

# PRESS RELEASE

## ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD DAY FOR MIGRANT WORKERS (FOREIGN EMPLOYEES) JORDAN LABOR WATCH

By:

The Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies

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Last Friday, the 18th of December, the international labor movement has celebrated the World Day for Migrant Workers (Foreign Employees). In this field, most facts indicates that despite of the progress Jordan recorded in the field of improving the circumstances of migrant workers (foreign employees) whether on the legislative level or on the actual grounds, yet a lot of groups of migrant workers (foreign employees) are still working under hard conditions; most of them get less than the minimum wage rate which is 150 JD per month, and work for more than eight hours a day; also, most of female housemaids suffer from a lot of violations like getting salaries less than the minimum wage rate, depriving them from legal holidays, and preventing them from communicating with their families or their family members who work in the country as well, also depriving them from medical care, not to mention verbal, physical, and sexual abuses by some employers or employment offices. Beside a lot of violations, workers in Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) suffer from.

The Jordanian government hasn't signed the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families yet, although most

of the convention's articles are in the Jordanian labor legislations; these legislations doesn't discriminate between national and migrant (foreign) work force in its articles except for the right of joining trade unions. The Jordanian law deals with migrant (foreign) workers as it deals with Jordanian workers, regardless of the nature of their work, as well as the case of social security law. Anyone who follows up the matter of migrant (foreign) workers in Jordan will notice a cumulative increase in its numbers in the last years; according to the ministry of labor, the number of the officially registered in migrant (foreign) workers in Jordan till mid December 2009 is 322,000 workers, with an increase of 6.3% comparing to 2008, the number back then was 303,000 workers. The numbers issued by the ministry of labor does not reflect the true reality of migrant (foreign) workers in Jordan, as some official and non official sources state that there are tens of thousands of unregistered migrant (foreign) workers in Jordan and do not carry official work permits, the estimations of unregistered migrant (foreign) workers in Jordan are between 100000 and 150000 workers, most of them work in the non official economic sectors or suffer from temporary

unemployment and seek employment opportunities.

According to the statistics of the ministry of labor, Egyptian work force form the biggest percentage of the total of the migrant (foreign) work force in Jordan, its percentage is 68% of the total migrant (foreign) work force by the end of 2008, while other Arab countries formed 2.2%, the rest is distributed among a number of foreign countries, the most distinguished are Indonesia 8.2%, Seri Lanka 6.8%, then Philippines 4.2% of the total. Migrant work force in Jordan is concentrated in some economical sectors, as following: social and personal services 24.8%, agriculture and fishing 24%, manufacturing 23%, trade, hotels and restaurants 13%, building and construction 12%. Concerning migrant workers who work at homes, their total is 50 thousands workers, and 48 thousands of them are females. Migrant (foreign) work force in Jordan transfer around 300 Million JD to their countries every year. In 2007, their transferences were 299 Million JD, in 2008 it was 295 Million JD, while in the first half of 2009 it was 147 Million JD. Concerning migrant Jordanian work force, the official estimations indicate that Jordanian workers outside of the country are 600 thousands workers, most of them work at the Arab Gulf countries; most of them are professionals

who work in medical professions, engineering, information technology, and consultations. For their financial transactions into the country, it plays a major role in supporting the Jordanian balance of payments which undergoes big problems with its retreat by 8.4% in the first ten months of this year comparing to the same period of the year 2008. Jordanian workers transactions in 2008 were 2478 Million JD, while in 2007 it was 2123 Million JD.

In the light of what was reviewed, it is necessary to continue the efforts the government started concerning improving the working environment to all workers in Jordan, including migrant (foreign) workers, and activating the role of work inspectors concerning raising their numbers and developing their skills, also developing labor legislations to suit international work standards and accelerating the signing of the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in addition to signing agreement number 87 regarding trade unions freedoms and protecting the right to organize; since that will improve legal, economic, and social conditions of all workers in Jordan, regardless of their nationalities, in addition to improving the image of Jordan in the international forums.