

No salary since February for hundreds working in Kuwait

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KUWAIT: Hundreds of security guards, porters and cleaners working at public institutions haven't received their salaries since February. All of these employees work in the public sector but are employed by a private company that has a contract with these public institutions and is in charge of paying their salaries.

"I haven't received my salary for the past three months and am surviving on charity. Also, my family back in Egypt is suffering as I couldn't send them money all these months and they depend on me. I didn't file a case against the employer at the shuoon (labor department) as I'm afraid that I may be deported," a security guard working at a location of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources told Kuwait Times.

The security guard, who preferred to remain anonymous, said he has been working in Kuwait for the past 16 years. "I'm working with the same company since I came to Kuwait. They were paying properly, but during the last two years, they began delaying the payment of our salaries, but were still paying. But since February they stopped paying," he explained. Around 300 guards, porters and cleaners working for the company at PAAAFR have not received their salaries since February.

Another employee from Bangladesh who serves tea and coffee at a Jahra municipal office and employed by the same company said he hasn't received his salary since March. "Although I haven't received my salary for the past two months, I am surviving as I have a part-time job. But I wasn't able to send money to my family back home," he said.

According to the employee, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal or deportation, around 100 employees working at the Jahra municipal office haven't been paid since March. "These employees are employed by the same company and work as porters, office boys and security guards. They are mostly from Bangladesh, India and Egypt, with salaries of between KD 150 to KD 200," he explained.

In April, a social media post by a group of security guards who work at the ministry of education went viral in Kuwait. In the post, the men complained that they had not received their salaries for the past five months. The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) followed up the case and their employer had to pay their salaries within a few days.

But that outcome is rare. More often, those who publicly complain of unpaid salaries are fired or deported or have their visas canceled by their employers. Failure by employers to pay wages for months at a time is a common problem in Kuwait, especially among companies contracted with the government.
