

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

AGENDA ITEM :

The Future of the Kafala System in Light of
Global Sporting Events and Labor Rights Ahead
of the 2034 FIFA World Cup

UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL

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1. Letter From Secretary General

Esteemed participants of MUNKFL'25,

As the Secretary General of MUNKFL'25, I warmly welcome you all to the fourth edition of Model United Nations Kayseri Fen Lisesi. First of all, I am pleased to say that we are continuing our work successfully, knowing that we are the pioneers in the MUN culture in Kayseri. We are truly honored to be able to present this precious conference that we have worked on for months. My organizing team has worked tirelessly for this conference, and of course, they did well. Also, special thanks go to my academic team, who also worked tirelessly to make your committees exceptional and engaging. It is with this spirit of dedication and pioneering achievement that we turn our focus to the crucial global challenges facing us today.

The 21st Century has brought about tensions between nations, unprecedented dangers, changes, and challenges that continue to plague the world. However, the United Nations offers a promising path forward. As members of the Model United Nations community, we recognize the imperative of active global engagement and the pivotal role we play in shaping a better future. Therefore, MUNKFL will simulate United Nations committees, providing a platform for delegates to engage in collaborative, competitive, conciliatory, and compromising decision-making processes. Through these simulations, we aim to foster dialogue, diplomacy, and a prioritization of societal needs in addressing pressing global issues.

May this experience leave you more prepared to lead, more committed to dialogue, and more confident in the role you can play in shaping the world around you.

Sincerely,

Taylan Emir Tav

2. Letter from the Under-Secretary General of the International Labour Organization

Dear Honourable Delegates,

It is with immense pleasure and a profound sense of responsibility that I, Sirrı Mahir Aydın, welcome you as your Under-Secretary General to the session of the MUNKFL Conference.

You are about to convene in a committee that stands unique within the United Nations system : the International Labour Organization (ILO). Founded in 1919 on the principle that universal and lasting peace can only be built upon social justice, the ILO is not a chamber for governments alone. It is the global home of tripartism.

This committee gives an equal voice to Governments, Employers, and Workers. This structure is not a formality ; it is our single greatest tool and our most complex challenge.

The agenda item before you, "The Future of the Kafala System in Light of Global Sporting Events and Labor Rights Ahead of the 2034 FIFA World Cup, " is not a theoretical exercise. It is one of the most urgent labour and human rights crises of our era.

For decades, the Kafala (sponsorship) system has governed the lives of millions of migrant workers, primarily in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. While intended to supply labour for rapid economic development, this system has been widely condemned by the ILO's own supervisory bodies for creating conditions analogous to modern slavery—restricting worker mobility, facilitating wage theft, and denying the fundamental right to freedom of association.

The global spotlight cast by the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar forced a series of historic, albeit incomplete, reforms. We saw the partial dismantling of Kafala, the introduction of a minimum wage, and new mechanisms for legal recourse. We also saw the severe limitations of reforms that lack robust enforcement.

Now, as the world looks toward the 2034 FIFA World Cup in Saudi Arabia—a nation undergoing its own massive infrastructure transformation via Vision 2030—we stand at a critical juncture. The international community, and specifically the ILO, must answer a defining question :

Will we leverage the immense pressure of global media, corporate sponsorship, and FIFA's own human rights policies to demand fundamental, lasting change ? Or will we allow the spectacle of sport to "sportswash" the human cost of its creation ?

Delegates, your mandate in this tripartite committee is to find solutions that are not only morally just but also politically viable and economically sustainable.

Governments must balance national sovereignty with their binding obligations under international labour conventions.



Employers must seek a stable, predictable, and productive labour market that does not rely on exploitation.

Workers must demand the non-negotiable fundamental rights that form the basis of human dignity and decent work.

This Study Guide is your foundation, not your limit. I expect you to move beyond simple condemnation and engage in genuine social dialogue. I challenge you to draft resolutions that strengthen ILO technical cooperation, that create binding enforcement mechanisms for 2034, and that finally offer tangible justice to the workers who build our world.

Prepare diligently, debate with passion, and collaborate constructively. I look forward to witnessing the innovative solutions you will bring to the ILO.

Sincerely,

Sırrı Mahir Aydın Under-Secretary General of the International Labour Organization
MUNKFL



3. Introduction

3.1 Introduction to The Committee

Welcome, distinguished delegates, to the International Labour Organization. You're not just joining any committee today – you're stepping into the UN's oldest specialized agency, born in 1919 from a powerful belief that lasting peace can only exist when it's built on social justice.

History Of The ILO

As the ILO celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2019, it is timely to reflect on the many life-changing events which are linked to the ten decades of ILO history.

The Organization has played a role at key historical junctures – the Great Depression, decolonization, the creation of Solidarność in Poland, the victory over apartheid in South Africa – and today in the building of an ethical and productive framework for a fair globalization.

It was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice.

