



Under curfew: 10

The Ramifications of the Corona Crisis on Cleaning Workers and the Mechanisms of Addressing the Crisis in Jordan

After the curfew was imposed on March 21st, 2020, several municipalities across Jordan formed miniature operation rooms to address the threat of the virus. Among the decisions that were made, cleaning workers in municipalities as well as Greater Amman Municipality were entrusted with the tasks of cleaning and sterilization. At the same time, the Minister of Local Administration confirmed the start of sterilization operations in all municipalities. He also indicated that in this period a sterilization tripartite at this period and it includes: waste disposal; sterilization of areas and residential neighborhoods; and cleaning of streets doors of commercial stores¹.

The report monitors the conditions of the cleaning workers in the municipalities and the Greater Amman Municipality as they dealt with the crisis. It also identifies the most prominent working conditions and the role of these workers during the current phase that focuses on tackling the emerging Corona virus in different regions in the central, north and south of the Kingdom. The report highlights the situation in the areas of the Capital, Al-Dhahil municipality, Azraq municipality, and Mafraq. These conditions were monitored in two phases: the first of which was done during the early stages of the curfew and the second was implemented almost a month after the imposition of Defense Order No. 13 of 1993.

Cleaning Workers are employed within various contexts in the governorates of the Kingdom. Some of them work based on contracts that are constantly renewed by the municipalities as they are seen as fixed contracts. Others are working based on temporary contracts or even daily contracts; the majority of these workers are either Jordanian or Egyptians; while others are working within Cash for Work Programs that are run by international organisations and these workers are Syrians or Jordanians. It should be noted that the duration of these projects ranges between forty and sixty working days².

52 workers were interviewed while compiling this report to understand their working conditions. These conditions varied greatly amongst the workers, whether during the crisis or before it, from one region to another depending on the authority these workers are employed for and the nature of their contracts.

Generally, workers who are employed based on fixed contracts should receive all of their labour rights based on the Civil Service System. Meanwhile, daily workers earn their wage based on the number of working days they are illegible to any vacations, official or religious holidays. Both categories of workers though are included under the umbrella of social security and receive health insurance.

1- Source: Al-Mamlaka News Channel: <https://cutt.ly/hyhGb5v> Date of visit:

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2- According to interviews and previous observations in the field

Working conditions in the Corona Virus Crisis

In the municipalities of Dhulil and Azraq, workers, work to clean and sterilize was divided between two shifts: one in the morning and the other in the evening; both of which lasts for 8 hours. Workers were told to abide by strict measures of public safety by wearing masks, gloves, and each one was given their own set of sterilizers. Moreover, workers were even provided with protective clothing and plastic shoes. Workers also have to change their gloves and face masks every 3 hours, while the protective clothing changed every two days, and municipalities provide sufficient supplies for that. In order to ensure the sharing of social responsibility, the Presidency of the two municipalities organized awareness-raising sessions for workers to highlight the ways in which the virus transmits and the need to take protective measures. The responsibility of cleaning workers was highlighted since they should ensure that all areas are cleaned and sterilized, and that waste is safely disposed of. Foremen were given the responsibility to supervise these procedures to ensure that both workers and communities are kept safe and clean.

On the contrary of what is being done in Dhulil and Azraq, workers in Mafraq, and the areas of the Hashemi Al Shamali, Jabal Al-Zuhur, Jabal Amman and Al-Wehdat camp in Amman lack any public safety tools. A group of workers in the Hashemi Al Shamali, who are affiliated with the Greater Amman Municipality, reported being provided with one mask throughout the daily working hours period. As for gloves, they still used the same cloth gloves that they used before the crisis. As for the workers in Mafraq, they were provided with safety tools in the first three days of the curfew only. This was reported by Syrians who signed temporary contracts and work in Mafraq in the Cash for Work projects. Another group consisting of Egyptian workers whose contracts are periodically renewed said that they were not provided with hand sterilizers.

"Every day we need new gloves and new masks. Some days, we have to buy them at our expense, because they don't provide us with them every day."

Phrases from workers in the Hashemi Al Shamali, Jabal Al-Zuhur, Jabal Amman, and Al-Wehdat camps areas

Workers who are employed based on fixed or temporary work contracts received their wages at the usual time they receive it each month. On the other hand, the wages for workers who are employed with Cash for Work Programs were delayed as they used to be handed out to each work, which was difficult to do as a result of the crisis.

Paper and Electronic Movement Permits

Regarding movement permits, and in Hashmi Al Shamali in particular, only workers with fixed contracts were provided with the needed permits. The others, who are employed on a daily basis, were forced to stay at home without work or wages. Following the launch of the electronic permits' platform, supervisors were issued permits and it was their responsibility to accompany the workers to and from work.

In Mafrqa, the same situation happened in terms of the issuance of the permits. However, a number of workers resumed working despite not having a permit, and one of them was held accountable one day by personnel from the Public Security Directorate.

As for the neighborhoods of Amman, work permits are not issued for workers since they reside in the same areas that they work in; and thus, do not need to move through means of transportation. Rather, permits are issued to workers who have to move as they do not reside in the same area.

"If the police see me wearing my uniform, then they don't ask me where your permit is. The problem occurs though when I finish work and I want to go home. Then, I have to keep wearing my uniform, because I do not have a permit. Cleaning Workers who are like me and used to work on cars are not allowed a permit."

One of the workers in Amman.

In Al-Dhulil and Azraq, workers were provided with electronic permits after their municipalities addressed the Ministry of Municipalities, which in turn addressed the Crisis Management Center and government whom then took the necessary action.



