

## The situation of the Palestinian Labor Market in 2020

### Participation in the labor force & unemployment

According to PCBS, labor force participation decreased from 44% in 2019 to 41% in 2020. Men's participation rate in the labor market reached 65% compared to 16% among women. Unemployment rates among labor force participants (15 years and over) increased to 26% in 2020 compared to 25% in 2019. Women's unemployment rates continued to double men's unemployment rates reaching 40%. The highest unemployment rates were among youth aged (15-24 years) reaching 42% (36.6% among young men & 70% among young women). As for youth graduates who hold a scientific qualification of an intermediate diploma or higher, their unemployment rate reached 54% (36% in the WB & 79% in the GS). In Gaza, 46.6% of workers suffer from unemployment (42% of men & 63.6% of women).

### Fundamental rights of workers in the private sector

**1/3** of wage workers in the private sector obtain their rights.

- 1 35% receive retirement/end-of-service indemnities, paid annual leave and paid sick leave
- 2 40% of women workers did not obtain a paid maternity leave
- 3 108 thousand do not have a work contract

28% of wage employees in the private sector (7.4% in the WB & 81% in the GS) receive less than the minimum wage of 1450 NIS (approx. 443 USD). 43% of employed persons work in the informal sector, while 62% of employed persons (67% men & 36% women) are employed in informal employment.

## Current strikes/labor disputes of Palestinian workers

### *Strike of the Federation of Unions of Palestinian Universities Professors & Employees;*

the federation has engaged in a series of protest actions against the dismissal of three unionists by Al-Quds University, on the background of a labor dispute between the union and the university's administration. The protest actions include suspension of work in universities, strikes and sit-ins in front of the Ministry of Higher Education. According to the Federation, the three unionists have been dismissed by the university's board of trustees after submitting demands on behalf of employees, and announcing a strike due to the lack of timely response by the university's administration to their demands. The Labor Ministry had attempted to act as a mediator in the dispute after the demands had been submitted, but without success. So far, despite wide mobilization, all mediation attempts to solve the dispute have failed. The Federation of Unions of Palestinian Universities Professors & Employees is calling for wide solidarity and support with their demands and protests in order to ensure respect of the right to organize.

*The Palestinian Doctors' Association* has been striking for over a month demanding an improvement in doctor's wages in the public sector, particularly an increase of general practitioners' allowance from 150% to 200%, as was obtained previously by specialized doctors. The struggle of public sector doctors isn't new, the association signed an agreement with the government last year (on 04/03/2020) for improvement in their wages, but the union was not satisfied with the way the agreement was implemented, and thus resumed its struggle. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the High Court of Justice issued a decision to stop the strike and this for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time. It should be noted that the Palestinian Law by Decree on the Exercise of the Right to Strike in the Public Sector is very restrictive, and bans medical professionals from striking without providing any alternatives, such as independent arbitration mechanisms for labor disputes.

Currently, the Doctors' Association is undertaking reduced protest actions, keeping emergency departments open in hospitals. On 03/05/2021, representatives from the Association had a dialogue with the government without reaching any agreement, but decided to pursue the dialogue for the coming week, provided that the government would cancel doctors' wage deductions against the background of a previous strike, and not take administrative or financial penalties against any doctor, in exchange for the Association to ease its procedures in the emergency departments.

### **Festival on the occasion of International Women's Day organized by the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Khuza'a with EU support highlights women's experiences in realizing their right to work**

The festival aimed to strengthen awareness of women's right to work and highlight the challenges they face in seeking a decent job.



Held in partnership with the municipality of Khuza'a and several local CSOs and cooperatives, the festival included the opening of a "Women Entrepreneurs' Exhibition" by the Minister of Entrepreneurship and Empowerment and the President of Khuza'a Municipality. In addition, several women had the opportunity to share their successful experiences at work, especially women with disabilities. [Click here for more information.](#)

**On the occasion of the annual World Day for Safety and Health at Work,** DWRC published a legal brief about OSH situation in Palestine in relation to existing laws, implementation, and violations. The paper is provided in Arabic. For further information, please [click here.](#)

### **Social assistance beneficiaries in Gaza organize to advocate for their demands**

During a conference held in Gaza on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, 2021, a social movement committee representing marginalized groups of social assistance beneficiaries, the unemployed and persons with disabilities (PWDs) was formed with the supervision of DWRC to represent these categories and their needs in front of official bodies. The committee aims to formulate the demands of marginalized groups, advocate for social protection legislation and systems that will guarantee a decent life to these groups, and communicate with competent authorities demanding their rights.



The committee's demands include improving access to health care through expanding the financial coverage of governmental health insurance; allowing social assistance beneficiaries to benefit from temporary job creation programs implemented by the Ministry of Labor in Gaza (families that obtain social assistance from the Ministry of Social Development –MOSD- are not eligible from benefiting from other programs); exempting social assistance beneficiaries from paying fees for medical reports, taking an oath in court, and any other documents that may be required by the MOSD, which constitutes a heavy financial burden on them as these fees can reach 300 shekels for some of them; and reforming the criteria for benefiting from social assistance programs for divorced women and PWDs, as eligibility is conditional to living in a separate residence from their families and not getting any financial support from immediate relatives, who are governmental employees.