Early years

The ILO moved to Geneva in the summer of 1920, with France's Albert Thomas as its first Director. Nine International Labour Conventions and 10 Recommendations were adopted in less than two years. These standards covered key issues, including:

- Hours of work,,
- Unemployment,
- maternity protection,
- night work for women
- minimum age, and
- night work for young persons

A Committee of Experts was set up in 1926 to supervise the application of ILO standards. The Committee, which still exists today, is composed of independent jurists responsible for examining government reports and presenting each year to the Conference its own report on the implementation of ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

The Great Depression, with its resulting massive unemployment, soon confronted Britain's Harold Butler, who succeeded Albert Thomas as Director in 1932. Realizing that

handling labour issues also requires international cooperation, the United States became a Member of the ILO in 1934, although it continued to stay out of the League of Nations.

The American, John Winant, took over as head of the ILO in 1939 - just as the Second World War was imminent. He moved the ILO's headquarters temporarily to Montreal, Canada, in May 1940 for reasons of safety.

His successor, Ireland's Edward Philan, had helped to write the 1919 Constitution and played an important role once again during the Philadelphia meeting of the International Labour Conference, in the midst of the Second World War.

Government delegates, employers and workers from 41 countries adopted the Declaration of Philadelphia as an annex to the ILO Constitution. The Declaration still constitutes the Charter of the aims and objectives of the ILO. The Declaration sets out the key principles for the ILO's work after the end of World War II. These include that "labour is not a commodity", and that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity".

Going global

In 1946, the ILO became a specialized agency of the newly formed United Nations.

America's David Morse was Director-General from 1948-1970, when the number of Member States doubled and the Organization took on its universal character. Industrialized countries became a minority among developing countries, the budget grew five-fold and the number of officials quadrupled.

The ILO established the Geneva-based International Institute for Labour Studies in 1960 and the International Training Centre in Turin in 1965. The Organization won the Nobel Peace Prize on its 50th anniversary in 1969.



Under Britain's Wilfred Jenks, Director-General from 1970-73, the ILO advanced further in the development of standards and mechanisms for supervising their application, particularly the promotion of freedom of association and the right to organize.

His successor, Francis Blanchard of France, expanded ILO's technical cooperation with developing countries. The ILO played a major role in the emancipation of Poland from dictatorship by giving its full support to the legitimacy of the Solidarnosc Union, based on respect for Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, which Poland had ratified in 1957.

Belgium's Michel Hansenne succeeded him in 1989 and guided the ILO into the post-Cold War period, emphasizing the importance of placing social justice at the heart of international economic and social policies. He also set the ILO on a course of decentralization of activities and resources away from the Geneva headquarters.

In March 1999, Juan Somavia of Chile took over as Director-General. He emphasized the importance of making decent work a strategic international goal and promoting a fair globalization. He also underlined work as an instrument of poverty alleviation and the ILO's role in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including cutting world poverty in half by 2015. Under Somavia, the ILO established the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which published a major report responding to the needs of people as they cope with the unprecedented changes that globalization has brought to societies.

In May 2012, Guy Ryder (UK) was elected as the tenth Director-General of the ILO. He was re-elected to his second five-year term in November 2016. Ryder has emphasised that the future of work is not predetermined: Decent work for all is possible but societies have to make it happen. It is precisely with this imperative that the ILO established its Global Commission on the Future of Work as part of its initiative to mark its centenary in 2019.

In March 2022, Gilbert F. Houngbo (Togo) was elected by the ILO's Governing Body as the Organization's 11th Director-General, becoming the first African to hold the position, and took up the role on 1 October 2022. He has focused his mandate on promoting greater social justice, fighting inequalities and discrimination in the world of work and achieving better working conditions both through national action and by building more effective multilateral coordination and leadership.





Mission and impact of the ILO

Promoting jobs, Protecting people

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission that social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.

The only tripartite U.N. agency, the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers representatives of 187 Member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

Today, the ILO's Decent Work agenda helps advance the economic and working conditions that give all workers, employers and governments a stake in lasting peace, prosperity and progress.

Four strategic objectives at the heart of the Decent Work agenda

Set and promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

Create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

The Mechanics of Tripartism in This Committee

Working within the ILO means adjusting how we approach diplomacy. You're not just representing your country's government – you're part of one of three distinct groups, and your strategy needs to reflect that. Success means building bridges not only with other nations but within your own group.

The Government Group: You carry the weight of ratifying and enforcing ILO Conventions. The challenge? Balancing your nation's practical realities (like the Gulf states' economic dependence on migrant labor or sending countries' need to protect their citizens abroad) with your legal commitments under international law.

The Employer Group: Often represented by the International Organisation of Employers, you speak for business interests. Your focus will be on solutions that actually work in practice – ones that are sustainable and don't crush enterprises under regulatory burden. You'll likely push for voluntary standards, market-driven solutions, and collaborative reform rather than heavy-handed punishment.

The Worker Group: Usually represented by the International Trade Union Confederation, you're labor's strongest voice. You'll be pushing hard for completely dismantling the Kafala system, making core labor conventions mandatory, establishing binding compensation funds, and ensuring all workers – migrants included – can organize freely.

Here's what matters: ILO resolutions work best when all three groups can get behind them. A resolution that employers hate will struggle in the real world, just like one that workers reject loses its moral authority.

