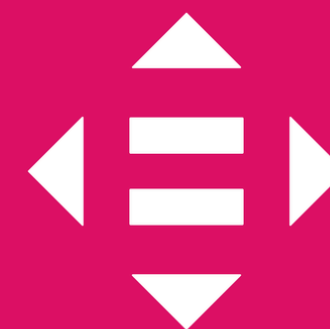


International Labour
Organization



MUNOX 24
15th Model United Nations of Xiamen

10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



Background Guide

Impact of Domestic Policies on Immigrant Labor Rights in Saudi Arabia

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Welcome Letter From The DAIS

Distinguish and honorable delegates:

Welcomed to Model United Nations of Xiamen 2024! I am Kyle Kim, a grade 11 student studying at Manila Xiamen International School, and I will be your director for this year's ILO committee. It is truly an honor to serve as your director for this year, see you at the conference!

My name is Sachiko Ting, and I am an 11th-grader from Chiway Repton School. It is an honour and great pleasure to serve as an assistant director for this year's International Labour Organization (ILO) committee in MUNOX. I hope to see delegates actively interacting and debating about the topic. Whether you represent a powerful nation or a smaller country, every voice matters, so don't be afraid to speak up and voice your perspective.

As we set out on this journey, we need to emphasize what a fabulous opportunity this is for everyone. MUN is something beyond an activity; it is a chance for you to connect with current worldwide issues, improve your communication skills, and work with peers from different backgrounds to carry out a solution. We encourage everybody here to embrace this experience completely and not be afraid to speak out your thoughts. Remember that the skills you accumulate here can be further applied into your future career!

This year ILO's topic focuses on the "Impact of Domestic Policies on Immigrant Labor Rights in Saudi Arabia." We are keen to see delegates deliver their unique perspectives and speeches to construct a flawless resolution. Keep in mind that if you put in your best effort, success will follow. Best of luck to everyone!

Sincerely yours,

Kyle Kim and Sachiko Ting

ILO Director and Assistant director

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Committee Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice by setting international labour standards. Founded in October 1919 under the League of Nations, it is one of the first and oldest specialized agencies of the UN. The ILO has 187 member states: 186 out of 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with around 40 field offices around the world, and employs some 3,381 staff across 107 nations, of whom 1,698 work in technical cooperation programmes and projects.

The ILO's standards are aimed at ensuring accessible, productive, and sustainable work worldwide in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. They are set forth in 189 conventions and treaties, of which eight are classified as fundamental according to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Together, these treaties protect freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labor, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The ILO is also a major contributor to international labour law.

Within the UN system the organization has a unique tripartite structure; all standards, policies, and programmes require discussion and approval from the representatives of governments, employers, and workers. This framework is maintained in the ILO's three main bodies: The International Labour Conference, which meets annually to formulate international labour standards; the Governing Body, which serves as the executive council and decides the agency's policy and budget; the International Labour Office, which is the permanent secretariat that administers the organization and implements activities.

In 2019, the organization convened the Global Commission on the Future of Work, whose report made ten recommendations for governments to meet the challenges of the 21st century labour environment. These include a universal labour guarantee, social protection from birth to old age and an entitlement to lifelong learning. With its focus on international development, it is

a member of the United Nations Development Group, a coalition of UN organizations aimed at helping meet the Sustainable Development Goals.



Topic Introduction

• Impact of Domestic Policies on Immigrant Labor Rights in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, a country generally relying on its immense oil riches, has long depended on immigrant workforce to drive its financial development and framework improvement. Migrant workers, mainly from North and Southeast Asia, structure the foundation of numerous enterprises, from development and homegrown work to medical services and accommodation. The nation continues to enhance its economy under its Vision 2030 arrangement, which is one of Saudi Arabia's essential system pointed toward broadening the economy and lessening dependence on oil by improving areas like tourism, technology, and entertainment. Treatment and rights of its immigrant workforce have become critical issues both domestically and internationally.

Saudi Arabia's dependence on immigrant workers started during the mid 20th century as the country experienced quick monetary improvement following the discovery of oil. As the nation's oil supply increases, so did its requirement for work across a large number of businesses. Notwithstanding, the native labor force was still unable to satisfy the demand of this fast development. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia went to immigrate workers, especially from developing countries, to fill the hole. These workers were fundamentally utilized in low-wage, work serious areas, including development, support, and homegrown work.

