

HAQ's stance on Offices of Recruiting Bahrainis Abroad

HAQ- The Movement of Liberties and Democracy - is concerned about opening more offices to employ Bahrainis in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, under the argument of providing better job opportunities for Bahrainis. The inauguration of these offices comes in light of the continuous influx of expatriate migrant labours in Bahrain, and repeated advertisements by the Bahraini Authorities in the neighboring countries for vacant posts in Bahraini ministries. These acts have coincided with the statements of government officials to confirm "involuntary" displacement indicated by the documents of Al-Bandar report, which was issued last January.

HAQ calls for cease of displacement of citizens outside their country, even under the theme of finding better jobs, and considers opening employment opportunities in some state institutions, especially the Ministries of Interior, Defense and the National Guard, which are loaded with non-Bahrainis. The Authorities are responsible for the deterioration of the general stability, as a result of importing expat migrants and granting them citizenship as part of the change of demography and political naturalization program, the social and economic impacts of which are starting to floating on the surface.

Suspicious Overshadowing Offices of Employing Bahrainis Abroad

HAQ warns of ongoing execution of plans in Al-Bandar report

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The Bahraini Ministry of Labour announced today that an office for recruitment of Bahrainis in the United Arab Emirates will be inaugurated next January¹. Last month, an office of recruiting Bahrainis in Qatar was officially opened², after which the Qatari Crown Prince, when meeting with the Bahraini Minister of Labor, Majeed Al-Alawi, stated that "Bahraini employees in Qatar will be treated in a similar way to his Qatari brother and that all posts are open for Bahrainis in various areas"³. The inauguration of the Bureau came after a year of preparation with the Qatari authorities, since the date of declaration of the idea of formation of offices of Bahrainis migrant labours in Gulf States, which include Qatar, United Arab Emirates and possibly Kuwait⁴.

The movement of Liberties and democracy "HAQ" is concerned about the escalation of the crisis of unemployment among Bahrainis- especially the youths, expected to reach 35% in the year 2013. This was stated by the Deputy Executive Chairman of the Labour Fund in a seminar titled "Job Opportunities and trained cadres in Bahrain"⁵. The source of this concern is the practical programs on the ground, appearing to be positively dealing with the unemployment crisis, especially among the young Bahrainis. In light of increasing migrant (non-Bahraini) labours, in public and private sectors, and the facilitation of job opportunity attractions outside Bahrain (Recruitment Offices in Qatar and others), "HAQ" suspects that what is happening to facilitate the process of creating Bahraini migrant labours, is an implementation of what was exposed in Al-Banadar report⁶.

Status of Migrant Labour in Bahrain:

¹ www.alwasatnews.com/newspager_pages/print_art.aspx?news_id=92903&news_type=LOC

² http://www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com/arc_Articles.asp?Article=209218&Sn=BNEW&IssueID=10813

³ <http://www.alayam.com/ArticleDetail.asp?CategoryId=1&ArticleId=288009>

⁴ <http://www.bah-molsa.com/Arabic/news.asp?hNewsID=2987>

⁵ Organized by the Chamber of Commerce Committee of Businesswomen in collaboration with the Bahrain Businesswomen Association, and held in Awal Hall at Gulf Hotel on February 7, 2007,

⁶ www.haaq.org/vedio/BahrainR2.pdf

In a survey by Al-Waqt newspaper⁷, about the problems of labour in Bahrain, included interviews with representatives of the embassies of states providing Bahrain with migrant labour; India, Bangladeshi, the Philippines, and Egypt. The census until the end of the year 2006 showed that out of a population of 742561 of whom 283549 migrants, 89% of which (251477) are employed in Bahrain, which represents approximately 71.50% of the total labour force (population of 351862) in Bahrain. Until the issue of the survey report (May 2007) and according to figures available from representatives of the embassies, the number of arrivals of Bahrain has reached nearly 295 thousand at the very least, which reflects an increase of 4% in the first five months from the beginning of the year in 2007.

Indian is the largest community in the number of labor in Bahrain, reaching to about 160 thousand, 40% of which are in the areas of requiring qualifications such as medical professionals, major companies, banks and others, while remaining members of the community (60%) work in the areas of construction, service sectors; such as restaurants, hotels, and shops, as well as domestic servants.

On the other, migrant Bangalis- about 90 thousand people – are employed in different jobs, including medical professionals, maintenance, some areas of education, marketing, banking and construction work. Among the 35 thousand Filipinos in Bahrain, housemaids represent 15%, while about 30 thousand of the Philippine migrant labours are employed in medical professions, education, maintenance and women cosmetic places. As for the Egyptian migrant labour in Bahrain, estimated at 9600 Egyptians, working in different careers of medicine, education, engineering, judiciary, and some handmade crafts, while others work in hotels.

Authorities and National Labour:

While at the time, studies and programs were presented to attract national employment in form of workshops and seminars⁸, there, set aside on the ground and in a suspicious manner, the existence of a scheme beyond making genuine solutions for the unemployment crisis in Bahrain. The doubts on the credibility of those programs augment when the Authorities continue to attract migrant labours from abroad, substantiated by the increase in their numbers, as indicated earlier, as well as by the advertisements made by different ministries of the State in the neighbouring countries to bring labour in disciplines existing among citizens. On one hand, the Bahraini Civic Service Bureau (CSB) addresses the ministries to provide any job vacancies⁹, it announces, on the other hand, outside Bahrain for vacancies in ministries, but for non-Bahrainis. A reference is made to the following advertisements in Egypt and Jordan:

- Advertisement in Jordanian newspapers¹⁰ on the existence of vacancies in the Bahraini Ministry of Electricity, provided to the citizens of Jordan, followed by a Bahraini delegation visit to conduct interviews with applicants.
- Advertisement in Egyptian press on the need by the Bahrain Ministry of Education to recruit teachers in more than 30 specializations. A delegation from the Ministry of Education was sent to conduct interviews with applicants in a number of Arab countries¹¹.
- Advertisement in Egyptian press on the need for a consultant doctor specializing in gynecological and childbirth¹² to be recruited by the Bahraini Ministry of Health.

