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ITUC-Africa condemns the raids, brutality and deportation of African Migrants by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa (www.ituc-africa.org)) is appalled by the acts of dehumanization meted out by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) against over 700 African migrants legally working in the UAE. We have it on record that the UAE government used Abu Dhabi's Rapid Intervention Forces (SWAT), Criminal Investigation Department, and police to carry out well-coordinated mass arrests. We have learned how the said authorities used excessive force, including stun guns, beatings, and also sexually exploited and harassed women, by among other things touching their bodies inappropriately.

These distasteful and unacceptable actions meted out against African labour migrants are revelations contained in the report from the authenticated investigative journalism work of impACT International for Human Rights Policies and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor. We commend these organisations for their useful report on pointing out the egregious human and labour rights violations of these African migrants. Several mainstream media outlets have since reported on these conscienceless attacks on African migrants by the UAE authorities.

According to the report, over 800 labour migrants with 700 of them being African labour migrants and the rest of Asian origin were affected. The accounts and testimonies of the victims noted that the Emirati Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) raided five residential buildings in Abu Dhabi known to house African nationals in the early hours of 24 and 25 June 2021. The Emirati security agencies destroyed CCTV and Wi-Fi, before breaking into homes, destroying the properties of the raided migrants. Victims' accounts also pointed to battering and brutalization before their arrest and during the period of their detention in a prison environment with inhuman conditions. Until their deportation, none of the victims was charged and taken to court for any offence in the five weeks of detention.

For female victims, several of them, including pregnant women, informed that they were sexually harassed as most of them were arrested naked and others in their underwear. The Police officers were touching their private parts and laughing out loudly, obviously enjoying themselves to the detriment of their victims. The victims were only allowed to take their

passports during the raids whilst the Police officers were shouting and hauling racial abuses at them. These migrants were denied access to medical and legal assistance whilst in detention. They were subsequently deported after long illegal incarceration with their personal belongings confiscated.

The ITUC-Africa strongly condemns the repulsive and distasteful night raids, criminal kidnap and inhuman treatments of these African labour migrants by the Emirati SWAT. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of those still detained by the UAE authorities.

African organised workers are angry and offended to learn that these abusive actions by the UAE authorities against Black African migrants were orchestrated simply because of their skin colour. We categorically denounce and condemn the racist premised hate against the African workers.

Further, it is disheartening and unacceptable to note that all the manhandled African migrants possessed all the necessary, legitimate and valid documents to live and work in the UAE.

ITUC-Africa finds it unacceptable that efforts by the victims to get their national governments, embassies and immigration officials to assist them in redressing the abuses they suffered have not been fruitful.

ITUC-Africa, therefore, calls on the African Union Commission and African governments, as well as the members of the international human rights defenders' community to also condemn these racist and hate attacks against these over 700 African labour migrants by the UAE. We also call on them to take swift, firm and effective actions to make the UAE account for these egregious infractions against the African workers. In specific terms, we urge the AU to lead the charge in the demand for commensurate and timely redress, including measured compensation for the victims.

We also call on the government of the UAE to take timely and genuine steps to progressively reform its Kafala system that lacks protection provisions for labour migrants, restricts their rights and exposes them to exploitation and discrimination. The Kafala system is contributing to the intensification of the perpetuation of racism, especially against Africans. The UAE must emulate Qatar that has successfully reformed its Kafala system and practices in a collaborative, broad and inclusive manner.



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