



“I WOULD FEAR GOING TO WORK”

LABOUR EXPLOITATION AT CARREFOUR SITES
IN SAUDI ARABIA

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“I’m not a rich person... I came here to earn money. If they kick me out of my job, I end up in an even worse situation. If they send me home, I’ll have to pay again to go to another country. It may also take a long time. So, I don’t argue with the people at Carrefour.”

Jagdish, from Nepal, speaking to Amnesty International in December 2023

With an annual turnover of over EUR 94 billion, the Carrefour Group is one of the world’s largest supermarket brands – operating over 14,000 stores in 40 countries. Headquartered in France, the company operates in the Middle East, Africa and Asia via its franchisee Majid Al Futtaim, with between 2,000 and 3,000 staff in Saudi Arabia – roughly a third of whom are contracted via outsourced labour supply companies. Carrefour Group was a ‘premium partner’ of the Paris 2024 Olympics, and states that “promoting human rights is fundamental to conducting its activities in a responsible and sustainable manner”. And yet, research conducted by Amnesty International shows that its operations in Saudi Arabia have been dogged by underpayment and overwork, and a culture of fear among the migrant workers that service it.

The Carrefour Group is far from the first company to be faced with serious labour abuses in their value chain in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, an investigation conducted by Amnesty International in 2023 into conditions faced by migrant workers contracted to Amazon warehouses in the country highlighted numerous grim accounts of exploitation, wage theft and entrapment at the hands of third-party labour suppliers, treatment that in some cases likely amounted to human trafficking. In February 2024, Amazon announced it had paid USD 1.9 million in recruitment fee reimbursements to over 700 workers as a result.

In the course of Amnesty International’s investigation into Amazon, researchers discovered at least one of the company’s contractors also supplied migrant workers to Carrefour Group’s facilities in the Saudi Kingdom. Interviewing 17 men from India, Nepal and Pakistan who had worked at Carrefour’s facilities in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam – and analysing other evidence such as employment contracts and audiovisual material - Amnesty International identified similar patterns of labour abuse amongst workers employed by four third-party contractors used by Majid Al Futtaim in Carrefour stores. Like with Amazon, this included cases likely amounting to forced labour and human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation.

In response to the allegations presented in this report, Carrefour Group said it has launched an internal investigation with Majid Al Futtaim, as well as a third-party audit of the situation of migrant workers in all its franchisee’s operations in Saudi Arabia.

CHEATED AND DECEIVED

Once full of hope and aspiration, migrant workers staffing Carrefour's stores in Saudi Arabia told Amnesty International how they were lured to the Kingdom by false promises during the recruitment process. Having already handed over extortionate recruitment fees averaging USD 1,200, the vast majority of workers interviewed reported being told they would be employed by a multinational company, like Carrefour Group, or even Amazon, rather than by a labour supply company contracting them to Carrefour stores. The two principal companies supplying staff covered in this briefing are Al-Mutairi and Badoor Najed, although some workers had contracts with two other firms.

Biraj, employed by Badoor Najed, told Amnesty International that he had worked at three different Carrefour stores in Saudi Arabia since his arrival a few years earlier. He said he took out a loan to pay almost USD 1,800 to a recruitment agent in India and was falsely told that Carrefour Group would directly hire him. **"I didn't have that money, it was a loan... The interest rate is 7.5% annually and I am still paying the loan. I couldn't repay it because my money went towards other household expenses. My dad died and I'm the breadwinner of my family. I'm the only son."**

Some of the workers had to sell land, or their family jewellery, or take on high-interest loans to cover these recruitment costs. Such extortionate and upfront charges can significantly increase the risk of workers ending up in situations of debt bondage, whereby an individual is forced to work to pay off debts, and which is an indicator of forced labour. Deception in the recruitment process is a key indicator of human trafficking for labour exploitation, which involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to compel someone into undertaking labour with the aim of exploiting them for profit.

OVERWORKED AND UNDERPAID

Once deployed in Carrefour's facilities, workers interviewed reported being overworked and underpaid – regularly working 60-hour weeks in violation of Saudi Arabia's labour law and sometimes being made to work up to 15 or 16 hours a day, especially when business was booming in periods such as "salary week" and Ramadan month, when all workers should receive higher rates of pay. Workers reported that they were often not even paid for overtime for these additional hours and that managers at the stores would sometimes cancel their rest day without providing an alternative day off, again in violation of the labour laws.



One described the work **"like oxen ploughing land"**. Another, Anand, a former warehouse picker, said:

"Inside Carrefour stores, workers are not treated as humans. They [managers] treat workers as animals. They keep on saying, 'yallah, yallah' ['let's go', 'let's go']. They cling to our T-shirt to make us work fast."

Tej, from Nepal, said his mobile phone showed that he usually clocked up around 17km walking each day in one of Carrefour's facilities in Riyadh: **"I didn't have time to cook food daily. I would eat stale food. I also had to overwork. Perhaps because of work and food, I fell sick. Sometimes, I had back pain. I had a fever. I became extremely weak. Now, I'm home, and I'm fit. I was fit before going to Saudi, too."**

Workers also complained about the poor quality of the accommodation provided by labour supply companies, with Pradeep describing his as like a **"cowshed"**, in which six people in a single room have to cook, eat, sleep and use the toilet.



