

oil tankers and floating workshops. The industrial zone in Egypt is a pilot project for Russia on the African continent that may set an example for similar industrial zones in other countries. There are already a large number of free economic zones in Egypt, giving rise to high competition between them. Initially, 90 percent of jobs created by the project are meant for the Egyptians, but over time the quota may be revised in favour of the Russians. The location of the RIZ can be deemed beneficial due to its proximity to the Suez Canal, which significantly reduces the production costs. The authors also note that the profit from the industrial zone will be directed to the Russian budget, and not to private companies.

OLGA BIBIKOVA. ON SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE LEBANON SOCIETY

Keywords: kafala; tile / employer; domestic servants; deportation; responsibility; racism.

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Abstract. On the example of Lebanon, the features of the functioning of the system of hiring foreign workers (kafala) in the Arab countries are considered. In Lebanon, this system applies to domestic workers, especially women. However, employers often do not fulfill their obligations under the contract. In addition, the economic crisis that broke out in the country made its own adjustments.

The “kafala” (sponsorship) system involves the hiring of domestic servants in the countries of South and Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Vietnam...) and Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Togo, Mali, Madagascar, Uganda...). The very name of kafala was present even in adat, customary law of the Arabs. It involves a form of adoption without the transfer of property to protect minor children - orphans. In a modern reading, the term kafala means that the employer takes responsibility for the hired foreign worker. This system (under other names) is used in many countries, including Europe. In this article, we will consider the situation that has developed in Lebanon. It also exists in other Arab countries, but the United Arab Emirates officially abolished professional kafala in 2008, and Qatar in 2016. But it continues to exist outside the law in almost all countries of the Middle East, which makes employees even more disempowered.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (as well as Jordan and Lebanon) actively use this system, which provides temporary labor in times of economic prosperity and makes it easy to abandon it in less prosperous periods.

Migration of domestic servants to Lebanon has been widely used since the early 1980s. Prior to this, domestic servants were mainly Lebanese girls who came from villages to cities, or Syrian and Palestinian women. The civil war made its own adjustments to the relations between the Lebanese citizens of different faiths themselves, as well as the Palestinians. Now, preference began to be given to women from non-Arab countries, such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and later Ethiopia.¹ These are countries with a predominantly Christian population, as well as other countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. Women are usually hired as domestic servants (maid and cook all rolled into one) to do household chores (cleaning, washing, cooking, caring for small children, etc.). Until 2019, their number was estimated at about

400,000, of which between 100,000 and 150,000 worked illegally. These women arrive in Lebanon through private agencies. Some researchers evaluate this activity as *trafficking in human beings*.²

It is more expensive than others to hire a Filipina, who, according to Lebanese employers, is “whiter in face” (which indicates that some degree of racism is not alien to Lebanese) and more educated, they know English. French-speaking Malagasy women are also in demand. Ethiopians make up the largest group of employees, as this is the cheapest category of workers.

Officially, it costs about \$2,000 to bring servants (for example, from Africa) through an agency. This amount includes the cost of a visa, insurance, ticket and legal formalities. Under the kafala system, the kafil / sponsor within the country, i.e. employer, is responsible for the visa and legal status of a migrant worker. But often they abuse their rights, delaying payment, or not fulfilling the conditions contained in the contract.

An entire economy has developed around the migration of domestic servants. Candidates from around the world apply to recruitment agencies in their countries. As soon as an employer is found, the agency requests the necessary documents for an exit permit, and then a visa.

To choose a servant, the employer is offered legal and illegal catalogs that contain a photo and a brief description of the employee, a list of her skills. After that, the kafil (guarantor) pays the transportation costs for the prospective worker and pays a certain tax. Thus, he becomes a kind of guardian. Under the terms of the contract, he must provide his servant with a visa, housing, medical insurance, basic necessities and technical equipment related to her work. The position of the employer-guardian, guaranteed by the kafala, contributes to the formation of a paternalistic system, where the employer becomes the only authority over his employee. However, often the employer does not fulfill its obligations. For example, it is known that, despite the fact that the agreement stipulates the existence of a separate

room for a servant, kafil can invite her to sleep in the kitchen, in the hallway and even on the balcony in the summer. In addition, he must provide a weekly day off, etc.

