

India: Jobs in Israel: Labour Activists, Trade Unions Raise Concerns Over No Protections for Indian Workers

Thursday 18 January 2024, by [The Wire \(IN\)](#) (Date first published: 15 January 2024).

At present, all workers going to conflict zones or places without sufficient labour protections are required to register with the MEA's 'e-migrate' portal. However, Israel is not part of the 'e-migrate' system for conflict zones, the 'Hindu' reported.

New Delhi: Labour activists and trade unions have raised concerns regarding the recruitment of Indian workers for jobs in Israel, as officials from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are set to screen applicants for these positions. Activists argue that the Indian government is bypassing normal protections it normally employs for Indian labour going abroad to conflict zones, [the Hindu reported](#).

These workers will not even be required to register themselves on the 'e-migrate' portal run by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the newspaper reported. Several government ministries and agencies have disclaimed any responsibility for the welfare and safety of the workers, it said.

In December, the Uttar Pradesh and Haryana government invited applications from construction workers for job openings in Israel. The government [plans to send](#) at least 10,000 workers to the conflict-hit nation. The workers will be selected by the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC).

These jobs promise attractive salaries of approximately Rs 1.37 lakh per month, but lack details on contractual protections. Accommodation, food, and medical insurance costs will be deducted from the salary. Furthermore, the workers are expected to pay for their own tickets, and the NSDC charges Rs 10,000 per worker as facilitation fees, the daily reported, citing official documents.

Activists have called the move "inhumane", saying that the government's decision to fast-track the recruitment of Indian construction workers, nurses and caregivers even while Israeli operations continue in Gaza and the West Bank will put them in harm's way.

"This step is against Indian ethos. We are for a ceasefire in Israel. We are concerned about the safety and security of workers," All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) general secretary Amarjeet Kaur told *The Hindu*, adding that trade unions now plan to approach the courts.

The Hindu reported that the Union government seems to be passing the buck on this matter. "While various government agencies formally distanced themselves from the documents themselves, put out in the name of NSDC International, government sources confirmed that the recruitment process will begin this week with interviews and screening in several cities," it said.

When asked, NSDC chief executive Ved Mani Tiwari told *The Hindu* that the advertisements had been issued by the state governments, not by the NSDC.

“We have no mandate for Israel or for the employers. We are not a recruiting company. Some state governments have invited applications for jobs in Israel and our mandate is to provide skill training for workers,” Tiwari told the daily.

The Union Labour Ministry declined to comment on the plans, as did Haryana Labour Minister Anoop Dhanak. “It is the MEA that monitors such migration of workers,” an official said on condition of anonymity.

However, the MEA also declined to reply to a detailed list of questions sent by *The Hindu* asking what kind of assurances were being requested from the Israeli labour agency — the Population and Immigration Authority, known as PIBA. Officials said that the recruitment was taking place as a “B2B” or business-to-business arrangement, offering little clarity on who will actually be responsible for the eventual fate of the workers.

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PIBA, the Israeli immigration agency, declined to comment on specific questions about the welfare of the workers, but sources said that they would proceed on the basis of an agreement signed with the Indian government, the daily reported.

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