

Report

Workers conditions in the printing press sector

“Obvious Violations Beside the Absence of Job Stability”

Labor Watch Reports

Prepared by:

Jordan Labor Watch

Phenix Center for Economic and informatics Studies

In Cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

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Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies

Is an independent scientific institute founded as a house for study, research and public opinion measurement in Amman in 2003. The Center seeks to contribute to the realization of comprehensive development in Jordan through developing and modernising of the Jordanian community at the economic, social, political and legislative levels, working to foster democracy in Jordan on the basis of freedom and equity, ensuring basic human rights at the social, political and civil levels for all Jordanians through developing projects and conducting studies and opinion polls and reports, in addition to creating a database that covers all fields of development to help realise the centre's objectives.



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Labor Watch

Is a joint program between Phenix Center for Economics & Informatics and Friedrich - Ebert - Stiftung (FES). Labor Watch Works to Monitor the status of labour and trade union movements in Jordan, lobbying for the development of labour legislations in cooperation with the concerned parties and in accordance to the international labour standards, contributing to the development of work conditions in Jordan, publishing reports on the status of laborers in Jordan, to raise awareness among workers themselves, facilitating the exchange of expertise in trade unions among other Arab and foreign countries to benefit from their experiences.



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Jordan Labor Watch
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Introduction:

This report was issued in order to examine the working conditions of workers in the printing press sector in terms of wages, working hours, and having their annual vacations and sick leaves, whether they are registered with the social security system, and other essential labor rights stipulated in the Jordanian labor legislations represented in the labor law, social security law, and related regulations.

This report is one of the reports issued periodically by the Jordanian Labor Watch, which is one of the programs founded by the Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies. The program discusses working conditions in several economic sectors within the frame of a plan to cover most of sectors where workers' essential human and labor rights are violated.

This report uses some qualitative methodology tools. Dozens of the sector's workers, trade unions, and related employers unions were interviewed. In addi-

tion to several field trips to work locations conducted by the team who worked on the report. This report was conducted between April and June 2012.

In order to follow an accurate and an objective measuring process, the report classifies the printing presses into different categories based on the number of workers where each category reflects the reality of the committed violations. If the number of workers is less or equal than 10 the printing press is classified as small. As for medium printing presses the number of workers is between 11 and 50 workers. The third category are the big printing presses where the number of workers is more than 50 workers.

Statistical background:

Obviously, accurate statistics about the number of printing presses or workers in the sector are not easy to obtain. The team preparing the report faced major difficulties in collecting accurate data on the number of workers in this sector and the number of printing presses.

Numbers from the General Trade Union of Printing Presses Owners indicate that nearly 15,000 workers (male and female) are working in 550 to 650 printing presses distributed over different governorates of the kingdom, and most of them are located in Amman in addition to Zarqa and Irbid.

There is a difference to the numbers given by the Trade Union of Workers in Typing and Photocopying which estimated that workers in this sector number 12,000 (male and female). They also confirmed the fact that there are no accurate statistics about workers in this sector. The percentage of women working in this sector is very low; estimations indicate that it is only 5%. Most of the women take positions in the administration, library, and cover bookbinding of medium and big printing presses. However, in small printing presses the number of women is insignificant. As for migrant workers who work in this sector numbers are limited and they only work as technicians and they are very talented and highly skilled. The sector of printing presses is considered to be restricted to local workers, but it has been noticed that there are quite a few migrant workers who work in medium and big printing presses illegally, without

holding valid work permits from the Ministry of labor.

Working conditions:

This part of the report describes a set of working conditions that should be applied in this enormous labor sector and it will be viewed throughout a group of standards as follows:

Wages:

Similar to most other labor sectors in Jordan, workers in this sector suffer from a significant decrease in the average of wages. The average of wages in this sector generally varies between 200 and 400 JD monthly, except for a limited number of experienced technicians whose wages could reach 1,000 JD monthly.