It is characteristic that the system of payment for the services of domestic servants can be different: sometimes money for work is sent directly to the family, which deprives the servants even of pocket money. The domestic servants are forced to find a way out of this situation in periodic prostitution. Within the domestic service community, a system has already been established to provide accommodation for those who are forced to resort to prostitution.

The contract is concluded for a fixed period. Usually the contract is drawn up in Arabic, which the hired worker does not know. Moreover, she may be generally illiterate, but interpretation into her native language is usually not done. If there is no telephone or the owners do not allow the use of the telephone or the Internet, then the worker finds herself in complete isolation. The author of these lines, while visiting a Lebanese family, observed the relationship between a Lebanese family and their housemaid from Ethiopia. The woman had a small room adjoining the kitchen. One day, the mistress of the house said that at night they were finally able to make a telephone call to the relatives of the housemaid. The employer should periodically provide such a call to her employee. Later, the Ethiopian, probably bored and depressed due to loneliness, lack of knowledge of the language, etc., left the house on her own. On the way, she was met by a friend of her host family who took her back. After that, the kafil, that is, the mistress of the house, turned to the agency, which found the housemaid to resolve the problem. The case ended with the Ethiopian finding another home.

According to the contract, the servants must have eight hours of work, eight hours of free time and eight hours of rest per day, as well as one day off per week. The rest belongs to the

competence of the employer, who, in addition, bears civil liability for it.

But various circumstances can intervene in the situation, as a result of which the servant becomes unnecessary. The servant can leave the family of the employer only after the stipulated period for repayment of the cost of expenses for her arrival in the country has passed. However, cases of escape from the host family are not uncommon. Now a clause has been introduced into the contract, according to which you can file a complaint against your master within 48 hours after escaping from your masters. Otherwise, the former housemaid remains homeless, without documents, since the documents are transferred to the employer immediately after arrival. Naturally, for an illiterate girl, such a situation ends negatively. In addition, the owners often accuse their maids of stealing, which entails irreversible consequences. In Lebanese newspapers, one can often find advertisements about the disappearance of a hired worker, which are characterized in court as “concern” for a former housekeeper. It is almost impossible to prove that no jewelry was stolen.

Often, workers face not only violation of labor rights, but also sexual harassment, which goes unpunished for the rapist. Since it takes place at home, many in Lebanon view it as a “private matter” beyond the intervention of the state and social structures.³

According to kafala researchers, despite the fact that the system has been condemned by human rights organizations, a migrant worker cannot terminate their employment contract without the consent of their employer. This system gives employers almost complete control over the lives of workers and leaves them vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and abuse. If they leave their employer without his consent, their stay in the country will become illegal.

The *economic crisis* in Lebanon, exacerbated by the pandemic, has led to an increase in unemployment. In Lebanon in particular, especially after the explosion in the port (Aug. 4,

2020), the economic situation has noticeably worsened. It is complicated by one of the highest debt-to-gross domestic product ratios in the world: the public debt is more than 80 billion euros, or 172 percent of GDP.⁴ The situation is aggravated by political uncertainty, internal divisions and the presence of more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees. According to some estimates, the number of domestic workers in the country in 2019 is 250,000, of which about 50,000 are in an illegal position. As we have already noted, the detachment of the latter is formed as a result of the voluntary departure or refusal of the owners to keep servants. Some give up their work as servants in the hope of more successful compatriots who have already found work in shops, hotels, etc., others are forced to turn to prostitution in order to survive... They cannot count on any protection of their interests. Accordingly, they are not legally *entitled to form trade unions*.

In the end, "word of mouth" conveys to the fugitives the information that there is a Center for Migrant Communities in Lebanon, which provides assistance to those who find themselves in a similar situation. So, for example, on Sundays at the evangelical Sodeko cemetery in Beirut, food is distributed, primarily rice, to women who are left without work and documents. As for the employers, they withdraw their guarantee and are no longer responsible for the person they hired.