The policies encompassing work regulations, migration regulation, and social protection fundamentally influence the living and working states of foreign workers. While certain changes have been carried out to work on laborers' freedoms, many difficulties remain. The intersection point of nation policies and migrant work privileges in Saudi Arabia uncovers a perplexing image of progress, stagnation, and ongoing debates about how to more readily safeguard the country's enormous migrant labor force.

The dependence on immigrant workers was organized with the introduction of the Kafala framework, a legitimate system intended to regulate immigrant workers. Under the Kafala

framework, migrant workers should have a sponsor who is liable for their visa, residency, and work grants. This sponsorship framework gave businesses huge command over their laborers, including the capacity to keep them from changing position or leaving the country without the business' authorization. While the Kafala framework worked with the flood of immigrant workers, it likewise settled in a power unevenness among employers and employees, prompting broad reports of double exploitation, discrimination and abuse.

The Kafala framework has been broadly censured for making an uneven power dynamic, permitting businesses to keep compensation, seize international IDs, and force over the top working hours. For instance, domestic workers from nations like the Philippines and Indonesia have detailed instances of physical and boisterous attacks, outrageous working conditions, and extended periods without rest. According to Human Right Watch, numerous specialists end up caught in shady positions since they can't change businesses or leave the country without their support's endorsement. In 2019, a study by Traveler Rights.org found that over 60% of the 3 million homegrown laborers in Saudi Arabia were impacted by these practices.

Throughout the long term, Saudi Arabia's financial requirements have kept on advancing. However, its reliance on immigrant workers has remained. Today, around 10 million immigrant laborers live and work in Saudi Arabia, representing almost 33% of the nation's complete populace. These workers come from a large number of nations, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Egypt, and are utilized in different areas, including domestic work, development, medical care, and cordiality. Notwithstanding their fundamental job in the economy, large numbers of these laborers face critical difficulties because of prohibitive policies.

Because of worldwide tension and as a feature of its Vision 2030 plan, Saudi Arabia has presented changes pointed toward further developing work privileges for immigrant laborers. In March 2021, Saudi Arabia announced changes to the Kafala framework, permitting immigrant laborers more opportunity to change occupations without their manager's consent and decreasing the gamble of being caught in oppressive workplaces. The changes likewise acquainted new measures with shield laborers from wage burglary and exploitation. In particular, the changes apply to around 7 million exile laborers in the confidential area, offering them more prominent

portability.

Nonetheless, while these changes address a step in the right direction, many labor rights groups contend that they don't go sufficiently far. Key areas, like domestic work, are as yet barred from these changes, implying that large numbers of the 1.6 million domestic laborers from nations like India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines stay powerless. Moreover, the absence of powerful authorization components has left numerous laborers unfit to profit from the new guidelines. Reprieve Worldwide has detailed that regardless of the changes, instances of misuse and exploitation proceed, particularly in labor camps where construction workers primarily from South Asia face poor living conditions and are still subject to harsh control by their employers.

Saudi Arabia's domestic policies connected with residency and social administrations further confound the experience of immigrant laborers. Workers frequently face difficulties in getting residency permits and getting to essential administrations like medical care and schooling. While certain specialists, especially those utilized in higher-paying areas, may approach social advantages, lower-wage laborers frequently live in conditions that are far below the normal standard.

A 2018 report by the International Labor Organization featured that many labor camps housing South Asian immigrant laborers, including those from India, Pakistan, and Nepal, needed sufficient admittance to clinical consideration. The report found that these camps, frequently situated on the edges of significant urban communities like Riyadh and Jeddah, were overcrowded, with laborers living in squeezed quarters, frequently sharing a room with others. The absence of legitimate clinical consideration has been a specific worry during the coronavirus pandemic, when numerous laborers found themselves unfit to get to clinics or centers.

In addition, Saudi Arabia's Nitaqat system, which was implemented to increase employment opportunities for Saudi nationals, has further posed a threat to the immigrant workers. Under these policies, organizations are expected to meet quotas for employing Saudi residents, and firms that don't consent face punishments, including restrictions on hiring immigrant workers. While the policy aims to reduce unemployment among Saudi nationals, it has

created uncertainty for migrant workers, many of whom face the threat of deportation if their employers fail to meet the required quotas.



Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities seeks to end injustice and make the world better by providing everyone an opportunity. This goal aligns closely with the ILO's mission of promoting social justice.



