

## **Egypt's Workers in 2025: From Wages and Arbitrary Dismissal to Occupational Safety**

*"In what state have you returned to us, O holiday?"* - this question imposes itself with every Labor Day, not as a passing celebratory occasion, but as a mirror reflecting the complex reality lived by Egypt's working class.

Amid sharp economic transformations and legislative changes that have reshaped labor relations, crises are piling up on workers' shoulders: erosion of real wages despite nominal increases to the expanding scope of informal work, proliferation of precarious employment patterns, restrictions on trade union activity, but also escalating arbitrary dismissal and the deterioration of social and health protection systems. An analysis of labor protests throughout 2025 shows that more than 90% of protests were triggered by wage-related issues, particularly disputes over the minimum wage, bonuses, allowances, and profit-sharing. Arbitrary dismissals and the widespread use of temporary contracts constituted the second leading cause of worker mobilization during the year. Other causes included problems relating to healthcare, health insurance, occupational safety and health, as well as workplace accidents which fall into two categories: accidents occurring during work, and accidents occurring during the commute to and from work, along with the continued hemorrhage of workers' lives on the roads.

Following the enactment of the new Labor Law, Egyptian workers have been subjected to increasingly unfavorable working conditions under a legislative framework that privileges investors and employers at the expense of labor rights, while weakening key protections enshrined in the Trade Union Law, the Health Insurance Law, the Social Insurance Law, and ultimately the Labor Law itself. The Center received dozens of complaints from various labor sites regarding the intransigence of the Ministry of Manpower in registering independent trade unions or taking clear procedural steps. Workers repeatedly visited the Ministry headquarters and labor offices to obtain documents confirming official registration to complete their union status, all to no avail. This is in addition to the delay in announcing the election program for the new union cycle and the move toward extending the current cycle by an additional six months.

**The Center therefore presents this report as a renewed attempt to sound the alarm and draw attention to the fact that the current situation is not merely an isolated crisis, but an expression of a new phase in labor relations that demands critical examination and a serious response - one that restores balance among the parties to the production process, and preserves the dignity of workers and their right to a decent and safe life. This report does not seek to provide an exhaustive account of all violations and protests, but rather to highlight the central issues underlying the current wave of labor unrest and to analyze how Egypt is entering a new and reconfigured phase of labor relations following the implementation of the new Labor Law. This assessment enables the formulation of a work plan for the coming year and identification of priority areas of focus.**

## I. Wages

Wages constitute one of the core measures of decent work and one of the most critical indicators of work quality. Egypt's labor and trade union movement has worked for many years toward linking wages to prices and adjusting the minimum wage. In 2010, the labor movement succeeded in securing a judicial ruling obligating the state to set a minimum wage that reflects the cost of living and ensures workers a dignified standard of living. At this time, the minimum wage stood at **400 Egyptian pounds**. It rose to 1,200 pounds in 2014, continued to increase, and reached **7,000 pounds** in March 2025, with a scheduled increase to 8,000 pounds on 1 July 2026.

However, despite the nominal increase in the minimum wage from 1,200 to 7,000 pounds, **its dollar-denominated value declined from \$169.50 to \$140**. When measured against meat prices, cooking oil, butane gas cylinders, or rice per kilogram, the real wage - or purchasing power of wages - has clearly and significantly declined over this period.

Several critical issues are associated with the minimum wage:

- The nature of the labor market and wage employees: Egypt has more than 21 million wage earners. Government employees numbered approximately 4.6 million in 2023, representing 22% of wage earners, 679,000 of which work in the public sector (3%) and 15.6 million (74%) work in the private sector - of whom 8.1 million are in the formal private sector and 7.5 million in the informal private sector, largely in intermittent and unstable employment.
- The Ministry of Manpower's allowance for deducting social insurance contributions - including both the worker's and employer's share - from the minimum wage calculation, which constitutes circumvention of proper application. This means that a minority receives the minimum wage net, while the majority receives it with social insurance contributions already deducted.

