

Report

# Impact of the Arab Spring on Arab transport unions and available opportunities

Prepared by:  
Jordan Labor Watch  
Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies  
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

2013



# Impact of the Arab Spring on Arab transport unions and available opportunities

Prepared by:  
Jordan Labor Watch  
Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies  
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

2013





للدراسات الاقتصادية والمعلوماتية  
ECONOMIC & INFORMATICS STUDIES

The Phenix Center for Economic & Informatics Studies is a non-governmental organization dedicated to independent policy research and measuring public opinions on impactful current and emerging issues in areas of economics, society, and its legislative environment in Jordan. The Center was founded in Amman, Jordan in 2003 under the registration number 142203. It works to promote a sustainable developmental paradigm in Jordan, rooted in human rights and the principles of democratic governance by focusing on reforming the labor policies, lifting of restrictions on freedom of association, and strengthening of social protection policies. The Center specializes in promoting inclusivity in development processes. It compiles databases of relevant actors and stakeholders, develops research, studies, papers and reports, conducts conferences and advocacy campaigns, and empowers several actors to take part in steering development through capacity building.

---



Jordan Labor Watch contributes to improving work conditions for all workers in Jordan in accordance with international labor standards. This is done through developing studies and reports covering various aspects of labor issues related to workers, uncovering violations and abuses to which workers are exposed in the work place. The program provides a comprehensive database covering various indicators related to the labor market, trade unions, labor organizations, laws and regulations, as well as governing performance. Furthermore, the program strives to present alternative policies that tackle challenges facing the Arabian and Jordanian labor market as well as conducting training programs that support upgrading skills and capabilities of advocates in the labor movement.

---

Disclaimer:

Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung are not responsible for the statements of workers and union officials cited in this report.

---

# Table of Contents

---

Introduction	1
Executive Summary	2
General framework / background	3
The transport sector globally and regionally	4
Status of labor organizations in the transport sector	5
Analytical reading	6
- Various trade union movements	7
- Seeking gains	8
- Positive reflections	9
- Varying efficiency	10
- Trade union discourse and planning	11
- Independence of labor organizations is at stake	12
- Seeking an active role for women and young people	13
Status of labor organizations by Country	34
- Egypt	34
- Morocco	38
- Algeria	39
- Yemen	41
- Kuwait	42
- Lebanon	45
- Libya	46
- Iraq	47
- Jordan	49
- Tunisia	51
- Bahrain	53
Recommendations	54
References	56

## Introduction

---

This study is made in the context of efforts exerted by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in the Arab region in order to explore the current circumstances under which labor organizations (trade unions) in the Arab region operate. The Arab region witnessed during the last three years intense developments and transformations which resulted in many countries in a downfall of entire political systems; while in some countries regimes engaged themselves in reform shifts in order to set more suitable methods and mechanisms to run their affairs. For the last three years, the region underwent a state of political, economical, social and security turmoil. Labor organizations, including labor organizations in the transport sector played, and continue to play an influential role in the ongoing transformations, in addition to being impacted thereby.

Accordingly, it has become highly significant to examine the attributes of this stage in terms of its reflection on workers in the various air, sea and land transport sectors. In view of the complicated political and social perspective in the Arab region, it is established that conducting an overall in-depth analytical study of this ultimately complex and ever changing situation possibly would help the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in the Arab region and the labor organizations in the transport sector

to play a more effective role in preserving the interests of workers and improve their working conditions amid such a turbulent atmosphere.

Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the impacts of the wave of democratic transformations experienced by the Arab region with all its interactions on the Arab transport trade unions as well as the available opportunities through examining and analyzing the conditions under which transport workers work, in addition to examining and analyzing the reality of labor organizations in the transport sector in the Arab region to determine how the rapid transformations impacted these organizations in terms of freedom of establishment, number of members, internal work mechanisms, and whether it exercises democratic practices in order to be able to independently assume an effective role in defending the interests of their members and protect their rights; in addition to reviewing other indicators through which the structures of these organizations and their performance mechanisms shall be assessed. Furthermore, in the course of the study, future opportunities available to workers in the transport sector and their organizations, whether organizations which existed before the democratic transformations or those which were established during the said transformations shall be examined.

A qualitative approach has been

used to achieve these objectives on two phases: the first being to collect secondary data through conducting an in-office survey of the entire relevant studies, reports and statistics; while in the second phase several in-depth interviews were conducted with specialists and experts in the field of trade union affairs in several Arab countries; in addition to holding several focus groups with the participation of many trade union leaders and activists from countries which were visited for the purpose of carrying out this study.

## Executive summary:

---

Like other work sectors in the world and the Arab region, the transport sector and workers therein were impacted by the global financial and economic crisis which hit the world since 2008 and which impacted negatively the work conditions of millions of workers in the various sub-sectors of sea, land, air and river transport. Transport workers in the Arab region, like all other workers and transport workers throughout the world were impacted by consequences of the said crisis through losing jobs or through a decline in the levels of employment quality; vulnerability, however, varied from one country to another according to the structure and configuration of the economy in the relevant region, and in the case of the Arab region according to the degree of integration of the Arab economies in the world economy.

The financial and economic crisis deepened the misery experienced by most Arab communities in form of more decline in their living standards caused by absence of decent work conditions and weak social protection systems applicable in these countries. These communities went far in their resentment and protest movements against deteriorating living conditions caused by authoritarian rules which dominated these countries since the phase of direct colonial period ended in the middle of last century; hence, large groups of these communities took to the

streets in various revolutions and uprisings which varied in levels and tools, but were similar in protesting against living and work conditions, and rejecting authoritarian regimes which singled out resources of these countries for the benefit of limited categories at the expense of majority of the society.

Since the eruption of the first one of Arab revolutions in Tunisia, the Arab region continues to undergo difficult throes whether in countries where ruling regimes were changed, countries whose revolutions escalated to levels closer to national war, or countries who responded to the wave of transformations in the region by undertaking some reforms. Presently, the region, however, witnesses difficult throes seeking democratic regimes under which all parties coexist, and accept the rules of the democratic game away from acquisition, domination and exclusion enabling workers in all sectors to improve their work conditions.

In this regard, workers in the transport sector like their fellow workers in other sectors were influential and impacted by this throes, whereas the reflections of the democratic transformation witnessed by the region with its difficult throes were simultaneously positive and negative on the part of workers in the transport sector; as on the one hand they enjoyed better freedoms in terms of expression,

assembly and organization, which are helpful elements for them to exercise their trade union activities to demand improvement of their work conditions without interruption by Government authorities, in addition, many of them suffered from some reflections of the democratic transformations witnessed in the region whether in terms of exercising their rights of expression, assembly and organization, or in terms of the declining growth rates in the various economic sectors among which is the transport sector leading to a further decline in the work conditions, especially the decline in wages, as well as the decline of the ability of these economies to generate new employment opportunities in this sector.

Due to lack of accurate and fresh data on the numbers of workers in the transport sector both on international and Arab scales, we considered some ILO based estimates which suggest that the number of workers in the transport sector ranges between 90 – 120 million workers throughout the world. In the Arab world, their numbers range between 2.0 – 2.5 million workers; some reports, however, indicate that the number of workers in the transport sector in the Arab region reach as many as 2.9 million workers. In view of the growth of work in the transport sector, hundreds of trade union organizations were founded in various parts of the world, whereas 759 of these organizations are

members of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) defending interests of approximately 4.71 million workers in this sector in 154 countries throughout the world; many branch federations of (ITF) operate in regions of the world such as the Arab region.

Most Arab countries witnessed during the last three years a wider area of freedom in terms of expression, assembly and organization which reflected on the work of trade union organizations in general including those covering the transport sector. Many trade unions do exist in the Arab region; some of them were established tens of years ago, others were established during the last few years in the course of the democratic transformations observed in the Arab region during the last three years. Presently, the number of trade union organizations who are active in the field of transport and members of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) reach 45 trade unions operating in 12 countries. Many other trade union organizations that are active in the field of transport do exist in several Arab countries, but are not members of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) for various reasons.

The study noticed the moderate degree of exercising the right to organize in trade unions among transport workers in the Arab region; while the numbers of



workers in this sector are close to three million workers, those whose membership in trade union organizations is declared count approximately 100,000 only. Moreover, many of the Arab trade union organizations in several Arab countries are strongly associated with the ruling political regimes and their political parties, while on narrower scale; some trade union organizations in these countries are associated with opposition parties which gives these organizations a political label.

The study also revealed that most trade union organizations in the transport sector throughout the Arab countries covered by this study do not own databases on the numbers of workers in the various divisions of transport sector (air, land, sea and river). Nonetheless, numbers of members of these trade unions during the last three years notably increased according to statements by Arab trade unions in the field of transport who were interviewed in the course of preparing this study. Furthermore, an increase was noted in the numbers of new trade union organizations in the various transport sectors in several Arab countries which is due to positive reflections of democratic transformations seen in the region during the last three years leading to a higher degree of exercising the rights and freedoms of opinion, expression, assembly and organization. It was also found that most Arab trade union organizations in the

transport sector in countries covered by this study do enjoy a good infrastructure, as most of them own headquarters, some own more than one location; all trade unions have work mechanisms and bylaws which demonstrate a strong organizational structure in countries covered by this study.

As regards wages of workers in the transport sector, it is broadly different in each sub sector, profession and country. Ultimately, workers in the air transport are better off in terms of wages, followed by workers in sea and river transport and lastly those working in land transport. Wages, however, are higher in the oil-producing countries, and relatively high for some higher technical and administrative positions. Nonetheless, wages for the vast majority of workers in transport sectors are moderate; while wages for workers in the informal transport sector are too moderate and barely enough to meet basic needs to maintain life. This sector does not enjoy trade union organization, nor does it enjoy any form of social protection. It was found, however, that some trade union organizations in the transport sector have cooperation and coordination relationships with civil society organizations, especially those concerned with human rights.

Labor organizations of transport sector in most Arab countries face restrictions

in exercising the right and freedom to organize leading to narrower freedoms to assemble, organize and protest, in addition to absence of legislations to regulate trade union activities especially concerning the newly established new and independent labor organizations. There are also restrictions related to the security status and political instability as seen in several Arab countries covered by this study such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen whereby security and political conditions reflected on performance of trade unions pushing some labor organizations in some countries to engage in political affairs on account of interests of their members.

The participation degree of trade union organizations in the social and political wave of protests witnessed by the Arab region during the past three years aiming to bring about changes toward democracy and promotion of popular participation has been variable. Some trade union organizations contributed tangibly and effectively in the popular protest movements in some Arab countries, this contribution took place at two levels; the level of trade union organizations in form of a central resolution or in form of individual decisions by activists in these trade union organizations, while the second level was represented in the participation by workers in general, and in the transport sector on individual basis. Many trade

union organizations, however, stood and are still standing neutrally concerning participation in these protest activities justifying their position by saying that these activities are not listed among their objectives. Simultaneously, there were, however, leaderships of trade union organizations who opposed and are still opposing the protest movements which demanded introducing changes toward democracy in their countries.

The democratic transformations and the state of throes witnessed by Arab communities over the last three years never reflected directly to improve working conditions; it has rather paved the way for work relations to balance on basis of justice. There are, however, thousands of workers in the transport sector, especially those working in the public sector, whose work conditions have improved due to intense labor protests carried out during the past years.

The popular protest movements demanding shift toward democracy in many Arab countries left positive effects on trade union organizations and institutions as well as on trade union activists and the workers themselves due to a higher level of courage as these organizations, institutions and activists were able to get rid of fear and hesitation regarding the reactions of governments and security agencies in many Arab

countries. In the same context, exercising the right and freedom of assembly and organize impacted positively the awareness of workers and their trade union organizations and expressed itself through intensifying labor protests witnessed in many Arab countries and included various economic sectors among which was the transport sector. Their level of ability to express, assemble and organize led to an increase in their ability to form trade union organizations and committees.

