October 29, 2023

Tel Aviv

Re: **A Request for Promoting a Bilateral Agreement to Bring El Salvador Workers to The Israel Construction Sector**

Over the past decade population growth rate in Israel was 1.8% per year and households grew at about 2.5%. This creates a challenge that requires a suitable response to the growing housing needs. In facing this challenge, the Israeli construction sector must, among other things, bring in foreign workers from different countries to work alongside the Israeli workers.

Today, the foreign workers make up about 10% of the workers in the construction industry and are engaged in the concrete and finishing works in the industry, which which employs a total of 320,000 workers in a wide variety of jobs.

About 26,000 workers from various countries who currently reside in Israel, came here as part of bilateral agreements signed with their countries of origin in order to keep up with the required pace of construction stemming from the high demand.

The Israeli government has now decided to increase the quota of foreign workers by an additional 20,000 workers.

As mentioned above, a prerequisite for having foreign workers in the local construction sector is a bilateral agreement between the countries as well as an implementation agreement. These agreements regulate the employment of the foreign workers with the aim of fully protecting their rights as well as preventing the need for the workers to pay intermediary fees in order to obtain a job in Israel.

Currently, bilateral agreements have been signed with Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, China, and Bulgaria.

The workers who arrive in Israel as part of the bilateral agreements undergo professional screening. The screenings are carried out in an orderly and systematic manner by skilled examiners and are done in the same way in all countries. It is important to emphasize that the professional screenings are carried out anonymously to ensure the reliability of the process and to prevent the collection of brokerage fees from the employees.

The workers who pass the screenings in Israel receive a work visa for five years and are recruited immediately upon landing in Israel by manpower corporations authorized by the State of Israel to employ them. These workers are entitled to the same rights, wages, and benefits as local construction workers in Israel and in addition the employer provides them with housing and medical insurance.

At the end of one year of work in Israel, the salary of these workers can reach as much as $4,000 net per month, along with many other benefits such as: vacation days, convalescence, accommodation provision (with a small amount deducted from the employee), meals, medical insurance, and pension substitute payment.

The payment of these wages and benefits to these workers is strictly monitored by the Israeli authorities, as is the work of all the manpower corporations that employ them.

Each year these workers can take a leave of up to 50 days to visit their homeland and subsequently return to work in Israel.

In keeping with the Israeli occupational health and safety standards, workers arriving in Israel undergo practical and thorough safety training.

The countries from which the workers come to the Israeli construction sector were chosen after a professional analysis of the recruitment potential, the construction standards in those countries as well as training and proficiency data. According to this analysis, El Salvador was chosen as a source of highly skilled workers for the construction industry in Israel.

In light of the above, we will be very happy to cooperate with the Ministry of Labor in El Salvador as well as with El Salvador labor unions, with the aim of laying the foundations for bringing skilled workers from El Salvador to work in the construction industry in Israel.

This initiative is backed and supported by the Ministry of Construction and Housing, which is responsible for coordinating all construction efforts in Israel.

**Isaac Gurvich**

Deputy Director General

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