Najran Province, Najran, Saudi Arabia on January 1, 2020. © Eric Lafforgue/Art in All of Us/Corbis via Getty Images

A CULTURE OF FEAR AND UNHEARD COMPLAINTS

Workers said they endured such conditions because if any were brave or desperate enough to make complaints, they were usually ignored, while others feared termination.

As Anand, employed by Al-Mutairi supply company, put it, **“Carrefour [franchise] doesn’t listen to our complaints”. He added, “If we raise [our] voice, Al-Mutairi will lay off workers for four to five months. They don’t give money for food... If workers complain to the Carrefour [franchise] during the day, the supply company person comes to the room and says, ‘Get out of the room [accommodation]’ in the evening. Who would dare to speak then?”**

Workers challenging managers or refusing to work the overtime demanded said they risked losing their job at the Carrefour store, being sent back to wait in their accommodation and – in violation of labour laws - not paid by the labour supply company until it found them a new job - often weeks or months later, if at all. Workers employed by two of the supply companies reported that they would stop workers from returning home after having their jobs terminated at Carrefour stores unless they paid the labour supply company an ‘exit fee’ of over USD 1,000 to leave the country - even if they were no longer receiving a salary.

This culture of fear meant the workers felt unable to stand up for their labour rights. Gopal, told Amnesty International that when he and his colleagues in one of Carrefour’s facilities tried to resist working additional hours, which they knew they might not be paid for, **“the Carrefour manager and supervisor would force us to work. They would even come to our room to bring us to work if we stayed in the room.”**

It is also evident that Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim’s complaints systems were ineffective. Indeed, Carrefour Group reported receiving “no alerts” from Saudi Arabia in 2022, and workers told Amnesty International they were either unaware of the existence of a helpline provided by Majid Al Futtaim, or were told by managers that it was only for staff directly employed at Carrefour stores.

The pressuring of contracted workers to work overtime or on their day off, often without full compensation, or when they are unwell, under the threat of losing their job suggests that the two key elements of forced labour – involuntary work and threat of penalty – may be present in Carrefour Group’s franchise operations in Saudi Arabia.

INADEQUATE DUE DILIGENCE IN A HIGH RISK CONTEXT

The Saudi Arabian authorities are ultimately responsible for protecting migrant workers' rights in the country. In the case of employees of the labour supply companies in this report, the government failed to meet its international human rights obligations to implement and enforce laws and regulations capable of protecting the workers' rights – including from private actors – and ensuring they could access justice.

In the case of Carrefour Group and its franchise partner Majid Al Futtaim, despite their own policies indicating that they are well aware of global human rights standards and their responsibilities to respect workers' rights – including throughout their value chains – and have taken some steps to meet these, it is clear that neither company have adequate human rights due-diligence processes commensurate with the high risk of serious abuses in Saudi Arabia. Such risks include those rooted in and exacerbated by the structural flaws of Saudi Arabia's labour and migration systems, which continue to bind migrant workers to their employers through the abusive kafala sponsorship system and make it virtually impossible for them to leave exploitative situations. These risks remain despite limited reforms in recent years, while there has also been regression in some areas, with the government significantly reducing in fines imposed on companies who violate labour laws. These shortcomings are made worse by the authorities' repression of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including the right of migrant workers forming or joining a trade union, and the absence of independent civil society organizations advocating for their rights.

This well-documented and persistent reality in Saudi Arabia means that international corporations know - or should know - they face an inherently high risk of human rights abuses occurring in their value chains. Such processes should be particularly important for companies such as Carrefour Group that rely on franchises and the outsourcing of labour supply to third parties.

A RESPONSIBILITY TO REMEDY

Under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights - which the Carrefour Group has committed to respect, including through its franchises – companies not only have the responsibility to “identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how they address adverse human rights impacts”, they also have the responsibility to provide for or cooperate in the remediation of those impacts that they have caused, or to which they have contributed.

In line with standards outlined in the UN Guiding Principles, the four labour supply companies and the recruitment agencies from which they procured workers can be said to have caused human rights abuses documented in this report. Meanwhile, both Carrefour Group and its franchisee Majid Al Futtaim have contributed to and benefited from human rights abuses, by engaging in the outsourcing of migrant labour without adequate due diligence and failing to use their significant leverage to ensure that other companies in their value chains respect human rights. Indeed, both companies failed to take effective action to stop and remediate abuses, despite receiving direct complaints from workers in their facilities and recently published research documenting exploitation in one of its suppliers. Majid Al Futtaim may also be said to have directly caused human rights abuses – including treatment which could amount to forced labour – by managers reportedly coercing contracted staff to work unpaid overtime hours, and denying them rest days, under threat of being “fired” from the Carrefour franchise.

UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

(Which the Carrefour Group has committed to respect, including through its franchises)

COMPANIES NOT ONLY HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO “IDENTIFY, PREVENT, MITIGATE, AND ACCOUNT FOR HOW THEY ADDRESS ADVERSE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS”, THEY ALSO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE FOR OR COOPERATE IN THE REMEDIATION OF THOSE IMPACTS THAT THEY HAVE CAUSED, OR TO WHICH THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED.

