, to the contrary of the nature of the work of Palestinian workers in Israel, which is predominantly unstable and temporary, seasonal, especially in agriculture and construction.
- There is a low turnover for Palestinian workers in settlements; the number of times workers changed jobs in the settlement in the past four years was 1.6 times with a standard deviation of 2.4 times. 54.5% of the workers did not change jobs at all in the past four years while 45.5% change their job once or more during this period. By economic activity, 83% of workers in agriculture have not changed their job at all, 68% in the services sector, 59% in industry, and 42.5% in construction. This indicates a relative job stability for those who work in settlements
- 11% of Palestinian wage workers work on confiscated lands originally owned by their families or one of their relatives. The percentage is slightly higher for women in the study sample. This reflects the extreme situations of alienation experienced by Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements!
- 33% of Palestinian wage workers, who work in the settlements with a work permit, had to pay a sum of money in exchange for a work permit!
- The majority of Palestinian wage workers in settlements (53%) are employed by Palestinian work contractors (agents/intermediaries), while 47% of them have a direct work contract with an Israeli employer. Employing Palestinian workers through contractors (agents) gives Israeli employers a great opportunity to avoid paying important workers' rights guaranteed by the Israeli labor law enforced in Israeli settlements for Palestinian workers since 10/10/2007.
- Most of Palestinian wage workers in settlements are working without written contracts; only 8.5% work through a written individual work contract with the Israeli employer, and 1.4% have a written contract of employment with the Palestinian labor contractor (agent). 48% work in the settlements through a verbal work contract with the Palestinian intermediary, 35.5% through a verbal contract with the Israeli employer, and 6% through a verbal agreement without determining whether it is with the Palestinian contractor or the Israeli employer.
- 93% of the Palestinian wage workers in the settlements are working in work sites where there are no workers' committees representing them and defending their rights with the Israeli employer, and Palestinian intermediary, while 7% work in work sites in settlements, where there are workers' committees.

3. Average working hours and wages

- The average time that Palestinian workers need to commute back and forth from their workplace in Israeli settlements in the West Bank is one hour (60 minutes) with a standard deviation of 42 minutes; this rate is low compared to the time needed by Palestinian workers from the West Bank to commute to and from their workplaces inside Israel



- In general, the average daily working hours for Palestinian workers in settlements is 8.7 hours with a standard deviation of 2 hours.
- 70% of Palestinian wage workers in settlements are working 8 hours per day and 24% work more than 8 hours, while 6% work less than 8 hours. In the agricultural sector, 58% of wage workers are working between 12 to 14 hours a day.
- The average number of days worked per week by Palestinian wage workers in Israeli settlements is 5.3 days with a standard deviation of 0.5 days. The average number of working days per month is 22.8 days. 72% of wage workers in settlements are working 5 days a week, and 26% are working 6 days a week.
- 5.9% of the workers in the study sample are paid on hourly basis. The average hourly wage of Palestinian workers in Israeli settlements was 20.1 NIS, with a standard deviation (5.9) NIS, and this average is very close to the hourly wage specified in the Guide on the Rights of Workers in Israel (it was 22 NIS according to its latest update in July 2011). 65% of these workers are paid an hourly wage of 22 NIS per hour or more, the majority is concentrated in the manufacturing sector, while 35% of them get paid less than 22 shekels per hour, and the majority of these also work in the industrial sector.
- 67% of the workers in the study sample are paid on a daily basis (for women in the study sample, this averages 32%). The average daily wage for those working in settlements is 167.5 NIS with a standard deviation of 60.8 NIS. This rate exceeds the minimum legal wage for workers employed six days a week, amounting to (164) shekels a day, while it is less than the minimum wage for workers employed five days a week, which is 189 NIS. About half the workers (49%) working six days a week are paid less than the minimum wage, and most of them are working in the construction sector in the settlements. Moreover, about 67% of the workers employed five days a week are paid less than the minimum, and most of them also work in the construction sector.
- By economic activity, the average daily wage for workers employed six days a week is lower than the minimum wage in all sectors (except for the construction sector where it is NIS 178), while the average daily wage for workers employed five days a week is lower than the minimum wage in all economic sectors.
- The average daily wage for men (174 NIS) is twice the average daily wage for women (84 NIS), which means that Palestinian women are subjected to a greater degree of exploitation, as the average daily wage rate for women is much lower than the minimum wage in Israel and the settlements
- The average daily wage of Palestinian workers in settlements is not linked to their educational level, but to their skill, the type of work or their physical strength! The average daily wage of illiterate workers or those with reading/writing skills is 162 NIS, which is higher than the average daily wage for a worker a BA level degree, which is 159 NIS.
- 28% of the workers in the study sample are paid on a monthly basis (it is close to 63% for women in the study sample). The average monthly wage for workers paid a monthly salary in settlements is 3490 NIS with a standard deviation of 1024 NIS. This rate is lower than the minimum wage specified in the Guide for the Rights of Workers in Israel, which is 4100 NIS per month. Nearly 88% of Palestinian workers employed in the settlements on a monthly basis are paid less than the minimum wage, while only 12% of them get paid a monthly wage that is equal or more than the minimum wage.



