

My name is Sara Al-Khatib and I'm the field based migration specialist for the MENA region at the Solidarity Center, an international workers rights NGO.

The failure to include migrants in social protection umbrellas is part of the architecture of global migration governance. The pandemic revealed the failure of labour migration systems around the world to protect migrant workers, especially that they are concentrated in the most affected sectors, which are the informal, unregulated, precarious, low waged and unorganized sectors, in which migrant workers are excluded from the protection of labour legislations and contracts. These sectors are not subject to administrative control and labour inspection and access to justice channels. We haven't seen serious efforts to regulate these sectors. Businesses and employers resist any attempts and therefore these sectors are expanding and the number of workers deprived of social protections increases. Vulnerable groups of migrant workers work in these sectors, such as women, children, undocumented workers, and others. Though all migrant workers are potentially vulnerable as they are excluded from labor law and social protection schemes that would support them.

Only businesses and unscrupulous employers benefit from the irregular migration and the expansion of the informal economy sectors. The administrative corruption and weak migration governance allow them to evade their responsibilities to provide social protection, which ultimately strains states' budgets and threatens social and economic stability, due to the spread of poverty, famine, diseases and poor education.

The current migration systems hinders the achievement of the sustainable development goals, so we need a new global social contract that pays attention to labour migration and turns it into an opportunity to achieve the SDGs, by abolishing the current distorted migration systems, such as the sponsorship system in the Middle East as an example, and creating a new global migration system that recognizes migrant workers across the world and in all sectors As workers and that values their work and great contributions in the social and economic development of countries and allow them to practice freedom of association and collective bargaining. During the pandemic, leaders of migrant communities have played important roles in raising awareness about the virus and vaccination and in delivering humanitarian aid to those affected in these communities. If their efforts were organized through recognized unions and associations, this would have saved the world a lot of time, efforts and financial losses. Migrant workers should be recognized as key actors and main stakeholders in social dialogue. The international community must stand against any violation of freedom of assembly and association as one of the most important fundamental standards binding for ILO member states.

The creation of a new, better and more fair, labour migration system is an opportunity to address the drivers of forced migration such as poverty, unemployment, wars, crises, climate change and natural disasters. In order to protect the health and social systems of countries from collapse, especially in

times of crises, a new, more fair and just, labour migration system is an opportunity to create social protection systems that include migrants in social security that is portable, end-of-service compensation, pensions and maternity funds, and cover them with health insurance, occupational health and safety, protection from occupational diseases and compensation for work injuries. It is also an opportunity to organize the unorganized sectors and transform the informal economy into a formal economy, with all what it takes from ratifying international conventions, the amendment and creation of national legislation, policies and bilateral agreements, strengthening law enforcement and access to justice, cooperation of the international community to enhance accountability for all those who deviate from international standards, and cooperation in combating administrative corruption and crimes of forced labor. Migrant workers are workers regardless of their migration status, race or gender, and therefore are entitled to their full human and labour rights and social protections, recognizing their agency to act collectively and demand better wages and working conditions.