As a result, Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim have a responsibility to ensure remediation for the human rights abuses detailed in this report, as do the labour supply companies themselves. This includes providing compensation to workers for harms suffered, and ensuring that the abuses are not repeated.

In response to the allegations detailed in this report, and shared in advance with the companies Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim told Amnesty International that they have launched an internal investigation, while Majid Al Futtaim also states it has taken steps in recent months to remediate the issues raised, including auditing contractors' accommodation and moving some workers to new housing; reviewing its policies and processes in terms of overtime and the ban on recruitment fees; increasing screening of new suppliers; and improving access to its employee hotline.

Carrefour Group stated it has also ordered a third-party audit of the “situation of migrant workers” throughout Majid Al Futtaim’s operations in Saudi Arabia and committed to “implement relevant measures” depending on the findings.

Such remedial measures should include providing effective and timely remedy to all workers impacted by labour abuses in Carrefour facilities, regardless of their employment status. In addition to the payment of compensation and the reimbursement of recruitment fees and stolen wages, this should include ensuring no worker pays recruitment fees, and all are provided with safe and humane working conditions, are adequately paid for overtime, are offering their services freely and are given job security and benefits without discrimination. More broadly, Carrefour Group should review its existing due diligence policies and practices including regarding migrant workers and related to its franchisees to ensure these adequately align with its human rights commitments around the world, with heightened scrutiny in countries where labour systems present additional human rights risks. The full responses from Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim can be found [here](#) and are summarized later in the report.

More detailed recommendations to Carrefour Group, Majid Al Futtaim, third-party labour supply companies, the Saudi Arabian government and the governments of migrant workers’ countries of origin are provided at the end of this report.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation builds on research conducted by Amnesty International in 2023 into the human rights abuses faced by migrant workers employed by Abdullah Fahad Al-Mutairi Support Services Co. (AFMCO, referred to as Al-Mutairi in this report), and Basmah Al-Musanada Company for Technical Support Services (Basmah) – both labour supply companies based in Saudi Arabia – and contracted to work in Amazon.com warehouses in the country.¹

The 2023 research uncovered a troubling pattern of exploitation that highly likely amounted to human trafficking. Recruitment agents and labour supply companies in Saudi Arabia deceived migrant workers, cheated them of wages, housed them in appalling conditions, and prevented them from finding alternative employment or leaving the country. Despite receiving direct complaints from workers over an extended period and having due diligence policies and mechanisms in place, Amazon failed to prevent these repeated human rights abuses against contracted workers.² Following Amnesty International's investigation, Amazon promised to work with its third-party contractors to remediate the abuses and ensure non-repetition. Among other action taken, Amazon announced in February 2024 that it had taken steps to strengthen its due diligence processes, and paid USD 1.9 million to reimburse more than 700 workers.³

In the process of the 2023 investigation, Amnesty International identified that Al-Mutairi also supplied workers to other multinational corporations in Saudi Arabia, including to Carrefour stores, leading the organization to conduct further research in this regard – the basis for this report.

Throughout this report, Carrefour “stores”, “facilities”, “dark stores”, “centres” or “warehouses” refer to Carrefour sites operated by Majid Al Futtaim in Saudi Arabia under a franchise agreement with the French company Carrefour Group.

Between December 2023 and July 2024, Amnesty International remotely interviewed 17 men from countries in South Asia, including India, Nepal and Pakistan, currently or formerly working in Carrefour facilities in Saudi Arabia. One man was directly employed by Majid Al Futtaim in a senior position at a Carrefour store, while 16 are, or were, employed by four third-party labour supply companies, all based in Saudi Arabia and contracted to work in Carrefour facilities – including supermarkets and fulfilment centres – in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam since 2021. Ten of the 16 men were employed by Al-Mutairi and three by Badoor Najed Contracting Company (Badoor Najed) – companies from which Majid Al Futtaim confirmed to Amnesty International that it receives third-party services. The final three of the 16 said they had worked in Carrefour facilities while employed by two different labour supply companies, referred to in this report as Company A and Company B, and not named because of the small sample. Amnesty International also reviewed documentary evidence related to the allegations made by these employees, including an employment contract and audiovisual material.

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- 1 Very limited information is available publicly regarding these labour supply companies. According to workers interviewed for Amnesty International's 2023 investigation, Basmah and Al-Mutairi are closely linked, with both sharing an office and using the same accommodation for their staff, and Amazon confirmed to Amnesty International that Basmah is a contractor of Al-Mutairi.
 - 2 Amnesty International, “*Don't worry it's a branch of Amazon: exploitation of migrant workers contracted to Amazon in Saudi Arabia*”, 10 October 2023, MDE 23.7229,2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/7229/2023/en/>
 - 3 Amazon, “Update on Amazon's response to violations of our supply chain standards involving contracted workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, 22 February 2024, <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/company-news/update-on-amazons-response-to-violations-of-our-supply-chain-standards-involving-contracted-workers-in-the-kingdom-of-saudi-arabia>; See also Amazon's earlier public response to Amnesty International's findings: <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/sustainability/amazon-response-to-amnesty-international>