Over time, human rights activists have ensured that justice provided for the reasons why foreign employees can terminate the contract: 1) the maid is subjected to sexual or physical violence. 2) she is not paid for more than three consecutive months. 3) she is forced to work in a place other than the one specified in the contract. Naturally, violations of the articles of the contract must be proven. But in such cases, it is clear that the police have more confidence in the Lebanese nationals than in the foreign worker. If a woman complains, she will in any case be detained, and her documents may be declared false. A hired worker can be deported before migrants who could confirm her words find out about this case.

In the words of an Ethiopian worker, "Employment agencies and employers treat us like a commodity... Sometimes I was beaten and denied food, but because of my contract, I cannot choose whether to work somewhere else or return home. My employer said, "I bought you. Pay me \$2,000 and then you can go wherever you want."⁵

Foreign workers who leave their sponsors without having worked out the period specified in the contract may "stand for many years" because they do not have the means to purchase a return ticket and do not have documents.

Embassies in such cases, as a rule, avoid participation in the fate of their compatriots. The most they can do is to provide assistance in case of forced or desired repatriation or to involve lawyers. Some embassies, for example, the Ethiopian embassy, in view of the mass nature of such conflict situations, organized shelters for their citizens who found themselves in a difficult situation.

A completely catastrophic situation arises for a foreign worker if she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child. The mother has no rights to Lebanese citizenship for the child. In matters of obtaining citizenship by birth, there are two positions in the world: the right of blood and the right of land *Jus soli*. According to the first law, the citizenship of a child depends on the status of the parents (in Lebanon, on the status of the father), their nationality and citizenship, and does not depend on the place of the child's immediate birth. *Jus soli* – the right of the land means that the country where the baby is born automatically grants him its citizenship. However, there is no such right in Lebanon.

In 2015, the government of Côte d'Ivoire, in an effort to protect its citizens, banned them from obtaining visas for domestic servants in Lebanon. Similar bans or restrictions have been adopted in Ethiopia, Madagascar, Nepal and the Philippines. However, there is no prohibition on the part of

Lebanon to accept foreign workers. Therefore, kafala job seekers are still trying to find work in Lebanon.

Women from Nigeria are also looking for work abroad. A catastrophic situation has developed here: as a result of a bloody civil war (1967–1970), between 700,000 and 3,000,000 people in Nigeria died. In the state of Imo⁶ where almost 4 million people live, 3 million of them are women and 900,000 are men. In such conditions, women are forced to rely only on themselves. Many people think that working as a servant abroad is the best option.

In everyday life, it is community centers run by NGOs or various associations that allow domestic workers to find each other and organize themselves, creating networks of solidarity. As a rule, the church becomes a place of communication, where workers come on Sundays. Thus, churches become a place of communication and information, a kind of safety zone to which foreign workers have access.

The Immigrant Housekeepers Alliance in Lebanon, founded in 2016 by a small group of migrants, is one of those organizations that operates almost illegally. It is curious to note that in order to draw attention to their activities, the Alliance tried to organize a performance dedicated to the problem of foreign workers in Lebanese society. It was to take place in Beirut at the Zukaka Theater on the occasion of Labor Day (1 May). At the last moment, the General Security Service requested a list of people participating in the performance “Unfair Deportation”, as well as copies of visas, which led to a hasty cancellation of the performance. Three days later, a demonstration was held by domestic workers in Beirut, who also wanted to draw public attention to their problems.

Christian employees usually have a day off (or half a day) on Sunday, which allows them to meet in churches. Since the problems of foreign workers became public knowledge, embassies have been forced to monitor the situation. Thus, for example, the Philippine embassy sends an employee on Sundays to the gathering place of its fellow citizens in some church

traditionally attended by them. Malagasy women, native to Madagascar, are known to gather in the parish of the French Protestant church in the Kraitem district, where they created a choir.

Natives of “black Africa” prefer to rent an apartment in which they pray in front of an impromptu altar and communicate with each other. They note that visiting Lebanese churches is humiliating for them due to undisguised curiosity and sometimes impudence they are treated with.

Characteristically, the “black” servants who accompany children to pools or beaches never bathe with them. The Lebanese themselves, analyzing this situation, say that this is the result of the attitude of the host society towards them, which thus manifests a kind of “passive racism”, although no one admits this. The conditions for such socially and collectively recognized racism are largely due to the lack of legal protection for immigrant workers, making racial discrimination a feature of Lebanese society.

