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

Labor & Trade Union Newsletter in Palestine – July & August, 2023 # (25)

Less education leads to higher earnings: the distorted reality of the Palestinian labor market

In principle, more education should lead to earning a higher income, but statistics indicate that the contrary is true for Palestinian labour force participants. The average monthly wage for employees with a secondary education & less (3881 shekels) was higher than the wages of those with a higher education diploma (3562 shekels) in the second quarter of 2023. This was also the case in the first quarter.

Average daily wages of Palestinian workers employed in Israel & Israeli settlements are much higher than those of workers employed in the Palestinian public & private sectors, & most of the jobs available in the Israeli labour market (in construction, agriculture, hotels & restaurants) do not require highly educated workers. During the period April-June 2023, the average daily wage of workers in Israel & Israeli settlements was 288.8 shekels (72.6 EUR), while the average daily wage in the West Bank was about half (136.8 shekels – 34.4 EUR). It was more than five times lower in the Gaza Strip (53.8 shekels – 13.5 EUR). 138,700 workers were employed in Israel (3,900 of them from Gaza) and 25,300 were employed in Israeli settlements, representing 14.3% of employed Palestinians (& 18.4% of employed persons in the West Bank). 36% of wage workers working in the Palestinian private sector were paid below the Palestinian monthly minimum wage of 1,880 shekels (about 472.5 EUR), 14% of them in the West Bank & 90% of them in Gaza. The average monthly wage of these workers was 717 shekels (180.2 EUR) in the Gaza Strip and 1,385 shekels (348 EUR) in the West Bank.

The monthly wage loss for workers due to non-abidance with the minimum wage can be estimated at 21.42 million shekels in the West Bank and 138.4 million shekels in the Gaza Strip, i.e. 5.7 & 34.8 million EUR respectively.

Will those employed in the Palestinian private sector finally have access to social security? A new draft law has been circulated for discussion.

A new draft of the Social Security Law for private sector workers was presented for discussion by the Labor Ministry from May 2023. DWRC engaged with the consultation process organized by MAS in Gaza and through the National Committee for Women's Employment in the West Bank, and submitted its technical and legal comments on the draft law to the Minister of Labor.

Women in Gaza continue to face blatant discrimination in employment and education

Female youth continued to face discrimination in two higher education institutions in the Gaza Strip, as these universities have set higher grades thresholds for girls than boys for acceptance in a number of fields of study. Al Aqsa University (a governmental institution) practices discrimination against female secondary school graduates in 30% of proposed study fields, while the Islamic University discriminates against them in the field of medicine. Higher education institutions should respect and fulfill the right to equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Palestinian basic law and international human rights conventions in their education programs.

The vast majority of Palestinian universities and higher education colleges uphold this right, but not in the Gaza Strip. DWRC & the National Coalition "My Right" denounced these practices in a letter addressed on 3/08/2023 to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Higher Education & Scientific Research, and received a response from the Minister of Higher Education stating that the Ministry is following-up on the matter based on related decisions of the Higher Education Council….

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Discrimination against women in Gaza (cont.):

…The Ministry of Education in Gaza did also practice open discrimination against women in its recruitment process for new public school teachers for the school year (2023-2024). It has set and published higher passing scores for interviews of women applicants for teachers' positions than those required from male applicants.

DWRC implements social dialogue sessions to improve women's access to decent jobs

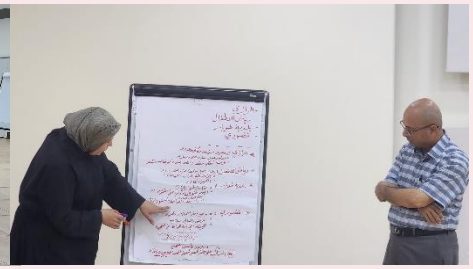
DWRC implemented four social dialogue sessions in Beit Hanoun, Khan Younis, Rafah, and Al-Nuseirat aiming at improving women's access to decent jobs in the various Gaza Strip governorates.

The sessions were attended by representatives of labor offices, municipalities, civil society organizations, unions, and cooperatives. During the sessions, violations of women's rights in the labor market were highlighted, including violence, discrimination, and harassment at work that form a real obstacle to achieving decent jobs for women. Participants stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation between various stakeholders to achieve effective progress in improving women's participation in the labor market, and removing barriers that stand in the way of achieving equality rights and opportunities at work.

During DWRC's annual trade union forum (no.13) in the West Bank, unionists analyzed the overall social, political, and economic environment affecting workers' rights and the labor movement.

Participants discussed issues related to the right to work, decent work, equality & non-discrimination, and the right for social protection. After discussing all these issues, unionists contributed in developing the strategic plan for DWRC for the upcoming three years.

18 union representative discuss mechanisms to improve occupational safety and health at work



On 28/08/2023, DWRC implemented a workshop in Ramallah to discuss issues related to occupational safety and health with the participation of 18 union representatives. Participants discussed conditions and mechanisms to achieve a safe work environment, and highlighted the important role of trade union representatives in negotiating with employers to provide OSH tools and equipment to workers in different work sectors, as well as the importance of raising awareness among workers about using them properly. Participants also discussed the importance of forming OSH committees at work and the need to play a role in monitoring the application of safety procedures at work. They also recommended highlighting violations related to OSH at work, and the provision of tools and equipment, improve communication with relevant bodies including the civil defense and the PRCS, and conducting dialogue with employers about the need to provide insurance against work injuries for workers in all sectors.