BETWEEN DECEMBER 2023 – JULY 2024

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REMOTELY INTERVIEWED



17 MEN FROM COUNTRIES IN SOUTH ASIA, INCLUDING INDIA, NEPAL AND PAKISTAN, CURRENTLY OR FORMERLY WORKING IN CARREFOUR FACILITIES IN SAUDI ARABIA

Amnesty International reviewed Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim's publicly available policies and standards, including Carrefour Group's "Respecting Human Rights", "Universal Registration Document: Duty of Care Plan 2023", and "Carrefour International Partners: CSR Appendix", and Majid Al Futtaim's "Employment Conditions Policy" and "Supplier Code of Conduct", as well as relevant Saudi Arabian laws and policies. The organization also read publicly available corporate information to establish facts about Carrefour's franchisee operations in Saudi Arabia and engaged in detailed correspondence with Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim between May and September 2024. The full responses from Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim can be found [here](#) and are summarised later in this report.

Amnesty International also wrote to Al-Mutairi and Badoor Najed to bring to their attention allegations of labour abuse of their workforce and urging them to remediate. At the time of publication, neither of these companies had responded.

On 9 September, Amnesty International shared its findings in a letter to Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the government body responsible for labour issues, but had not received a response by the time of publication.

Amnesty International has changed the names of the individuals quoted in this report to protect them. The organization urges all parties concerned to ensure that no employee faces reprisals. Any reprisal would be contrary to international human rights law and standards.

BACKGROUND

SAUDI ARABIA'S LABOUR SYSTEM: INHERENT RISKS TO MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS

For decades, NGOs, journalists and UN bodies have documented systemic human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, including the cruel impact of Saudi Arabia's weak labour rights protections on workers.⁴ Amongst those most affected are foreign migrant workers who constitute around 77% of the country's private sector labour force and are governed by the inherently abusive sponsorship (*kafala*) system.⁵ As such, the very real human rights risks facing those who would operate Carrefour Group's franchise in Saudi Arabia should have been well-known to the company when it branched out into the Gulf region, and increasingly since then.

The *kafala* system binds foreign workers to their employer, who acts as their official sponsor (*kafeel*) from the moment they enter the country and throughout their employment. To enter and work in Saudi Arabia, migrant workers require their employer to sponsor their visa, and issue and renew their residence permit. This dependency leaves workers acutely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by their employers in myriad ways.

Since 2021, Saudi Arabia has introduced several reforms to this system, including easing certain restrictions on workers' freedom to leave the country or change employers under specific conditions. Nonetheless, in practice, the *kafala* system still imposes strict limitations on the freedom of migrant workers once they are in the country, and they continue to face significant challenges in exiting the country or moving jobs without their employer's permission. According to the the US State Department's 2024 annual Trafficking in Persons (2024 TiP report), between March 2023 and April 2024, the government recorded 305,444 foreign workers who switched jobs without the consent of their current employer.⁶ However, the report did not disclose how many foreign workers had requested

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- 4 See, for example: Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Migrant Workers' Long Overdue Wages at Risk", 29 February 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/29/saudi-arabia-migrant-workers-long-overdue-wages-risk>; and BWI, "2034 FIFA World Cup Bid: BWI Lodges Complaint Against Saudi Arabia Over Forced Labour and Wage Theft", 5 June 2024, <https://www.bwint.org/cms/2034-fifa-world-cup-bid-bwi-lodges-complaint-against-saudi-arabia-over-forced-labour-and-wage-theft-3141>; The Guardian, "Used, abused and deported: migrant workers land back in Bangladesh after Saudi dreams turn sour", 21 March 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/mar/21/used-abused-and-deported-migrant-workers-land-back-in-bangladesh-after-saudi-dreams-turn-sour>; Equidem, "Broken Promises: Forced Labour in Saudi Arabia and the Fast Tracked World Cup Bid", 18 June 2024, <https://www.equidem.org/reports/broken-promises-forced-labour-in-saudi-arabia-and-the-fast-tracked-world-cup-bid>; International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, "Workers accuse Middle East operations of McDonald's, Chuck E. Cheese and other Western brands of labor abuses", 10 October 2023, <https://www.icij.org/investigations/trafficking-inc/mcdonalds-chuck-e-cheese-brands-labor-abuses/>; Migrant-Rights.org, "New reforms and ongoing challenges in Saudi's labour justice system", 13 August 2020, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2020/08/new-reforms-and-ongoing-challenges-in-saudis-labour-justice-system/>; Centre for Migrant Advocacy – Philippines, "Stakeholder Submission for Universal Periodic Review – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Individual Submission by the Centre for Migrant Advocacy Philippine. Oct-Nov 2018 Session", https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-04/cma_phils_upr31_sau_e_main.pdf; UN General Assembly, *Compilation on Saudi Arabia: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/WG.6/31/SAU/2*, 30 August 2018, p. 10, https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2018-10/a_hrc_wg.6_31_sau_2_e.pdf; International Labour Organization, "Employer-migrant worker relationships in the Middle East: Exploring scope for internal labour market mobility and fair migration", March 2017, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_552697.pdf; and Human Rights Watch, "Bad dreams: Exploitation and Abuse of Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia", 13 July 2004, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/07/13/bad-dreams/exploitation-and-abuse-migrant-workers-saudi-arabia>. See also, US State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons reports 2001-2024.
- 5 According to KSA General Authority for Statistics, there are 18.8 million (58.4%) Saudi nationals and over 13.4 million (41.6%) non-Saudi nationals working primarily in the private sector. For more details, see the Register-based Labour Market Statistics-Q1, 2023, <https://www.stats.gov.sa/sites/default/files/Register-based%20Labour%20Market%20Statistics-%20Q1%2C%202023En.xlsx>
- 6 US Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Saudi Arabia, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/saudi-arabia/>