The extent of representation by the traditional as well as the new and independent trade union organizations of workers in the transport sector is still low, especially, trade union organizations in the private sector. It varies from one sector to another and also from one country to another; it can be said, however, that an increase in the membership of trade union organizations in the transport sector took place, especially in the new and independent trade union organizations. It can also be mentioned that the reality of labor force in the Arab region, in view of the weak decent work conditions in most Arab countries covered by this study, is considered a major indicator to the inefficiency of these trade unions. An obvious contrast was detected in the abilities of trade union organizations in the transport sector in Arab countries subject of this study in terms of their

ability to use various types and levels of collective bargaining techniques and skills. Upon analyzing the reality of trade union organizations in the Arab region, their weak role in the media was obvious whether in their relations with foreign media means and/or local media which is assumed to connect members of trade union organizations with each other.

It could be argued, though, that there is an obvious weakness on the part of trade union organizations in the Arab region, including those operating in the various sectors of transport, in the use of modern administrative systems. Their own strategic plans lack implementation efficiency due to absence of implementation mechanisms. As regards the new and independent trade union, their performance is still rather poor in this regard.

It is note worthy that most labor organizations in the region; including organizations of workers in the transport sector do not have enough independence to undertake their tasks freely, as many leaderships of these organizations in some countries turned loyalty to the new political ruling authorities or to some political thought houses adopted by the new political ruling authorities. In addition, there are many trade union leaders who devote resources of their trade union organizations to achieve personal and

private interests at the expense of interests of workers they represent.

In spite of the deep transformations and throes the Arab region witnessed and is still witnessing in the area of enabling citizens to exercise their fundamental human rights, which include equality and non-discrimination in terms of sex, color, race or religion, the role of women in trade unions in the Arab region in general and those active in the transport sector in particular has been rather weak; this, however, does not eliminate the occurrence of significant changes in the degree of women representation in various bodies of these organizations, especially in the new and independent trade union organizations. An improvement was also detected in the representation of youth in the bodies of many trade union organizations as new generations of young men started to assume advanced positions in many trade unions especially the new and independent.

### **General framework:**

Transport sector takes major significance on global scale in many economic, political and social aspects being the main means of trade at local, regional and international levels, in addition to transporting people throughout the world by different transport means. This sector employs tens of millions around the world

in different transport means. Transport sector played an essential role in linking people around the globe.

This sector and those working therein were exposed to many crises adversely affecting millions of workers in their sub-sectors represented in sea, land, air and river transport. On international scale, we saw the global financial and economic crisis which shocked the world in 2008 of which the world is still recovering slowly and at different degrees in countries depending on the degree of damage to which these countries were exposed. As a result, millions of workers in many economic sectors lost their jobs in addition to an obvious decline in the working conditions of other millions of workers among which were those working in the transport sector.

Workers in the Arab region were not excluded from negative effects of the financial and economic crisis. All Arab countries were impacted by events and results of the said crisis to different degrees according to structures and compositions of their economies as well as to the degree of their integration in the global economy. Arab economies as well have been negatively impacted to various degrees including economies of the oil producing countries whose proceeds declined due to the decline of oil prices at the international markets as

a result of the global crisis, and therefore, investments retreated in the said countries leading to weaker ability to generate new employment opportunities which impacted significantly immigrant workers of various nationalities particularly the Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese and Sudanese which countries are major exporters of manpower to the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

With regard to negative effects of the financial and economic crisis on workers in the Arab region, local communities in many Arab states reached advanced phases of their resentment and movement against deteriorating living conditions caused by authoritarian rules which dominated these countries since the phase of direct colonial period ended in the middle of last century; the decline in living standards prompted most of citizens in these countries to take to the streets in revolutions and uprisings which varied from one country to another in terms of their levels and tools. The misery of living conditions of most of citizens in the region has been the inevitable result of the on-democratic nature of ruling regimes in the region whereby miserable and inadequate developmental patterns and economic policies which never considered the pressing economic, social and political needs and priorities of their citizens were applied. These developmental patterns

and economic policies it produced lacked the fundamental human rights in its various civil, political, economic, social and cultural dimensions leading to the emergence of miserable and inappropriate working conditions which do not provide the minimum standards of decent work for millions of Arab workers; it also led to an increase in the numbers of workers in the informal sector which does not provide workers with the simplest standards of social protection. The inevitable result was that citizens took to the streets aiming to change the prevailing de facto and demanding change of governance and administration methods of the state. In this case, however, the various Arab security agencies were not able to predict the volume of peoples' reaction and were taken by surprise.

Since the end of 2010 the Arab region continued to undergo difficult throes whether in countries where ruling regimes were changed, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen or countries whose revolutions escalated to levels closer to national war as in Syria, or countries whose response to the wave of transformations was relevant such as Jordan, Bahrain and Morocco, in addition to countries whose citizens are still moving in various degrees. The region, as motioned earlier, is still witnessing difficult throes seeking democratic regimes under which all parties coexist, and accept the rules

of the democratic game away from acquisition, domination and exclusion enabling workers in all sectors to improve their work conditions.

In this regard, workers in the transport sector like their fellow workers in other sectors were influential and impacted by this throes, whereas the reflections of the democratic transformation experienced by the region with their difficult throes were simultaneously positive and negative on the part of workers in the transport sector; as on the one hand many of them enjoyed better freedoms in terms of expression, assembly and organization, which are helpful elements for them to exercise their trade union activities to demand improvement of their work conditions without interruption by Government authorities; nonetheless, many of them still suffer from some reflections of the democratic transformations witnessed in the region whether in terms of exercising their rights of expression, assembly and organization, or in terms of the declining growth rates in the various economic sectors among which is the transport sector leading to a further decline in the work conditions, especially the decline in wages, as well as the decline of the ability of these economies to generate new employment opportunities in this sector.

This study is being made under an initiative by the" International Transport

Workers' Federation – Arab Region" aiming to analyze impacts of the wave of democratic transformations witnessed by the Arab region with all its throes on Arab transport trade unions as well as the available opportunities through examining and analyzing the work conditions of transport workers who represent about 3 -4% of the total Arab work force counting about 64 million worker in different work sectors according to ILO Global Employment Trends report , in addition to examining and analyzing the reality of labor organizations in the transport sector in the Arab region to determine how the rapid transformations impacted these organizations in terms of freedom of establishment, number of members, internal work mechanisms, and whether it exercises democratic practices in order to be able to independently assume an effective role in defending the interests of their members and protect the rights thereof; in addition to reviewing other indicators through which the structures of these organizations and their performance mechanisms shall be assessed. Furthermore, in the course of this study, future opportunities available to workers in the transport sector and their organizations, whether organizations which existed before the democratic transformations or those which were established during the said transformations shall be examined.

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives a qualitative approach has been used to conduct the study on two phases: the first being to collect secondary data through conducting an in-office survey of the entire relevant studies, reports and statistics, which unfortunately were limited, adding difficulties in the face of the researcher, as for instance no databases or accurate statistical indicators were reached concerning workers in the transport sector and its branches; while in the second phase several in-depth interviews were conducted with specialists and experts in the field of trade union affairs in several Arab countries; in addition to holding several focus groups with the participation of many trade union leaders and activists from countries which were visited for the purpose of carrying out this study. In the course of the research, this study was based on a set of globally adopted labor standards as contained in the various declarations and conventions of the International Bill of Human Rights such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; in addition to the various ILO conventions, especially those falling within the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Rights and Basic Principles at Work. This framework was considered due to the specific standards contained in these documents that constitute

minimum limits to be provided in any work atmosphere, which are represented in the right to organize in trade unions, the right in collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced labor as well as child labor, and elimination of all forms of discrimination in employment and occupation; in addition to the right in social protection and the right in fair and satisfactory terms of work.

A number of variables were identified to be used in accordance with the used qualitative approach and were divided into two types: independent variables and dependent variables; the independent variables being represented in freedom of expression, freedom to organize, and freedom of peaceful assemble, which are considered influential variables on workers in the transport sector and their trade union organizations in terms of the level of their awareness in their own fundamental human and labor rights, as well as their desire to join existing labor organizations, or establish new labor organizations; in addition to the characteristics of existing or new (independent) trade union organizations as regards membership base, percentage of this membership of those eligible to join the trade union, mechanisms of decision making, degree of independence from governments and political parties, activities undertaken by these organizations to defend interests of their members and improve the

work conditions thereof; moreover, the extent of participation of youth and women in the membership of trade union organizations and the degree of application of parameters of good governance in the various internal regulations of these unions in performing their daily work, among these parameters are: accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, participation and responsiveness to external effects. It may be useful to point out in this regard to some parameters which were taken into account upon preparing this study, as it has been confined to eleven countries only namely: Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia and Bahrain.

### **Transport Sector, Internationally and Arabian**

Transport sector is considered among the major employing sectors throughout the world and in the Arab region as well. Tens of millions of people work in this sector throughout the glob. According to estimates of ILO, the total work force in the world reaches approximately three billion workers by the end of 2011. Due to lack of accurate and fresh data on the numbers of workers in the transport sector both on international and Arab scales, the researcher was forced to resort to making some approximation of figures in order to create a general outline of statistical

indicators on international and Arabian levels. It is found that the number of workers in the transport sector ranges between 90 – 120 million workers throughout the world; this estimation is based on the assumption by many studies and reports that the percentage of those working in the various types of the transport sector falls between 3 – 4% of the total work force; under the same assumption, the number of workers in this sector in the Arab region ranges between 2.0 – 2.5 million workers, considering that the total Arab work force count 64 million worker according to the last report by ILO. Some reports, however, indicate that the numbers of workers in the transport sector in the Arab region exceed these estimations as stated in a report of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development that the number of workers in the transport sector in the Arab region reached as many as 2.9 million workers in the year 2006. The researcher was not able to reach more modern and accurate indicators on the numbers of workers in the transport sector in the Arab region.

Based on available statistical indicators on air transport sector, it provides around 56.6 million job opportunity around the world and accounts for \$2.2 trillion of global GPD. About 1500 air transport companies use around 24 thousand aircrafts landing in 3800 airports around the world. In the Arab region, air transport



sector contributes around \$75 billion of GDP representing 2% of the total sector contribution in the global GDP. The sector provides around 1.1 million job opportunities in the region; the air fleet of the Arab region comprises more than 700 aircrafts.

Transport sector plays vital roles in promoting development opportunities and economic progress; it also represents an essential tool to bring about regional economic integration, improve the quality of life, and reduce poverty in the region. In general, transport systems in countries of the region are considered of a good degree of relative advancement. Most countries of the region own broad networks of roads and possess big capabilities and great potentials in some areas; some of them also own important facilities for air and maritime transport, and in some cases a large network of railways. The quality of infrastructure facilities, however, is inadequate in many cases. The high significance of transport in the Arab region stems from the fact that it dominates the most important international water routes which are considered a lifeline of maritime navigation in the world including: the Suez Canal, the Strait of Bab Elmandeb, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Gibraltar; besides, the Arab region is a main exporter of energy in the world, especially oil and gas.

Shipping is considered the main pillar of international trade and global economy. More than 70% of the world trade is transported across seas and later handled in seaports all over the world; the global maritime fleet exceeded the threshold of 1.5 billion tons of tonnage. In the Arab region, all Arab countries have sea outlets on many seas and oceans such as the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, the Arabian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. The deadweight tonnage of the Arab shipping fleet represents a percentage of 1.7% of the total tonnage of the world fleet. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Algeria dominate around 70.0% of this tonnage.

As regards land transport in the Arab region, it has achieved an estimated annual growth of 5.4% during the last ten years. Unfortunately, numerical indicators to highlight the significance of this sector in the overall Arab economy are not available. Land transport however is considered a main pillar for transport services across the Arab countries, with a lesser degree regarding transport of passengers or goods across Arab countries. Despite having railways in some Arab countries, inland transport handles the bigger share of these transport services. Arab countries are interconnected with each other through a network of highways.

Owing to the significant contribution of the transport sector in the global economy and their ability to employ tens of millions of workers, ILO since it was founded in 1919 endorsed many conventions and declarations to regulate the various terms of work especially in the field of maritime transport. The entire terms in the field of maritime transport were composed in a comprehensive agreement entitled: International Labor Organization Convention No. 186 for 2006 on the subject of maritime labor. This convention stipulated many rights related to the minimum requirements of seamen to work on board ships, employment terms, standards of housing and recreational facilities, food and restaurants, security, medical care, social protection, and social insurance, etc.