- The average monthly wage for men is 3589 NIS, while women working in the settlements on a monthly basis are paid 3293 NIS. This indicates that wage differences between men and women are much lower for monthly wages than for daily wages.
- The average monthly wages by level of education are comparable to a large extent (except for the anomalous value of the average monthly wage for BA degree holders). This indicates that the average monthly wages for Palestinian workers in settlements does not depend on the level of education as much as it depends on other factors more important for Israeli employers. The average monthly wage for a Palestinian worker with middle school education is 3628 NIS, which is very close to a worker with a middle diploma, which is 3700 NIS!
- In general, 21% of Palestinian wage workers in Israeli settlements have pay deductions for income tax, 15.7% for health insurance, 6.4% for Israeli National Insurance, 15.9% for severance pay, 22% for transportation allowance, 13% for guarding them while working in the settlement, and 3% of the workers have union fees deducted from their wages (paid to Histadrut)! These percentages differ for workers paid on a monthly basis, as well as in relation with the workers, who receive a salary slip.
- In general, a low percentage of Palestinian wage workers in Israeli settlements obtain paid holidays and social insurances. Only 11% of the workers, who are working five days a week, and 32.5% of the workers, who are working six days a week, have access to annual paid leave, 29% of all Palestinian wage workers in settlements have insurance against work injuries, and (13%) have health insurance. 17% obtain paid religious leave. These percentages vary according to the type of economic activity in which the workers are employed, and the worst situation is the once of Palestinian workers in the construction sector in the settlements.

4. Occupational health and safety

- 75% of Palestinian wage workers in settlements are working in locations where no work clothes and protective equipment are provided for use, and this percentage reaches 79% in the construction sector.
- 71% of the workers are exposed to the sun in open workplaces, and this percentage reaches up to 91% in the construction sector, and 73% in the agricultural sector.
- 24% of the workers are exposed to allergies from chemicals and pesticides, this percentage reaches 48% for agricultural workers, and 41% for industry workers in the settlements.
- 66% of the workers are exposed to inhalation of dust, 26% are exposed to inhalation of chemicals, 24% to smoke inhalation, and 11% are exposed to inhalation of gas. By economic activity, these percentages increase for the agricultural sector, where 71% of the workers are exposed to inhalation of chemicals.
- 22% of Palestinian workers in the settlements are constantly exposed to the risks related to inflammable chemicals, and this percentage reaches up to 46% for workers in the industrial sector in the settlements. There is a high percentage of workers, who are continuously or repeatedly exposed to risks of skidding, rotating machinery, and electric shocks.
- Some 21% of Palestinian wage workers have been exposed to work injuries while working in the settlements during the last four years, and 40% of the total number of workers, who were exposed to a work injury, suffered from wounds, 33% from fractures, and 9% from burns.



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- 56% of the total number of Palestinian workers, who were exposed to work injuries in the settlements, had to cover the costs of medical treatment themselves, for 11.5% it was covered by relatives, and for 8% by Palestinian health insurance.

5. Violations of workers' rights

- 32% of Palestinian wage workers in settlements are exposed to psychological violence, 27% are exposed to persecutions on the basis of racial/ethnic appartenance, 7% are subjected to physical violence, and 32% to the threat of confiscation of their work permit!
- 42% of Palestinian workers in the settlements are exposed to violations of their rights by the Israeli occupying army, Israeli border guards and the Israeli police, 41% of them are exposed to violations of their rights by the security guards and personnel of the settlements, and 22% by Israeli employers. However, it is notable that 22% of Palestinian workers in the settlements were abused by their compatriots, Palestinian labor contractors!
- 71% of Palestinian wage workers in the settlements do not receive a salary slip, which means that most of them do not have evidence of their work, which is one of the most important documents for obtaining their rights in Israeli labor courts in case of labor dispute with the Israel employer.
- 76% of Palestinian workers in the settlements receive their wages in cash, while 16% receive their wages by check, and only 2% through bank transfer; 6% are getting paid in more than one way, which means that the majority of Palestinian workers in settlements are vulnerable to fraud on their rights by the Israel employer.
- Some 8% of Palestinian wage workers in settlements were forced to sign documents in Hebrew, which is not understood by the workers. About 3% of the workers were forced to sign documents to give up their rights, and this while working in the settlements during the past four years.

6. Alternatives to work in the settlements

- 82% of Palestinian wage workers have the desire and willingness to leave their work in the settlements if a suitable alternative is available, while 18% of them do not have the desire and readiness to quit.
- 70% of wage workers would prefer to obtain an adequately paid job, 12% would prefer to establish a small business, 9% would like to establish an agricultural project, 8% would like to set-up an industrial crafts business, while only 1% would like to work in a cooperative project.