Democracy & Workers' Rights Center-Palestine
مركز الديمقراطية وحقوق العاملين -فلسطين
WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Labor & Trade Union Newsletter in Palestine – June to September

(2)

Facts and figures about the Palestinian labor market

In the second quarter of 2019, unemployment remained extremely high in the Gaza Strip (47%), whereas it was 15% in the West Bank. Labor underutilization (which includes the unemployed, time-related underemployed and discouraged job seekers) concerned 33% of the labor force, i.e. 490,600 persons. Women's unemployment rate continued to be double men's, at 43.6% for women compared to 21.5% for men. As for workers' fundamental rights in the private sector, 47% of workers do not have work contracts, 51% of female workers are deprived from their right to a paid maternity leave. Furthermore and compared to 2018, no improvement was noticed on obtaining the minimum wage, as 30% of wage workers in the private sector were paid less than the minimum wage of 1450 NIS (about 405 USD), not forgetting to mention that in terms of average daily wages, women earned only 53.6% of men's wages. 30% of private sector workers have received severance pay. Over the past years, the percentages of workers obtaining severance pay/pension contributions have increased from 20.5% in 2014 to 25.1% in 2018, as well as workers obtaining paid leaves, which increased from 21.7% in 2014 to 25.2% in 2018.

For an overview about basic rights by private sector employees in Palestinian establishments from the year 2014 until the second quarter of the year 2019 based on national statistics, click on the following link: http://dwrc.org/en/1/5/33/Facts-sheets.htm

DWRC's 10th annual trade union forum focuses on labor legislation and how to enhance workers' rights protection

DWRC organized its 10th annual trade union forum in Jericho between 26 & 28 of September 2019. The forum was attended by 72 participants, about half of them women, representing 22 unions, and guest speakers from the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Local Authorities and the PNA Employees' Bureau, as well as a Palestinian-Israeli labor lawyer.

This year, the forum focused on topics related to regulations that need to be reformed, including amendments to the Regulation for Local Authorities' Employees, amendments to the Palestinian Labor Law and the law's reform process, and amendments to the Civil Service Law. The forum also focused on the draft law on union organizing, its importance, and union's comments and recommendations concerning the draft law. During the forum, women unionists had the opportunity to discuss their plans, challenges faced and needs. In addition, unionists discussed their situation, and union's successes and challenges in defending and promoting workers' rights and interests.

Two plenary sessions took place, one discussed the new Law on Occupational Safety and Health and Committees and Supervisors, as well as the steps taken by the Labor Ministry towards its implementation. The second session included a presentation of the newly adopted ILO Convention No. 190 and recommendation No. 206 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. A specialized session was organized to discuss characteristics of Palestinian labor in Israel and main violations that workers face in the Israeli labor market. *For more details, please click on the following link: http://tiny.cc/tqsqez*

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Achievements of DWRC's Legal Aid and Human Rights Unit until the 3rd quarter of 2019

By the end of September 2019, the Legal Aid and Human Rights Unit had provided more than 755 free legal consultations benefiting 2844 female and male workers, 21.9% of them women. Since the beginning of the year, the Unit adopted 56 cases of labor rights violations, among them 16 cases were solved through negotiated settlements. So far, DWRC's legal advice, and complaints solved, enabled female and male workers to obtain around 895,000 shekels in indemnities from their employers. The Legal Unit also continued to provide consultations to employers and institutions to improve compliance with the Palestinian Labor Law. 52.7% of these employers took further steps and measures to abide with the law.

Woman worker opens her own business after obtaining fair indemnities for dismissal

T.A. is a female worker, who devoted 9 years of her life to working at a candy company and used to speak up for her co-workers, relaying their demands to management. She was exposed to insults and dismissed for having an intense argument with one of her colleagues. After her dismissal & denial of rights, she went to the labor office demanding her legal indemnities. The labor office's mediation with the employer resulted in a proposed settlement of 11 thousand shekels as compensations for the dismissal. The proposed amount did not include unpaid leaves or compensation for arbitrary dismissal, therefore she refused and her complaint was referred to DWRC.

DWRC's lawyer was able to negotiate higher indemnities with the employer, reaching 20 thousand shekels. This amount includes severance pay, unpaid annual and sick leaves, and compensation for arbitrary dismissal. After T.A. obtained her indemnities, she successfully started her own project in selling decoration plants.

Representatives of PPSWU meet with the Minister of Telecom and IT to discuss issues of contract and daily wage workers, and areas of cooperation

The Palestinian Postal Service Workers' Union met in August with the Minister of Telecom and Information Technology and his deputy in Ramallah to discuss postal service workers' demands, focusing on the issues of daily wage and contract-based workers. During the meeting, both parties agreed on developing just and favorable mechanisms to enable current workers employed through fixed term contracts to obtain permanent positions as civil service employees. In addition, they agreed on setting new mechanisms for any contract workers that the Palestinian Post may employ in the future, limiting such temporary employment to one year, while seeking to build a partnership with the Labor Ministry to allow workers with terminated contracts to join vocational training courses. This would allow them to develop professional skills that will enable them to obtain jobs in other occupational fields.

They also discussed preparations for welcoming a facts-finding committee from the Global Union UNI Post and Logistics, which will come at the end of the year to document how the Israeli occupying power's measures affect the Palestinian Post. On the other hand, they talked about ways for empowering women in the Palestinian Post by educating them in laws affecting them and engaging them with training courses to improve their leadership skills. Finally, they agreed on steps for improving the work environment in postal offices and occupational safety and health.

16 new trainers in occupational safety and health in the West Bank

As part of DWRC's ToT training courses, we implemented a five-day training course on occupational safety and health attended by 15 female and male unionists and an employee from the Ministry of Agriculture. Trainees improved their knowledge and skills in delivering training sessions, preparing training materials, communication, and team building in the field of safety and health. Several trainees have started promoting OHS education by implementing training days in their workplaces/sectors of work. A similar training took place earlier this year in Gaza. So far, 29% of the trainees took steps to promote OHS and implemented training days in their workplaces or sectors.