We can take the example of the protests at T&C Garments Company (Al-Obour Industrial Zone), located in the industrial zone of Al-Obour City, who went on strike to protest management's refusal to implement the annual wage increase mandated by the Labor Law, which sets a minimum of 7%. The strike followed the failure of workers and their representatives to reach an agreement with management, which showed no willingness to engage in negotiations even after the strike began. Management instead resorted to threatening dismissal. In an escalatory move, management summoned Manpower officials, who in turn hinted at the possible dismissal of workers, provoking outrage among the approximately 7,000 workers. Workers rejected this approach and demanded a negotiating meeting attended by management and Manpower representatives to address the crisis.

Similarly, workers at Sedico Pharmaceuticals (Sixth of October City, Giza Governorate) organized a protest despite receiving relatively higher wages compared to other companies, arguing that their salaries remain low compared to peers in the same sector. Workers demanded salary increases and bonuses to keep pace with rising prices. Production was

halted, with assembly lines shut down abruptly under the pretext of unscheduled maintenance of indefinite duration. This followed a wave of protests over a meager wage increase that did not exceed 22% of the basic wage, with a production bonus of only 75% of that increase. Despite the company's pledges to pay various bonuses, it failed to honor its commitments, prompting the protests and work stoppage.

Workers at the Hydraulic Power Stations of Aswan High Dam 1, Aswan 2, and Esna (belonging to the Water Power Plants for Electricity Generation Company) also escalated their protests from demonstrations to sit-ins inside their workplaces, demanding application of the minimum wage, incorporation of outstanding allowances, and increases in allowances and annual profit shares. Workers appeared in videos chanting: "***We want our rights***" "*One, two - where is the electricity minister?*" "*O electricity minister - the time for empty consolation is over*". Workers' demands included, in addition to the minimum wage: incorporation of all outstanding allowances, increase of the food allowance to 50 pounds per day, increase of the lighting allowance to 1,000 pounds per month, increase of the travel cash allowance, payment of hazard allowances, qualification settlement, renaming the production bonus as annual profits and increasing it to 24 months, paid in a lump sum, reinstatement of incentive allowances and increase of the performance bonus from 250 to 350, increase of the excellence bonus and monthly disbursement rather than bimonthly, reinstatement of abolished promotions etc.

The list of these mobilisations is long - in Al-Shorbagi Textiles Factory, Misr El-Amriya Spinning and Weaving Company, Al-Takamoliya Food Industries, Dshna Sugar Mill in Qena Governorate, the Armant Factory in Luxor, the Chemicals Factory in the Hawamdeya Sugar Complex in Giza Governorate, the Nile Linen Group Textile and Furnishings Factory in the Alexandria Free Zone, United Pharmacists Company, Misr Spinning and Weaving Company - Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra, Misr Aluminum Company - Nag Hammadi, Greater Cairo Water Supply Sector, Al-Bawaba News Newspaper, Al-Gumhuriya Pharmaceuticals Distribution Company, Cairo Water Supply and Sewerage Company - and those mobilisations are occurring in the context of a severe economic crisis, with inflation reaching approximately 30-40% in 2025 and living costs rising following the implementation of the Comprehensive Health Insurance system.

**Trade union leader Gamal Othman interprets the escalating frequency of labor protests as a serious indicator of deteriorating economic conditions** affecting broad segments of Egyptians. He identifies low wages as the primary and common factor in all current labor strikes, which are expected to intensify in the coming period if the situation of failing to accommodate people continues and a rational voice capable of offering genuine solutions remains absent. Othman also noted, in remarks to Fekr Tani, that one of the most important causes of protests is non-compliance with the minimum wage approved by the government in May of the previous year. He argued that even the 6,000 pounds set by the government as a subsistence minimum is no longer sufficient given rising prices, and that workers would need three times that amount to live with dignity.