3.2 Introduction to The Agenda Item

In the first decades of the 21st century, the migrant worker system became widely referred to the "kafala system" in English. The word kafala comes from Arabic, and the related word kafeel refers to the local employment sponsor in the system. In Islamic adoptional jurisprudence, "kafala" refers to the adoption of children. The original law of kafala was expanded to include a system of fixed-term sponsorship of migrant workers in several countries in the late 20th century. This modern system has its origins in labour practices related to pearl hunting. In the Persian Gulf, the pearling industry was dominated by slave labour, and prior to the abolition of slavery in the 20th century, slaves were used as pearl divers.

The 2034 FIFA World Cup gives us something we rarely have – serious leverage. With the world watching, multinational sponsors involved, and FIFA's reputation on the line, we actually have a shot at meaningful change. Your challenge is to forge consensus that uses this moment to tear down systems of exploitation and build something better – a real legacy of social justice and decent work.

Saudi Arabia and the reform

Saudi Arabia's recent labor reforms have replaced the Kafala system with a more flexible contractual employment model. According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), this new system allows migrant workers to change employers without needing their current employer's approval, leave the country without an exit visa, and access vital legal protections that were previously unavailable under the Kafala framework. The reform is part of Saudi Arabia's broader Vision 2030 initiative, which ambitiously aims to modernize the economy and enhance the rights and welfare of millions of foreign workers. While the government has described the reform as a significant step forward, several human rights organizations have consistently emphasized the urgent need for comprehensive implementation and monitoring to ensure that these changes translate into tangible, lasting improvements for workers.

The main reason on this reform known as *The Vision 2030*.

4.2 Key Words/Concepts

Tripartism : The unique structure of the ILO that brings together representatives of Governments, Employers, and Workers on an equal footing to debate and create labour standards.

Social Dialogue : All types of negotiation, consultation, or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers, and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

Decent Work : The ILO's primary goal, defined as productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity. It involves fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection.

ILO Core Conventions : The ten fundamental international instruments that all ILO member states are obligated to respect, regardless of ratification.

Supervisory Mechanisms : The ILO system used to monitor whether member states are implementing the conventions they have ratified. Key bodies include the Committee of Experts (CEACR) and the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS).

Kafala System : A sponsorship system used in GCC states to monitor migrant labourers. It legally binds a worker's immigration status to an individual employer or sponsor (*Kafil*), giving the employer significant control over the worker's mobility and ability to leave the country.

Kafil : The individual or company that acts as the legal sponsor of a migrant worker. Under the traditional system, the Kafil has the power to grant or deny permission for the worker to change jobs or leave the country.

Forced Labour : Defined by ILO Convention No. 29 as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily."

Debt Bondage : A situation where a worker is forced to work to pay off a debt. In the context of the World Cup, this usually occurs when workers take huge loans to pay illegal Recruitment Fees to agents in their home countries, trapping them in their jobs until the debt is paid.

Heat Stress: A major occupational health hazard in the Gulf region. It refers to the physical risk posed to construction workers labouring in extreme summer temperatures, often mitigated by the "Summer Working Ban" (mid-day work bans).

Saudization: A Saudi government policy requiring companies to hire a certain percentage of Saudi nationals. This policy impacts migrant workers by creating a tiered labour market and incentivizing the reduction of foreign labour dependency.

Qiwa Platform: The Saudi government's digital platform for labour services. It acts as the interface for approving contracts and requesting job transfers, aiming to remove the absolute power of the individual *Kafil* by digitizing the process.

Wage Protection System (WPS): An electronic salary transfer system required by law in GCC states. It mandates companies to pay wages through banks so the government can monitor if workers are paid on time and in full.

Vision 2030: Saudi Arabia's strategic framework to reduce oil dependence and diversify its economy. The massive construction projects (Giga-projects like NEOM) required for this vision and the 2034 World Cup are the main drivers of labour demand.

5. Historical Background

5.1 Genesis of Kafala and Economic Drivers

Kafala system

The kafala system is a system in the Middle East that involves binding migrant workers to a specific employer throughout the period of their residence in a country. It currently exists in many Arab countries, especially those in the Arabian Peninsula, with Lebanon, Jordan and Kuwait also being very prominent. A similar "binding system" existed in Israel until 2006, when the Israeli Supreme Court addressed and eliminated it.

The system, which blocks domestic competition for overseas workers in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf requires migrant workers to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their visa and legal status. This practice has been criticized by human rights organizations for creating easy opportunities for the exploitation of workers, as many employers confiscate their migrant workers' passports and abuse them with little chance of legal repercussions and even repatriation. In 2014, the International Trade Union Confederation estimated that there were 2.4 million enslaved domestic workers in the Arab Gulf countries and the Levant, virtually all of them from West Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

5.2 International Condemnation and Early ILO Report and Conventions

Work conditions in Kafala System denied in ILO conventions and protocols as Forced Labour Conventions/Protocols ;

- 1. In giving effect to its obligations under the Convention to suppress forced or compulsory labour, each Member shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate its use, to provide to victims protection and access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation, and to sanction the perpetrators of forced or compulsory labour.
- 2. Each Member shall develop a national policy and plan of action for the effective and sustained suppression of forced or compulsory labour in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, which shall involve systematic action by the competent authorities and, as appropriate, in coordination with employers' and workers' organizations, as well as with other groups concerned.

