

Human Rights Council Sixteenth session Geneva
Agenda item 6 Universal Periodic Review: LEBANON

CORRECTED VERSION

In regards to foreign domestic workers, ASAFED would like to underline the fact that specifically the women who come from East Africa, and the Horn suffer from diverse abuses in Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries. Some domestic workers from Asia have their governments involved in signing agreements in their interests; countries of the Horn have yet to stand for their nationals. This is the case of Ethiopians who are completely abandoned and cannot even turn to the agencies that brought them over because they are trapped into accepting more illicit means of survival.

Physical violence is an everyday occurrence, freedom of movement is unheard of and the working hours are mostly without rest. Their passports are withheld to discourage efforts in view of escaping a very harsh and difficult life. Added to all these dire conditions the exploitative work load puts the female foreign domestic workers under the category of **modern day slavery**. There are many cases of maids being flogged, burnt or deprived of food. There are also cases of sexual abuse of the live in domestic worker by the male members of the family. Some have committed suicide; others have been thrown out of buildings

These young girls leave their homelands in the hope of finding a job and helping their families. The agents who bring them over, usually obtain false status by procuring adult passports to the under aged girls. There were cases whereby the employers washed their hands off all their abuses by indicating it all started on false premises. Moreover, there are agents who withhold all of their papers and blackmail the women into paying or being trapped in the circuit of **human trafficking**. A lot of money is made on the backs of the Girl Child. Victims of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, their bodies are sometimes not found or repatriated and end up being buried without autopsy. A case in point is the story of a young girl whose parents fought to get autopsy only to find out she was all sown up and with missing body parts.

We thank all the journalists, trade unionists and NGOs who took their time to interview these women, who earnestly and protectively encouraged them to speak up. We must all be proud of those who shared their most intimate sufferings, and think of how it would have affected us had they been our daughters. We owe a lot to these live witnesses whose lives are now a lesson that is accessible to all.

Thursday 17th of March

Ms. Ghennet Girma