**The foregoing presentation makes clear that the vast majority of workers in both the public and private sectors do not receive their entitlement to the minimum wage, let alone the bonuses, allowances, leave benefits, and other related entitlements attached to wages. And this comes in a context where Egyptian citizens are already suffering from severe inflation and continuously rising prices of goods and services, subjecting workers to unjustified financial pressure.**

## **II. Arbitrary Dismissal**

Arbitrary dismissal - particularly of trade union leaders - is one of the most prominent manifestations of the condition of Egypt's working class in 2025. Examples include:

- Agricultural Bank of Egypt: dozens of employees and workers from various sectors of the Agricultural Bank organized a protest outside the bank's main branch against the dismissal of 1,200 employees and workers in violation of the law. Protesters stated that dismissal decisions had been issued since 2020, with management sending letters accusing a number of them of gross negligence without investigation or prior notification. Workers' attempts to return to work through labor offices proved unsuccessful. Dismissed workers noted that the workforce reduction policy targeted employees who had filed lawsuits to incorporate outstanding 20% allowances and had obtained favorable rulings, as well as workers dismissed for violations involving ATM machines due to insufficient training. Dismissal decisions also encompassed employees who had publicly asserted their rights through Facebook groups and pages - activities that certain bank officials characterized as disclosing workplace secrets and damaging the institution.
  
- Eastco (Eastern Tobacco Company): The Parliamentary Bloc President of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, Ihab Mansour, submitted an urgent inquiry addressed to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Business Sector, and the Minister of Labor, regarding complaints by members of the General Assembly of the United Employee Shareholders' Union at Eastern Company (Eastern Tobacco). The complaint concerned arbitrary dismissal orders issued against 6 employees and arbitrary penalties imposed on 18 others, with the apparent purpose of coercing the General Assembly into voting to approve a single acquisition offer valued at 5 billion pounds — while estimates suggest the fair value of the offer is no less than 15 billion pounds.
  
- Ceramica Innova Factory, Fayoum Governorate: Management of Ceramica Innova (formerly Al-Faraonah) in the Kom Oshim Industrial Zone issued dismissal warnings to approximately 45 workers who had been placed on compulsory leave, along with

hundreds of other workers receiving only basic wages, on grounds of non-responsiveness to recall notices. In March, management had informed 350 workers from various departments - including 130 workers with disabilities hired as part of the mandatory 5% quota - that they would be placed on six-month compulsory leave receiving only basic wages. Workers who refused were dismissed. Two months earlier, management had forced all 57 female workers at the company into compulsory leave, and had drawn up a list of 300 additional workers in preparation for their dismissal.

- Webryat Samanoud Factory: The East Tanta Court of First Instance ruled on 30 July in favor of the dismissal of union leader Hesham Al-Banna in a case brought by management of Webryat Samanoud Company arising from a strike demanding application of the minimum wage. Management accused Al-Banna of "*inciting workers to strike and causing losses to the company as a result of the strike*". Notably, the Samanoud Prosecution had previously dismissed a complaint filed by management against nine workers - including Al-Banna - on charges of striking and damaging the company, which, as workers noted, demonstrates that the company's accusations lacked evidentiary basis.

All of these examples demonstrate that **the expansion of arbitrary dismissal represents one of the manifestations of the imbalance in labor relations and the bias toward employers at the expense of labor**, in addition to draining workers' limited resources in litigation to defend their legal right to reinstatement or compensation.

### **III. Regularization of Temporary Employment**

Employment stability depends on the existence of lawful employment contracts and permanent labor relations. However, in the context of labor market disorder and labor legislation biased toward employers, a large segment of workers continues to operate under temporary contracts for years on end, with no genuine guarantees of job security. Labor Law No. 14 of 2025 has codified this reality by legitimizing the role of labor supply agencies (commonly known as labor subcontractors) such that workers spend years inside the same company while their legal relationship is effectively managed by an intermediary contractor. In the event of a workplace injury, the company disclaims responsibility by citing the worker's contractual relationship with the subcontractor, a clear model of evasion of legal obligations.