- 3. The definition of forced or compulsory labour contained in the Convention is reaffirmed, and therefore the measures referred to in this Protocol shall include specific action against trafficking in persons for the purposes of forced or compulsory labour.

The measures to be taken for the prevention of forced or compulsory labour shall include:

- (a) educating and informing people, especially those considered to be particularly vulnerable, in order to prevent their becoming victims of forced or compulsory labour;
- (b) educating and informing employers, in order to prevent their becoming involved in forced or compulsory labour practices;
- (c) undertaking efforts to ensure that:
 - (i) the coverage and enforcement of legislation relevant to the prevention of forced or compulsory labour, including labour law as appropriate, apply to all workers and all sectors of the economy; and
 - (ii) labour inspection services and other services responsible for the implementation of this legislation are strengthened;
- (d) protecting persons, particularly migrant workers, from possible abusive and fraudulent practices during the recruitment and placement process;
- (e) supporting due diligence by both the public and private sectors to prevent and respond to risks of forced or compulsory labour; and
- (f) addressing the root causes and factors that heighten the risks of forced or compulsory labour.

Each Member shall take effective measures for the identification, release, protection, recovery and rehabilitation of all victims of forced or compulsory labour, as well as the provision of other forms of assistance and support.

- 1. Each Member shall ensure that all victims of forced or compulsory labour, irrespective of their presence or legal status in the national territory, have access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation.
- 2. Each Member shall, in accordance with the basic principles of its legal system, take the necessary measures to ensure that competent authorities are entitled not to prosecute or impose penalties on victims of forced or compulsory labour for their involvement in unlawful activities which they have been compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being subjected to forced or compulsory labour.

Members shall cooperate with each other to ensure the prevention and elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour.

The measures taken to apply the provisions of this Protocol and of the Convention shall be determined by national laws or regulations or by the competent authority, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned.

5.3 The 2022 Catalyst: Qatar and the Pressure for Reform

A new agreement concluded between the Qatari authorities and the International Labour Organization (ILO) sets out a pathway that could lead to long-promised reform of Qatar's abusive sponsorship system if the government delivers on the agreement in full.

The organization is cautiously welcoming the agreement to establish a technical cooperation project made public today, in which the Qatari government has committed to revising its laws in line with international labour standards and the guidance of ILO experts. However, it urges the government to clarify how and when it will deliver on these commitments ahead of a key ILO session on 8 November.

“However, the question of whether this is a true game changer will be answered by the actions of the government in the coming period. Will it, for example, categorically clarify whether it intends to change the law to allow all migrant workers, without exception, to leave the country without their employers' say-so? This is something that on our reading they would have to do in order to fulfil this agreement.”

This agreement is a welcome step that offers a prospect of hope for migrant workers in Qatar...However, the question of whether this is a true game changer will be answered by the actions of the government in the coming period.

The joint ILO-Qatar project which has been agreed sets out five areas of action to address forced labour in Qatar. One of these includes removing “restrictions on migrant workers' ability to change employers and exit the country”, which are key to driving abuse of migrant workers.

Until laws relating to workers' entry, exit and employment in the country have been reformed, migrant workers in Qatar will continue to be subject to a sponsorship system that places them at high risk of serious labour abuse.

Qatar has previously claimed to abolish its sponsorship system while leaving intact key elements that mean workers cannot leave the country or change job without their employers' permission.

“This agreement should signal a change of approach, and we will be monitoring closely as to whether laws and practices change.”

Qatar has previously claimed to abolish its sponsorship system while leaving intact key elements that mean workers cannot leave the country or change job without their employers' permission

The government of Qatar has thus far not announced any reforms to its sponsorship system beyond a brief and unspecific reference to an amendment to the functioning of its exit permit system included in the minutes of a Cabinet meeting on 25 October.

On the same day, the government of Qatar publicly announced plans to introduce a minimum wage and establish a fund to pay migrant workers owed wages. The agreement with the ILO includes a commitment to improve and expand coverage of the existing wage protection system, including “eventually” to domestic workers.

Amnesty International has repeatedly seen the devastating human impact of prolonged non-payment of wages by companies that have folded or are on the verge of doing so and has called on the government for several years to address this issue. If implemented effectively, these measures would be positive for migrant workers in Qatar.

ILO decision heralds new era for workers' rights in Qatar. Saudi Arabia and the UAE must follow its lead

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) decision to close the complaint against Qatar, following the government's commitments to dismantle the kafala system and end modern slavery, signals a new era for workers' rights in the country.

"Qatar has set a new standard for the Gulf States, and this must be followed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE where millions of migrant workers are trapped in modern slavery," said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

The complaint lodged by the ITUC in 2014 exposed the exploitative conditions of two million migrant workers servicing and building the huge infrastructure programme to deliver the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

"New commitments made by Qatar to the ITUC and the ILO will normalise industrial relations in the country and have opened the way for international businesses operating in Qatar to sign agreements on workers' rights and decent work with global union federations" said Sharan Burrow.