such transfers or how many successfully changed jobs with their employer's consent. Additionally, no comparative data from previous years was provided, making it difficult to determine whether this figure reflects improved job mobility for foreign workers or how it compares to the job mobility of Saudi nationals. The report also lacked disaggregated data by profession, gender or nationality, leaving it unclear which groups of foreign workers are benefiting most from these changes. Given that Saudi Arabia hosts over 13.4 million foreign nationals living and working in the country,⁷ the figure of 305,444 foreign nationals changing jobs without their employer's consent, appears relatively low and shows that only 2.3% of foreign nationals were able to switch employment.

Employers also continue to maintain the power to render migrant workers undocumented through no fault of their own, by cancelling their visas or failing to renew their residence permit, thereby exposing them to arrest and deportation.⁸ Indeed, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior and media outlets regularly carry reports of the arrest of thousands of people for breaching residency and work regulations, and being deported as a result.⁹ According to the 2024 TiP report, the government reported that since 2023 it has removed the ability of employers to file "absconding" cases against migrant workers in the private sector, instead giving employers the option to request to terminate an employee and mark them as "discontinued from work". This status does not confer criminal liability on workers, but grants them a 60 day period to change employer or leave the country, the government states.¹⁰ It remains unclear how this reform is working in practice but, regional organization Migrant-Rights.org notes several concerns, including how a lack of adequate notifications of such changes to their status can result in workers unknowingly becoming undocumented and at risk of arrest and deportation.¹¹

The kafala system effectively transfers the government's responsibility for regulating employment and ensuring worker protection to private employers, creating a deeply imbalanced power dynamic that puts migrant workers in a particularly vulnerable situation. By enabling the latter to exercise significant control over the life of the worker, the system directly enables forced labour and other serious human rights abuses.

Indeed, in June 2024, the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), a global trade union, filed a landmark complaint against Saudi Arabia at the International Labour Organization (ILO) alleging breach of ILO forced labour conventions due to the exploitative living and working conditions of the country's vast migrant workforce.¹²

7 Saudi Arabia, Register-based Labour Market Statistics-Q1, 2023, (previously cited).

8 For further analysis of the labour reforms, see: Amnesty International, "Don't worry it's a branch of Amazon: exploitation of migrant workers contracted to Amazon in Saudi Arabia", pp.17 – 19 and; Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Human rights reforms insufficient", 25 March 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/25/saudi-arabia-labor-reforms-insufficient>

9 See Saudi Arabia Ministry of Interior's X account <https://x.com/MOISaudiArabia>; and for example, Saudi Gazette, "22,021 illegal residents arrested in a week", 7 September 2024, <https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/645369/SAUDI-ARABIA/22021-illegal-residents-arrested-in-a-week>; and Saudi Gazette, "Saudi Arabia arrests 20,718 illegal residents in a week", 31 August 2024, <https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/645220/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Arabia-arrests-20718-illegal-residents-in-a-week>

10 US Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Saudi Arabia, (previously cited).

11 Migrant-Rights.org, "Saudi Arabia revises its regulations for absconding domestic workers", 17 April 2024, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2024/04/saudi-arabia-revises-its-regulations-for-absconding-domestic-workers/>

12 BWI, "BWI lodges complaint against Saudi Arabia over forced labour and wage theft, 5 June 2024", <https://www.bwint.org/cms/2034-fifa-world-cup-bid-bwi-lodges-complaint-against-saudi-arabia-over-forced-labour-and-wage-theft-3141>

2024

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

DOWNGRADED SAUDI ARABIA ON ITS GLOBAL RIGHTS INDEX

DESIGNATING IT AS A COUNTRY IN WHICH THERE IS NO GUARANTEE OF WORKERS' RIGHTS

GLOBAL RIGHTS



INDEX

Abuses migrant workers often face in Saudi Arabia include:

- having to pay illegal recruitment-related fees to secure a job;
- being deceived or misled in the recruitment process;
- having their passports confiscated;
- low pay;
- late or non-payment of salaries;
- inadequate living conditions; and
- restrictions on changing jobs or leaving the country.¹³



These issues are compounded by Saudi Arabia's highly repressive policies restricting freedom of expression, association and assembly, which prohibit migrant workers from forming or joining trade unions, and bargaining collectively to improve their working and living conditions.¹⁴ In 2024, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) downgraded Saudi Arabia on its Global Rights Index, designating it as a country in which there is "no guarantee" of such rights.¹⁵

Furthermore, the government's minimal oversight and enforcement of labour laws mean that employers who violate workers' rights often face little or no accountability. For example, at the end of 2023, Saudi Arabia drastically reduced the financial penalties for employers found in violation of various provisions of the labour law. Now, an employer will be fined just 300 SAR (USD 79) per employee for late or withheld wages – more than 16 times lower than previous fines for large

13 For further discussion of the kafala system and human rights abuses faced by migrants in Saudi Arabia, see: Amnesty International, "Don't worry it's a branch of Amazon" (previously cited).