On this subject, the National Security forces arrested 16 workers from two branches of Modern Gas Company in Sohag and Qena Governorates, following protests demanding direct employment with the company and cancellation of subcontracting arrangements with a third-party firm, according to two sources among the protesting workers at both locations

who spoke to Mada Masr. A source from the Sohag workers explained that National Security conducted "home raids" and arrested approximately 7 workers from the governorate branch, while a source from Qena stated that approximately 9 colleagues had been arrested simultaneously. One of the striking workers had previously explained that he had worked at the company for approximately 10 years under a subcontract renewed annually with the intermediary firm, which deducts approximately 1,300 pounds per month from his wages in exchange for subcontracting him to Modern Gas.

Similarly, collectors at Natgas (National Gas Company) in Damanhour organized a work slowdown strike protesting their employment under subcontracts and wage levels below the minimum wage, according to four sources among the collectors who spoke to Mada Masr. Workers stated they had organized a protest outside company headquarters, which was brought to an end on orders from the Damanhour Investigations Chief and National Security, with workers being instructed to delete protest photos from social media *"because there are elections going on now... and protests are unacceptable"*. All of this prompting them to resort to a work slowdown: *"if the daily target is to collect 150 bills, the collector collects only 50"*, as one collector explained to Mada Masr.

Additionally, approximately 3,000 temporary workers at Misr Aluminum Company announced a strike and sit-in demanding regularization, termination of their contracts with labor supply firms, and application of the minimum wage. One striking worker (an electrical maintenance technician with seven years of service) stated that temporary workers, referred to as "leased labor," **receive wages several thousand pounds below the minimum wage**, ranging between 2,250 and 3,500 pounds. Workers have been employed at the company for between 7 and 10 years through labor supply firms (most prominently "Hamis" and "Production") contracted by Aluminum without workers being informed of the details of these contracts or receiving copies.

Approximately 50 temporary journalists working in national newspapers organized a protest on the steps of the Journalists' Syndicate, protesting the failure to implement hiring procedures announced by the National Press Authority in mid-August. A total of 114 journalists had previously submitted a memorandum to Syndicate President Khaled Al-Balshi, requesting the formation of a journalists' delegation to meet with the President of the National Press Authority to investigate the causes of delays in implementing their appointment decision. **Protests by journalists at BBC Egypt, Al-Wafd, and Al-Bawaba News also exposed the deprivation of hundreds of journalists from lawful employment contracts and the minimum wage, despite working for years without any job security.**

#### **IV. Medical Care and Health Insurance**

For years, Egypt's working class enjoyed a relatively acceptable healthcare and health insurance system whose core was nevertheless based on a uniform contribution rate from wages for all workers, without imposing additional financial burdens or direct service fees.

However, with the enactment of Law No. 2 of 2018, a clear disparity emerged between workers in areas where the new system had been implemented and their counterparts under the old system, with the old health insurance system itself beginning to impose fees for services previously provided free of charge.

The new system transferred an additional burden onto workers, who now bear the cost of insuring family members - including children at all educational levels and non-working spouses - in addition to visit fees and co-payments for examinations, scans, and laboratory tests, as well as complications related to workplace injuries. This constitutes a steadily increasing financial burden on workers. Against this backdrop, **healthcare and health insurance problems became one of the primary causes of labor protests in 2025**. We documented a number of illustrative cases, including:

- Nasr Wool and Superior Textiles Company (STIA), Alexandria, and Bayda Dyers : workers sent simultaneous complaints to the Cabinet Presidency after health insurance hospitals in the governorate refused to provide medical services without monthly data updates, pending the settlement by the holding company for cotton, spinning, and weaving of its outstanding debt to the Health Insurance Authority.
- Arab Company and Bolvara Spinning and Weaving, Alexandria: approximately 1,200 workers at Arab Company and Bolvara Spinning and Weaving went on strike protesting the suspension by the Alexandria Health Insurance Authority of all medical treatment services, before ending the strike following a pledge by the company's chairman and managing director to settle the outstanding debt owed to the National Social Insurance Authority by the end of December, and to resume services, according to two worker sources who spoke to Mada Masr.

These problems are clearly concentrated across wide sectors of the labor force, revealing that **the privatization of health services and the imposition of fees have prevented workers from accessing the healthcare they require**, driving many to charitable associations in search of affordable treatment consistent with their limited wages.

