

Lebanon: IDWF Statement in Support of the Kenyan Migrant Domestic Workers' Sit-in Action for Repatriation and Free of Abuses



On the morning of the 10th of August, 2020, 30 Kenyan women migrant domestic workers and 3 children, have been gathering in front of the Kenyan Honorary Consulate in Badaro, Beirut, Lebanon to protest against abuses and ask for repatriation back to Kenya. The number of protesters increased since the start of the protest and this sit-in is still ongoing at the time of publishing this statement. The Kenyan Consulate, supposedly set out to protect more than a thousand Kenyan domestic workers in Lebanon, becomes a place dreaded by these same migrant domestic workers as it is filled with many [reports of wrongdoings](#) of the Lebanese officials, ranging from overcharging for services to [sexual harassment and assault](#).

Migrant domestic workers have been struck by a series of crises in Lebanon. On top of not being paid since October, many have been struggling for survival since the spread of COVID-19. On Tuesday during the explosion, two Kenyan women went missing. One was found later by her fellow domestic workers who assisted her to get to a hospital, and the fate of the other is still unknown. Disappearance of migrant domestic workers is not new in Lebanon. Since 2015, four Kenyan women domestic workers have been missing. According to the protestors on the ground, the Kenyan consulate makes no effort to reach its nationals, to provide them with support, housing, or cash assistance. One woman among the protestors is left homeless after her house exploded during the blast.

According to the laws, employers are responsible for purchasing return tickets for their domestic workers upon the end of their contracts. Governments, both of the country of destination and of country of origin, are bound by legal provisions in times of crisis and disaster, to join efforts to repatriate migrants including migrant domestic workers back to their countries. With the economic crisis in Lebanon, migrant domestic workers do not have the means for basic subsistence, food, and medication not to mention to pay for their own return to their home countries.

“Therefore, we call upon the governments of Lebanon and Kenya to abide by the legal provisions and international standards to put their immediate effort to assist the Kenyan domestic workers urgently, to have access to safe housing and subsistence and arrange their safe return to Kenya for free and as soon as possible”, said Lara Nuwayhid, IDWF MENA Regional Coordinator.

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a global federation of domestic workers consisting 74 affiliates in 55 countries representing over 560,000 domestic workers worldwide. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been mobilizing support for the migrant domestic workers in Lebanon to meet their needs. It will continue to monitor the situation faced by all migrant domestic workers to ensure their basic human rights are being protected, just as any other workers.