Labor & Trade Union Newsletter in Palestine – September & October, 2021 # (14)

The situation of the Palestinian Labor Market (3rd quarter of 2021)

According to PCBS, the labor force participation rate increased during the third quarter of 2021, reaching 44% compared to 43% in the previous quarter. Data indicated that participation on the labor force remained at the same level in the West Bank (46%), while it increased in Gaza Strip from 38% to 41%. Men's participation rate in the labor market increased from 68% to 69% during the same period, while women's participation rates increased from 17% to 18%. The number of employed persons increased by 20 thousand workers compared to the second quarter of the same year (4% increase in the W.B. compared to 4% decrease in Gaza). An increase in the number of workers working in local markets was noted; from 869 thousand workers in the 2nd quarter to 891 thousand workers in the 3rd quarter. In addition, the number of Palestinian workers working in the Israeli labor market increased by 3 thousand workers between the second and third quarter of 2021. Unemployment rates among labor force participants (15 years and over) increased from 26% to 27%. Women's unemployment rates continued to exceed men's unemployment rates, reaching 47%. The unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip remained extremely high, reaching 50% compared to 15% in the West Bank. **When it comes to fundamental rights,** half of wage workers working in the private sector do not have written work contracts, and 33% receive retirement/end-of-service indemnities, while the percentage of women not obtaining a paid maternity leave decreased from 51% to 47% between the 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2021. The percentage of wage workers employed in the private sector, who are paid less than the minimum wage of 1450 NIS, decreased from 29% to 28% (7% in the West Bank & 83% in the Gaza Strip).

TRADE UNIONS HOLD CONFERENCES TO ELECT THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

On 18/09/2021, **the Construction Workers' Union in Salfit** held its periodic conference, in which participants approved the union's internal statute and chose 9 representatives. This union is affiliated to the New Unions Federation.

The Emergency Medical Service Workers' Union held its 8th periodic conference in 25/10/2021. During the conference, participants reviewed the administrative and financial reports of the union and approved them. The president of the union talked about the union's role in defending workers' rights and improving their work conditions, and the importance of monitoring violations of workers' rights. The new president of the union was elected directly (as stated in the internal regulation of the union). Elected administrative committee members held a meeting after the conference to state all work priorities of the union.

DWRC implements a training course on the right to organize and the Palestinian Labor Law

On 26/10/2021, DWRC concluded a training course on "the right to organize and the Palestinian Labor Law" in Gaza. The two-day course was attended by 18 union representatives 14 of them were women.

During the course, participants improved their skills on freedom of association and the right to organize, how to form a trade union, holding trade union conferences, national and international laws related to trade union action, and labor rights and how to claim them. Trainees were able to improve their practical capacities when it comes to calculating the amount of severance pay when their work relationship end whether through dismissal or resignation.

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DWRC launched a digital campaign about gender equality and women's right to work

In September, the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center launched a series of short awareness ads as part of its thematic campaign for enhancing support for women's right to work #شارك_رسالتك_وادعم_المساواة_وحق_المرأة_في_العمل (#share your message and support equality and women's right to work). The ads featured awareness messages chosen by grassroots women organizations targeted through our project "Gender Equality in the Economic Sphere: Our Right, Our Priority" funded by the European Union, and implemented through a partnership between DWRC, PWWSD, COSPE and EducAid.

Field of Occupational Safety and Health

With an aim to promote workers' rights in occupational safety and health, and to contribute in building the capacities of unionists on OSH at work, the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center implemented a training course about unions' intervention in OSH between 09-11/09/2021.

The course was attended by 14 union representatives from various sectors, in which participants were able to improve their knowledge of the concept of OSH and related legislations, obligations of employers as per Palestinian labor law in ensuring OSH, work injuries and compensations, OSH committees and supervisors' law, work injuries investigation process, the role of the safety committee in the union and how to establish it, the role of labor inspectors, prevention methods, differences between work injuries and occupational diseases, reasons behind work injuries and occupational diseases and parties responsible for covering the expenses, violence and harassment at work including sexual harassment. During the training, unionists discussed methods for union intervention.

A campaign to encourage workers to get vaccinated: in light of the slow progress of Covid-19 vaccination in the Gaza Strip due to people's reluctance to get vaccinated, DWRC implemented a campaign to encourage workers in Gaza to get vaccinated, with the participation of workers and unions from various sectors, who spoke up about the importance of getting the Covid-19 vaccine to protect themselves and their families.

Rights violation: arbitrary dismissal of a female teacher after 24 years of service, and an attempt to deprive her of some of her labor rights

Teacher obtains 150,000 NIS in indemnities for labor rights

SUCCESS STORY

"I will work on my future & my family's future. I will reclaim a piece of land that I own, cultivate it and make use of it"

(H.H.) worked for 24 years as a kindergarten teacher at a school affiliated with an international organization in Al-Qbebah. In June 2020, the school notified her that they were terminating her services, without providing any legal justification, and informed her that her last day at work would be 30/08/2020.

The school's administration offered her to sign a clearance that did not take into account all her labor rights according to the laws and regulations applied at the school, which include the Palestinian Labor Law, Work Discipline Systems, and the employees' work contracts. After receiving the notice, (H.H.) sought legal assistance from the Legal Aid and Human Rights Unit at the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center. The Legal Aid Unit's team reviewed and analyzed the internal regulations of the school and the teacher's work contracts, and the rights they stipulate, and compared them with the proposed clearance. After more than a year of negotiations between the teacher and the school's administration, and after reviewing all the legal briefs prepared by DWRC, the administration decided to provide all the legal rights for the teacher estimated at 150,000 NIS. *For more details please click here: http://dwrc.org/en/1/8/543/Success-Story-teacher-obtains-150000-NIS-in-indementies-for-labor-rights.htm*