

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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Situation of African Migrants in the Middle East

The African Union Commission notes with dismay recent adverse media reports regarding the plight of African migrant workers in different parts of the world especially the Middle East.

While the root causes might be different in each country, the challenges experienced by African labour migrants working in low skilled jobs are similar and the situation is further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic in general.

In an effort to gain concrete insight on the atrocities experienced by African labour migrants, the African Union Commission held an emergency meeting in coordination with some of the affected Member States with workers, namely Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. The meeting discussed the ongoing efforts, the need to strengthen urgent rights-based humanitarian interventions leading to the safe repatriation of the migrants, and to address the plight of migrants languishing in detention centres.

As a global phenomenon, the desperate situation of African low skilled migrant workers in Middle East and Gulf countries demands for a global call for transformative actions aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of African migrants, especially during emergencies such as the COVID19 pandemic. This includes the enforcement of signed bilateral labour agreements between sending and receiving countries.

Many countries have put in place mechanisms to respond to Covid-19 induced adverse conditions. Consequently, movement restrictions including detaining migrants have been imposed. The overwhelming conditions associated with Covid-19 have jeopardized the livelihood and rights of migrants in many ways. To mention a few: migrants are faced with challenges including the lack of access in healthcare services, the requirement of 14 days mandatory quarantine, frozen visa processes include exit visa, abrupt termination of their jobs, outstanding salary payments, and the closing of businesses which included remittances sending agencies.

The African Union Commission calls for the promotion, respect and adherence to universal human rights in dealing with African labour migrants. Concerted efforts across all stakeholders of governments and international organizations to provide urgent humanitarian intervention to end these sufferings are indispensable to alleviate the pain and agony projected at African brothers and sisters who are migrants in some jurisdictions in the Middle East.

For further information Contact:

Sabelo Mbokazi, Head of Migration Division, African Union Commission, Email: MbokaziS@africa-union.org

For further media inquiries, please contact:

1. Mrs. Esther Azaa Tankou | Head of Information Division | Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | Mobile: +251911361185 | E-mail: yamboue@africa-union.org
2. Mr. Gamal Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer| Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org