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Migrant groups demand protection from Dhaka for Bangladeshi domestic workers in Saudi

Sunday 30 September 2018, by [ULLAH Areeb](#) (Date first published: 1 September 2018).

Scores are leaving Saudi Arabia after “being tortured, sexually and physically abused, even raped by their employers”

A coalition of migrant rights NGOs in Bangladesh, including former maids who were abused, called on the Bangladeshi government to protect its female domestic workers inside Saudi Arabia.

The calls for protection come as the Saudi authorities approved measures to criminalise sexual harassment earlier this week.

Scores of Bangladeshi women continue to return home daily from Saudi Arabia after facing physical and sexual abuse at the hands of their Saudi employers.

Members of the coalition include the BRAC migration programme, which helps abused migrant workers, and BOMSA, which provides training to women planning to work overseas.

Local migrant rights group estimate that at least 2,000 women have come back to Bangladesh in the last five months after citing claims of abuse.

International pressure groups should be vocal in holding Saudi Arabia accountable and bring to justice for their action

- Bangladeshi Civil Society for Migration

Many returned home after escaping to Bangladeshi government shelters in Riyadh, and detention centres across Saudi Arabia.

Some had reportedly waited years, while the vast majority waited months for repatriation back to Bangladesh, according to NGOs.

The statement, released by the Bangladesh Civil Society for Migration, described instances where Bangladeshi maids were “being tortured, sexually and physically abused, even raped by their employers”.

“International pressure groups should be vocal in holding Saudi Arabia accountable and bring to justice for their action, protect human rights, and prevent abuse,” the group said during a press conference in Dhaka.

“The Bangladeshi government must scrutinise its decision to send women over to Saudi Arabia. It

should explore new markets and job opportunities for its potential migrant workers.”

Denial of abuse

The recommendations proposed by the BCSM include calls for pregnant victims to demand compensation from their employers, and for the Bangladeshi embassy in Saudi Arabia to explain how it is helping abused maids.

The BCSM also said that the Bangladeshi government had “remained silent” and refused to acknowledge the repeated episodes of abuse.

Aid workers reiterated these claims and told Middle East Eye that the government had accused the returnee domestic workers of “making up the stories”.

Representatives from BRAC told MEE that the Saudi authorities have not prosecuted any employer accused of torturing their employees.

The Bangladeshi government did not return calls for comment but in the past claimed that the women returned home after being unable to integrate into Saudi culture.

Aid workers have meanwhile raised concerns for the safety of these returnee workers, as families and local communities reject them for having faced sexual abuse.

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P.S.

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<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/Stop-abuse-tortured-maids-demand-protection-Bangladeshi-women-Saudi-726410658>