These statistics about wages estimated by the team who worked on preparing this report are close to the numbers given by the department of statistics a few days before finalizing this report. Those numbers indicate that the wages given to workers in elementary occupations, machine operators, craftsmen, technicians, and technicians' assistants in both the public and the private sectors range between 238 and 401 JD whereas wages given to workers in these occupations in the private sector ranges between 197 and 312 JD monthly .¹

Obviously there is a disparity in workers' wages in printing presses, the level of wages in the first class printing presses

(big printing presses) being higher than in medium and small printing presses. It has been noticed that there are many workers who receive wages less than the minimum wage of 190 JD. Many printing presses still pay the previous minimum wage which was 150 JD monthly². Some workers who have worked recently in the printing presses sector have pointed out that they used to receive 150 JDs monthly during the three months probation period, and then their salary has been raised to be 190 JDs monthly.

Apart from the size of the facility, there

are other factors which determine workers' wages in this sector: the worker's or

most of small printing presses and many medium printing presses deprive their workers of the right to take a sick leaves

the technician's efficiency in the scope of his work, the expertise which he holds, and accordingly his ability to use modern printing presses.

Many technicians and workers mentioned that their company's administration forces them to work on more than one printing press in order to reduce the used manpower. This is an additional burden on workers and technicians, and in case they object s they lose their jobs and are discharged.

Moreover, many workers in printing presses suffer because they don't receive regular annual wage increases. In addition, many of them have wages deductions because of penalties imposed by their employers. Some administrations impose wages deductions because of violations on which the Jordanian labor law prevents employers to deduct the

salary. Being late to work, for example, can be no reason for wage deductions as this is considered a clear violation to article 47 of the Jordanian labor law which stipulates cases where the employer has the right to deduct from the employee's salary; being late to work is not one of them.

The research team noticed that workers in many small printing presses don't receive their salaries regularly at the end of each month. . Many of them pointed out that they receive their salaries divided into instalments depending on the employers desire and ability to pay

those salaries.

Working hours:

Many workers in printing presses, especially workers in medium and small printing presses, suffer from the fact that they have to work more than eight hours daily without receiving overtime. violation This violates article 59 of the Jordanian labor law which stipulates; "It is permissible to put the Employee to work with his consent for more than the ordinary working hours provided that the Employee receives a wage against every hour overtime a minimum of 125% of his ordinary wage".

Vacations and official holidays:

Most workers in the printing presses are deprived of their vacations and sick leaves. As at this point there is also a

1. Department of statistics, wages index numbers 2010, June 2012.

2. The minimum wage has been raised since February 2012 from 150JDs monthly to be 190JDs monthly.



Social security and Health insurance

ence in the degree of how far this sector's employees enjoy their rights according to the aforementioned categories. In most of the small printing presses and in quite a few medium printing presses these rights are regularly violated. Paragraph A, article 61 of the labor law stipulates that the vacation is 14 days annually or 21 days for those who worked in the same institution five years or more.

As for sick leaves most of the small printing presses and many

Most of small printing presses and many medium printing presses deprive their workers of the right to take a sick leaves

medium printing presses deprive their workers of the right to take a sick leave, and they are allowed to take 14 days at the most, and in exceptional cases of illness it is 28 days.

This is violating article 65 of the labor law which stipulates; "Every Employee shall be entitled to a fourteen day sick leave with full pay per year based on a report from the physician approved by the establishment. It may be renewed for a further fourteen days with full pay if he is hospitalized and with one half pay if it is based on a report of a medical committee approved by the establishment and was not hospitalized in any hospital". If the worker had to be absent for reasons of sickness, most of the printing presses administrations decided to reduce his salary in order to compensate his days of absence, and sometimes they decide to discharge him even if the worker submitted a proper medical report.

In spite of the fact that most of the printing presses administrations commit to registering workers to the social security, some of these printing presses administrations and especially the small ones tend to not registering their workers in the social security since the date of

their employment. Instead they postpone the

registration process to save the amount paid by the employer which is 12.25% of the worker's salary. This act is considered a violation of article 20, paragraph C of the social security law which stipulates; "the institution shall pay all due contributions and shall be responsible of the payments since the date when the insured was hired month by month even if he has quit. Any part of the month shall be considered a full month for the end of applying the provisions of this law, and also the one month notice is counted within the actual service which is included within the provisions of this law". With regard to health insurance, a very limited number of the big printing presses provide health insurance for their workers, while the majority of workers in small and medium printing presses are not registered in any health insurance system. This issue requires applying the articles in the social security law, entrusted by the council of ministers, concerned with registering participants in a health insurance system.