BWI General Secretary Ambet Yuson said, "this agreement with QDVC and VINCI, which complements and builds on our productive cooperation with the Qatar's Supreme Committee on Delivery and Legacy, is a major step towards the full respect of workers' rights in Qatar. We look forward to working with both parties in our ongoing efforts to improve the working and living conditions of migrant construction workers in Qatar. As the text of the agreement indicates, it is 'founded on the shared belief that all construction workers should be treated with dignity, and live and work in decent and safe conditions'."

"For the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) this means a sea change for transport workers, in aviation, in ports, and in public transport. We look forward to working with companies to build protection for workers, with good, sustainable jobs, recognising international standards and best practice," Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation ITF.

A new technical cooperation programme between the ILO and Qatar will support the transition to a modern industrial relations system, with the UN body establishing an office in the country for the first time. Migrant workers in submitting complaints to the national disputes mechanisms will receive support along with an extensive technical and training programme for officials.

"The commitments made by the Government of Qatar dismantle the kafala system, put in place a minimum wage and start to build freedom of association rights for migrant workers who will now be able to elect representatives on workplace committees," said Burrow.

The commitments made by Qatar include:

Dismantling the kafala system;

- Employment contracts will be lodged with a government authority to prevent contract substitution, ending the practice of workers arriving in the country only to have their contract torn up and replaced with a different job, often on a lower wage.
- Employers will no longer be able to stop their employees from leaving the country and the contentious issue of workers' rights to change employers will be cleared up.
- Identification papers will be issued directly by the State of Qatar, and workers will no longer rely on their employer to provide their ID card without which workers can be denied medical treatment.

Wages:

- A minimum wage will be prescribed as a base rate covering all workers, ending the race-based system of wages.
- Improvements to the existing Wage Protection System to ensure that wage arrears are systematically settled.

Worker representation and grievance procedures:

- Workers' committees will be established in each workplace, with workers electing their own representatives.
- A special disputes resolution committee with a timeframe for dealing with grievances will be a centrepiece for ensuring rapid remedy of complaints.

5.4 Pre-2034 Labour Landscape: Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia prioritizes the protection of expatriate workers' rights as a cornerstone of a balanced labor market and sustainable economic development. Aligned with the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which emphasizes justice and human dignity, safeguarding these rights has become a national imperative. Through progressive legislation and innovative initiatives, the Kingdom strives to cultivate a fair and equitable work environment, demonstrating its commitment to local and international human rights principles across various sectors.

A comprehensive legal framework has been established in the Kingdom to protect the rights of expatriate workers and ensure justice and transparency. The Saudi Labor Law governs the relationship between workers and employers, mandating written employment contracts that clearly define wages, tasks, and responsibilities, thereby establishing clear obligations and rights for both parties.

Employers are also required to pay wages on time through the "Wage Protection Program," an electronic system launched by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

This system monitors wage disbursements for all workers in private sector establishments, both Saudi and expatriate, creating a database of updated wage payment information.

The program assesses establishments' compliance with timely and agreed-upon wage payments, promoting transparency and minimizing disputes. Furthermore, the system guarantees a minimum wage and ensures end-of-service compensation for workers upon contract termination, in accordance with the labor law's stipulations. The system also regulates working hours and grants workers paid annual leave and sick leave, which promote a work-life balance.

The Wage Protection Program has successfully protected the wages of over 8.5 million employees in the Kingdom. It has also contributed significantly to reducing labor disputes, curbing commercial concealment crimes, decreasing reliance on cash transactions, attracting foreign investment from regional companies, and fostering a secure and appealing work environment for expatriates.

The Musaned Platform's domestic worker contract insurance service safeguards the rights of domestic workers, with over 500,000 workers currently covered. This service offers several benefits, including compensation for domestic workers in cases of permanent total or partial disability resulting from accidents. It also provides compensation if the employer fails to pay salaries and financial dues due to the employer's death or permanent total or partial disability.

The Kingdom has implemented significant regulatory amendments to strengthen the worker-employer relationship, notably abolishing the traditional Kafala (sponsorship) system and replacing it with the contractual relationship improvement initiative. This ministry-led initiative represents a substantial step toward enhancing the work environment and bolstering expatriate worker rights, aligning with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program.

Benefiting over one million workers, the initiative aims to build an attractive labor market, empower and develop human competencies, and improve the work environment. It facilitates job mobility, allowing workers to transfer to new employment upon contract completion without requiring prior employer approval. It also grants workers the right to exit, return, and travel permanently by electronically notifying the employer, eliminating the need for employer consent. These changes enhance worker independence and bolster the global appeal of the Saudi labor market.

The Kingdom, through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, has regulated working hours and rest periods, ensuring expatriate worker rights and promoting work-life balance. The Saudi Labor Law stipulates a maximum of eight working hours per day, or 48 hours per week, with the possibility of extending this to nine hours for certain categories or reducing it to seven hours for hazardous or harmful work. Employers are required to provide rest, meal, and prayer breaks totaling no less than half an hour during the workday, ensuring that workers do not work more than five consecutive hours without a break. These periods are not counted as actual working hours.

