

Media Statement

Cambodians Trapped in Jordan need Repatriation and Support

July 01, 2020

Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL) calls on the Royal Government of Cambodia to immediately intervene in the repatriation of a number of Cambodian citizens currently trapped in Jordan.

On 17 March 2020, Vega Textile Co., Ltd and Camel Textile International Corporation, two garment factories located in the city of Al-Karak in Jordan, ended the employment of at least 21 Cambodian workers. According to the unified contract for migrant workers in Jordan, as well as the workers' verbal agreements with these companies prior to leaving Cambodia upon the end of their employment, Vega Textile and Camel Textile had responsibility for purchasing their flight tickets back to Cambodia. However, Vega Textile and Camel Textile have not purchased these tickets, nor informed workers when the tickets will be purchased. In addition, Vega Textile and Camel Textile have failed to pay social insurance moneys previously cut from these workers' salaries, which amount to approximately US\$1,000 per person. As a result, these Cambodian workers have been trapped in Jordan without employment or income for over three months.

Both Vega Textile and Camel Textile are owned by the same parent company based in Taiwan. Based on the public factory supplier lists of brands sourcing from Vega Textile and Camel Textile, this parent company also operates at least two factories in Cambodia:

1. Optimum Fashion Manufacturing Co., Ltd, located in Prey Pdao Village, Tropang Korng Commune, Somrong Torng District, Kampong Speu Province.
2. U.I.C Apparel Manufacturing Co., Ltd, located in Tropang Toul Village, Sangkat Kombol, Khan Porsenchey, Phnom Penh.

On 27 June, Jordanian Minister of Labour Nidal Bataineh personally went down to inspect workers' conditions at Vega Textile and Camel Textile after complaints were raised to the Jordanian Ministry of Labour. Based on a ministerial [press release](#), the Minister ordered Vega Textile and Camel Textile to take corrective action, assigning labour inspectors to the factories for a period of two weeks to ensure compliance. On 29 June, after several attempts by factory management to prevent it, Cambodian workers finally met and spoke personally with Jordanian Ministry of Labour officials where they reiterated their demands to return home and be paid their social security benefits by Vega Textile and Camel Textile.

Whilst we recognise that air travel restrictions have likely contributed to the length of time that workers have been forced to stay in Jordan, we understand that there are still a number of flight paths open from Jordan, including to Dubai and to Qatar. From both Dubai and Qatar, workers could take flights to South Korea or Hong Kong and then finally on to Phnom Penh. We also recognise that flight ticket prices have substantially increased above their normal

prices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, however this is not a sufficient excuse to leave workers trapped abroad without employment or income. Vega Textile and Camel Textile must fulfil their legal duties and pay for the repatriation of these Cambodian workers as soon as can be arranged.

As well as Cambodian workers, Vega Textile and Camel Textile also employ a large number of Burmese workers. On June 24, some of these workers also publicly raised their problems and difficulties in Jordan in a [media interview](#). Following this, on 29 June 2020, the Embassy of the Republic of Myanmar in Israel issued an [announcement](#) on the organisation of repatriation flights for Burmese citizens employed at a number of factories in Jordan, including Vega Textile and Camel Textile.

Tola Moeun, Executive Director of CENTRAL said, *“The Myanmar Government should be applauded for its swift intervention to rescue Burmese citizens trapped abroad. The Cambodian Government should follow Myanmar’s example and, as it did for Cambodians trapped in Malaysia, liaise with airline companies to organise repatriation for these Cambodian citizens trapped in Jordan without employment or income.”*

CENTRAL calls on the Cambodian Government, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Cambodia’s diplomatic missions in Egypt and Kuwait, to swiftly intervene in this case and ensure that Vega Textile and Camel Textile fulfil all of their duties, particularly in repatriation of Cambodian workers and payment of social security benefits

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