Occupational Hazards during the Crisis

This category is considered one of the most groups who are exposed to diseases due to the nature of their work. Through observations in the field as well as the interviews that were conducted with workers in order to prepare this report, these risks are summarized as follows:

First: Dealing directly with waste in all its forms and the microbes and toxic contents it contains. The risk gets even worse in cases where the waste bags are not closed tightly, especially if they contain pieces of glass or the residue of medical tools such as needles and other infection transmitters. In many cases, the public does not show an obligation to place waste bags inside the containers, which the compressors cannot lift, so the workers collect them themselves, and this increases their exposure to various potential hazards.

Second: Direct exposure to sunlight, especially in light of the changes in their working hours. Previously, the morning period started from 6:30 am, but in the light of the Corona crisis it now begins at 10 o'clock.

Third: Physical stress due to the particularities related to working in the crisis, which requires other tasks added to their daily load including sterilization and spraying. Workers are thus required to sterilize the fronts of stores, as well as the waste compressors and various machines of the municipalities on a daily basis to avoid transmitting the virus. They are also tasked with sterilizing neighborhoods and constantly rinsing the streets in Al-Dhulail, and spraying trees in Azraq after the high temperatures that occurred April, which led to the spread of insects. Weeding tasks are also entrusted to some workers in the capital, and some of them clean and sterilize 5 neighborhoods daily, in contrast to what was previously done. Also, cleaning workers who work on main streets are more likely to be run over.

Fourth: With regard to taking public safety measures, the workers reported that they are not used to wearing such means, especially the mask, which hinders their work in most cases.

Summary

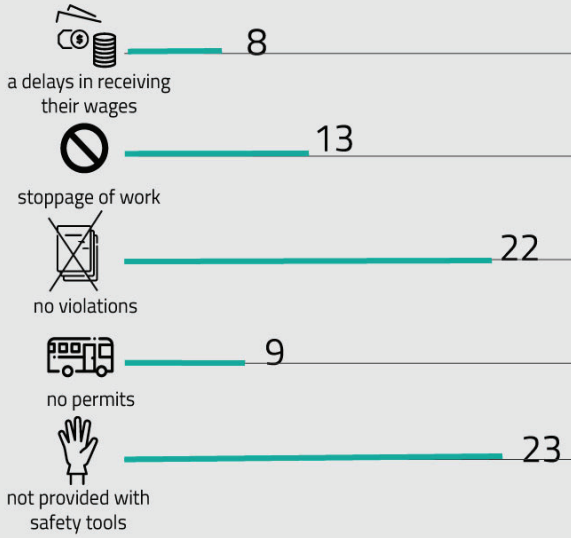
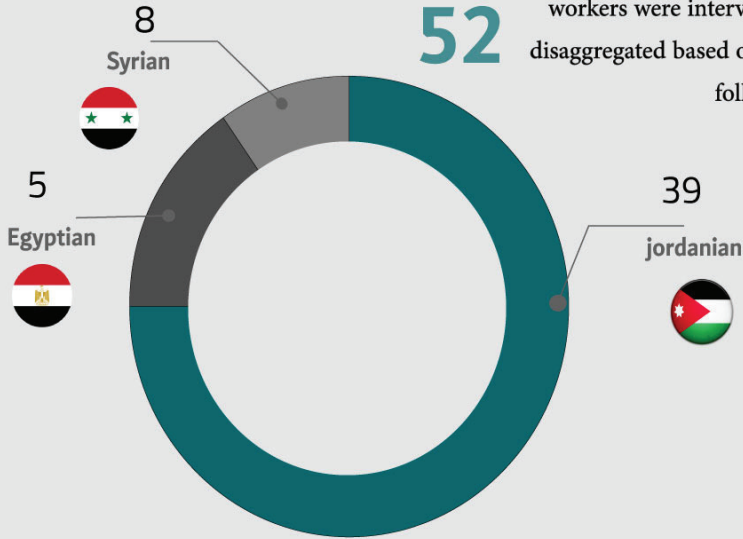
52 workers were interviewed for this report, disaggregated based on their nationalities as follows:

As for the observations and violations that were detected, they relate to movement permits, wages and public safety tools. Many of these workers were subjected to more than one violation at the same time, such as working without a movement permit and the absence of public safety tools.

- 8 Syrian workers in Mafraq faced a delays in receiving their wages because they could not be delivered to them by hand or by electronic wallet.
- 13 Jordanians in Azraq and Amman had to stop working due to the nature of their contract (daily workers) and without deduction of wages.
- 9 of the workers (of whom 4 are Egyptians and 5 are Jordanians) work even though they were not issued with movement permits.
- 23 of the workers, whether Jordanians, Egyptians, or Syrians, who are working in either Amman or Mafraq reported that they were not provided with public safety tools necessary to protect themselves from the virus
- 22 workers in Azraq and Al-Dhuleil did not face any challenges

52

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Recommendations

Despite the increase in the tasks assigned to workers in the Corona crisis, the workers concluded that working in this period is much easier compared to previous times from their point of view. They said that this is in light of the lack of public access to public places compared to the situation before the crisis, especially parks, markets and schools.

Accordingly, Tamkeen recommends the following:

- Allocating different containers in which the types of waste are sorted according to their type, and educating the local population on the necessity of sorting their waste to facilitate the cleaners' work.
- Providing workers with gloves to prevent the transition of the virus and protect them from unsafe waste such as medical or broken solid waste.
- Carrying out regular medical checks for workers to ensure they are able to work in light of the risks to which they are exposed to.
- Provide workers with sterilizers even after the crisis ends.

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For legal aid and human rights