Labor & Trade Union Newsletter in Palestine – January and February, 2021 # (10)

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 in Palestine, the number of employed persons decreased by 55 thousand compared to 2019

As is the case worldwide, the Covid-19 pandemic and governmental measures aiming to control its spread in order to save lives have affected the labor sector in Palestine. According to PCBS, labor force participation decreased from 44% in 2019 to 41% in 2020. Unemployment rates among labor force participants (15 years and over) increased to 26% in 2020 compared to 25% in 2019.

Youth graduates aged (19-29 years) who hold an associated diploma certificate and above were among the categories most affected by unemployment; as unemployment rates among this category reached 54% in 2020 (69% for young women compared to 39% for young men).

The number of employed persons decreased by 5% (from 1.01 million employed person in 2019 to 955 thousand employed person in 2020).

PALESTINIAN LABOR MARKET		ISRAELI LABOR MARKET & SETLLEMENTS	
2019 →	877,000 ↓	**2019 →**	133,000 ↓
2020 →	830,000 ↓	**2020 →**	125,000 ↓

About half of the employed persons in Palestine are classified in informal employment. When it comes to wage employees in the private sector and their rights, only **1/3 obtained basic rights** as follows; 35% obtained contributions to pension fund or severance pay, paid annual and sick leaves.

60% of women employees obtained maternity leave, 36% of employees working in the private sector have a work contract, while 23% are affiliated to workers/vocational unions in Palestine. Due to several lockdowns and other restrictions on mobility and economic activities, 14% of employed persons were absent from their jobs during 2020 due to the pandemic.

Official launch of the project: "Gender Equality in the Economic Sphere: Our Right, Our Priority"

The launch of the project "Gender Equality in the Economic Sphere: Our Right, Our Priority" was officially marked on the 24th of February, by two launch events, a virtual event for the West Bank and an event held in Gaza city. The project is implemented by the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Palestine (DWRC), in partnership with COSPE, EducAid, and the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD). The project is funded by the EU through the thematic program "Civil society organizations as actors of governance and development work in the field".

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TRADE UNIONS HOLD CONFERENCES TO ELECT THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

On 23/01/2021, **the Construction Workers' Union** held the establishing conference of its Tubas branch, which counts 144 members.

The establishing conference was attended by 76 members, who approved the union's internal statute and chose 9 representatives. This union is affiliated to the New Unions Federation.

On 27/01/2021, **Al-Umma College Employees' Union** held its periodic conference. Union members approved the financial and administrative reports presented by the outgoing union administrative committee. Candidates for the elections of the new administrative committee presented their program for improving employee's work conditions and circumstances, in particular with regard to the matter of the unified classification system for governmental higher education institutions' employees, severance pay package and supporting resilience of education in Jerusalem. Five representatives were elected, including one woman.

DWRC implements a dialogue meeting in Gaza addressing the Palestinian elections and its impact on rights of workers and graduates

On 10/02/2021, the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center implemented a dialogue meeting in Gaza about the upcoming Palestinian elections and their impact on the rights of workers and graduates. The meeting was attended by unionists, workers, young graduates, and other activists. During the meeting, participants discussed the elections' law and its impact on social rights, unionists' vision in relation to elections, and how elections will affect the situation of youth and graduates. They also agreed on the importance of participating in the electoral process. At the end of the meeting, participants agreed on a number of recommendations including; (1) reducing fees for participating in the electoral process or exempting lists, especially the lists of workers, youth and graduates. (2) The need to be represented on electoral lists. (3) To develop in the coming future labor and youth lists, so that these categories could elect their representatives, who carry their interest and issues. (4) The need to adopt social and economic laws as priorities of the electoral blocs' programs. (5) The need to raise awareness and build capacities of youth and workers to take part in the decision making process.