The ILO conventions on transport focused on the maritime labor sector due to the fact that maritime transport represents, as mentioned earlier, a backbone for the various transport sectors on a global level in view of the special and difficult nature of work at sea; this, however, does not justify neglecting other transport sectors in the course of the protection system provided by ILO conventions. In view of the growing work in the transport sector hundreds of trade union organizations were founded in various parts of the world, whereas 759 of these organizations are members

of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) defending interests of approximately 4.71 million workers in this sector in 154 countries throughout the world; many branch federations of (ITF) operate in regions of the world such as the Arab region.

### **Status of labor organizations in the transport sector**

The wider area of freedoms of expression, assembly, and organization witnessed in most Arab countries during the last three years impacted the work of trade union organizations. We will try in this part of the study to conduct an analysis of the effects of these reflections on work conditions under which transport workers work, as well as the level of their awareness in their own fundamental human and labor rights, as well as their desire to join existing labor organizations, or establish new labor organizations; in addition to the characteristics of existing or new (independent) trade union organizations as regards membership base, percentage of this membership of those eligible to join the trade union, mechanisms of decision making, degree of independence from governments and political parties, activities undertaken by these organizations to defend interests of their members and improve the work conditions thereof; moreover, the extent of participation of youth and women in the

membership of trade union organizations and the degree of application of parameters of good governance in the various internal regulations of these unions in performing their daily work, among these parameters are: accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, participation and responsiveness to external effects.

This analysis will be presented in two phases: firstly, presenting an analytical reading of the status of trade union organizations in the transport sector in Arab countries subject of this study; and secondly, presenting a preview of the status of trade union organizations in the transport sector in each Arab country separately.

### **Analytical reading:**

There are a number of trade unions in the Arab region, some of which was established decades ago and others have been established over the past few years as part of the phase of democratic transformations in the Arab region since late 2010. The number of trade union organizations in the transport sector who are members of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) counts 45 trade unions distributed over twelve Arab countries, namely: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain and Libya.

There are, however, other trade union organizations in the transport sector in many Arab countries but are not members of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) for many reasons such as failure of some to provide minimum limits of democratic practices, some others fail to settle the due membership fees to the account of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), in addition to recently established labor organizations whose organizational structures have not yet been completed. The declared number of members of trade unions in the transport sector in the Arab region who are members of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) reaches one hundred thousand members, which shows only about 20% of the real membership, in the sense that true membership of these organizations would be close to half a million members. These trade unions are unable to declare the real number of their members due to their weak financial capabilities leading to their failure to settle the full financial obligations to the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) which is calculated based on the number of their members.

Above mentioned indicators show clearly how insignificant is the exercise of the right to organize by workers in the transport sector in the Arab region; as at a time the minimum numbers of workers

in the transport sector range between 2.0 – 2.5 million workers, and even close to 2.9 million workers according to some estimates, the number of those with declared membership in trade union organizations is nearly one hundred thousand only at a ratio ranging between 4.0 – 5.0% only. This may be attributed to a set of reasons, whereas some countries absolutely prohibit trade union organizations such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar; while some other Arab countries who impose legal and security restrictions on exercising the right to organize such as Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Yemen; in addition to factors related to the nature of economic patterns prevailing in the Arab region where formal employment sectors minimize in favor of the informal sectors, and thus the clear labor relations between laborers and employers disappear in favor of an unbalanced and unstable individual labor relations which is a result of the failure of Arab economies to generate decent jobs. This, however, applies to other various employment sectors and is not limited to the transport sector, but is concentrated in the land transport sector. Both air and sea transport sectors are of the well-organized sectors. In the well organized air transport sector, many Arab governments impose very strict restrictions to deprive workers therein from exercising their right to organize.

In addition, many of the Arab trade union organizations in several Arab countries are associated with the ruling political regimes and their political parties. While on a narrower scale; some trade union organizations in these countries are associated with opposition parties which give these organizations a political label, and thus the hesitation of many workers to join these trade unions for fears of negative effects their membership therein may draw. Moreover, there are trade union organizations in some Arab countries who do not give way to new membership in order to maintain control of the affairs of the trade union, and repeat their victory in the elections, which is often won unopposed due to the dominance of some heads and members of their boards over the general assembly of the trade union.

In the course of analyzing the weak representation of Arab trade union organizations of workers in the transport sector, it may be pointed that the rules of procedures (internal regulations) of most of these organizations allow the continuous nomination of the same persons for many election rounds, in addition to the weak application of good governance standards such as transparency, questioning, and accountability, and therefore prevalence of non democratic work methods in trade unions leading to isolation of many

trade unions from their bases, and a weaker detection of their concerns and problems and lack of adoption of their issues on the part of the trade union. Furthermore, many leaderships of trade unions exchange common interests with administrations of companies where they work, and accordingly the actions of these trade unions become bound by the interests of administrations of the said companies. Among the reasons for the little number of memberships for many of the trade unions of workers in the transport sector is the focus of many of them on major transport company, which is often government owned (public sector), or the government owns big stake thereof; another reason is the negligence of transport sectors' workers concentrated in small and medium sized enterprises in which trade union work is harder than in large enterprises; this situation is clearly demonstrated in the land transport sectors.

In the course of preparing this study, it was found that most trade union organizations in the transport sector in Arab countries subject of this study do not own databases showing the total number of workers in the various branches of transport sector (air, land, sea and river) which demonstrates inadequacy in the performance of the departments of statistics in providing the necessary statistical data for workers in the different

transport sectors; it also reflects the inadequacy in the performance of these trade unions toward building up their own databases for workers in the various branches of transport sector. This requires the trade unions of transport workers in the Arab countries to build databases to show the total numbers of workers in the transport sector, as this would help to know the real numbers of workers in the transport sector and the extent to which they enjoy their labor rights. Having a database on the number of workers in the transport sector will allow proper assessment of the extent of impact of the transport sector in the economy of the concerned country depending on the size of the work force therein, which will help in drawing strategic plans by trade unions of workers in the transport sector to uphold this sector and pressure governments and employers to improve conditions of workers therein.

Despite lack of databases on the total number of workers in the transport sector in Arab countries covered by this study, a significant increase in the numbers of members of these trade unions has been observed over the past three years according to statements by Arab trade union organizations in the transport sector upon interviewing them in the course of preparing this study. Furthermore, an increase was detected in the number of new trade union organizations in the

various transport sectors in several Arab countries as in Jordan and Egypt; this is due to the positive side effects of the wave of democratic transformations witnessed by the region since three years which raised the degree of freedoms of opinion, expression, assembly and trade union organization. In this regard, the last three years witnessed the establishment of a big number of new and independent trade unions in various sectors among which was the transport sector; while some Arab countries covered by this study still suffer from restrictions on freedom of trade union organization; other Arab countries, also covered by this study, prohibit workers in the public transport sector to form or join trade unions which necessitates reconsidering all legislations and regulations restricting trade union activities; accordingly, trade unions themselves are required to pressure in the direction to clear the legislations in several Arab countries of texts restricting freedoms of association.

There are many trade unions which represent workers in the different branches of the transport sector; as more than one trade union was found representing workers of the branches of land, sea and air transport. Some trade unions represent transport workers according to geographical areas where they live or work, which is logical and reflects the perception of many transport workers of their need to engage in trade union organizations; as it is assumed that trade union organizations are institutional and be located in the

geographical areas where their members stay so that it becomes able to defend their rights and protect their achievements. It may be useful to point out in this regard that most Arab trade union organizations in the transport sector in countries covered by this study do enjoy a good infrastructure, as most of them own headquarters, some own more than one location; all trade unions have work mechanisms and bylaws which demonstrate a strong organizational structure in countries covered by this study.

Levels of wages of transport workers in Arab countries vary in accordance to the different economic conditions in each Arab country. For instance, wages of workers in this sector in the oil rich Arabian Gulf states where the annual per capita income is high and these countries do not suffer from any economic problems; as in Kuwait for example, the average monthly wage of workers in the transport sector ranges between \$2000 - \$15000, while wages range around medium and low ratios in other Arab countries such as Jordan, Morocco and Egypt whereby these countries suffer from difficult economic situation and where the average monthly income of workers in the transport sector ranges between \$600 - \$2000. Such amounts barely are sufficient to meet the requirements of a small family in a country like Morocco for instance, or Jordan. This fact highlights the great responsibility upon trade union organizations of transport workers as to the need to continue struggling for the sake of

improving the living conditions of members of these organizations. Furthermore, workers' wages vary in the same country according to each branch of the transport sector; whereas wages of workers in the air transport sector rise in some Arab countries covered by this study to reach a monthly amount of \$15000 as in Kuwait, followed in the second rank by wages of workers in the sea transport sector, while wages of workers in the land and river transport stands in the last rank.

The study noted that most members of trade unions in the transport sector in Arab countries work under permanent employment contracts, especially in the government transport sector which indicates a higher degree of job stability for those workers. Majority of workers in the sea transport sector in Arab countries, however, work under temporary employment contracts; this matter is relative from one Arab country to the other; for instance, most workers in the sea transport sector in Egypt work under temporary employment contracts, while most workers in the sea transport sector in Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, and Jordan work under permanent employment contracts, and most workers in the sea transport sector in Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, and Jordan work under permanent employment contracts. Accordingly, transport trade unions are required to pressure toward changing the temporary employment contracts of their members to permanent ones in order to secure job security to workers in this sector including decent wage, social

security, health care and other conditions of decent work.

The past years have seen a notable increase of mass protests carried out by trade unions especially after the democratic transformations witnessed in the Arab region during the past years since the beginning of 2011 which resulted in a wider area of freedom exercising in terms of expression, assembly and organization created by the wave of democratic transformations in the Arab region. Most of these protests have focused their demands on improving wages, improving work conditions, payment of incentive allowances and rewards to workers, and improving social and health security systems which indicates an increase in the awareness among transport workers in the Arab region of their rights, as well as a tendency to freedom of fears which accompanied trade union work in the Arab region for decades. Many labor organizations succeeded through protests it carried out to achieve wage increases in favor of their members and improve their working conditions, as was the case with workers of Jordan Ports who carried out a series of labor protests in order to improve wages of workers therein; while some trade union organizations of transport workers in other Arab countries still struggle for the sake of achieving the rights of their members as in Morocco. It may also be noted that most transport workers' organizations in Arab countries covered by this study fought collective bargaining rounds

with employers or governments which resulted in partial achievement of workers' demands, especially regarding improving their wages which indicates a steady improvement in the awareness of the importance of the method of collective bargaining to achieve demands of workers.

With regard to relationships of these union organizations with civil society organizations, the study found that some trade union organizations in the transport sector have relationships of cooperation and coordination with civil society organizations, especially those concerned with human rights issues which indicates the interaction of these unions with righteous issues as well as their ability to interact and coordinate with other active organizations in the community. All trade unions of transport workers covered by the study were found members of local labor federations, and hold membership of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) which demonstrates the extent to which these trade unions are interested in organizational and institutional work both on local and international level.

The legislative obstacles are among the most prominent issues facing the labor organizations in the transport sector in view of restrictions it imposes in most of Arab countries on freedoms of trade union organizations and the consequent restrictions on freedoms of assembly, organization and protest; in addition to the lack of legislations to regulate trade

union work especially the recently established new and independent labor organizations. There are also additional obstacles related to the security situation and political instability witnessed by many Arab countries covered by the study such as Egypt, Tunisia Libya and Yemen whereby security and political factors reflected on the work of trade unions, which prompted some labor organizations in some Arab countries to engage in political affairs on account of the interests of their members. The instable security situation contributed to disrupting the implementation of many plans and events related to matters of members' interests in many trade unions

### **Various trade union movements:**

Upon viewing and following up the popular protest movements which erupted in the Arab region nearly three years ago, it is found that the extent of the contribution of trade union organizations in that movement was various. This wave of protests came seeking change toward democracy and to promote popular participation. Some trade union organizations participated effectively in the popular protest movements in some Arab countries, such as the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), who played through its various trade union organizations a key role in escalating the momentum of mass protests in the various Tunisian regions throughout the course of the Tunisian revolution late 2010 and early 2011. The General Tunisian Labor Federation is still playing a key political role in the presently



ongoing phase of political transformations. In Egypt also, the independent trade union organizations took part in the various protests witnessed by the country in the course of the revolution of 25th of January 2011 (despite their few number then); in addition to the participation of tens of thousands of workers in the various branches of the transport sector, and members in the traditional trade union organizations in Egypt as well as in Yemen; these contributions took place at two levels; the level of trade union organizations in form of a central resolution or in form of individual decisions by activists in these trade union organizations, while the second level was represented in the participation by workers in general, and in the transport sector on individual basis. Many trade union organizations, however, stood and are still standing neutrally concerning participation in these protest activities justifying their position by saying that these activities are not listed among the objectives of their organizations.