Health and occupational safety:

Health and occupational safety standards are among the most important decent work conditions. Providing a safe work environment is an essential requirement for the different parties of the production process whether they are workers, employers, or governmental entity, where the

importance of complying with health and occupational safety conditions is basically referred to respecting

the worker's humanity considering that the accidents and the occupational diseases are the main reasons for injuries and deaths among workers.

In the context of the team members' field trips and the interviews done with workers in the printing presses sector, there is a big disparity in the levels of applying the health and safety standards stipulated in the Jordanian legislations concerned with the Jordanian printing presses institutions. These legislations are not fairly applied or it could happen that they are not applied at all in small business institutions. In the medium printing presses the level of applying such standards is considered medium. It has been noticed that big printing presses are fairly complying with occupational and safety standards as there are clear and obvious instructions for workers to be committed to these standards.

Work injuries in printing presses mainly concern hands and fingers or inhaling gases which harms the respiratory system.

It has been noticed that in different classes of printing presses and especially in the small ones workers are not fully aware of the risk of not using the occupational safety tools. Also they depend on their personal experiences to determine these risks, due to the fact that printing presses don't provide awareness sessions.

The research team wasn't provided with any statistical numbers or information

there is a big disparity in the levels of applying the Jordanian health and safety standards stipulated in the Jordanian legislations concerned with the Jordanian printing presses institutions

about how many work injuries and what types of work injuries in the printing presses sector have

been registered by any official entity, whether by the ministry of labor or the social security corporation.

The absence of job stability:

Job stability in this sector is absent; the employee doesn't have the feeling of being consent and being safe regarding himself, his job, and the institution he works in. This concerns most of the workers. Many of those who have been interviewed assured that they don't feel that they belong to the institution they work in. This is because collecting money and increasing the profits are priorities for employers and directors of these institutions, and the labor laws and the related regulations are the least of their concern.

It has to be mentioned that most of printing presses act in an unpredictable manner which creates fears to the workers that their future and their job

stability depends entirely on the level of their personal loyalty to employers and directors. This makes them feel frustrated and disloyal to the institution they work in. (In addition to the low wages issues, previously mentioned in this report).. Beside other hard working conditions such as being deprived of the essential rights stipulated in the labor law, the workers have a feeling of instability because of being dispensable.

Most of printing presses are managed by unpredictable mode which creates fears to the workers that their future and their job stability depends only on the level of their personal loyalty to employers and directors

workers' rights and interests and improve their work conditions in a sector where the vast majority of workers suffer from the low levels of wages and the terms of health and occupational safety. Workers in this sector suffer from many work injuries, the absence of job stability, arbitrary dismissals, as well as from being deprived

of their essential rights stipulated in the Jordanian labor law with regard to working hours, annual vacations and sick

leaves, and the fact that the priority is for the Jordanian worker to be hired in this sector instead of expats, and that many of them are deprived of being registered to social security.

Weak union representation:

Many workers in the printing presses sector have pointed out that one of the main reasons of the decline of the occupational, social, and economic level for workers in the printing presses is the lack of union representation. Many responded that they didn't know whether there is a union to represent them or not. Some workers have pointed out that the union focuses all the attention on big cartoon enterprises and doesn't concern the printing presses sector. Many workers have noticed the union's lack thereof to this wide sector. In the same context, a group of workers in the printing presses sector, especially workers in the small and the medium printing presses, have established a new union called "The Independent Union for Printing Presses Workers" which aims to defend their rights and to improve their work conditions.

The declaration of this new Trade Union includes that the aim of establishing this independent union is to defend the

Workers in the printing presses sector who were interviewed by the research team hope that the new union would presume its normal role of defending workers' interests in this sector, work on improving their working conditions, and stop the violations which they are exposed to.

