

United Labour Federation condemns Sri Lanka labour 'export' to Israel

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The United Federation of Labour condemned the agreements signed by the Sri Lankan Government with Israel to send more than 10,000 Sri Lankan workers to work in Israel's agriculture, construction and caregiving sectors.

According to them, these deals exploit vulnerable Sri Lankan workers and expose them to unsafe and life-threatening working conditions while propping up the Israeli Government and its ongoing 'genocide' against Palestinians.

A press release issued in this regard read: "The Palestinian economy has been decimated by Israel's crippling occupation over many decades, causing mass poverty and unemployment and resulting in many Palestinians being dependent on Israel for employment. Approximately 130,000 Palestinians were employed in Israel before its current campaign of aggression, making up almost 65% of its construction industry workforce and almost 25% of its agricultural sector. As it began its campaign of terror against Palestinians, Israel also cancelled the work permits of thousands of Palestinians from Gaza working in Israel, then detained, imprisoned and deported them back to Gaza. Sri Lankan workers are now being sent to fill these labour shortages. While the duplicitous Government led by President Ranil Wickremesinghe expresses solidarity with Palestine internationally, including by supporting United Nations General Assembly resolutions for a ceasefire, these worker-based deals provide far greater material and political support to Israel. It dilutes international pressure on Israel to establish a permanent ceasefire which would save the lives of many Palestinians. These worker-based deals also supplement the Sri Lankan Government deepening its ties with its Israeli counterpart, including opening new Consulates in Israel, participating in Red Sea operations, and initiating direct flights between Colombo and Tel Aviv. The complicity of Sri Lanka in Israel's ongoing genocidal campaign through these deals will have adverse implications for Sri Lankan workers in the entire region. As the Israeli Government gets involved in military aggression in Iran, Lebanon and Syria, the likelihood of an escalation to a full regional conflict increases by the day, greatly endangering the lives of Sri Lankan workers not only in Israel but in the wider region. Labour and Foreign Employment Minister Manusha Nanayakkara's assurances of Sri Lankan workers' security in Israel ring especially hollow as they are based on the self-serving guarantees of his Israeli counterparts. We demand that Sri Lanka's agreements with Israel to export Sri Lankan workers be scrapped immediately."

The Morning

P.S.

- “United Labour Fed. condemns SL labour ‘export’ to Israel”. The Morning. 02 May 2024:
<https://www.themorning.lk/articles/ChoAAqGy0B32bxVxaQBc>