Current Situation

Overview of Immigrant Labor in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the world's largest destinations for immigrant workers, with around 13 million immigrants living in the nation, making up almost 37% of the absolute populace of 35 million starting around 2023. Immigrant laborers in Saudi Arabia are primary from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (Philippines and Indonesia), and Africa (Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia). These immigrant laborers fill a vital role across enterprises, including construction, domestic work, hospitality, retail, and service. The development area specifically utilizes over 3.7 million specialists, while immigrant workers account for 1.6 million laborers.

Immigrant workers have been vital for Saudi Arabia's economic development, particularly as the realm leaves on its ambitious Vision 2030 arrangement. Vision 2030 tries to enhance the economy away from oil reliance by zeroing in on areas like the travel industry, entertainment, and development. As these industries grow, so does the interest in work, which keeps on being provided generally by immigrant laborers because of the moderately low support of Saudi nationals in manual and service-based jobs.

The Kafala System and Labor Reforms

For a long period of time, Saudi Arabia's work strategies were managed by the Kafala framework, a structure that tied immigrant workers legal status to their employers. Under Kafala, laborers were expected to have the authorization of their managers to change occupations, leave the nation, or restore their residency grants, often leading to exploitation, forced labor, and human rights abuse. Immigrant laborers were oftentimes exposed to wage keeping, identification seizures, long working hours, and dangerous everyday environments, with restricted responses to legitimate insurance.

In March 2021, Saudi Arabia introduced critical changes with the Kafala framework, known as the Labor Reform Initiative (LRI), which looked to further develop work conditions

and line up with worldwide labor standards. The changes permitted immigrant laborers to change occupations without the endorsement of their bosses, apply for exit and reemergence visas without manager assent, and leave the country without requiring their manager's consent. Additionally, the reforms provided workers with greater access to labor dispute resolution mechanisms and labor courts.

Notwithstanding, in spite of these changes, there is continuous concern about the viability of their implementation. Reports from associations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International propose that while the legitimate structure has improved, authorization stays conflicting. Numerous businesses keep on seizing laborers' visas, keeping wages, and subjecting workers to shady circumstances, especially in domestic work and low-wage areas where legitimate securities are frequently more fragile or nonexistent. Immigrant workers, who are predominantly women from the Philippines, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, remain particularly defenseless against abuse, including physical and sexual violence, exhaustion, and confinement, as they are avoided from a portion of the securities presented by the work changes.

Living and Working Conditions of Migrant Workers

Immigrant laborers in Saudi Arabia, particularly those in construction, domestic work, and other low-paid areas, frequently persevere through unfortunate living and working circumstances. Numerous workers live in packed work camps or employer-provided housing, with restricted admittance to medical care, sanitation, and fundamental services. For immigrant workers, the circumstances are many times more tricky. Many are bound to their bosses' homes, working extended periods of time with little reprieve, and confronting limitations on correspondence with the rest of the world. Human rights organizations have documented cases of abuse, exploitation, and even trafficking, with workers facing significant obstacles in accessing legal remedies or escaping abusive situations due to the power imbalance inherent in the employer-worker relationship.

The Saudi government has done whatever it takes to address a portion of these issues. Notwithstanding the Labor Reform Initiative, immigrants have presented a wage security system,

which commands that businesses should pay compensation through bank moves to further develop straightforwardness and responsibility. Saudi Arabia has likewise settled work courts to successfully address complaints more. In spite of these actions, underlying issues inside the work market, including restricted admittance to equity, fear of retaliation, and the continuous control that businesses hold over laborers' lawful status, keep on presenting critical hindrances to working on the general freedoms and government assistance of immigrant workers.

Comparisons and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Context

Saudi Arabia's immigrant work strategies and difficulties are not remarkable. Across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain, similar work frameworks are set up. Like Saudi Arabia, these nations have depended on the Kafala framework to direct immigrant work, bringing about inescapable reports of exploitation and abuse. The construction of larger-scale infrastructure projects, like those for the FIFA World Cup in Qatar and Exhibition 2020 in Dubai, has featured the situation of immigrant laborers across the locale. The MENA region as a whole hosts millions of migrant workers, with countries like the UAE and Qatar introducing reforms similar to Saudi Arabia's, though with varying degrees of success in terms of implementation and enforcement.