Employers' problems:

Most of employers' problems in the printing presses sector, from their point of view, are as follows: Most of the workers, especially technicians, have a weak expertise. Employers see that the reason behind this are the weak technical abilities of graduates from vocational institutions which train technicians. These area graduates from the vocational institutions have also weak abilities to improve themselves because they are not



taught well in primary stages. As many of the directors in the big and medium printing presses pointed out, the modern technology used and working on modern machines require good educational levels, which graduates of the vocational institution don't have. Accordingly, the

vocational institutions outcomes are not in line with the needs of the printing presses sector.

The employers: many Jordanian workers tend not to commit to their work, where there are delays in the mornings and also repeated sudden absentees, in addition to that they quit their jobs suddenly, especially for the youth employees

Beside the above mentioned, many Jordanian workers tend not to commit to their work, according to the employers. They complain about delays in the mornings and also about repeated sudden absences, in addition to that some staff quit their jobs suddenly, especially young employees. Many of the small and medium sized of the printing presses owners have complained about the world's rapidly developing printing technologies, which require large capital inputs a requirement in order to improve the printing presses sector – a requirement most of them are not capable of having. This comes along with the fact that the printing presses sector is extending and now covers more than what Jordan needs taking into consideration that the few big printing presses control the lion's share of the market – a factor that pushes many medium and small printing presses to discharge workers.

Conclusion and recommendations:

This report can be summarized as follows: many workers in the printing presses sector are deprived of most of their essen-

tial labor rights stipulated in different Jordanian labor legislations and decent work standards. They are suffer-

ing from low levels of wages, are deprived of their annual vacation and sick leave allowances, the occupational safety and health terms are not properly applied in work locations. In addition, other essential labor rights are not applied, not to mention the absence of the feeling of stability and job security.

Moreover, there is a tangible disparity regarding respecting the essential labor standards depending on the printing press size: The bigger the company is the better its workers' working conditions are, and the smaller it is the more its workers suffered from the lack of the required essential work conditions such as wages, social security protection, working hours, annual vacation, sick leaves and job stability.

Most of the workers in the medium sized printing presses enjoy essential labor rights at the medium level, except that many of those workers are exposed to several violations such as unpaid long working hours, low wages, and some of them receive salaries below the minimum wage which is 190 JD approved by the trilateral commission constituted of



governmental representatives from the ministry of labor, trade unions, and employers' associations since February 2012. In addition, it has to be that some of the workers are not registered with social security, and don't enjoy privileges like medical insurance.

As for workers in small printing presses, with ten or less employees, violations are obvious: long working hours, low wages, many of the employees are not registered with social security, many of them work in different positions from the ones they were hired for, occupying more than one position in the printing press, a fact that reduces their desire to continue working in these companies, and urges them to look for other jobs in the same sector or in a totally different one, as stated by some of the workers interviewed for this report. Workers in this sector also suffer because they are not fairly represented by trade unions in order to define their rights, with the Trade Union of Workers in Typing and Photocopying focussing their work on big cartoon companies and neglecting the printing press sector.

The employers in the printing press sector complain that most of their workers, especially technicians, have a weak experience, graduates from vocational training centers in the areas of printing press have weak technical abilities and weak abilities to improve because of their weak academic qualification. The employers have also complained about delays in work schedules, repeated sudden absences, or sudden resignations, especially by young employees.

Concluding this report we would like to

present some recommendations that should be considered in order to reduce the violations against workers' rights as follows:

- 1 The role of the inspectors from the Ministry of Labor should be improved on the ground in order to reveal the violations many workers in the printing presses sector are exposed to.
- 2 The role of the social security corporation inspectors should be improved on the ground in order to cover all workers in the printing presses sector.
- 3 Workers in this sector should have union representation which provides social protection and protects workers in this sector from the violations they are exposed to.
- 4 The technical and practical curriculums in the vocational training institutions in the area of printing should be further developed in order to be in line with the modern technical standards of printing presses. Printing presses administrations should be participating in setting those curriculums.
- 5 The employers' part in improving their staff's efficiency should be enhanced by letting them participate in advanced vocational training programs periodically.