Simultaneously, there were, however, leaderships of trade union organizations which opposed and are still opposing the protest movements which demanded changes toward democracy in their countries. That position may be explained that any shift toward democracy shall reflect on the structure of these organizations affecting mechanisms of their work accordingly, which may affect negatively the personal gains of these leaderships in terms of keeping their senior positions, and thus they would lose

many gains and privileges they had achieved through the support which they used to receive from governments and governments' institutions enabling them to dominate these trade union organizations and control their resources on the grounds that these organizations are part of the structures of the existing political systems. This applies not only on some trade union organizations of the transport sector, but also on some organizations and trade union federations who are active in other operational sectors.

It is noted, however, that by viewing the protest movements in the Arab region and its elements, the above mentioned difference in positions is still valid until the present time. In light of the ongoing process of transformation toward democracy, there are some trade union organizations and their federations who still support the undemocratic practices of many political systems in their countries, basing this position on the hypothesis that the weak democratic practices in a country facilitate the work of these organizations on undemocratic practices as well, hence realizing the gains and interests of some heads and executives of these organizations. On the contrary, other trade union organizations in the Arab region, including those working in the transport sector strive to bring about changes in the political atmosphere in their countries toward more democratic practices, and in particular freedoms of expression, assembly and association, basing this position on the hypothesis that democratic political

atmosphere allows workers in the transport sector and other sectors to organize themselves and exercise their work freely enabling them to establish balanced relationships with employers and top managements both in the public and private sectors alike, and accordingly, achieve a positive result in terms of improving the work and living conditions of workers these organizations represent.

### **Seeking gains:**

The protest movement seen in the Arab region over the last three years came as an inevitable result of the decline in various development indicators compared with other regions and countries around the world. The region is witnessing the highest unemployment rates in the world, especially among the youth (15 – 24 years old) where unemployment rate reaches 28.1% in Arab countries of the Middle East, and 23.8% in Arab countries of North Africa while the rate on international level reaches 12.6%. Moreover, the region suffers from low wage rates and increase in numbers of the poor to include in addition to citizens who are unable to work the workers themselves; and there is also an obvious increase detected in the number of workers in the informal sector, in addition to a clear decline in the various indicators of economic development, which reflected negatively on most workers including those working in the transport sector.

The above explained situation increased pressure on Arab communities who

were prompted to revolt in the face of governments protesting against dictatorial political systems in many Arab countries, and therefore, it was logically anticipated that these democratic transformations reflect positively on work conditions leading to rebuilding labor relations between workers on the one side and employers and their management on the other side both in the public and private sectors on new basis taking into account the fundamental rights and principles at work which include satisfactory and fair working conditions, creating decent job opportunities, raising wage levels, providing social protection as well as fair and balanced employment contracts for workers. But, however, in the logic of historical transformations, these anticipated results were not reflected directly and rapidly to improve above mentioned indicators, which took place with some anyway, because outcomes of subject transformations will be seen only later on medium and long term due to the fact that such changes would help laying the foundations of democracy in the administrations of state institutions, and will help to create a state of social balances between society components especially workers on the one side and employers and governments on the other side.

There are thousands of workers in the transport sector, especially those working in the public sector whose working conditions have improved due to the intensity of labor protests which were carried out over the past

years in expression of the state of imbalance in labor relations, and also due to the desire of governments and some employers in the private sector to absorb the anger of workers in their institutions; accordingly, an improvement of some work conditions could be noticed; this improvement is still in its early stages and is anticipated to continue in positive trends in the medium and long terms depending on the extent of improvement of political atmosphere in which trade union organizations in the Arab region, among which are those organizations representing workers in the transport sector, work; but also depending on the improvement of the performance of the trade union organizations in the transport sector themselves.

### **Positive reflections:**

The popular protest movements demanding shift toward democracy in many Arab countries left positive effects on trade union organizations and institutions as well as on trade union activists and the workers themselves due to a higher level of courage as these organizations, institutions and activists were able to get rid of fear and hesitation regarding the reactions of governments and security agencies in many Arab countries, as well as reactions of employers in the private sector which was reflected positively by increasing the courage level of many trade union organizations and trade union activists and even the workers themselves against employers and top managements

both in the public and private sectors. Moreover, degrees of exercising freedoms of opinion, expression and assembly have risen, and trade union organizations as well as the workers themselves become more aware of their rights and started to circulate these rights among workers and demand the achievement thereof stronger than any earlier time.

The wave of democratic transformations witnessed by the Arab region prompted workers in the private sector to organize themselves in trade unions, an action which was forbidden for many of them in previous times. This was obvious in each of Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Jordan. Additional waves of organizing workers in trade union organizations were noticed in the public sector as well as an increase in the membership of existing ones. It can be claimed that a relevant improvement was achieved in the ability of workers and their trade union activists as well as their trade union organizations to express their views and positions freely. It may be useful to state here that many administrations in the Arab countries, which have not seen major political and social protests loosened in facing this type of activities by their workers for fears of unexpected reactions of workers which can escalate to larger protests.

In the same context, exercising the right and freedom of assembly and organize impacted positively the awareness of workers and their trade union organizations and

expressed itself through intensifying labor protests witnessed in many Arab countries and included various economic sectors among which was the transport sector. Their level of ability to express, assemble and organize led to an increase in their ability to form trade union organizations and committees. Arab countries who witnessed tangible democratic changes have seen waves of major protests in various labor sectors including the transport sector resulting in the formation of new trade union organizations and committees many of which represented a challenge to prevailing laws and regulations. The transport sector in many Arab countries witnessed major labor strikes before and during the democratic transformation period. The strike of port workers which was carried out by nearly four thousand workers in the port of Aqaba in Jordan in summer of 2009 represented a turning point in the awareness of the Jordanian labor movement towards their rights and the possibility to achieve them not only in the transport sector, but also in other economic sectors. That incident was the beginning of a series of labor protests in the port of Aqaba, while the last took place at the time of preparing this study. The case of Morocco too was a high point in this regard, as well as the cases in some transport sectors in many Arab countries subject of this study.

Many of the Arab countries subject of this study witnessed the establishment of trade union organizations and committees for workers in the various branches of transport

sector. In Jordan commercial drivers, flight attendants, and pilots established their own trade union organizations. Likewise in Egypt where many trade union organizations were established for workers in many sectors such as aviation security, flight attendants, railways, seamen, and container handling workers in Alexandria port and others. These are clear and important indicators that various labor sectors, but specifically the transport sector are undergoing significant transformations toward freedoms to assemble and organize which include some risks and opportunities; the risks are to leave these movements to act without direction and assistance by the experienced international and regional organizations, and also without reaction by governments to respond to demands of these labor movements by amending legislations which regulate trade union work toward enabling them to work freely; while the opportunities are represented in the abilities of activists themselves to intensify practices based on principles of independence, democracy and effectiveness.

### **Various effectiveness:**

The increase in the area of exercising freedoms of expression, assembly and organization impacted the efficiency of most Arab trade union organizations in the transport sector in terms of widening the membership base of these organizations, this effect, however, varied from one trade union to another, and from one country to another.

In this regard, it was found through analyzing the reality of traditional as well as new and independent trade unions in this sector that membership of trade unions in the transport sector working in the private sector has grown significantly in many Arab countries subject of this study, and in particular the new and independent trade unions. On the contrary, no apparent increase was noticed in the membership of most of trade unions in the transport sector working in the public sector. This is stemming from the fact that membership of trade union organizations in the public sector has been quasi mandatory; i.e., it obligates workers to join the specific trade union as soon as they start work in institutions of the public sector; membership fees were automatically deducted from their salaries and transferred to the concerned trade union; accordingly membership of these trade unions was broad already before the democratic transformations witnessed in the region commenced.

Moreover, the ratio of representation by traditional as well as new and independent trade union organizations in the transport sector is still weak, particularly trade union organizations working in the private sector, it also varies from one sector to the other and from one country to the other. Accordingly, exerting a lot of efforts is still required to strengthen organizational capacities of various types of trade union organizations working in the transport sector to enable them to practice the skills of professional

mobilization, organization and advocacy in order to increase the level of representation of these trade union organizations of their labor bases.

The weak union representation in various labor sectors, including the transport sector impacted negatively the efficiency of these trade union organizations. The concept of efficiency, however, is a relative one, understanding, appreciation and determination of which varies from one party to another, therefore, the reality of workers in the Arab region as well as the weak working conditions in most Arab countries subject of this study is seen as a key indicator of the weak efficiency of these unions. This is clearly noticed through analyzing the working conditions in the Arab region in general and in particular in the transport sector. The difference is apparent in the degree of appreciation of decent work standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; while workers in the very well organized transport sectors such as air transport enjoy a high level of decent work standards, other workers in the transport sector such as sea and land transport workers enjoy a level of decent work standards and conditions which range between good and poor.

There has been a clear difference in the capacities of trade union organizations in the transport sector in the Arab countries subject of the study in terms of their ability to use various types and levels of collective

bargaining techniques and skills. Some trade union organizations gained cumulative and advanced experiences which enabled them to conduct collective bargaining which often led to success in achieving their objectives and demands or part thereof, while in the same sector, there were trade union organizations which are weak in the field of collective bargaining and often failed to achieve their goals due to their conviction that collective bargaining methods are limited to strikes and protests.

With regard to organizational capabilities in general, it was noticed that most new and independent labor organizations lack the high capacities and organizational skills necessary to enable them to achieve their vision in setting up effective trade union organizations, as many of them still adopt methods of improvisation in their work and implementation of activities. The weak capacities in knowledge and skills were obvious with many of their leaders while the clear vision and enthusiasm of these leaders were emphasized.

It was noted in the course of analyzing the reality of trade union organizations that their role in the media was weak both in their relations with foreign media means and/or local media which is assumed to connect members of trade union organizations with each other. Interacting on social media websites, in particular Facebook, by many trade union organizations, especially the new

and independent ones was noticed. However, these media means are not sufficient to boost communication between members of trade union organizations themselves, or to enhance coordination and cooperation with other trade union organizations who are active in similar branches of the transport sector or in the transport sector in general, because many workers in some transport sectors do not use social media, especially those working in the land transport sector.

In connection with the issue of efficiency of trade union organizations, it may be suitable to point out to the tendency towards the formation of new unions in the course of activating the principle of trade union formation freedom leading to the risk represented in the formation of trade union organization with a very few number of members, without inserting in their bylaws texts encouraging them to coordinate and merge with other trade unions in the same sector. This matter represents a real risk which may tear out and weaken trade union work. Moreover, it is necessary for the bylaws and internal regulations of trade unions and labor federations to encourage the unification of trade union organizations on basis of democratic selection.

## **Trade union discourse and planning**

Among the most important reasons behind the retreat in the efficiency of trade union organizations in the Arab region in

general, but also among those working in the transport sector in particular is the lack of use of modern methods in running the affairs of these labor organizations; the most important one of these methods is for the trade union organizations to work in institutional structures based on determining their identity, vision, and mission; and thus, achieve their goals through drafting strategic plans and follow up the implementation thereof, in addition to developing clear policies determining their attitudes towards public economic policies in the country and other issues of concern to workers in the transport sector. In conclusion, what may be called the trade union discourse is absent in the case of most labor organizations and in particular those in the transport sector.