Conversely, a few nations in the region, like Lebanon and Jordan, have seen deteriorating conditions for immigrant workers because of political precariousness, economic crises, and the effects of conflict. In Lebanon, for instance, the breakdown of the economy and the downgrading of the cash have left numerous immigrant laborers stranded. In Jordan, while changes have been made to further develop work securities for immigrant laborers, particularly in the garment industry, challenges remain in enforcing these regulations and addressing the systemic issues of low wages, long hours, and inadequate living conditions.

International Criticism and Calls for Further Reform

Global associations, including the International Labor Organization, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International,

have consistently called for stronger enforcement of work regulations and extra changes to safeguard immigrant laborers in Saudi Arabia. These associations have underlined the gap in legitimate protection for immigrant laborers and have required the complete abandonment of the Kafala framework rather than piecemeal changes.

One of the main points of contention raised by the international watchdog is the absence of admittance to equity for immigrant laborers. Notwithstanding the presentation of labor courts, numerous laborers know nothing about their freedoms and lack the resources to navigate the legal system. Moreover, fear of retaliation frequently prevents laborers from reporting maltreatments or looking for legitimate plans of action. The framework, despite the fact that it is improved, still grants businesses extensive command over laborers' lawful status, making it challenging for them to act freely in safeguarding their own privileges.

Besides, the continuous financial and political changes in the region have exacerbated the weaknesses of immigrant workers. Increasing expenses of living, particularly for fundamental things like food and fuel, have stressed immigrant laborers' capacity to help themselves and their families. Numerous workers send settlements back to their nations of origin, which have become more basic as the worldwide financial emergency, exacerbated by expansion and struggle, influences their families' jobs.

Bloc Positions

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), consisting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait, has vigorously depended on immigrant workers to support their quickly developing economies, especially in areas like construction, domestic work, hospitality, and medical care.

The GCC state upholds the Kafala framework as a fundamental administrative structure for overseeing immigrant laborers. While recognizing that changes are needed to address global worries about work privileges, they contend that the Kafala framework is urgent for guaranteeing monetary strength and security inside their work markets. Starting around 2021, the complete number of immigrant laborers in the GCC was roughly 8.5 million, with Saudi Arabia facilitating around 10 million migrants, making up almost 33% of its populace (Bay Work Market Reports).

Settlements from these migrants are huge, with Saudi Arabia alone sending about \$37 billion in settlements yearly, affecting the economies of work-sending nations like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. A report from the World Bank gauges that settlements from Saudi Arabia represent 6.5% of the nation's gross domestic product, underscoring the financial relationship between labor sending and receiving countries.

Southeast Asia

Southeastern Asian countries, such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, compose the primary labor-exporting nation to Saudi Arabia. Migrant laborers from these nations frequently face critical difficulties, including exploitative work and deficient lawful securities.

Starting around 2021, roughly 1.1 million Filipinos were working in Saudi Arabia, with many utilized as specialists confronting extreme difficulties, including restricted admittance to equity and security from misuse (Philippine Abroad Business Organization). As per Basic

Freedoms Watch, almost 1 of every 4 migrant laborers announced being exposed to different types of misuse, including actual savagery and constrained work. The organization documents numerous cases of labor trafficking, especially among female domestic laborers from nations like Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

These countries advocate for more security for their nationals working abroad and calls for far-reaching work changes in Saudi Arabia. They underline the significance of international labor standards and the requirement for a system that guarantees the freedoms of migrant workers. In response, nations such as the Philippines and Bangladesh have executed measures to defend their nationals working abroad. The Philippines has laid out the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), which offers support services, including legitimate help and government assistance programs for Filipino laborers in Saudi Arabia. In 2021, the Philippine government launched a “one-stop shop” for migrant workers, offering comprehensive services ranging from job placement to legal advice.

Bangladesh has likewise made strides by consenting to a reciprocal work arrangement with Saudi Arabia in 2018, which incorporates arrangements for fair wages, health care coverage, and worked on working circumstances. Moreover, the Bangladeshi government has made a framework for pre-departure direction programs, guaranteeing that migrants are educated regarding their freedoms as well as expectations prior to leaving the country.

Nepal has likewise made progress by enacting the Foreign Employment Act, which aims to regulate recruitment agencies and give better security to immigrant laborers.

Western Bloc

Countries within the Western bloc, including the European Union, the United States, and Canada, have been vocal critics of the freedoms circumstances concerning migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and the need for eliminating the Kalafa system. They stress the requirement for adherence to global basic freedom guidelines.