On the other hand, doubts, about the credibility of programs attracting national employment, were underpinned through statements by Bahraini officials in describing young Bahrainis of laziness, tenderness and tendency for comfort. Fatima Baluchi- Minister of Social Development- stated to CNN American news channel that "Bahrainis donot accept hard working, and demand office jobs". Part of an independent report on the poverty in Bahrain, this was the Minister's justification answer when she was asked about the reasons behind the reluctance of the Bahraini Authorities to employ its citizens¹³. It is to be noted that there was a clear indication to the Minister of Development, in page 122 of the second Al-

⁷ <http://www.alwaqt.com/art.php?aid=56663>

⁸ <http://www.alwaqt.com/art.php?aid=56731>

⁹ <http://www.alayam.com/ArticleDetail.asp?CategoryId=2&ArticleId=287222>

¹⁰ http://www.alwasatnews.com/pdf/default.asp?issue_number=1879&p=1

¹¹ <http://www.alayam.com/ArticleDetail.asp?CategoryId=2&ArticleId=269226>

¹² <http://www.arab7.com/up/file/1102962472968.jpg>

¹³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDfVo_Noino

Bandar report¹⁴, and her anticipated role in the section concerning "Rehabilitation and Strategic restructuring of civic society"¹⁵. The same view was confirmed by the Minister of Labour, who waged a relentless campaign on «young lazy Bahrainis who refuse the jobs offered to him, preferring relaxation over to work, and leaving the opportunity for foreign workers to fill vacant posts in Bahrain»¹⁶. The "laziness" image of Bahraini youths was contradicted by the conclusive findings of a survey made by a BBC reported in a special program dedicated to youths in the Arab world¹⁷.

Another dimension, which throws more doubts on the credibility of the Bahraini recruitment offices, is the issue of "detached" labour force, known locally as "free visa", which is about facilitating the entry of thousands of migrant workers into the labour market through work visas provided by some influential figures in the country. This labour force, are not recruited or employed through proper and official contracts, but rather engage in unofficial multi jobs, with less pay than the labour market, thereby sucking any genuine vacancy for work and lowering its payment for Bahrainis. It also led to the attraction of institutions and companies (large and small) to take advantage of the "cheap" employment, depriving the chance for Bahraini citizens, who cannot afford such low income jobs. Although the Ministry of Labour took "strict" measures against illegal labour, such actions have been unable to face the corruption expressed by the guarantors and sponsors of the migrants, who are mostly senior members of the ruling family.

Migrant Labours and Al-Bandar report:

The recruitment offices to provide jobs for young Bahraini abroad, specifically in the Arab Gulf states, were orchestrated amidst common tendency to create Bahraini migrant labour as exemplified by data on the ground. According to "Al-Ayam" newspaper, seen to be close to the Bahraini Authorities, in the first page of April 30, 2005 issue, that there are Bahraini migrant workers in the Gulf states, among them, 21 thousand in Kuwait, similar figures in Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and smaller a number in Oman.

This trend confirms what has been leaked in the report, dubbed locally as "Al-Bandar report", produced by the Gulf Center for Development of Democracy. The local Authorities issued a judicial ban to prevent its media coverage. On page 110 of the report, in the third section, entitled "The Challenge of Naturalization .. Estimates and Indicators"¹⁸

Bahrain's strategic objective is controlling the rapid population growth and support opportunities for increasing number of Sunnis in order to preserve the national identity, Bahraini culture and social cohesion. It is a policy based on the principle of swift decision-making, through reducing foreign employment and keeping it at a minimum level while treating the economic situations and ***activating a strategy addressing unemployment by opening migration opportunities for the Shi'ite, whatever few in number***, and the maximum utilization of foreign competencies necessary for Development.

It should be noted that many of the plots and program which were mentioned in Al-Bandar reports- whether the first¹⁹ or the second- have been realized on the ground. This casts doubt on the credibility of the offices of recruiting Bahrainis in the Gulf States to be politically motivated, including a program of "involuntary" displacement or migration under the justification of search for the better and adequate job.

HAQ movement expresses its deep concern about all destructive and sectarian plans which came out in Al-Bandar reports, calling for their cessation and prevent their implementation. The offices of recruiting Bahrainis abroad seem attractive to some Bahraini youths, frustrated and desperate of real programs by Bahraini Authorities to create a decent life on their land. However, it will not solve the basic problem resulting from endemic corruption in the organs of the State and by the political and religious sectarianism financed and directed by the Royal Court as stated in Al-Bandar reports.

¹⁴ Bahrain 2005-2010: Action Plan of the Secret Organization- Gulf Center for Democracy Development, UK, January 2007 (Arabic)

¹⁵ <http://www.haaq.org/vedio/CAS9AZ0L.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com/Articles.asp?Article=185783&Sn=BNEW>

¹⁷ www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle_east_news/newsid_4292000/4292381.stm

¹⁸ <http://www.haaq.org/vedio/tajnees1.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.bahrainrights.org/files/albandar.pdf>

HAQ expresses the fear that these practices will strip the general stability and public security, in light of the growing social and economic impacts due to the implementation of the change of the demography and orientated political naturalization. HAQ blows the whistle on this issue due to its impact on the stability of Bahrain as well as the region. HAQ also calls for international organization to apply pressure on the local Authorities to alleviate the effect of unemployment among citizens by opening up certain public sectors, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense and National Guards, which have been sealed against them, and opened for non-nationals.