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## Universal Periodic Review: Oman

### Presentation by Abdelaziz Muhamat concerning the Global Detention Project submission on Oman

Thank you for this opportunity to present the Global Detention Project's concerns regarding Oman's policies and practices related to the arrest, detention, and removal of migrant workers and other vulnerable non-citizens. The Global Detention Project is a nonprofit organisation based in Geneva that promotes the human rights of people who have been detained due to their immigration status. We work to end arbitrary and harmful immigration detention practices around the world by increasing transparency, ensuring accountability, and supporting the protection of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers through research and advocacy.

#### National Consultations

The Government of Oman did not organise national consultations in preparation for its National Report for this review cycle. This lack of consultation underscores the limited opportunities for civil society engagement and participation in the UPR process.

**Our Statement focuses on three key issues** related to immigration enforcement in Oman:

- Labour rights and the kafala sponsorship system;
- The prevalence of human trafficking and the limited access to justice for victims; and
- The use and conditions of immigration detention, including the lack of transparency and independent monitoring

#### Updates since the 3th Cycle: Labour Rights and the Kafala System

- During the 3th cycle, Oman supported recommendations to strengthen migrant labour protections and to reform the kafala system.
- Since then, Oman has enacted a new Labour Law under Royal Decree No. 53 of 2023, which introduced some welcome improvements — including a prohibition on passport confiscation without consent, reduced working hours, and provisions allowing workers to stay in the country while pursuing legal claims against their employers.
- However, serious challenges remain. Domestic workers are still excluded from the 2023 Labour Law and remain governed by outdated and inadequate regulations dating from 2004. This leaves them exposed to exploitative conditions such as unpaid wages, excessive working hours, movement restrictions, and even physical abuse. Furthermore, the kafala system continues in practice. Workers' residency status remains tied to their employers, and those who leave abusive situations risk being labelled as "absconding," leading to fines, detention, and deportation.

#### Human Trafficking and Access to Justice

- During the last review, Oman accepted recommendations to strengthen its anti-trafficking framework.
- Yet, human trafficking and forced labour remain pervasive, particularly among women migrant domestic workers. Reports continue to document deception during recruitment, excessively long working hours, and physical and psychological abuse.

- Despite this, for six consecutive years, Oman has not investigated or prosecuted any alleged traffickers. Victims are often treated as offenders — detained and deported rather than protected and supported.

### **Detention Facilities and Conditions**

- Oman continues to detain migrant workers and undocumented persons for immigration and labour-related offences.
- However, information about where detainees are held and under what conditions remains limited. Existing reports confirm the use of deportation centres in Salalah and Sohar, and the holding of non-nationals in Sumail Central Prison, often alongside ordinary prisoners.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the above information, the Global Detention Project encourages Oman to:

1. Undertake legal reforms to ensure that immigration laws do not undermine labour rights or the rights of at-risk non-citizens, including victims of trafficking, ensuring that these people are not subjected to arbitrary detention or other punitive measures that violate Oman’s human rights obligations.
2. Ensure that immigration detention is only used as a measure of last resort, when it is absolutely necessary and proportionate, and provide transparency about the conditions of detention to ensure that no one is harmed by such measures.
3. Implement legal reforms prohibiting the arrest and detention of migrant workers accused of “absconding,” as well as those apprehended as a result of their employers or sponsors flouting labour and immigration laws, and ensure that migrant workers retain their right to seek redress, claim unpaid wages, and report abuses regardless of their immigration status.