The ministry's Unified Contract Program for recruiting domestic workers has strengthened the protection of domestic worker rights by establishing a binding contract that specifies the obligations of both parties. The ministry has also updated the list of domestic workers and those of similar status, clarifying the contractual relationship, simplifying the contracting and litigation process in case of disputes, adding definitions, provisions, and controls, and addressing the rights and duties of both employers and domestic workers. The ministry has taken proactive measures to regulate contractual relationships and protect the rights of foreign workers before their arrival in the Kingdom. Key among these is the Professional Accreditation Program, which includes the "Qualification Verification" and "Skills Verification" services. The Qualification Verification service, conducted through a fully automated electronic platform, verifies the skills, experience, and certifications of highly skilled expatriate workers within a maximum of 15 working days. The Skills Verification service evaluates the skill level of medium- and low-skilled workers in professions that do not require academic degrees through practical and theoretical tests, both before and after their arrival in the Kingdom. Transferring domestic workers' services between individuals has also been made available via the Musaned platform to enhance recruitment quality, protect rights, and regulate the contractual relationship between all parties.

Regarding leave entitlements, the law guarantees employees a minimum of 21 days of paid annual leave, increasing to 30 days after five years of continuous service, with leave pay provided in advance.

Employees are also granted sick leave with full pay for the first 30 days, three-quarters pay for the next 60 days, and unpaid leave thereafter, all within the same year. Special leave is also provided, including five days upon the death of a spouse, parent, or child, and three days upon marriage or the birth of a child, in addition to a one-time paid Hajj leave, lasting between 10 and 15 days, during the employee's service. These provisions contribute to justice and ensure comfort and stability for employees within the Kingdom's work environment.

Concerning employee health and safety, the Kingdom has developed a comprehensive national occupational health and safety policy, aiming to protect workers and provide a safe, risk-free work environment. Safety regulations mandate that employers adhere to strict standards for preventing occupational injuries and diseases, including providing necessary protective equipment and conducting regular training on general safety procedures, such as handling hazardous materials and responding to workplace emergencies.

To safeguard workers in exposed environments, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has mandated a prohibition on outdoor work under direct sunlight during the summer months, from 12 noon to 3 pm, between June 15 and September 15 annually. This measure aims to mitigate health risks associated with extreme heat and heat stress. The ministry conducts regular inspection campaigns to ensure compliance and imposes penalties on violators to protect worker health and rights.

The ministry emphasizes employers' commitment to implementing safety programs and procedures as stipulated by the Saudi Labor Law, including providing first aid and fire protection measures and ensuring the presence of a safety officer in major establishments. Government agencies collaborate with the private sector to promote a culture of occupational safety through awareness training programs, contributing to a reduction in workplace accidents and injuries.



The ministry's Labor Attaché program raises worker awareness of labor laws, rights, and duties within the Kingdom. The ministry has also bolstered the protection of expatriate workers' financial rights by introducing an insurance product covering their dues in private sector establishments in case of employer default. This product aims to protect workers and mitigate the impact of unpaid dues, providing various benefits as outlined in the insurance policy. To streamline procedures, the ministry has facilitated easy and flexible financial transfer solutions for domestic workers, signing strategic agreements with numerous local banks and electronic payment channels. The contract documentation service plays a vital role in preserving worker rights, with over nine million worker contracts currently documented.

Among the ministry's comprehensive educational programs and initiatives, the Labor Culture initiative stands out, educating workers and employers about their rights and duties as specified in Saudi Labor Law. It includes multilingual awareness materials to ensure accessibility for all workers. The ministry's awareness efforts include integrated campaigns across traditional and modern media, featuring explanatory videos and multilingual electronic and print guidebooks that simplify labor regulations and worker rights concerning wages, working hours, and vacations.

The ministry also conducts regular workshops and training courses for expatriate workers and employers to enhance awareness of the labor law and regulations. This integrated approach raises legal awareness among all parties and ensures compliance with legislation, fostering a safe and stable work environment.

The Kingdom prioritizes advanced protection mechanisms, including effective channels for reporting violations, submitting complaints, and seeking redressal through relevant authorities to resolve labor disputes according to established legal procedures. Violations can be reported through official channels, such as the ministry's application, which allows for confidential and easy reporting. Labor courts have also been established to provide swift and fair resolutions to labor disputes.

The Kingdom has strengthened the rights of expatriate women in the labor market through legislation and effective initiatives designed to achieve equality and equal opportunities. Saudi Labor Law mandates equal wages between men and women, prohibiting wage discrimination based on gender or any other factors. The Kingdom has also reinforced women's rights through initiatives supporting their participation across various sectors.

Since joining in 1976, the Kingdom has strengthened its strategic partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to improve the work environment and develop its legislation in line with international best practices. The Kingdom has ratified several international agreements aimed at enhancing worker rights, most notably Occupational Safety and Health Convention No. 187, which focuses on developing comprehensive national policies to ensure worker safety and mitigate workplace risks. These ratifications demonstrate the Kingdom's commitment to implementing the highest occupational safety standards, enhancing the sustainability and quality of the Saudi labor market.