It became apparent through analysis that only a few of the traditional as well as the new and independent trade union organizations use these methods in the proper way. A limited number of trade union organizations operating in the transport sector do develop strategic plans in accordance with adopted criteria for strategic planning. Some, however, develop work plans, but do not care to develop implementation mechanisms thereof, nor does it use such tools as monitoring and evaluation to determine the extent of achieving the targeted goals and what has been accomplished. This situation reflected negatively on the performance and efficiency of many labor organizations of both types; i.e., the traditional as well as the

new and independent trade unions. In spite of some improvement in the performance of many trade union organizations in the private sector in terms of planning, many trade union organizations still need to exert efforts in this regard to improve their efficiency.

With regard to the performance of the new and independent trade unions, They are still rather weak in this regard due to their recent formation, and due to the fact that some of their leaderships are themselves new to trade union work, and therefore, do not possess necessary skills to assume their work institutionally and professionally, others were active in traditional trade unions and, therefore, were used to follow traditional work patterns which were used in these labor organizations; many of the traditional trade unions in the transport sector used to exercise work in an improvised manner. However, had some of them developed strategic plans, these were often nominal and never implemented or adhered to, which led to the absence of specific and clear trade union discourse to include priorities for the work or trade union organizations in the transport sector as well as to take into account the entire challenges faced by workers in this sector and draw general perceptions to face the same accordingly.

It is necessary, however, to point out that according to the analysis of the reality of both the traditional as well as the new and independent labor organizations, some

leaderships of these organizations prefer not to draw specific plans and policies toward many issues to leave the door open in front of themselves to take their positions freely without being confined to limitations which may be enforced against their will by plans and policies adopted in the organizations they head.

Absence of the adoption of strategic planning in some labor organizations in the transport sector led to resorting to self understanding and personal analysis in order to define their attitudes toward many economic, social and political topics leading them to reflect their personal opinions and positions on issues of concern to workers they represent or the society as a whole. Accordingly, this situation demonstrates the need to enhance the capabilities of these organizations in the field of strategic planning in its various forms to draw plans and follow up the implementation and evaluation thereof.

## **Independence of labor organizations is at stake**

As regards the real independence of trade union organizations in the Arab region in general, and in particular those working in the transport sector, whether the traditional or the new and independent organizations, the basic dilemma is standstill for decades, as most of the Arab trade union organizations in the various sectors do not enjoy enough independence to exercise their basic mission

represented in improving working conditions of members and workers they represent, as well as preserving their acquired rights. This matter applies at various degrees to both types of trade union organizations; i.e., the traditional as well as the new and independent labor organizations.

While some trade unions were and are still subjected to governments and their various agencies, others were subjected to wills of political currents and parties which dominated some of these trade unions both in the government and the opposition. This situation continued to standstill even during the phase of transformation toward democracy witnessed by some Arab countries; some leaderships of these trade unions rapidly shifted their loyalty toward the new ruling authorities in some countries or to some political thought houses adopted by the new political ruling authorities.

Furthermore, many trade union organizations plunged into details of political life in their countries and started to assume political roles which consumed much of their capacity (Tunisia and Egypt are examples thereof). These, however, are sensitive roles which contain many potential risks as to subjecting the interests of workers to wills of politicians and their interests not vice versa.

Another type of independence which ought to be discussed in the course of discussing the independence of trade unions in the



Arabian region in general, and in particular the transport sector, as there are many trade union leaders who devote resources of their organizations to achieve selfish and personal interests at the expense of the general interests of workers they represent, such phenomena were seen in many traditional trade unions, and began to appear, at a narrower scale, in some of the new and independent trade unions, which necessitates reconsidering the entire methods followed by some trade union organizations in the transport sector in many Arab countries subject of this study in order to adopt and exercise the best methods of good governance in all the details of activities of relevant trade unions and their federations, as well as to draw organizational structures and procedures to suit the priorities of the labor movement and its trade union organizations.

### **Seeking an active role for women and the youth:**

In spite of the deep transformations and throes the Arab region witnessed and is still witnessing in the area of enabling citizens to exercise their fundamental human rights, which include equality and non-discrimination in terms of sex, color, race or religion, the role of women in trade unions in the Arab region in general and those active in the transport sector in particular has been rather weak; as membership of many trade union organization is predominantly dominated by males; the main reason for that is the weak women participation in economic life in general,

which is considered on of the most important structural imbalances in Arab economies and is seen as a result of the incompatibility of developmental patterns applied in the Arab region with pressing needs and priorities of Arab communities leading to making participation of Arab women the least in the world at ratios of 15.1% and 20.2% in the Middle East and North Africa respectively; while in other parts of the world the ratio ranges between 30.4% in countries of South Asia and 64.0% in countries of East Asia, and the ratio of women participation throughout the world reaches a percentage of 47.9%.

The ratio of employment of women is different in various branches of the transport sector; while the percentage of women employment in both transport sectors of land and sea transport is very slight due to the nature of both sectors, the air transport sector is considered among the mixed sectors. The subject of women employment reflected on the degree of women representation in the general assemblies, federations, and executive boards of transport trade union organizations in the same ratio of their employment in this sector. It has been noted, however, that some Arab trade union organizations in general, and particularly those working the air transport sector have placed women in their various commissions; however, the presence of some of them is symbolic and is represents an attempt by some managements of some trade unions to give an unrealistic impression about the actual

role of women in these organizations before the international trade union organizations, so some women are present in top positions, while the actual interaction and decision making is kept in the hands of men. This, however, does not deny an improvement in many labor organizations in the transport sector in the Arab region during the past years in terms of increasing the participation of women in the various organizational levels of these organizations.

During the past few years, Arab trade union organizations, particularly the new and independent trade union organizations have seen evident changes in the degrees of women representation in its various commissions as a result of democratic transformations witnessed in the region and the preceding throes thereof. In addition, it was found in the course of analyzing the reality of Arab trade union organizations in the transport sector that an improvement occurred in the degree of representation of the youth in the various commissions of such organizations. Fresh generations of young people started to assume advanced positions in many trade unions, especially, the new and independent trade unions. While in the traditional trade unions, people of medium and older age groups are still dominating most of high bodies of these organizations. This clearly reflects the weakness of democratic mechanisms and practices in the bylaws and internal regulations of most traditional trade union organizations, as well as the weak

exercising there of, if any in others, besides, beginnings to establish internal bylaws and regulations based on democratic basis to contain the foundations to build up an effective trade union movement.

## **Status of labor organizations by Country:**

### **1- Egypt:**

Egyptian law nominally provides for the right of Egyptian workers to form and join trade unions as well as the rights to strike and collective bargaining, there are however, many restrictions which limit the exercise of these rights. The law obligated all newly established trade unions to join the General Federation of Trade Unions which was controlled by the government until the revolution of the 25th of January 2011. In March 2011, the Egyptian Minister of Manpower declared the right to form independent trade unions and confirmed this right which was stated in articles 52 and 53 of the Constitution which was endorsed in December 2012. The said Constitution was invalidated on the third of July 2013. Accordingly, until the moment of preparing this study, there is no legislation in Egypt which affirm the right to establish independent trade unions, however, quite a big number of trade unions were allowed to be registered; according to the Ministry of Manpower a number of 1428 new trade union were registered since the declaration of the

Minister of Manpower in 2011. In addition, the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions and the Democratic Federation of Egyptian Workers were established as two independent trade union organizations having many newly established trade unions as members. While the invalidated Egyptian Constitution allowed peaceful labor strikes, no legislations or regulations were issued to organize the exercise of this right. As regards the right of collective bargaining, the labor law does not provide for collective bargaining on the level of an enterprise in the private sector, but requires tripartite negotiations through a central committee in which the Egyptian Workers Trade Union Federation and the Ministry of Manpower are both represented. The collective bargaining negotiations which occur often take a character of disputes settlement and not that of a real collective bargaining aiming to achieve the rights of workers. It is worth mentioning in this regard, however, that Egypt ratified so far eight of the ILO conventions namely those with the numbers (29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138, and 182).

There are no precise figures on the total number of workers in the transport sector in Egypt. However, estimates of several trade union activists in the transport sector indicate that the number of workers in the various branches of this sector reaches almost one million workers both in the public as well as the private sectors, and are represented by a number of trade unions associated with three

federations, namely: the General Federation of Trade Unions (the official federation), the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions, and the Democratic Federation of Egyptian Workers. According to the resolution by the Minister of Manpower in March 2011 allowing the formation of trade unions both in the public sector as well as in the private sector, hundreds of independent trade unions were formed in Egypt during the last three of years including some trade unions in the transport sector. There are in addition hundreds of other trade unions under formation. The increase in the number of trade unions led to an increase in the number of their members since the beginning of the democratic transformations in 2011. No precise figures are available on the number of new members of trade unions, but there is an increase of the number of young people who joined the trade unions, and to a lesser degree the number of women.

The past few years, especially following the beginning of the democratic transformations witnessed and are still ongoing in, Egypt witnessed a notable increase in labor protests carried out by trade unions, especially the independent ones, and trade unions in the transport sector played a big role in these labor movements and protests. Most of these protests focused on demanding improvement of wages, improvement of work conditions, and payment of incentive allowances and bonuses for workers. As a result of collective bargaining between workers and employers, partial achievement of workers' demands was

reached especially regarding improvement of wages.

On the general structure of Egyptian trade unions in the transport sector, all trade unions in the transport sector seem to have internal regulations and bylaws, own headquarters, some keep more than one headquarters, particularly those with activities in more than one work location or governorate. Most of trade unions are members in local trade union federations and members in the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). It was also found that some trade unions have cooperation and coordination relationships with civil society organizations, some others haven't any kind of such cooperation. In addition, most members of trade unions in the transport sector work under permanent employment contract, especially those in the public transport sector; but those working in the sea transport sector are excluded, for many of them work under temporary employment contracts.

Monthly wages of most workers in the transport sector in Egypt range between 1000 – 2000 Egyptian Pound (\$140 -\$280). Wage rates are different from one sector to another and from one company to another, as there are workers who earn wages of approximately 4000 Egyptian Pound (\$500), which are of the highest in Egypt, but are not enough to secure a decent living standard for workers in this sector.

Among the main obstacles facing the trade unions of transport workers in Egypt is the absence of a special law to regulate the work of trade unions, and there are obstacles related to the security situation and the situation of political instability prevailing in Egypt. Among the positive indicators is that many trade unions in the transport sector have annual or semi annual work plans, the implementation of which is being followed up in accordance with preset timetables, this phenomenal was not existing before 2011. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and many other international federations as well as international and Egyptian civil society organizations assisted in enabling these trade unions to develop plans for their activities. Future work plans of trade unions focus on working to improve the working and living conditions of workers, increase the degree of awareness among workers in their rights, and on preserving any gains they achieve.

Among the Egyptian transport workers trade union is the General Trade Union of Sailors in Suez, which is a new and independent trade union established in 2012 having as members about five thousand workers out of the total number of sea transport workers. There are as well other trade unions in the city of Suez which represent workers in this sector. Most members of this trade union, however, work under temporary employment contracts and their average monthly wage reaches an amount of \$500; this trade union keeps three

headquarters, and follows internal bylaws as well as an annual working plan; it is a member in the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), and is not associated with any local labor federation. This trade union had carried out many labor protests demanding salary increases, and had signed collective agreements with employers. Among obstacles this trade union faces are the low wage rates and the temporary employment contracts; and among its priorities for the next five years is the implementation of plans of health care, social insurance as well as equality of Egyptian workers with their foreign peers in wages.

There is also the Trade Union of Workers in the Public Transport, which is an independent trade union, a member the independent Democratic Federation of Egyptian Workers and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), having as members about 45 thousand workers across the city of Greater Cairo, and having coordination relationships with civil society organizations; a number of its members are associated with civil society organizations concerned in human rights issues; this trade union has internal bylaws and keeps a headquarters; all its members work under permanent employment contracts. Moreover, this trade union had carried out many labor protests over the past three years demanding improvement of wages, restructuring, as well as demanding end-of-service compensations, renewal of transport fleet, and upgrading of health care

for workers; it signed collective agreements with employers; the average monthly wage of members of this trade union reaches an amount of 1200 Egyptian Pound, and there is a very limited increase in the number of women who are registered in this trade union which is stemming from the fact that the number of women who are working in the public transport sector is very low, while the number of youth who are registered in this trade union has increased drastically. This trade union operates under a plan without a time frame but it is being updated according to developments. The main obstacles this trade union faces are the absence of a legislation which regulates the relations between independent trade unions and the government, and the instable political situation currently witnessed in Egypt. Among priorities of this trade union during the next five years is the work to achieve rights of workers, improve their living standard through increasing wages, improve the level of health care, and raise awareness of workers of their rights.