The Western bloc focuses on the need for exhaustive changes to further develop work freedoms and dispense with manipulative practices like the Kafala situation. They ask Saudi Arabia to maintain its commitment to international labor standards and human rights treaties. The U.S. State Department's annual Human Rights Reports detail labor rights concerns, emphasizing the need for reforms and specifically highlighting issues related to the Kafala system, with the 2022 report calling for better protections for workers. Similarly, during the EU-Saudi Arabia Human Rights Dialogue in 2020, EU officials pressed for comprehensive labor rights reforms.

In its 2021 Trafficking with Persons Report, the U.S. Department of State showed that Saudi Arabia stays on the Tier 2 Watchlist for illegal exploitation, featuring continuous issues connected with labor exploitation and human rights abuse. A 2020 report by Amnesty International uncovered that roughly 1.6 million domestic workers in Saudi Arabia stay defenseless against violence, frequently missing sufficient legitimate securities. The European Parliament passed a goal in 2021 urging Saudi Arabia to change its work regulations, especially those influencing migrant workers, and underlined the requirement for accountability for violations.

Africa and Latin America

Albeit African and Latin American nations don't supply workers to Saudi Arabia at a similar scale as South Asia, they still hold a stake in the discussions around freedoms and worker conditions for immigrant labor. This bloc upholds the improvement of work conditions, accentuating the requirement for monetary advancement close by the backing for labor workers freedoms. They enter into bilateral agreements with Saudi Arabia that promote fair wages, safe working environments, and grievance mechanisms. Additionally, these countries collaborate within regional organizations like the African Union and CELAC to collectively push for adherence to international labor standards.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced that workers from African countries, like Ethiopia and Sudan, face especially cruel working circumstances,

particularly in domestic work settings. As per the UNHCR, almost 70% of migrant laborers from African countries working in Saudi Arabia are engaged with domestic work, where they frequently need legitimate securities and are at high risk of abuse.

The remittances sent home by migrant workers play a crucial role in supporting the economies of several African nations. For instance, Ethiopia received approximately \$1.5 billion in remittances from Saudi Arabia in 2020, accounting for a significant portion of its GDP.



Questions To Consider

1. What role does the International Labour Organization play in monitoring and addressing labor rights issues in Saudi Arabia?
2. How can Saudi Arabia better ensure that labor protections are applied equally to all immigrant workers, regardless of gender, nationality, religion or legal status?
3. How can Saudi Arabia improve labour rights for foreign workers while also pursuing economic growth and development?
4. What effects do Saudi Arabia's labor reforms, such as the Saudization program (Nitaqat), have on the rights and working conditions of immigrant workers?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Kafala (sponsorship) system, and how does it affect the vulnerability of immigrant workers to maltreatment and abuse?
6. To what extent do Saudi Arabia's labor regulations and enforcement mechanisms protect immigrant workers from labour rights violations such as unfair wages, poor working conditions and abuse?

For Further Research

Reports and Publications:

Human Rights Watch: "Saudi Arabia: Abuses Against Migrant Workers"

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/05/12/saudi-arabia/abuses-against-migrant-workers>

Amnesty International: "Saudi Arabia 2023/24"

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/saudi-arabia/report-saudi-arabia/>

International Labour Organization (ILO): "Labour Market Reforms in Saudi Arabia"

https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_824439/lang--en/index.htm

Brookings Institution: "Saudi Arabia's Labor Market Challenges and Economic Diversification"

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/saudi-arabias-labor-market-challenges-and-economic-diversification/>

Middle East Institute: "Saudi Arabia's Labor Reforms: What Has Changed for Migrant Workers?"

<https://www.mei.edu/publications/saudi-arabias-labor-reforms-what-has-changed-migrant-workers>

Articles and Research Papers

The Guardian: "Saudi Arabia's New Labor Reforms and What They Mean for Migrant Workers"

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/15/saudi-arabia-new-labor-reforms-migrant-workers>

Al Jazeera: "Assessing the Impact of Saudi Labor Reforms on Foreign Workers"

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/22/assessing-impact-saudi-labor-reforms-foreign-workers>

For Further Research

Reuters: "Saudi Arabia's Labor Law Changes: A Step Forward for Migrant Rights?"

<https://www.reuters.com/article/saudi-labor-reforms-idUSKBN2B30JZ>



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