The Kingdom actively hosts and organizes international conferences in partnership with the ILO and other international institutions to discuss challenges and opportunities facing labor markets both locally and globally. These conferences promote social dialogue among stakeholders and facilitate the development of strategies that adapt to economic transformations and labor market changes. Key issues addressed in these conferences include promoting decent work practices, providing sustainable job opportunities, and achieving equality between men and women in the work environment.

This comprehensive set of policies and initiatives has enhanced the Kingdom's position as an attractive work destination that respects the rights of expatriate workers. The focus on improving the work environment and measuring worker engagement has also contributed to increased worker satisfaction, attracting global talent and raising labor market productivity, in alignment with the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which aims to enhance quality of life and the competitiveness of the local and international economy.

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a historic transformation in its labor market, driven by Vision 2030 and a commitment to building a dynamic, inclusive, and globally competitive workforce. The Saudi labor market has changed since the beginning of this project.

This transformation is anchored in four key areas:

1. Workforce Expansion and Economic Opportunities

Saudi Arabia is implementing wide-ranging reforms and initiatives to boost employment, support national workforce development, and strengthen economic resilience.

- Since 2020, more than 2.48 million Saudis have entered the private sector, reflecting the success of labor nationalization policies.
- This success is also reflected in supervisory data, with more than 250,000 dedicated visits conducted to support localization programs in Q1 2025 alone, surpassing targets.
- The Nitaqat initiative encourages private companies to hire Saudi nationals, increasing employment across diverse industries.
- National skills programs are equipping young Saudis with the expertise needed in high-growth sectors such as technology, engineering, finance, and healthcare.
- The overall labor force participation rate reached 68.2% in Q1 2025, with Saudi participation climbing to 51.3%, both representing steady progress under Vision 2030.
- Meanwhile, the Human Resources Development Fund supported 143,000 Saudi men and women into private sector employment during Q1 2025, investing 1.83 billion SAR into training, empowerment, and guidance programs.
- Female labor force participation has more than doubled, rising from 17% in 2017 to 36.3% in Q1 2025 - continuing to exceed Vision 2030 targets.
- The unemployment rate among Saudi women also dropped to a historic low of 10.5% in Q1 2025, underscoring the impact of dedicated programs and reforms to expand economic opportunity.

- These efforts are further supported by more than 3,000 establishments completing self-assessments related to workplace inclusivity, and 3,393 establishments awarded the "Mowaamah" certificate by the end of H2 2025, for providing suitable work environments for the work of people with disabilities to work.
- More than 800 training programs have delivered over 280,000 certificates, supporting more than 120,000 Saudi women into employment.
- The Wusul program has helped over 307,000 women overcome transport barriers and maintain job stability.
- Partnerships with more than 46,000 private sector companies are creating professional and leadership opportunities for women.
- The Leadership Training and Mentorship Initiative – developed in collaboration with INSEAD – has trained 1,700 women for mid- and senior-level roles in both public and private sectors.
- Flexible work options, extended maternity leave, and improved childcare services are making it easier for women to balance professional and family responsibilities.
- Structural reforms, including equal pay provisions and a unified retirement age of 65 for both men and women in the private sector, reflect the Kingdom's commitment to workplace equality.

2. Worker Rights and Fair Employment

- The Musaned platform promotes transparent and ethical recruitment of domestic workers through licensed agencies, offering standardized contracts, wage tracking, and complaint channels.
- The Job Mobility Freedom service allows workers to change employers without needing the previous employer's consent, removing past sponsorship restrictions.
- Employers are prohibited from withholding passports, salaries, or restricting workers' movement, ensuring workers' autonomy and legal rights.
- The Labor Reform Initiative, introduced in 2021, has transformed the contractual relationship between employers and workers, reducing dependency on sponsors.
- In 2024, Saudi Arabia became the first Arab country to launch a National Policy for the Elimination of Forced Labor, offering a comprehensive framework to combat all forms of forced labor.
- The Wage Protection System ensures that salaries are paid electronically, in full, and on time, significantly reducing wage-related disputes.
- By the end of 2024, it covered more than 900,000 private sector establishments, representing the vast majority of employers, and safeguarded the wages of over 8.5 million employees.

- What is more, Saudi Arabia's strong enforcement systems ensure fair treatment and uphold worker rights. Labor inspection quality remains high, with a supervision quality rate of 93.65%, while labor courts and friendly settlement mechanisms resolve 77% of disputes before reaching litigation.
- Saudi Arabia's labor courts provide a structured and transparent process for resolving employment-related disputes.
- The **Friendly Settlement** process resolves 77% of complaints before they reach litigation, supporting faster and more collaborative outcomes.
- All workers, including domestic workers, have access to grievance mechanisms that reinforce accountability and fair treatment.
- Through the Preventive Justice Initiative, the wage clause in notarized employment contracts has been adopted as an enforceable document, enabling workers and employers to submit a request for enforcement in the event of non-payment of wages, without the need for additional documents.

