4th Report on

The impact of the Corona Virus

Crisis on the workers
Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights monitored numerous violations reported by workers in various sectors. These sectors include: Services, Restaurants, Daily Workers, Manufacturing, Irregular Workers, as well as Transportation. These violations were recorded in the period between 23 - 25 of March.

Since the beginning of the crisis, Jordan took a number of steps to curtail the spread of the virus. Most notably of them was the curfew imposed by the government through Defence Order No. 1 of 2020 as announced by Prime Minister Omar Razzaz on Friday March 20 in accordance with the provisions of the National Defence Law. As a result, sirens sounded on Saturday morning at 7 am to signal the Kingdom-level curfew, which isolated each governorate and banned any gatherings, regardless of their goals or objectives. It also banned any forms of movement except those that were deemed essential and thus allowed for by the government.

As part of its work, Tamkeen has monitored the status of the Jordanian Labour Market and the impacts of these decisions on its workers. Indeed, the current report is part of a series that Tamkeen has been publishing since the onset of the Crisis. It will thus flesh out the most important violations faced by workers in various sectors, as shown below:
Agricultural Sector:

The majority of Agricultural Workers work on a daily basis, as they receive their wages on a daily or weekly basis or once the season ends. The wage system even includes those regular workers who work in Food Chain Factories, since their wage is calculated based on their daily work, although they receive a monthly wage. It should also be noted that these workers are not provided with annual paid vacation days as provided for in the Jordanian Labour Code.

In light of the current circumstances and even though the Agricultural sector was excluded from Defence Order No.1, the majority of the workers in Deir Alla, Irbid, Mafraq, Azraq as well as Lubban district in Amman reported that they were unable to reach their working places. Their inability meant that these workers would be unable to receive their daily wages. Other workers reported that they were willing to leave their homes and risk their lives to secure their livelihoods; while others said they are waiting to be provided with permits that would allow the to move to and from their working places, especially since now it is the season of beans. Meanwhile, workers who reside inside the farms or in areas near it reported that they are still working.

As for the provision of occupational safety tools specifically for COVID-19 or even in general, the workers reported that they have to provide it on their account for themselves. These unsafe working conditions place these in further risks due to the current virus, and leads to them working in a fear and uncertainty-filled environment.

On the other hand, workers have also pointed out to the impact the crisis has had on employers as they could not sell their crops in the market, especially after the markets and restaurants were closed. Employers were also unable to move, which resulted in financial loss both in terms of income and revenue.
Construction Sector:

The sector consists of those who work in building: indoor electrical installations, tiling, painting, sanitary installations, as well as the manufacturing of aluminium windows and doors and their home installation.

Workers in the sector, regardless of their nationalities or whether they are daily workers who work for an employer, a contractor or for their own account, or even contractors themselves, that they have stopped working as a result of the crisis. The stoppage in work has negatively affected them as they depended on the wages they received in days where work was available. The situation worsens for those workers who are not included under the umbrella of Social Security, as a high number of Egyptian workers work in the sector even though they hold either agricultural work permits or invalid permits. As for Syrian workers who hold flexible work permits, they are not required to pay any of the monthly contributions in order to be able to renew the permit the following year. The majority of Jordanian workers, on the other hand, work for their own account and thus are not registered under the umbrella of Social Security. Therefore, this category cannot claim unemployment compensation in light of the current crisis.

Like their counterparts in the agricultural sector, daily workers in the construction sector have confirmed that their living conditions has deteriorated, and that it is expected to get even worse in light of the indefinite interruption of work. These comments were repeated in many interviews with the Tamkeen team, including that of a worker who said that he was forced to borrow money to buy bread for his family.
Barbershops and Hair Salons:

Both workers and employers in male barbershops and female hair salons face a complete stoppage to all of their activities. The cessation is not just the result of the issuance of Defence Order No. 2 as the sector was not included in the excluded sectors, but also due to the possibility of the spread of the virus through the tools used in salons, as it has direct contacts with both the worker and the customer.

Workers in the sector have confirmed that they are unable to provide for their basic livelihoods, like the other sectors. The most important of these needs are the rents to their shops and houses; as well as their loans instalments; their electricity and water bills; and the basic needs of their houses from food and drinks.
Barbershops and Hair Salons:

The impact of the crisis was felt by workers in the Textile sector on two fronts: the first of which was due to the stop of requests by customers to workers, whether those working at home or in factories; while the second relates to the inability of workers to reach their working place. Thus, the impact was felt by workers whose income was stopped; or were not paid their wages by the employers as factories are usually committed to producing a certain number of clothes. In cases where these factories cannot meet their numbers and deliver their products on time, they will not pay the wages of their workers.
Restaurants:

Both daily and formal workers have reported that the Defence Order has meant a total cessation of their activities, which meant that they will not be receiving their wages throughout the curfew period. When these workers were asked about their living conditions, the workers who are either Jordanians, Egyptians or Syrians, reported that their wages are usually around 6-14 JODs a day based on the number of years of experience and the nature of their work.

Restaurant workers were negatively impacted by the crisis, as they were unable to pay their house rents, while others were unable to provide the basic needs for their families and thus were forced to only get what they can afford, which was limited to bread and yogurt.

As for Productive Kitchens, its owners who are mostly women, share the losses felt by restaurant workers and employers alike. Ever since the crisis, customers have stopped making orders, which led to great losses, especially as many of these kitchens were expected to receive many orders to celebrate Mothers’ Day on March 21. As a result of Defence Order No. 2 though, these women suffered great losses as they had already bought the basic materials but then were not compensated when these orders were cancelled.
Governmental Procedures to help the poor and those affected:

The government announced a series of decisions to provide benefits to a number of categories. These included: the poor, daily workers, the elderly, in addition to Palestinians and Gazans. The government said that these benefits were provided to compensate for the impact that the governmental measures that were taken to reduce the Corona virus on them. However, it was noted that neither the measures announced by the Social Security Corporation nor by the National Aid Fund mention migrant workers, refugees or even the children of Jordanian women who do not have a Jordanian nationality.

The omission of these categories is worrying as many of them work in the formal sector and are in fact registered under the umbrella of Social Security. Besides, these categories are considered among the most vulnerable in the Jordanian society as they continue to be exploited in terms of their decent work conditions and social protection. Thus, some of them continue to receive low wages; work in unsafe environments and are subjected to numerous types of labour violations.

It should be noted here that the number of actively insured people under the umbrella of Social Security is 1 million, 317 thousand, 163 thousand of them are not Jordanians, which means that 12.4% of active subscribers in SSC are non-Jordanians.
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