14 According to the ILO, "trade unions are not explicitly prohibited in Saudi Arabia, but they do not exist in practice. However, the Labour Law permits the establishment of worker councils for Saudi nationals only", see ILO, "Regulatory Framework Governing Migrant Workers", November 2019, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/legaldocument/wcms_728262.pdf. Since 2021, there have been worker committees for Saudi nationals employed in some large state entities such as Aramco, see "Law forming Work Committees, 2001 AD", <http://www.ncar.gov.sa/Documents/Details?Id=7ifAYfcmWXPpEzGmxytFg%3D%3D>

15 ITUC, "Democratic workers' rights crumbling: 2024 ITUC Global Rights Index", 12 June 2024, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-global-rights-index-2024>



Restaurant workers and a street cleaner watch a World Cup football match live on a television at a restaurant's outdoor seating on June 20, 2018 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia © Sean Gallup/Getty Images

establishments – and 1,000 SAR (USD 266) for passport confiscations, down from 5,000 SAR (USD 1,333). Large reductions have also been made for denial of weekly rest days, failure to provide medical insurance, and health and safety breaches.¹⁶

Similarly, the 2024 TiP report highlighted that while there had been an increase in convictions for all trafficking offences in 2023 (141, up from 60 in 2022), the majority of sentences handed down specifically for the 53 labour trafficking offences resulted in less than a year in prison. The TiP report described these as “lenient” penalties that “did not adequately reflect the nature of the crime, undercut efforts to hold labor traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, and increased potential security and safety concerns for victims”.¹⁷ Saudi Arabia’s 2009 Law for Combating Crimes of Trafficking in Persons criminalizes human trafficking, including for the purpose of labour exploitation, and imposes penalties of up to 15 years in prison and/or a fine of up to 1 million Saudi riyals (USD 266,000).¹⁸

This lack of enforcement perpetuates a cycle of abuse, as workers have limited recourse to justice. The kafala system thus not only facilitates but actively enables forced labour and other serious human rights abuses, creating a climate of impunity for employers and leaving migrant workers without adequate protection or support.

¹⁶ Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, Ministerial Decision No. 75913 of 19/5/1445H, 3 December 2023, <https://www.hrsd.gov.sa/ar/knowledge-centre/decisions-and-regulations/ministerial-decisions/75913>. See also Migrant-Rights.org, Saudi Arabia reduces penalties for employers' labour law violations, 9 February 2024, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2024/02/saudi-arabia-reduces-penalties-for-employers-labour-law-violations/>.

¹⁷ US Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Saudi Arabia.

¹⁸ 2009 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law, article 3.

CARREFOUR IN SAUDI ARABIA

The eighth largest supermarket provider in the world, Carrefour Group is a multi-billion-dollar multinational retail and wholesale company headquartered in France.¹⁹ With more than 14,000 stores across 40 countries,²⁰ it reported an annual turnover of EUR 94 billion in 2023, a growth of 10.4% from 2022.²¹

In Saudi Arabia, Carrefour stores are operated by its franchisee Majid Al Futtaim, a household name in the Middle East. It describes itself as a “leading integrated lifestyle provider with brands across industries such as shopping malls, Hotels, Cinema, Hypermarket & much more”.²² As of 2023, Carrefour Group franchises accounted for more than 11,000 of its stores around the world.²³ A shift towards this economic business structure is part of the company’s 2026 strategic plan, which states that franchise is “at the heart of its model” and aims to make it account for at least 90% of all its future new stores across Europe.²⁴

According to publicly available information, Majid Al Futtaim opened the first Carrefour store in Saudi Arabia in 2004. It now operates at least 24 stores and at least 10 fulfilment centres (often called “dark stores”), which ship online purchases directly to customers.²⁵ Majid Al Futtaim holds exclusive franchise rights to the Carrefour brand across 30 countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia regions.²⁶

According to Carrefour Group, the company has over 300,000 employees worldwide, with a total of more than 500,000 people who “work under the Carrefour brand”, including those contracted by franchises and via third parties.²⁷ Carrefour Group states that the “number of staff in Saudi Arabia varies between 2,000 and 3,000 employees”, including “1,000 to 1,500” in its stores, 500 of whom work in dark stores.²⁸ The company confirmed in correspondence with Amnesty International that a third of staff in Saudi Arabia are “outsourced” by its franchisee Majid Al Futtaim to third-party contractors (labour supply companies), although this number depends on the needs of the business at any given time. According to Carrefour Group, Majid Al Futtaim has two such contractors – Al-Mutairi and Badoor Najed – which, Carrefour Group states, “provide the company with staff to perform duties such as cleaning, security, and e-commerce fulfilment (pickers).”²⁹