## **V. Occupational Safety and Health**

The absence of occupational safety and health requirements is one of the most prominent problems facing Egypt's workers, and a direct cause of the recurring accidents and workplace injuries at production sites.

The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights commended decisions issued by several governorates prohibiting sanitation workers from working outdoors at midday during peak heat hours, describing them as a step in the right direction and a direct response to warnings the Center had issued regarding the danger of heat stress on the health and lives of the working class, particularly in sectors with the greatest exposure to sunlight and fieldwork.

In a statement dated 12 August 2025, the Center affirmed that these measures constitute a positive step in the direction of worker protection, consistent with national laws and occupational safety and health standards, which oblige employers to provide a safe and healthy work environment. **The Center renewed its call on the Minister of Labor to attend to the serious risks of heat stress hazards and take urgent measures to protect workers in public and private establishments**, and to ensure employer compliance with occupational safety and health standards and to monitor their field implementation in order to protect workers' lives.

Moreover, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms condemned ongoing violations against workers at Central Egypt Flour Mills, foremost among them the obstruction of legally guaranteed financial entitlements, breach of fair wage guarantees, and the absence of effective redress mechanisms. These violations reached an extremely grave level, culminating in an incident in which one worker attempted to end his life by throwing himself from atop a silo while demanding his rights, reflecting the magnitude of the psychological and social pressure borne by employees. The Commission received complaints and reports from company employees regarding the violations cited in its statement and the direct harms flowing therefrom - affecting the economic stability of workers and their families - as well as complaints concerning the deterioration of occupational safety and health systems within work sites, the recurrence of injuries and fatalities and the obstruction of documentation of some workplace injuries, thereby depriving injured workers of their entitlements. These are facts requiring urgent investigation and accountability.

According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the total number of occupational injury cases reached **8,317** in 2023, distributed as follows:

- Government sector: 1,404 cases
- Public/public business sector: 2,463 cases
- Private sector (50+ workers): 4,327 cases
- Investment sector: 123 cases (1.5% of total)

The Advisor to the Minister of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health indicated that the Central Administration for Occupational Safety and Health conducted inspections of 47 establishments in 15 governorates over just 9 days (from 29 September to 7 October 2025) as part of inspection campaigns at construction sites to verify compliance with occupational safety and health standards in accordance with the new Labor Law No. 14 of 2025. These campaigns resulted in the issuance of 115 citations and 43 warnings against non-compliant establishments. Only 21 establishments were found to be fully compliant.

## **VI. Workplace Accidents**

### **1. Accidents During Work**

The Egyptian Center monitored a number of fires and accidents at workplaces during 2025, the most prominent of which include:

- A major fire inside a cardboard factory in the Fifth Zone of Sadat City, Monufia Governorate;
- A large fire inside a cleaning products and chemicals factory in the Rubeiki area of Badr City, which reignited despite attempts at containment;
- A massive fire inside a garments factory in the Badrasheen area, Giza Governorate;
- The collapse of a concrete roof during pouring operations at a Webryat factory under construction in the Second District of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra, Gharbia Governorate, resulting in injuries to 12 workers;
- A devastating fire at a factory and dyeing facility in the Yamani area of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra, Gharbia Governorate, resulting in casualties and fatalities following the sudden collapse of parts of the building;
- An explosion of boilers at Al-Bashbishy Factory in the Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra Industrial Zone, Gharbia Governorate, causing the death of 7 persons and injury of 36 others, with victims transferred to treatment facilities in Zifta, Samanoud, and Tanta

These incidents reflect **the absence of civil safety and occupational health procedures**. The 2023 Economic Census findings further indicate the existence of **1.9 million unregistered establishments**, representing 50.7% of all economically active establishments in Egypt. Accordingly, when discussing safety and occupational health standards, it must be recognized that compliance discussions relate to only 50% of establishments, while the other 50% are unregistered and unlicensed.

## **2. Accidents During Commuting**

In the context of the widespread prevalence of informal work, employers evade their fundamental obligations, most importantly the provision of safe and appropriate transportation for workers. From workers in industrial zones to agricultural workers, **the hemorrhage of the working class on the roads continues** and daily commutes have become a permanent source of danger threatening workers' lives.

