

## Ethiopia bar domestic workers to UAE over right abuses

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July 26, 2012 (ADDIS ABABA) - The Ethiopian government has banned its citizens from becoming domestic workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to stop the widespread human rights abuse and inhumane treatment Ethiopian workers face in the Middle East.

The ban will remain imposed until an agreement that ensures the rights of citizens is reached with agencies at home and concerned bodies in the UAE.

Ethiopia's Consular General in UAE, Mesganu Arga, said the temporary suspension is aimed at rooting out unscrupulous recruiters and abuses in the Gulf nation.

"We have suspended labour from Ethiopia to the UAE because a number of recruitment agencies are working illegally," said Arga.

"We want an agreement with the UAE that ensures our nationals' rights."

The Consul-General further said that his office in Dubai, which is the only Ethiopian mission in UAE, receives five to ten complaints a day on a number of matters such as unpaid salaries and physical abuse.

Under Ethiopian law, sponsors are required to provide medical insurance and pay employee a minimum monthly wage of 660 Emirati Dirham - around US\$180. All contracts have to be sent to the Labour Ministry in Addis Ababa, which provides workers with an ID card to work overseas.

A lot of Ethiopians are brought to UAE without proper work contracts or insurance, and most face hardship.

Every year thousands of Ethiopian women make an economic migration to the Arab world seeking lucrative jobs but are subjected to cruel beatings, other forms of torture and are denied their wages.

Others are thrown out of high-rise windows, face sexual abuse and are forced to work hard without sleep. Many end up mentally ill while others prefer to commit suicide.

Many return home with horror stories and allege to being treated like slaves.

According to the Consul, there are an estimated 100,000 Ethiopians in the UAE but only one agency is known to be legally recruiting Ethiopian workers. Last week, Ethiopia has banned dozens of illegal recruitment agencies based in the capital.

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