Carrefour Group has several human rights policies in place (detailed further below) as well as a “vigilance plan” (referred to by Carrefour Group as a “duty of care plan”) in adherence with the French Law on the Duty of Vigilance of Parent and Instructing Companies Law (Duty of Vigilance Law). This law, in effect since 2017, mandates French companies to publish plans laying out how they will identify and prevent human rights violations resulting directly or indirectly from their activities, the activities of

19 International Supermarket News, “Top food retailers in the world by turnover 2023”, 2 January 2024, <https://internationalsupermarketnews.com/archives/14134>

20 Carrefour, “Get to Know the Carrefour Group better”, <https://www.carrefour.com/en/group>

21 Carrefour, “Consolidated financial statements as of December 31, 2023”, <https://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/2024-03/Carrefour%20-%20FY%202023%20Consolidated%20financial%20statements.pdf>; and Carrefour, “FY 2023 Results”, February 2024, https://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/2024-02/Carrefour_FY_2023_Presentation.pdf

22 Majid Al Futaim, <https://www.majidalfuttaim.com/#Home>

23 Carrefour Group, “Universal Registration Document”, 2023, https://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/2024-03/CFR2023_URD_FR_MEL_24.03.29_1.pdf

24 Carrefour Group, “Presentation of the ‘Carrefour 2026’ strategic plan”, 8 November 2022, p. 6, https://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/2022-11/Press%20Release_Carrefour%202026%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf

25 Retail & Leisure International, “Majid Al Futtaim Open First Carrefour Store in Ha’il City KSA”, 31 October 2023, <https://www.rii.uk.com/majid-al-futtaim-open-first-carrefour-store-in-hail-city-ksa/>

26 Zawya, “Majid Al Futtaim boosts Carrefour’s online capabilities with largest regional fulfilment centre now open in KSA”, 20 October 2020, <https://www.zawya.com/en/press-release/majid-al-futtaim-boosts-carrefours-online-capabilities-with-largest-regional-fulfilment-centre-now-open-in-ksa-j86ucuob>

27 Carrefour, “Get to Know the Carrefour Group better” (previously cited).

28 Letter from Carrefour Group to Amnesty International, 31 May 2024. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/8582/2024/en/>

29 Letter from Carrefour Group to Amnesty International, 31 May 2024.



Unionists and employees of Carrefour group demonstrate at their branch of Ivry Sur Seine, outside Paris as part of a national day of protest for better working conditions on April 3, 2021. © AFP via Getty Images

companies it controls directly or indirectly (subsidiaries as defined by French corporate law), and its subcontractors and suppliers with whom the company has an established commercial relationship, when the activities are linked to this relationship.³⁰ Since 2001, Carrefour Group has had a Global Cooperation Agreement with UNI Global Union, a global union federation, aimed at promoting “social dialogue, diversity and the fundamental labour rights of the multinational retailer’s 321,000 employees around the world, as well as thousands of workers in its global supply chain”,³¹ though this does not apply to the workforce in Saudi Arabia and other franchise countries.³²

Despite these measures, Carrefour Group has come under scrutiny in recent years over allegations that its lack of effective human rights due diligence has led to human rights abuses in its value chain. For example, in this regard, it has been “put on notice” of formal legal proceedings by the environmental NGO Bloom France in relation to its tropical tuna fish-purchasing practices.³³

In March 2024, the Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT, the French Democratic Union of Labour, a major French confederation of trade unions) launched legal action against Carrefour Group in France, alleging that its increasing use of a franchise model is resulting in staff losing social benefits previously negotiated with the multinational.³⁴

30 French Law on the Duty of Vigilance of Parent and Instructing Companies (also known as the Duty of Care Law) (English translation), available at: <https://respect.international/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ngo-translation-french-corporate-duty-of-vigilance-law.pdf>. See also: <https://www.amnesty.fr/focus/devoir-de-vigilance>

31 UNI Global Union, “UNI reinforces global agreement with Carrefour”, 5 October 2022, <https://uniglobalunion.org/news/uni-reinforces-global-agreement-with-carrefour/>

32 This agreement applies only to employees in Carrefour Group’s ‘integrated’ countries in Europe and Latin America. See: Carrefour Group, “Taking action to protect human rights and labour rights”, p.8, https://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/2024-06/010_2024_Droits%20humains_Carrefour_fren-GB.pdf. See also p.4 of the agreement itself: https://uniglobalunion.org/wp-content/uploads/PROJET-ACCORD-DIALOGUE-SOCIAL-CARREFOUR-UNI-2021_EN.pdf

33 Bloom, “Bloom sends a formal notice to Carrefour to put an end to the ecological and human tragedy of tuna fishing”, 8 November 2023, <https://www.bloomassociation.org/en/bloom-sends-a-formal-notice-to-carrefour-to-put-an-end-to-the-ecological-and-human-tragedy-of-tuna-fishing/>