One of the active trade unions in the transport sector in Egypt also is the Trade Union of Workers in the Railways, members of which reach 61 thousand workers, in addition to other trade unions which represent workers in this sector. This trade union, however, is a member in local trade union federations and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), it has internal bylaws and regulations as well as a headquarters. This

trade union keeps no relations with any of the civil society organizations; the average monthly wage of members of this trade union reaches an amount of 1200 Egyptian Pound, most workers work under permanent employment contracts except a few who work under temporary contracts, had carried out over the past years many labor protests demanding wage increase, signed collective agreements with employers, witnessed over the past period a notable increase in the number of registered youth, and the number of member women has increased slightly. Furthermore, this trade union has an annual work plan which is updated periodically, main obstacles it faces are political and security instability, future objectives it seeks to achieve are to upgrade the conditions of workers, wage increase, provide adequate housing for workers as well as to upgrade the health services provided to them.

## 2. Morocco:

Moroccan Constitution provides for the right of workers in Morocco to form trade unions and join them as well as to exercise the right of strike and collective bargaining. Laws issued by virtue thereof, however, impose some restrictions on exercising the said rights as it requires any trade union who intends to organize a strike to notify the concerned authorities ten days prior to the date of carrying out the strike. In case a strike is carried out at any institution, the law permits the appointment of substitute employees

in place of striking workers. The authorities, however, are empowered to disburse labor protests carried out in unauthorized locations. The Moroccan Labor Law allows the establishment of trade unions, and courts are empowered to return dismissed workers to employment and enforce decisions obliging employers to bear damages including retroactively due wages. In spite of the fact that the law permits collective bargaining, the impact of exercising this right has been limited, especially regarding wage cases controlled by employers. Nonetheless, Morocco has ratified so far seven of the basic international labor conventions, namely those numbered (29, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182).

No clear statistics are available on the number of workers in the transport sector in the Kingdom of Morocco. Those workers, however, are distributed over all sectors of land, sea and air transport sectors both in the public and private sectors. Workers in the transport sector are represented by many trade unions, mostly attached to the Moroccan Labor Union. Many trade unions in the field of transport were established over the last five years, so that whenever a company is established in the field of transport, a corresponding trade union is established accordingly. Most transport workers who are registered in trade unions work under permanent employment contracts, except a few of them who work under temporary contracts; the average monthly wage reach as much as \$1200.

Most trade unions in the transport sector in Morocco carried out labor protests over the last five years rejecting the closure of many institutions, protesting against workers' dismissal or demanding dues of workers from closed companies; as well as demanding the improvement of work conditions. Many collective agreements were signed between workers and employers. The last five years witnessed an increase in the number of youth and women who joined trade unions in the transport sector.

Among the independent trade unions in the transport sector is the National Trade Union of Ports Workers in Morocco, with a membership of about five thousand members. This trade union is a member of the General Moroccan Labor Federation as well as the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). This trade union keeps cooperation and coordination relationships with several civil society organizations in Morocco, it follows internal bylaws and regulations, and owns a headquarters. Most workers who are registered in this trade union work under permanent employment contracts except a few who work under temporary contracts. This trade union carried out many labor protests during the past years which aimed to achieve workers' rights from closed institutions, improve working conditions, and release of arrested workers. This trade union signed many collective agreements; it has a three years long strategic plan which is continuously followed up to evaluate achievements.

Among the main obstacles facing this trade union is the inability of authorities to enact the laws related to workers' rights. The trade union intends to continue the efforts to achieve workers rights and improve their living conditions.

### 3. Algeria

Algerian Constitution provides for allowing Algerian workers to join trade unions of their choice, but requires the consent of the government to establish trade unions and federations, the law requires the approval of the Ministry of Labor within 30 days. The government, however, is empowered to nullify the legal status of any federation or trade union if found inconsistent with the institutional system, public order, or prevailing laws and regulations. The General Federation of Algerian Workers is the only legally recognized labor body. The law permits the establishment of new trade unions, but there are many unspecified restrictions in this regard.

In spite of the fact that Algeria had ratified the ILO convention No. (87) on freedom of association and protection of the right to organize, its contents were not fully reflected in the national Algerian legislations. The Algerian law provides for the collective bargaining for all trade unions but require them to obtain a prior permission. Nonetheless, the General Federation of Algerian Workers remains as the only body who is authorized to

negotiate collective bargaining agreements. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that Algerian law provides for the exercise of the right to strike, this right is confined because the government is empowered to prevent strikes for economic, political and social excuses. In addition, due to the emergency law in force, all public demonstrations, including protests and strikes must obtain prior permission from the government; according to the law, workers are only allowed to strike after 14 days from the start of mediation. So far, Algeria ratified eight of the ILO conventions, namely those with the numbers: 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138, and 182.

Workers in the transport sector in Algeria are represented by the National Federation of Transport Workers, a member of the General Union of Algerian Workers. This federation comprises many trade unions which represent transport workers who are distributed over the various transport sectors of sea, air and land transport. No statistical indicators are available for transport workers in Algeria; however, they are distributed over the public and private sector.

Among the largest trade unions in the transport sector in Algeria is the National Federation of Algerian Ports Workers, comprising 37 trade unions, in addition to ten affiliated trade unions which were established three years ago after they were coordinates. This federation has seen only a little increase in the number of its members during the past five

years, and it is considered the only federation who represents Algerian port workers. The federation is a member of the General Union of Algerian Workers, The Maghreb Trade Union Federation, The Arabian Federation and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). This federation keeps limited relationships with some civil society organizations through which the federation provides some social assistance only in religious occasions. The federation follows internal regulations and rules of procedures; it has a main headquarters in the capital and branches in every port. Most members of this federation work under permanent employment contracts, but a few work under a one year valid, but renewable temporary employment contracts.

This federation carried out many protests in some ports which had focused mainly on ways and means how to apply the laws, acquisition of equipment, and improvement of wages and bonuses. The federation had signed three big collective bargaining agreements during the last five years. The average monthly wage of member workers of this federation reaches about \$800, in addition to the thirteen month salary and a share of the annual profits. Women members in the federation slightly increased over the past years, while numbers of the youth members increased significantly; the youth represents 80% of the members. The federation has short, medium and long term plans it works to carry out and follow up. Many achievements were made during the past five years in fields of wage improvement,



as well as employment and social services. The federation is preparing for the next collective bargaining agreement on wages, increasing availability of occupational health and safety means, as well as completion of some medical projects for workers, in addition to strengthening trade union regional and international relations.

#### 4. Yemen

Although, the valid Yemeni Labor Law is relatively consistent with international labor standards, however, it confines the freedom of trade union work. Yemeni labor legislations include many restrictions related to trade unions membership coverage, as it bans house service workers as well as employees of the public sector to join trade unions.

Labor Law is not applied on employees of the civil service, daily workers, house service workers and foreign workers. However, the law permits trade unions to bargain on wages, carry out strikes or other actions to achieve their demands, but there are major restrictions on exercising the right to strike, as a prior notice has to be given to the employer and the government before carrying out the strike, also, a written consent from the executive office of the General Federation of Workers' Trade Unions in Yemen has to be obtained. Workers may appeal any dispute before the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Workers may also resort to an arbitration committee consisting of a representative

of employers, and a representative of the General Federation of Workers' Trade Unions in Yemen. The Yemeni Government, however, never recognized the implementation and exercise of the right of collective bargaining, as the Ministry of Labor has the power to object collective bargaining agreements, also it interferes in the activities of the federation. Transport workers in Yemen are represented by the General Trade Union of Transport which is a member of the General Federation of Workers' Trade Unions in Yemen. There is one labor federation in Yemen which is the General Federation of Workers' Trade Unions in Yemen, legislations do now allow the formation of any other federation; some trade unions, however, are not members of the said federation. So far, Yemen ratified on the following eight ILO conventions: 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182.

The numbers of workers in the transport sector in Yemen are estimated at 55 thousand workers, 15 thousands of them work in the public sector and 40 thousands in the private sector. These estimates, however, seem to be far less than reality, it may reflect numbers of those working in the formal sector. It is known that in the transport sector, especially in the land transport sector many are working in the informal sector.

In the course of democratic transformations witnessed by Yemen over the last three years, new trade unions were formed, particularly in these work sectors where it was forbidden to

form trade unions such as sectors of air and sea transport, especially Aden Containers Terminal which was run by Dubai Ports International, where a labor committee was formed. In the land transport sector two trade unions were formed for owners and drivers of trailer trucks.

Most workers in the various branches of the transport sector in Yemen work under employment contracts based on the civil service regulations, the rest work under collective employment contracts under Labor Law No. 5 for 1995. These contracts are being endorsed by trade unions, especially after the beginning of the wave of democratic transformations in the region and Yemen in particular. The Yemeni revolution contributed to increasing the wage levels for many workers in the transport sector, especially those who are represented in trade unions due to sit-ins and strikes carried out during the past years. Workers in air transport earn the highest salaries which start at \$1000 up to \$5000 monthly. While workers in the sea transport sector earn salaries between \$300 and \$3000; the land transport sector is dominated by owners and drivers of taxis and passenger buses whose income is variable from one to the other, but the average monthly income for one of them stands at \$ 350.

The General Trade Union of Transport Workers was established in 1956 is one of the major trade unions in the transport sector in Yemen. This union is a member of the

General Federation of Workers' Trade Unions in Yemen, the Arab Federation of Transport Workers, and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). The trade union was engaged during the past years in drafting some wage and salary guidelines, improving the wage rates, granting workers in all sectors overdue allowances and bonuses which they were denied before the revolution; in addition to improving standards of occupational health and safety through enforcing the medical insurance regulations for workers and their families which they were denied before the revolution. The transport sector in Yemen faces many challenges represented in the privatization actions in many sectors especially the sea transport sector, in addition to the political instability in connection with the ongoing political transformations in Yemen.

## 5. Kuwait

The Kuwaiti labor law relatively provides for freedoms of trade union organization and collective bargaining including carrying out strikes, there are, however, many restrictions and limitations to exercising these rights, as the law stipulates that founding members of any trade union may not be less than one hundred workers, ratio of Kuwaiti citizens of the founding members may not be less than 15%, and persons who wish to establish a trade union must obtain judiciary discharge clearances from government institutions.

The law provides for a limited right in collective bargaining for workers in general but deprives house service workers, ports workers and employees of the public service of this right, i.e., workers in the public sector have no right to strike but those in the private sector may exercise this right with limitations such as the necessity to obtain a prior permission from the Ministry of Interior who rarely would issue such a permission. The law empowers courts to dissolve any trade union for violating labor laws or challenging public order and public discipline. The Emir (head of the state) may dissolve a trade union through an administrative resolution. There is in Kuwait one main workers' federation having as members a number of transport workers trade unions. Nonetheless, Kuwait ratified so far the following seven ILO conventions: 29, 87, 98, 105, 111, 138 and 182.

The total number of workers in the transport sector in the State of Kuwait counts about 15 thousand workers distributed over all sectors of land, sea and air transport; most of them work in the public sector, a minority, however, works in the private sector. Workers in the transport sector in Kuwait are represented by the Trade Union of Workers in the Ministry of Transportation, which is responsible for sectors of post, communications, land transport, and maritime. In addition, there are trade unions for workers in the Kuwaiti Airways and its affiliate companies, workers in the Kuwaiti Oil Tanker Company, and workers in the Civil Aviation. Over the last five years some new

trade unions were established, one of them is the trade union for workers in the Civil Aviation.

Among the trade unions which represent transport workers is the Trade Union for Transportation having as members about 2000 workers; members of this trade union increased during the last five years. The average wage in sectors represented by this trade union reaches a monthly amount of \$2300. This trade union is a member in the Arab Federation of Workers in Transport, Post and Communications and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF); it keeps coordination relationships with various civil society organizations in Kuwait, and follows internal rules of procedures and a headquarters. Members of this trade union work under individual employment contracts as well as government employment contracts. It carried out various protest movements of economic and social nature over the last five years through its institutions, and never concluded any collective bargaining agreements with employers.