Today the church is the only organization that gives them real help. In December 2019, a Protestant congregation in Beirut wanted to set up a social grocery store, but the funds needed to set it up were not enough. Now, in addition to distributing medicines and food, the church takes over the collection of donations in their favor.⁷

Contracts signed by immigrant domestic workers upon their arrival in Lebanon were never of any real value, and their terms were always subject to change at the will of the employers or agencies that recruited them. In September 2020, Labor Minister Lamia Yammin Duaihi put forward proposals to change the situation of foreign women workers, proposing a new “unified (standard) contract” providing a safer basis for protecting the rights of women working in the kafala system, which she envisioned would eliminate inequality inherent in this system.⁸

Although this draft contract was not accompanied by any oversight mechanism that could enforce its principles, the Lebanese Recruitment Owners Union filed an appeal with the Shura Council, Lebanon's highest administrative court, which rejected the proposal for new legislation.

The first organization, the Union of Domestic Workers, was established in 2015. Despite the fact that the organization was supported by the International Labor Organization, the International Federation of Trade Unions and the National Federation of Trade Unions of Workers and Employees of Lebanon, Labor Minister Sejan Azzi refused to recognize it without any arguments, calling it "illegal".

Lebanon has signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), as well as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998). Thus, the denial of the status guaranteed by the Labor Code to foreign domestic workers, as well as the outlawing of the associations of this group of the population established to protect them, is a violation by Lebanon of its obligations. Similarly, Convention No. 189 of the International Labor Organization guarantees the rights and protection of domestic workers. Lebanon has also signed this convention, but has not ratified it.⁹

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation of domestic workers has deteriorated markedly. The explosion in the port of Beirut, which devastated the city on August 4, 2020, further exacerbated the plight of foreign workers. Foreign workers were also among the victims¹⁰. The explosion severely damaged the wealthy Christian district of Ashrafiyya, whose residents actively used the services of foreign workers. Under these conditions, some Lebanese families decided to abandon the servants, left their apartments and went to the mountains or to relatives. Many workers, dismissed by the employer, ended up on the street. There were cases when the owners brought their workers, along with their belongings, to the embassy buildings and left them there.

After the explosion in the port of Beirut, Lebanese employers prefer to hire Syrian women or their compatriots as domestic servants, their wages are lower, because there is no need to pay for a visa, work permit, etc. In addition, these servants do not need housing, which also reduces costs.

Indeed, the situation after the explosion in the port changed the life of the country. 300 thousand residents of Beirut lost their homes. With the economic downturn, the devaluation of the Lebanese pound and the Covid-19 crisis, the prices of basic products have exploded. Famine has begun among foreigners living in Lebanon illegally. Although the international community has mobilized to help the Lebanese since the tragedy of August 4, foreigners remain the anonymous victims of this tragedy. In particular, “*Lebanese only*” signs¹¹ began to appear on the walls of some clinics in Bourj Hammoud, where free food distribution is organized.

As a rule, the wages of female domestic workers are about \$150-500 (127–423 euros) per month, part of which is transferred to their families back home. But after the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, the payment dropped sharply. Before the crisis, 1 dollar was worth 1,500 Lebanese pounds. Today – about 8,000, and salaries are paid in pounds, which, due to the reduction in the circulation of currency in the country, makes it difficult to transfer money abroad.

On August 10, 2021, the Kenyan community demonstrated in front of their consulate in the Badaro area, south of Beirut. It demanded immediate repatriation and protested against consular officials who advised them to become prostitutes in order to pay for their return ticket.

The Lebanese government was forced to react to the situation. The Prosecutor General's Office decided to *suspend a fine* of 300,000 Lebanese pounds (168 euro) for women, 400,000 (224 euro) for men, which were applied to undocumented migrants who wished to leave the country. But this was the only gesture of the Lebanese government.¹²

Farah Baba of the Anti-Racism Movement notes the “tragic banality” of the situation of foreign domestic servants in Lebanon: cheap foreign domestic workers are often used because *it compensates for the lack of services provided by the Lebanese state, especially in terms of caring for the sick and the elderly*.¹³

Indeed, until recently there was no practice in the Moslem world of establishing homes for the elderly or orphanages. As a rule, the Moslem community takes care of them, although isolated cases of the emergence of such organizations for temporary residence took place, as a rule, after any geoclimatic or political upheavals. At the same time, Christians organized similar shelters, having experience in creating monasteries. There are similar institutions for Christians in Lebanon, but not everyone can afford them.

