Labor & Trade Union Newsletter in Palestine – September & October, 2022 # (20)

The situation of the Palestinian Labor Market

According to PCBS, the third quarter of 2022 witnessed some changes when it comes to the labor market in terms of number of employed people, statute of employment, and fundamental rights, as follows;

Increase in the number of employed people; a 3.3% increase in the number of employed people *(from about 1.114 million in the 2nd quarter of 2022 to about 1.151 million in the 3rd quarter of the same year).* This increase came as a result to the increase of employed persons in the West Bank (by 3.6%), and in the Gaza Strip (by 2.4%). While there was a **decrease in the number of Palestinian workers working in Israel** by about 11 thousand workers. In addition, the number of employed persons in Israeli Settlements decreased from about 29 thousand in the 2nd quarter 2022 to about 27 thousand in the 3rd quarter 2022.

One fourth of labour force participants were unemployed; the unemployment rate among labour force participants (15 years and above) was about 25% *(13% in the WB compared to 47% in the GS)*. Women's unemployment rate doubled men's unemployment rate reaching 43%, as men's unemployment rate was 20%. What is highly noticeable is **the gender imbalance in employment in the tourism sector;** during the 2nd quarter of 2022, as 47.3 thousand are wage workers (44.4 thousand men are employed in this sector compared to 2.9 thousand women), while 7.0 thousand are self-employed (6.1 thousand men and 0.9 thousand women).

When it comes to fundamental rights; 62% of wage workers in the private sector do not have a work contract, 73% are deprived from their right to receive retirement/end-of-service indemnities, and 53% of women obtained a paid maternity leave. **40% of workers in the private sector received less than the minimum wage of (1,880 NIS);** 19% in the WB & 90% in the GS. There is a huge wage gap between the WB & GS, as the average monthly wage of workers paid less than the minimum wage in Gaza was (705 NIS) compared to (1,461 NIS) in the West Bank.

Gaza unionists develop advocacy and collective bargaining skills

With the participation of 30 unionists (21 of them women), the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center concluded a three-days training course focusing on advocacy and collective bargaining in Gaza on 12/10/2022.

The training course focused on the importance of advocacy campaigns, building alliances, networking between associations and trade unions, and collective bargaining. The course also highlighted the importance of trade union action to improve the situation of Palestinian workers.

As part of the awareness campaign "Equality at work is a right for all women", DWRC implemented an event on "women's right to access the labor market" on 27/09/2022 in Qalqilia

The event was implemented in partnership with the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, Cospe, and EducAid, with the support of the European Union.

The event highlighted women's right to access job opportunities without discrimination. During the event, women shared their experiences and challenges they face at work. The event also included a presentation of the "Help desk" service for people with disabilities at labor offices, which aims to integrate women with disabilities into the labor market by documenting data for women and enhancing their chances of obtaining employment opportunities. Different entertaining and awareness activities took place during the event, as several associations were able to present their products and services.

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

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In support of women workers: the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center obtained 15,000 NIS as indemnities for a woman worker at a local municipality

(SH.A.) is a 40 year old woman worker and a mother of five children, who worked as an office housekeeping agent for three years at a municipality in the Ramallah governorate, but was never paid the minimum wage. At the beginning of 2022, the worker decided to leave her current job due to delays in paying her wages. It was not an easy decision for her, especially since she supports her husband in providing basic needs for their family.

(Sh.A.) asked the municipality's administration to provide her legal rights, but the administration rejected her request on the pretext that she is a day-wage worker, and thus has no labor rights. Four months after leaving her job, the worker had not received any of her rights. (SH.A.) sought legal advice from DWRC's Legal Aid and Human Rights Unit. DWRC's legal consultant, Mrs. Samah Farakhneh, confirmed that the status of "day-wage worker" does not apply to (SH.A.), since she was paid a monthly wage, although day-wage workers are also guaranteed basic labor rights under the Palestinian Labor Law. She was also advised to demand her labor rights guaranteed by the law, including: *severance pay, the minimum wage difference, and a work certificate.* During the first stage of negotiations, the municipality offered to pay 8,000 NIS as compensations for (SH.A.), which was not a fair amount.

Through a number of dialogue sessions and negotiations that lasted for two months, the worker was able to obtain an amount of 15,000 NIS. She said: *"I am unable to go to courts to demand my rights. This way I obtained my rights and it was more than I expected".* If the worker had decided to file a case with the judiciary, she may have been awarded a higher amount than the one she obtained through negotiations. However, due to the lack of specialized labor courts in Palestine, the length, difficulty and complexity of the legal procedures (which may last for more than 5 years), many workers prefer to accept a negotiated settlement that they consider to be fair in many cases.

DWRC trains 15 unionists on ILO convention (No.190) about violence and harassment in the world of work

The three-days training course focused on highlighting various forms of violence that occur in workplaces, including economic & psychological violence, in addition to explaining Convention no. 190, the role of trade unions in preventing violence and harassment at work, protection mechanisms at work, and how to deal with a case that includes a violation of rights related to violence and harassment at work.

DWRC participated in the MENA network meeting in Istanbul, organized by the Olof Palme International Center; this meeting allowed DWRC team members to exchange information with counterparts about labor and union situations in Turkey, Somalia, Sweden and Palestine and seek ways to collaborate.

DWRC contributed in developing ESCR-Net's report on transforming conflict-affected situations for women

In conflict-affected situations, women are among the vast majority who experience job losses and lay-offs. Women continue to bear the burden of care work in general, care for sick people and older adults - which remains unaccounted for, made invisible, and unvalued. Access of women and girls to essential services has become even more challenging. As a result of migration and displacements spurred by conflict, economic necessity and other processes, many rural households are headed by women, yet they are not fully recognized. Women and girls also face different barriers and forms of discrimination based on their intersecting identities in each society. ***Click here to review the report.***