The number of women registered in this trade union increased significantly during the past few years; women took up top positions in the board of this trade union for more than one round. The number of youth has increased as well. It has no drafted plants to follow; but, however, had achieved a number of demands in favor of workers in the various professional branches such as the danger

allowance, executive allowances for top positions. The trade union plans to increase its membership of workers in general with special focus on women and youth; in addition to fulfillment of some pending economic and social demands currently under negotiation.

Another trade union of transport workers in Kuwait is the Trade Union of Workers in the Kuwaiti Ports Authority, which was established in 2003 whereby a number of 700 persons work in the public sector. Registered workers in this trade union count 530 workers. It recorded an increase of women and youth members; it is a member in the Kuwaiti Trade Unions' Federation and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). This trade union keeps coordination relationships with civil society organizations, follows internal rules of procedures, and owns a headquarters; and its members work under government employment contracts. It carried out several labor protests and strikes, signed a number of collective bargaining agreement, and works in accordance with a prefixed plan; some of its achievements over the past period were switching employees from public cadre to contract workers, increase allowances for employees and health insurance for employees and their families.

Workers in the air transport sector in Kuwait count 3500 workers, about 2700 of them work in the public sector and about 800 in the private sector; they are represented by two trade unions: The Trade Union of Workers

in the Civil Aviation, and the Trade Union of Workers in the Kuwaiti Airways. The Trade Union of Workers in the Civil Aviation was established in 2004, having as members 1500 workers, its members have increased over the past period both of women and youth; most members of its board are from the youth. This trade union keeps relationships with several civil society organizations in Kuwait, operates in accordance to written rules of procedures, and owns a headquarters. Workers in this sector work under government employment contracts, their average monthly wage ranges between \$6000 and \$15000. It carried out a number of protests and strikes during the past period demanding wage increase, signed collective bargaining agreements, has a strategic plan. Among its main achievements during the past five years were the approval of special allowances for workers in the General Directorate of Civil Aviation, fulfillment of demands of air controllers and solving the problems they used to face. This trade union succeeded in forming an official committee by the management for hazardous and hard occupations, cancellation of the decision to stop payment of noise allowance for workers in the construction department and repayment thereof, as well as providing health insurance for the workers. The main priorities of work of this trade union during the next five years is to achieve all labor demands, solve the problems of workers in the Civil Aviation and improve the conditions of workers and employees.

## 6. Lebanon:

Lebanese labor legislations provide for the right of workers in the private sector to form and join trade unions, as well as to exercise the rights of strike and collective bargaining. There are, however many restrictions which limit the exercise of these rights; as it prevents workers in the public sector, house service workers and some agriculture workers from forming or joining trade unions. In addition, by virtue of the provisions of the Lebanese Labor Law, the government may interfere in the work of trade unions administratively and financially, as the Ministry of Labor is the party who grants the approval for the formation of trade unions in the private sector, and the same ministry has the authority to dissolve them; the said ministry, as well, sets dates and procedures of elections for trade unions, and endorses the results thereof. Furthermore, there are major restrictions on exercising the right to strike, which requires prior approval from the Ministry of Interior; the party who intends to carry out a strike must notify the ministry of the time, place and the number of persons involved in the strike. The law provides for the right of collective bargaining, where as in the case of concluding an agreement through collective bargaining, two thirds of the members of the General Assembly of the concerned trade union have to approve the agreement. Nonetheless, Lebanon ratified so far the following seven ILO conventions: 29, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182.

There are no specific and accurate numbers on numbers of workers in the transport sector in Lebanon, they are, however, distributed over the various land, sea and air transport sectors; all of them work in the private sector and are represented by eleven trade unions. During the last five years, one new trade union was founded which is the Trade Union of Workers in the Air Line Companies. It may be stated that what applies on all Lebanese trade unions, applies also on trade unions of workers in the transport sector in terms of reflection of sectarian and partisan divisions on the structure of these trade unions, i.e., most influential political parties in Lebanon establish trade unions and federations of their own.

One of the transport trade unions in Lebanon is the Trade Union of the Middle East Airlines, which was founded in 1972 and having as members 900 workers. It is worth mentioning that there are four other trade unions representing workers in the same sector. Members of this trade union have decreased due to the so called "reform plan" which was implemented in the company in 2001. This trade union is a member in the General Workers' Federation of Lebanon, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), and the Public Services International Trade Unions Federation (PSI). This trade union keeps coordination relationships with civil society organizations through the General Workers' Federation of Lebanon; and it works according to written rules of procedures.

Members of this trade union under employment contracts generally subject to the Lebanese Labor Law; the average monthly wage of workers in the company reaches \$700, it carried out some labor protests, and never concluded any collective bargaining agreements so far. The number of women members in this trade union never increased since it was founded, so did the number of youth members. This trade union is working on a plan aiming to establish a post-pension solidarity fund, and take actions to improve wages of workers.

The wave of democratic transformations witnessed by the Arab region since the beginning of 2011 did not influence transport trade unions in Lebanon, being part of the entire Lebanese trade union movement so far; the main reason for that is due to the vertical sectarian division in Lebanon, as well as the strong overlapping between sectarian political parties and trade union organizations.

## 7. Libya

It is known that the Libyan trade union movement was part of the Libyan political system until the fall of the political regime in October, 2011. Ever since then, many initiatives were taken by the Libyan labor movement in order to rebuild the trade union movement on new bases.

The Libyan Constitutional Declaration issued in 2011 never contained any signals

recognizing trade union rights; the new draft labor law, however, provides for the freedom to form trade unions, as well as the right to strike, but within limitations such as exhaustion of all procedures of conciliation and arbitration. Since the fall of the political regime, Libya witnessed several labor strikes such as the strikes of teachers and lawyers protesting against many policies; the government never prevented or hindered these strikes. Nonetheless, Libya ratified so far the following eight ILO conventions: 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182.

As regards the transport sector, no specific figure is available on numbers of workers in this sector in Libya. Workers in the transport sector are represented by three major trade unions who are all members of the National Federation of Libyan Workers; the three trade unions are: the Trade Union of Ports Workers, the Trade Union of Public Transport, and the Trade Union of Workers in the Maritime Base. All member workers of trade unions in Libya are of public sector workers. The last years have not witnessed the formation of any new trade unions. Most of workers in the transport sector, however, work in the private sector, and accordingly they are not trade union registered.

The major sea transport trade union is the General Trade Union of Ports, Sailors and Clearance, having as members about 12 thousand workers, and is the only trade union representing workers in this sector;

a member in the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), operates in accordance to internal rules of procedures, and keeps coordination relationships with recently founded civil society organizations in Libya. Most workers in this sector work under permanent employment contracts, others work under temporary ones. The average monthly wage of workers in this sector ranges between \$600 and \$700 in addition to incentive allowances. This trade union carried out protests during the past period against privatization of one ports company. Numbers of registered women in this trade union increased slightly upon the appearance of a trade union lady activist who heads the membership committee in the National Federation of Libyan Workers, and she is the representative of the General Trade Union of Ports, Sailors and Clearance. Numbers of the youth have increased significantly as well. This trade union follows an annual working plan which is being updated continuously; it faces some obstacles such as the absence of stable laws, especially the labor law, in addition to workers' dismissal from time to time due to adopting modern technologies by employers. The main future plans of this trade union focus on work to increase awareness of workers of their rights, to deepen their understanding of the importance of trade union work, and collective bargaining.

## 8. Iraq:

Iraq has been among the first Arab countries

where trade union movements had been established early last century. In the decade of the sixties, domination by Iraqi government over the trade union movement deepened, and most of that movement became part of the structure of the political regime, especially in the eighties and the nineties. Much was counted on improvement of the situation of freedom of trade union organization during the last decade, but the conditions of Iraqi workers and their trade union movement have not improved so far. Laws regulating trade union in Iraq are still the same since decades. The democratic transformations movement witnessed by the Arab region over the last three years has not left any effect on improving the working conditions or on the level of freedom to organize in Iraq.

The valid Iraqi labor law provides for the establishment of trade unions; it is, however, the same law which was applicable before the fall of the previous ruling regime. In spite of the fact that the new Iraqi Constitution provides for the right to organize, there are major obstacles in front of forming new trade unions. Presently, there are many trade unions in Iraq, there are also three federations of the Iraqi trade unions: The General Federation of Iraqi Workers, The Trade Unions Federation of Kurdistan Workers, and another unrecognized federation called The Federation of Workers' Boards and Trade Unions of Iraqi Workers. Iraq, however had ratified so far the following eight ILO conventions: 29, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182, but never ratified convention No. 87 on

freedom of association and protection of the right to organize.

The present Iraqi Constitution provides for the right of citizens to form and join trade unions and professional associations, in addition to carrying out peaceful strikes according to stipulations and conditions of the law. The Iraqi labor law, however, prohibits employees of the public sector from carrying out strikes, and does not allow them to join any trade union or federation other than the General Federation of Iraqi Workers. The law also prohibits the formation of trade unions or federations other than the General Federation of Iraqi Workers. It permits workers in the private sector, however, to form workers' trade union committees with limited functions in employment locations which employ 50 workers and more. These workers' trade union committees may request arbitration of the Ministry of Labor in labor disputes. The law does not provide for the right of collective bargaining except through trade workers' trade union committees to represent workers.

Transport workers in Iraq are represented by a set of trade unions such as the Trade Union of Land Transport and Ports, the Trade Union of Aviation, the Trade Union of Workers Quays, and Trade Union of Passengers Transport, etc., all of which are members in the General Federation of Iraqi Workers. Workers in the transport sector in Iraq are distributed over both the public and private sectors, but are more concentrated in the

public sector. There is no legislation allowing the formation of trade unions outside the General Federation, there are, in spite of that independent trade unions which operate without legal cover. A number of new trade unions have been established over the past period though.

Among trade unions representing transport workers in Iraq is the General Trade Union of Ports' Workers in Basra with 4000 member workers. It is a member of the Iraq Workers' Federation and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), furthermore, it keeps cooperation and coordination relationships with a number of civil society organizations. This trade union operates under internal rules of procedures, and owns a headquarters. Most of its members work under temporary employment contracts, some work on daily basis. The average monthly wage of its members ranges between \$400 and \$1200. It carried out a number of labor protests over the past period demanding improvement of workers' wages and incentive allowances; it concluded collective bargaining agreements over the past years, and succeeded to increase the percentage of members among women and the youth. This trade union follows annual working plans and mechanisms of implementation thereof; but, however, it faces difficulties resulting from the instable political situation, and the incompatibility of existing labor legislations to the present situation in the various labor sectors. Within its future plans, this trade union intends to



seek increasing the numbers of its members, object arbitrary dismissal and arrest of some workers for political reasons.

Among the trade unions which represent Iraqi transport workers also is the Trade Union of Transport Workers in Kurdistan, Iraq, which is a member of the Kurdistan Workers Trade Unions Federation, the International Transport Workers' Federation, as well as the Public Services International Trade Unions Federation (PSI). Transport workers in the Kurdistan Province are concentrated in the land transport sector, whereby a number of three thousand workers are working in the private sector. This trade union witnesses an increase in its members both among women and the youth. It has a headquarters and follows internal rules of procedures. Furthermore, this trade union carried out several protests related to occupational health and safety matters, and amendment of laws of pension and social insurance. It has a working plan, under which it operates aiming to increase the number of its members, to form trade union committees in the work locations, draft a new labor law, increase wages of workers, cover as many as possible in the social insurance, and the creation of a compensation system for the unemployed.

## 9. Jordan:

The labor law in Jordan provides for permitting workers in any profession to establish a trade union of their own; however,

legal restrictions were imposed by the same law which limit the opportunity of establishing trade unions; as the law authorized the power to approve establishing new trade unions to a tripartite committee composed of the government, trade unions and employers associations. The previous labor law, however, kept this authority in the hands of the Minister of Labor. Only seventeen trade unions were licensed so far in Jordan, interlinked in the framework of the so called The General Federation of Trade Unions in Jordan. Ever since the middle seventies of last century, the Ministry of Labor, in view of the said labor law and directives issued by virtue thereof, never permitted the establishment of any new trade union, all attempts to establish new trade unions were turned down. Jordan, however, had ratified so far the following seven ILO conventions: 29, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182.