After the explosion in the port, some embassies were forced to organize temporary shelters, and then a mass departure of their citizens. Prior to this, a similar action on a smaller scale took place in 2006 during the aggravation of Lebanese-Israeli relations. In total (estimated), about 170,000 *immigrant women workers* have left Lebanon in the last two years due to the sharp deterioration of the economic situation. However, 11,453 *new work permits* were issued in 2020. This indicates a decrease in demand: compared to 43.825 in 2019, there was a decrease of 73.8 percent.¹⁴

Wadi al-Asmar, secretary general of the Lebanese Center for Human Rights, believes that “a country that is not able to ensure the safety and dignity of people who come to its territory should simply stop encouraging people to come. It should forbid them to come, saying: “Listen, we are not in a position to protect you.” Unfortunately, this is not being done.” And further: Wadi al-Asmar compares recruitment agencies to *the functioning of a human trafficking mafia*.¹⁵

In the spring of 2020, a man was arrested in Lebanon after posting an ad on Facebook for the sale of a Nigerian housekeeper. He offered those who wished to purchase a 30-year-old domestic worker for \$1,000. Thus, he wanted to recover the cost of moving

a worker from Nigeria to Lebanon.¹⁶ But the Nigerian *refused to return to her homeland* even after the intervention of the Nigerian embassy, who offered to send her to her homeland. The Lebanese embassy in Nigeria *suspended the issuance of work visas* after it became known that already 69 domestic workers who had been victims of violence had been evacuated from Lebanon to Nigeria.

Harassment of domestic servants does not occur in Lebanon only, but is widespread throughout the Gulf region. In Saudi Arabia, kafala covers almost 70 percent of private sector workers. In August 2018 two Nigerian workers *were killed* by their Saudi owners in Riyadh.¹⁷

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Analyzing the application of the kafala system in Lebanon, one comes to the conclusion that it is nothing but a modern form of slavery. In many African countries, the lack of a clear position on migration, the lack of regulatory laws in this area, as well as the desperate desire of citizens to immigrate to more prosperous countries, have resulted in human trafficking under the guise of domestic workers.

Assessing the current situation, Wadi Al-Asmar notes that *it is difficult for Lebanese to admit that they are racists. For them, racism is something they experience when they travel to Europe or the United States, but they find it difficult to understand that racist behavior exists. The functioning of justice is discriminatory for all people who do not speak Arabic, for all people who come from a country that the Lebanese subconscious considers a country of a lower level.*¹⁸

Unfortunately, since the ILO adopted *Convention No. 189* on Decent Work for Domestic Workers in 2011, the document has only been *ratified* by 29 countries. At the same time, the countries of the Persian Gulf and the Arab states – Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon, as well as their African partners, such as Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania – *have not yet*

ratified the convention and have not taken it into account in their legislation.

In the summer of 2021, a special report was prepared by several UN agencies stating that the Lebanese government was primarily responsible for abuses against migrant domestic workers. It calls for the elimination of the kafala system and the creation of legal protection for all foreign workers employed in the household in Lebanon¹⁹. However, internal turmoil in the country pushed the fight for the rights immigrants to the background. The situation of foreign women working as domestic workers has largely faced the indifference of the population, who are thinking about how to save themselves.

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KSENIA ATAMALI. NORTH AFRICA: MUSLIM MIGRATION TO EUROPE AND THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. Condensed Abstract.

Keywords: international migration, Maghreb, Europe, socio-economic development, integration of migrants, Muslim diasporas, terrorism, pandemic; COVID-19, radicalization, threats.

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T.I. Tyukaeva, PhD(Politics), Center for the Middle East Studies, [1] examines the problem of migration from the Maghreb countries to Europe. The author points out that the uncontrolled