

## Was there any improvements in the Palestinian Labor Market during the year 2022?

*The overall fundamental rights of Palestinian workers in the Palestinian labor market have declined during the year 2022 although there was a slight improvement when it comes to employment.* In general more workers have joined the Palestinian labor market during the year 2022 according to PCBS, as the number of people employed increased from 889 thousand in 2021 to 940 thousand in 2022. In addition, to an increase in the number of workers working in the Israeli labor market and settlements reaching 193 thousand workers in 2022 compared to 145 thousand workers in 2021. **As for participation in the labor market**, it remained the same compared to 2021, as 2 out of 10 women participate in the labor market while 7 out of 10 men do. **When it comes to unemployment**, the Palestinian labor market witnessed a slight improvement, as the unemployment rates decreased from 26.4% in 2021 to 24% in 2022. **Women's unemployment rate** also marked an improvement by 3% during 2022, reaching 40%, but still doubled men's unemployment rate. Unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip exceeded three times the unemployment rates in the West Bank reaching 45% in the GS compared to 13% in the WB.

**76% of workers are wage workers but do these workers have access to decent work?** A large number of workers are deprived from their labor rights, starting with the right to a work contract, 65% of wage workers do not have work contracts, 74% are deprived from their right to receive retirement/end-of-service indemnities, and the right to a paid maternity leave of 56% of women was denied. **After the government raised the amount of the minimum wage in 2022 to (1880 NIS)**, the percentage of workers not obtaining the minimum wage increased reaching 40% compared to 29% with the previous minimum wage account of (1450 NIS). Women did not benefit much from the increase of the minimum wage as 50% of them did not obtain the new minimum wage, compared to 38% of men.

## Striking for over a month...

Will public schools' teachers reach a settlement with government?

Thousands of teachers working in public schools have been striking for more than a month demanding the establishment of a democratic & independent trade union to represent them, the adoption of a law to professionalize education, the disbursement of a 15% bonus to the salary stipulated in the agreement made between teachers and the government last year, and the payment of their full salaries, since only 80% of teachers' salaries have been paid for more than a year due to the financial crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority.

Many teachers have been threatened to be arrested, in addition to being subjected to administrative penalties including filing a case in the Administrative Court, the arbitrary transfer of some teachers, and the referral of some senior teachers to retirement, even though there is a decision by the Prime Minister to extend their service until the end of the year. In addition to financial penalties includes deductions from the salaries of striking teachers.

**Lack of real representation for teachers working in public schools:** Teachers have been demanding the establishment of an independent and democratic trade union to represent them, despite the existence of the General Federation of Teachers. This federation is affiliated with the PLO, and teachers striking believe that this federation does not represent them especially that electing representative relies on political backgrounds not democracy.

**No going back until all demands are guaranteed;** many work agreements have been made previously between teachers and the government, but government continues to fail in fulfilling teachers' labor demands since the strike undertaken by teachers in 2016, and the strike of 2022. As a result to failing in fulfilling teachers' labor demands, teachers refuse to stop there strike measures unless all their demands are guaranteed.

## Additional Labor Disputes

### **Strike of the Area Staff Union (ASU) of the UNRWA**

In response to the suspension of the head of ASU by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East due to “escalating trade union measures”, employees of the UNRWA expanded their strike measures leading to a general strike in the West Bank starting from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023. About 3700 employees in health, education, and relief services sectors rejected the policy of cuts imposed by UNRWA against Palestinian refugees, its prejudice to the job security of its workers, and have been demanding an increase of their wages.

### **A crisis between insurance companies and the Medical Association**

The Palestinian Medical Association called on all doctors, centers and hospitals to stop dealing with insurance companies, and to provide a detailed report about medical examination and treatment given to any patient affiliated with these companies. The Association stated that insurance companies earn huge amounts of money from patients, while paying low fees to medical institutions and doctors, in addition to not paying their dues for more than a year. Thus the Medical Association requested insurance companies to commit with the association’s pricing of medical examinations and the payment of their dues. On 19/02/2023 the Medical Association and the Palestinian Insurance Federation reached an agreement, in which insurance companies would commit with the pricing set by the Medical Association form medical examinations.

### **A three-days training course about advocacy skills in Gaza**



Aiming to put pressure on decision makers, and improve the capacities and skills of unionists, DWRC contributed in building the capacities of 23 female and male workers (21 of them women), in organizing advocacy campaigns, building alliances, networking, and media skills.

## **Representatives of civil society organizations and trade unions recommended establishing specialized and effective labor courts**



They also called upon the Ministry of Labor to provide vocational training centers with a diversity of specializations, and facilitate young women’s access to these centers, in order to contribute to reducing focus

on traditional specializations that push graduates towards unemployment. These recommendations were issued during a seminar on employment policies and decent work, implemented yesterday in Nablus by DWRC through the project: “Gender Equality in the Economic Sphere: Our Right, Our Priority”, implemented in cooperation with PWWSD, COSPE and EducAid, and funded by the European Union and PSAC - Social Justice Fund.

## **The Democracy & Workers’ Rights Center implements a two-days training course about the right to organize and union leadership**

on 19/02/2023, addressing the right to organize and union leadership in Ramallah, with the participation of 13 newly elected unionists from Workers’ Union in Qalqilia Municipality, Workers’ Union in Betunia Municipality, Farmers’ Union, Secretary Workers’ Union, Kindergarten Workers’ Union, Postal Services Workers’ Union, Food and Industries Workers’ Union, and the Federation of New Unions. Through its activities, the course focused practical training and discussions on trade union organization, the importance of union foundation and structure, leadership tasks, planning, trade union meetings, and decision-making.