Membership of most trade unions attached to The General Federation of Trade Unions in Jordan is rather weak as a result of its failure to engage in public life. Membership of all these trade unions never exceeded 5% of the entire number of Jordanian workers; this membership, however, is concentrated in a limited number of trade unions.

The Jordanian labor law is applicable on workers in the private sector, while workers in the public sector are subjected to the Civil Service Act which contains no provisions allowing or preventing workers to organize

in trade unions; the Government, however, never allowed the formation of any trade unions for workers in the public sector except the professionals of them, such as physicians, engineers, lawyers, agronomists, veterinarians, and dentists etc. This situation continued until the teachers extorted their right to establish a trade union in 2011, and they were followed by Imams and preachers. Thereafter, the Constitutional Court issued an explanatory decision in July 2013 permitting all workers in the public sector to establish trade unions of their own.

As regards the numbers of workers in the transport sector, like transport sectors in other Arab countries, no precise figures are available on the numbers of workers in the sector. The Jordanian Department of Statistics points out that numbers of workers in transportation and warehousing sector reached (22252) workers. According to initial estimations, this figure is too far from reality as only the drivers of passenger transport automobiles (taxis and service lines) reach 75 thousand workers, and yet the drivers of trailer trucks are to be added.

Nevertheless, during the past three years, thousands of workers established several trade unions despite the fact that they obtained no licenses from the Government. Until the date of preparing this study, there were twelve independent trade unions, and they formed a labor federation in April 2013 named: The Jordanian Federation of Independent Trade

Unions.

With regard to trade unions in the transport sector, there are four trade unions within the framework of the General Federation of Trade Unions which are the General Trade Union of Workers in the Air Transport, the General Trade Union of Workers in the Ports and Clearance, the General Trade Union of Workers in Land Transport and Mechanic, and the General Trade Union of Workers in the Railways. As regards the new and independent trade unions, a number of trade unions were established namely: the Independent Trade Union of Jordanian Pilots, which is not part of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions, but more of a professional association than a trade union; the Independent Trade Union of Commercial Drivers, the Independent Trade Union of Workers in the Container Terminal, the Independent Trade Union of Aircraft Maintenance Engineers and Technicians, and the Independent Trade Union of Workers in the Railways; all of these trade unions are members of the Jordanian Federation of Independent Trade Unions.

Port workers in Aqaba played a major role in the labor movements over the past few years through carrying out a number of labor strikes which started in Summer 2009 and is still going on. On the one side, their movement alongside movements of daily workers in the agricultural sector contributed to motivating tens of thousands of workers in Jordan to move towards improving their work

conditions through carrying out hundreds of labor protests in various economic sectors in Jordan; and on the other side, their movement contributed to improving the terms of work in the Ports Authority were they themselves work, leading to improvements in levels of occupational safety and health conditions, and wages have improved evidently. Until the date of preparing this study, port workers continue to carry out a strike aiming to enforce implementation of the provisions of a collective bargaining agreement signed earlier with the port administration, causing embarrassment to the General Federation of Trade Unions and prompting it to dissolve the trade union committee of workers in the port under the excuse that its electoral round has expired; while in fact, this decision was made in order to push the trade union committee to cease the strike.

Like other Jordanian labor trade unions, the (legitimate) labor trade unions as per the definition of the Jordanian labor law, in the transport sector suffer from obstacles of its weak internal rules of procedures because General Assemblies of these trade unions were prevented from drafting its own internal rules of procedures leading to weakening democratic exercises therein. Accordingly, many of these trade unions never conducted elections since many years, which led to widening the gap between its administrative boards and members. Therefore, the transport sector was one of the most sectors which witnessed movements aiming to form new

and independent trade unions as mentioned earlier.

The new and independent trade unions in the transport sector suffer from difficulties related to government non recognition, and therefore, they are unable to rent headquarters, collect membership fees, instead they collect donations. In addition to the fact that its trade union ambitions are too high, but organizational capabilities are rather weak or medium due to its weak experience in actual trade union work and field activities.

## 10. Tunisia:

Tunisian legislations allow workers in both the public and private sectors to establish and join trade unions without prior permission from the government. The law does not allow dissolving trade unions except by a court order. The government, however, sometimes does not respect this right in practice. Moreover, labor legislations in Tunisia confine the right to strike by requiring a ten days notice prior to the day of carrying out the strike. The right in collective bargaining, however, is recognized and protected in the Tunisian law. Workers in Tunisia are represented by the General Tunisian Labor Union. Three new labor federation emerged after the revolution, namely: Tunisian Labor Federation, The General Confederation of Work, and the Tunisian Organization of Work. Tunisia had ratified all the basic ILO conventions with the numbers 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138, 182).

The Tunisian trade union movement assumed an important role since it was established in 1946 in defending the interests of Tunisian workers, in addition to a political role in defending the independence of Tunisia. Moreover, the Tunisian Federation for Work played a major role in the Tunisian revolution early 2011 through the contribution of many labor sectors in the early events of the revolution, its role escalated to become an accommodator in some stages through opening the headquarters of the union for the Tunisian crowds in many providences. The peak of this role was when the union declared the general strike on 11 December, 2011 under the slogan of toppling the regime; this role continued until the date of preparing this study through assuming a vital role in mediating between the main Tunisian parties to reach a situation of political stability in Tunisia. In general, this major role of the Tunisian Federation for Work in the political life, and the absence of fear represented in the previous political regime resulted in making workers rush to join member trade unions in the federation. Additionally, the number of trade unions increased in Tunisia after the revolution, which formed, as stated earlier, three new labor federations.

Tunisian Federation for Work suffers from many problems represented in the traditional structure it follows which is characterized as the "long hierarchical", and therefore, decision making is difficult and inflexible. This type of pyramid-like structure implied difficulties to

change old-aged leaderships leading to a rather weak, not renewable, and decades' long trade union discourse, which on its part led to less engagement of the youth in its leading committees added the little representation of women in its leading committees. The Tunisian trade union movements discourse like other Arab trade union movements suffer from the weak labor trade union discourse which was not refreshed for decades. In addition, the vital engagement of the Tunisian Federation for Work in political life produced to two points of view by those concerned in the Tunisian workers' affairs and their trade union movement, the first viewed this as reflecting the strength of the federation and its vital influence in the public life, which is good and required; while the second viewed this as a negative element resulting in higher unemployment rates, low wage levels and even retreat thereof in view of the higher inflation rates, and other work conditions.

With regard to the Tunisian trade unions in the transport sector, most of them are members of the Tunisian Federation for Work, most members thereof are of workers in the public sector, membership increased after the revolution while most new members came from the private sector, this is due to the fact that workers in the public sector were already members in these trade unions. There are in Tunisia four trade unions organizations active in the transport sector, namely: the National Tunisian Railways Federation, the General Federation of Ports' Workers, the

General Federation of Commercial Maritime and Ports, and the National Federation for Transport. Among these trade union organizations, many trade unions were formed in the transport sector.

As regards the numbers of workers in this sector, the researcher was unable to obtain any figures showing the real numbers of workers in this sector, but an unchecked estimate of 60 thousand workers which is hard to check out in a country with a population of nearly 11 millions people.

## 11. Bahrain

Bahraini legislations permit the formation of trade unions. However, one trade union is allowed for each institution, sector, activity, industry or a group of similar professions; but, no more than one trade union is allowed for workers in the same institution. The law does not require prior permission to form a trade union, but a trade union must send its rules of procedures to the Ministry of Labor along with names of its founders. Moreover, Bahraini legislations allow all workers both in the public and private sectors to join trade unions including immigrant workers.

There is in Bahrain one labor federation only, namely the General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions. Labor legislations do not allow establishing another one, Bahraini trade unions are obliged to join this federation by force of law. Bahrain had so far

ratified five of the basic ILO conventions with the numbers 29, 98, 105, 111, 182, but never ratified convention number 87 on freedom of association and protection of the right to organize. On the ground, workers in Bahrain suffer of hard working conditions, especially those in the sector of constructions and immigrant workers.

In the course of democratic transformations witnessed by the region including the Kingdom of Bahrain, the General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions played a key roll in enhancing the popular protest movements in support of democratic freedoms and was subjected to strong and various difficulties. The Bahraini government, however, supported the foundation of new trade unions during the last three years.

Like in other Arab countries, no precise figures are available on the number of workers in the transport sector in Bahrain. There are more than one trade union for transport workers in Bahrain: the Trade Union of Workers in the Services Company of Bahrain Airport, the Trade union of workers in the Gulf Airways Company, the General Trade Union of Flight Attendants, the Trade Union of Workers in CARS Company for Public Transport, and the Seaports Trade Union.

## Recommendations:

In the light of analysis and outcomes offered in the course of this study, following are recommendations which we believe if applied and adopted by the International Transport Workers Federation in the Arab region and affiliated labor organizations, tangible achievements can be expected during the coming phase. Our recommendations are as follows:

1- Developing a modern labor and trade union discourse which take into account pressing challenges and priorities facing the Arab labor and trade union movement active in various branches of the transport sector through which the agenda and priorities of labor and trade union movement in the transport sector in the Arab region may be upgraded. This discourse (agenda) shall not be confined by the applicable developmental patterns in the region and in each country, or by economic policies produced thereby which influence workers in various branches of the transport sector, in addition to new challenges and dangers imposed by the wave of political transformations witnessed by the region, as well as the state of political, social and security instability, which is expected to last for many years to come. This may be achieved through conducting a series of specialized workshops aiming to analyze the surrounding atmosphere in which labor organizations operate and the effects of developmental patterns and economic

policies over transport workers and their trade union organizations; these workshops shall be conducted with the participation of economic, social and political experts, as well as trade union leaders and activists on single country levels and on the level of the entire Arab region.

2- Developing strategic sub plans on the level of each country and the level of each branch transport sector based on the new trade union discourse (trade union agenda), and thereafter, developing a comprehensive strategic plan to cover all trade union organizations active in the transport sector in the Arab region, to be accompanied with written and specific implementation mechanisms within a frame work of a specific and flexible time table, and in accordance with clear and measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators to be entrusted to an independent team for implementation.

3- Developing a flexible structural organization to suit the nature of challenges and dangers faced by transport workers and their trade union organizations which shall be able to achieve its agenda effectively, and to contain mechanisms and techniques which suit the nature of strategic and secondary goals on the level of each country as well as the secondary transport sector, and on the level of the region as a whole, taking into account the rebuilding of efficient trade union organizations who are independent and effective while assuming its work using

democratic mechanisms, and enabling weakened groups such as the youth, women, and the disabled to play more effective roles in the activities of these organizations, including reconsidering its internal regulations which mostly are centralized.

4- Developing the abilities of trade union organizations in the transport sector in the Arab region to be able to assume their activities and achieve their goals as stated in their new discourse and agenda, so as to link processes of ability development with goal achievement as prefixed in the strategic plan and the work plans at various levels of countries, branch sector, or the trade union organization itself. The process of building abilities shall include the young generations of men and women, and shall also include applications of communication, leadership, internal and external media, pressure and support campaigns, collective bargaining techniques, and ways and means how to carry out various types of labor protests.

**End**

## References:

- ILO, Global Employment Trends 2013, January 2013.
- ILO, Maritime Labor Convention, 2006.  
[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C186](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C186)
- Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Arab Economy Report for 2006
- International Aviation Group, 2012 report  
<http://www.aviationbenefitsbeyondborders.org/>
- Mazaya Holding Company, Arab Aviation Report, Future Horizons in the light of present performance 2010  
<http://web.worldbank.org>
- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, sea transport for 2012
- Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Arab Transport Report for 2006
- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, land transport for 2012
- International Transport Workers' Federation, special bulletin of conference No. 42 for 2010.
- International Transport Workers' Federation, Arab region, member organizations data base.
- Department of Statistics, Annual Statistical Book for 2012, issued in September 2013.