The Center attempts to document a number of these incidents as evidence of a recurring pattern of negligence and absence of protection, not merely isolated individual events:

- 15 workers were injured following the overturning of a pickup truck between the Farshout and Abu Tesht centers in Qena Governorate; they were transferred to Farshout Central Hospital;
- A number of workers drowned following the sinking of a Nile ferry that was transporting them in Nekla Al-Enab village, Al-Qanater area, Giza Governorate;
- One young woman was killed and 17 others injured - suffering fractures and multiple lacerations - following the overturning of a microbus carrying agricultural workers and its collision with a private vehicle on the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road at kilometer 95, Wadi Al-Natron, Al-Beheira Governorate;

- 10 daily wage workers were injured following the overturning of a pickup truck while returning from work on the Bilbeis–Mastorod road in Sharkia Governorate; they were transferred to Mastorod Al-Souq Hospital;
- Bahjour Specialized Hospital in Monufia Governorate received 9 fatalities and 11 injured following a collision on the regional road toward the Cairo–Alexandria Desert Road; maximum alert was raised across hospitals in the governorate and surrounding areas, with the Ministry of Health stating it was working to assist the families of victims and the injured in the context of its disaster response plan;
- 1 worker died and 16 others were injured following the overturning of a transport vehicle on the Suez Road, which was carrying them to their place of work at an architectural project under construction; injured workers were transferred to the New Medical Complex in Suez;
- 2 workers died and 3 others were injured following the collision of two half-trucks loaded with stones near Samalout center, north of Minya Governorate;
- 1 female worker died and 14 others were injured following the overturning of a pickup truck near the Samalout axis on the Western Desert Road; injuries ranged from lacerations to suspected spinal fractures, left forearm fractures, dislocations, suspected post-concussion syndrome, contusions, and bruising. The vehicle was carrying 15 workers from Maghagha center; a steering malfunction caused the vehicle to overturn multiple times;
- 11 workers were injured following the overturning of a half-truck carrying them on the Suez Road near the entrance to the New Administrative Capital; injured workers were transferred to hospital for medical care;
- 28 workers suffered contusions and lacerations\*\* following the overturning of a pickup truck on the road to Al-Shantour village, Samsta center, south of Beni Suef Governorate; injured workers were transferred to hospital for first aid and treatment;
- On the regional ring road in Giza Governorate, 7 daily wage workers were killed including 5 children and 2 women from the village of Ma'sarah Sawi in Tamia center, Fayoum Governorate and following the overturning and burning of an ill-equipped vehicle that had been transporting them home from work harvesting tomatoes;
- On the Rast Bridge in Ashmoun center, Monufia Governorate, a cargo truck collided with a microbus carrying workers\*\* to their workplace at a fruits and vegetables collection center - most of them children - killing 4 workers instantly and injuring 14 others, one of whom later died;

**In conclusion, the facts and testimonies presented herein make clear that the crisis confronting Egypt's working class is no longer confined to a specific sector or partial demand, but has become a comprehensive crisis affecting the very core of the employment relationship : low wages intersect with the absence of job security, arbitrary dismissal stands alongside precarious contracts, health protection continues to deteriorate as safety standards remain absent and workplace accidents persist at**

**production sites and on the roads, confirming that the cost of labor is now sometimes paid with workers' lives.**

**The continuation of these conditions, in the context of weak trade union representation and the absence of effective collective bargaining channels, portends further social tension and renders labor protests a natural expression of the failure of economic justice. Accordingly, any genuine reform process must begin by restoring the value of labor and by adopting policies that guarantee a fair wage linked to prices, regularization of employment, enforcement of safety standards, and protection of the right to independent trade union organization, alongside reform of the health and social protection system.**

**Without this, Labor Day will remain an annual occasion on which the same question is asked again and again: does the holiday return to restore workers' rights, or does it pass merely to expose the widening gap between what ought to be, and what actually is?**

**Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights**

**Labor Day - 2026**