



Methodology of the Allegations Tracker of Abuse Against Migrant Workers in the Gulf

The tracker captures publicly reported allegations of labour abuse committed in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE – by businesses against migrant workers, for the purpose of providing a record of incidents and identifying patterns of abuse. This tool supplements the Resource Centre’s regular tracking of allegations of abuse for which company responses are sought (see below), and is useful as in most cases of abuse in the Gulf the company involved is not publicly named.

The tracker includes allegations dating back to January 2016 and is updated on a monthly basis.

Sources

We mostly rely on allegations of abuse made by international and Gulf-based English-language media outlets and international human rights NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Migrant-Rights. Our [regional researchers](#) also monitor news articles appearing in migrants’ countries-of-origin. The Tracker is predominantly based on materials available in English, mainly due to organizational resource capacity. Going forward, we will seek to expand the Tracker to monitor Arabic-language media.

What do we include?

Only allegations of specific incidents are included and not information on general trends of abuse¹. The main categories of data we capture are:

- the types of abuses being alleged;
- the sectors and companies involved; and
- the nationality, number, and location of the migrant workers. Where possible we record numbers of workers impacted in each case by nationality.

Our categories explained

Corporate Abuses

¹ The Tracker does *not* aim to capture the following:

- General government responses to abusive employer practices
- Contextual information reporting on *general trends* in labour abuse in the region;
- Government, NGO and academic *studies or estimates* of workers impacted;
- Reports on migrants’ living conditions or accidents involving migrants not explicitly related to company/ employer malpractice; and
- Abuses against domestic workers, as the Tracker only captures abuses committed by corporate entities.



We analyse each case against a set of 20 indicators for labour abuse, which are sorted into eight broad categories. Currently, our analysis of the data is downloadable at the level of these eight categories:

1. **General Conditions of Employment**, encompassing concerns over contract substitution, recruitment fees, non-payment of or delayed wages, failure to pay overtime, failure to provide a living wage and unfair dismissal.
2. **Arbitrary denial of freedoms**, encompassing restrictions on *freedom of movement* including through the confiscation of passports or failure to regularize migrants' status leading to *de facto* immobility due to fear of arrest, attacks on *freedom of assembly* including by using excessive force to disperse strikes or protests, denial of *freedom of expression* including by penalizing workers for publicly complaining about their treatment and **deprivation of liberty** including for the exercise of legitimate rights or for employers failure to renew visas/work permits.
3. **Occupational health and safety**, compiles reports of hazardous and unsafe working conditions including when leading to casualties among workers, unaddressed health risks and failure to provide emergency aid and medical insurance including for coverage of treatment for work-related injuries.
4. **Inhumane and/or poor living conditions**, includes concerns over workers' accommodation such as overcrowding, lack of hygiene, safety hazards, power and water cuts, as well as failure to provide workers with food.
5. **Verbal or physical abuse by employers**, includes beatings, insults, intimidation, and threats with dismissal or other reprisal for raising concerns and/striking.
6. **Modern Slavery, forced labour and human trafficking**, which only captures incidents when this terminology is explicitly used in the report. Some incidents captured under "General Conditions of Employment" might also lead to situations of forced labour, but are not included unless described as such by sources of the report.
7. **Injuries**, includes injuries due to accidents on site and injuries sustained during protests e.g. as a result of police violence.
8. **Deaths**, includes deaths allegedly caused by corporate abuse or neglect, including when a result of equipment malfunction on work sites, failure to take appropriate safety measures on work sites or in accommodation camps. Other deaths recorded were caused by fatal violence by employers, excessive use of force in strike dispersals, and suicide purportedly following employers' failure to address grievances.

A separate sheet is created to capture worker deaths attributed to "natural causes" by the Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy. NGOs and journalists raised concerns over the lack of thorough investigation into the circumstances of deaths and near impossibility of conducting autopsies in the country, to independently ascertain the cause of deaths, whilst [investigative reporting and studies](#) on working conditions have highlighted risks to migrant workers health and lives.

Seeking company responses

In line with the Resource Centre's broader strategy and libel policy, we make every effort to reach out to specific companies accused of abuses and ask them to respond to the allegations made using our [Company Response Mechanism](#), unless the company has already responded or commented on the case publicly.



Scope and Limitations

The Tracker captures publicly reported information on abuses allegedly committed by corporate entities. The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre does not independently verify the accuracy of the allegations. When relevant and possible, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre uses the Company Response Mechanism to seek responses from companies publicly implicated in the commission of abuses (see above).

The Tracker includes minimal information of corporate abuses against women migrant workers and does not include a category specifying the migrant workers' gender, as news reports generally do not contain information on migrants' gender and predominantly use "masculine" pronouns. This is a reflection of limited public reporting on abuses facing women migrant workers beyond those employed as domestic workers, which are excluded from the Tracker as they are generally employed by private individuals. We are working, together with partners, to improve gendered documentation of corporate abuses in the Gulf, including by focusing on sectors, which traditionally employ women migrant workers, as well as labour supply and facilities management companies providing cleaning and other services predominantly carried-out by women workers.

The Tracker does not purport to provide comprehensive information on abuses faced by migrant workers in the GCC as it only captures publicly reported information. Restrictions on labour and human rights activism, civil society space and media freedoms coupled with fears of reprisals from migrants suffering abuse lead to severe under-reporting. Even though we believe that the actual number of corporate abuses against migrants is much higher than captured in the Tracker, we believe the Tracker provides useful indications on patterns of abuse, sectors implicated, company responsibility and lack of accountability, and nationalities of migrant workers mostly affected.