3. Occupational Safety and Social Protection

Workplace safety and health regulations

- Over the past six years, workplace injuries in Saudi Arabia have fallen by 30.7%, and occupational fatalities by 70.6%. These outcomes are supported by one of the region's most active inspection regimes, with more than 411,000 supervisory visits conducted by The Ministry in the first quarter of 2025 alone. The compliance rate with occupational safety and health requirements now stands at 73%, showing that reforms are not only being introduced – they're being implemented.
- Today, Saudi Arabia ranks among the safest labor markets globally, recording 242.2 injuries per 100,000 workers. Behind these numbers is a wide-ranging approach that includes new regulations, strong enforcement, and a serious investment in awareness and prevention.
- The National Council for Occupational Safety and Health has delivered 16 awareness programs, reaching over 70% of the workforce.
- To safeguard workers from extreme summer temperatures, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD) issues an annual **ministerial decision** prohibiting outdoor work under direct sunlight during the hottest midday hours (from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm), typically from mid-June until mid-September.
- This decision applies nationwide and requires employers to reschedule outdoor work to cooler times of the day. The measure reflects the Kingdom's commitment to occupational safety and health (OSH) and aligns with international best practices to reduce risks of heat stress, dehydration, and other heat-related illnesses.
- By implementing this recurring ministerial decision, Saudi Arabia demonstrates a proactive approach to worker welfare and ensures that labor protections respond to seasonal risks as part of broader reforms to improve workplace conditions.

- Mandatory health insurance ensures that all private sector workers have access to quality healthcare.
- Saudi Arabia ranks among the safest labor markets globally, with only 287.8 injuries per 100,000 workers – a testament to its strong preventive and regulatory systems.

Social protection and worker welfare

- The SANED unemployment insurance program provides temporary financial support to Saudi nationals who lose their jobs.
- Maternity leave has been extended from 10 to 12 weeks, while paternity leave provides three days of paid leave.
- Domestic workers are not responsible for repatriation costs, which are covered by employers, recruitment agencies, or the Ministry, ensuring fair treatment and financial protection.

4. International Cooperation and Labor Market Competitiveness

Saudi Arabia's Commitment to International Standards and Global Talent

Saudi Arabia is committed to aligning its labor market with international standards, strengthening global partnerships, and enhancing its appeal to top global talent. This commitment is at the core of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which seeks to transform the economy, empower people, and position Saudi Arabia as a global hub for innovation and investment.

International standards and ILO engagement

- Saudi Arabia has ratified several key ILO conventions, including Convention No. 187 on Occupational Safety and Health, and is actively considering additional instruments such as Convention No. 155 on workplace safety.
- The ILO–Saudi Arabia Programme of Cooperation further strengthens regulatory frameworks, enhances enforcement, and expands protections for workers, including migrant and domestic workers.
- These reforms are ensuring that Saudi Arabia's labor policies not only meet global benchmarks but also improve fairness, inclusivity, and safety across the workforce.

Attracting global talent and driving economic growth

- A cornerstone of this effort is the Kingdom's long-standing partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO). Since joining the ILO in 1976, Saudi Arabia has worked closely with the organization to advance workplace rights, improve labor standards, and build institutional capacity. In 2018, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD) and the ILO launched a joint Programme of Cooperation that has provided technical assistance and capacity building to support ambitious labor market reforms. On 4 June 2025, HRSD and the ILO signed an agreement to launch Phase 3 of this programme, backed by a USD 4.1 million budget and implemented over two years.

- Phase 3 focuses on seven priority areas designed to close decent work gaps in Saudi Arabia: social dialogue, recruitment and mobility, domestic work, access to justice, social protection, labor inspection and occupational safety and health (OSH), and fair wage-setting.
- Implementation is supported by ILO experts based in Riyadh, ensuring alignment with international best practices and closer coordination with other UN agencies. This approach reflects Saudi Arabia's determination to embed international labor standards into national practice while responding to local needs and priorities.
- Alongside these reforms, the Kingdom is investing heavily in attracting and retaining skilled professionals in engineering, technology, healthcare, and finance.
- Industry-specific talent schemes are diversifying the labor market, while reforms to recruitment and mobility make Saudi Arabia more competitive as a destination for global talent.
- Expanded investment in research, development, and innovation is creating high-value jobs, fostering entrepreneurship, and ensuring long-term sustainability. These efforts are directly tied to Vision 2030 and the Kingdom's aspiration to create a knowledge-based economy.

6. Questions to be Addressed

1. How will the 2034 FIFA World Cup be effected by the new system Vision 2030?
2. How will the workers be effected by Vision 2030?
3. Why the thoughts for Kafala system has changed time by time?
4. How the thoughts for Kafala system has changed time by time?
5. What are the effects of the kafala system on migrant workers and what measures can be taken to prevent it from happening again?
6. How opportunities that can given to the global countries which have effect on FIFA to increase their worker's safety?
7. How can a common solution be maintained between FIFA and ILO regarding workers' rights?
8. How can safety measures be increased for workers working conditons in mega sports events such as FIFA?
9. Where can workers express their ideas for their working conditions and the things that they want to change?
10. What might be the influence of civil society organizations and the media in the event of potential injustices against workers at mega sporting events like FIFA?

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