34 Le Monde, “CFDT attacks Carrefour over its social policy in France ‘which has very serious consequences for workers’”, 11 March 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2024/03/11/grande-distribution-la-cfdt-attaque-carrefour-sur-sa-politique-sociale-en-france_6221339_3234.html

LABOUR ABUSES LINKED TO CARREFOUR GROUP IN SAUDI ARABIA

Many of the abuses workers described to Amnesty International were similar to those reported to the organization in 2023 by migrant workers contracted to Amazon warehouses, demonstrating a worrisome pattern. Indeed, 12 of the workers Amnesty International interviewed for this report were contracted by the same labour supply companies used by Amazon. At the point of recruitment, some even believed they were being employed to work directly for Amazon, and the vast majority of those interviewed did not realize that they would in fact be working for a labour supply company – a third-party contractor engaged by larger companies to fulfil their staffing needs.

When a recruitment agent in Nepal told Upendra that he would be working for e-commerce giant Amazon, he and other recruits were **“excited, like kids getting chocolates”**, Upendra told Amnesty International.³⁵ But a day before flying and after paying thousands of Nepali rupees to secure his job, he was shocked to discover he would be employed by Al-Mutairi, a labour supply company. Once he arrived in Saudi Arabia, he was put to work as a “picker” and “stocker”, among other roles, but not for Amazon. Instead, he found himself in a Carrefour warehouse, a contracted worker managing online orders.

For two years, Upendra toiled at Carrefour facilities. Like most of those interviewed, his time in Saudi Arabia was characterized by overwork and underpayment, sub-standard housing, precarious employment and unheeded complaints. Despite these conditions, he persevered quietly out of fear of losing his job and the vital income he sent home to his family each month.

Upendra may have been hired by a third-party supply company, but his labour served two retail giants – Carrefour Group and its franchise partner, Majid Al Futtaim. As this investigation shows, he and potentially hundreds of other migrant workers were exploited by labour supply companies, as well as by Majid Al Futtaim, which over at least several years benefited from their labour and alongside Carrefour Group failed to take sufficient action to prevent and address mistreatment within their value chains.

MANY OF THE ABUSES WORKERS DESCRIBED TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WERE

SIMILAR TO THOSE REPORTED TO THE ORGANIZATION IN 2023 BY MIGRANT WORKERS CONTRACTED TO AMAZON WAREHOUSES, DEMONSTRATING A WORRISOME PATTERN



35 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

MISLED AND CHEATED DURING RECRUITMENT

As has been well documented by NGOs and other actors, it is commonplace for migrant workers to have to pay vast sums to get employment in Saudi Arabia and the wider Gulf region, despite this being outlawed by national legislation and international labour standards.³⁶

It is perhaps unsurprising then to find that most contracted workers Amnesty International interviewed for this report, including workers from the four labour supply companies identified, had paid between USD 500 and USD 2,000 – on average USD 1,200 – in recruitment fees and related costs to several parties to secure their jobs in Saudi Arabia.³⁷ This included paying for the services of recruitment agents and brokers in their home countries, as well as for visas and other travel costs.

These agencies, sometimes with the involvement of labour supply companies in Saudi Arabia, deceived or misled the prospective workers about the nature or benefits of the jobs they were going to, inflating the salary they should expect and/or tricking them into believing they were being hired directly by large and well-known multinational corporations, rather than by third-party supply companies that feed workers to Carrefour stores. Deception in the recruitment process is a key indicator of human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation, as defined by the ILO.³⁸

Majid Al Futtaim states that the employer should cover all recruitment-related costs, and that details of pay, leave, discipline and grievance processes, as well as the “employer and employee relationship”, should be provided in a language understood by the worker and “freely agreed”.³⁹

Upendra, told Amnesty International:

“I went there paying a hefty amount of money to the manpower [recruitment agency]. I paid 120,000 Nepali rupees (USD 899) for the manpower. I paid money for medical tests, travel, etc., so it cost about 150,000 rupees (USD 1,125) altogether. In Nepal, the manpower people didn’t even say a word about Carrefour. They just said it was an Amazon job. A day before my flight to Saudi Arabia, when we had already paid the money, I realized it was the job at Al-Mutairi.”⁴⁰

36 See, for example: Migrant-Rights.org, “Huge recruitment fees charged for jobs in the Gulf; Qatar recruiters accused of demanding the highest commissions”, 25 June 2022, <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2022/06/huge-recruitment-fees-charged-for-jobs-in-the-gulf-qatar-recruiters-accused-of-demanding-the-highest-commissions/>; The Guardian, “Used, abused and deported: migrant workers land back in Bangladesh after Saudi dreams turn sour”; and The Guardian, “Revealed: migrant workers in Qatar forced to pay billions in recruitment fees”, 31 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/31/migrant-workers-in-qatar-forced-to-pay-billions-in-recruitment-fees-world-cup>

37 See Article 40 of Saudi Arabia’s Labour Law, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/74429/89847/F2095468703/SAU74429%20Arab.pdf>. ILO standards prohibit workers from being “charged directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, any fees or costs for their recruitment” and Saudi Arabia’s Labour Law stipulates that employers should cover the costs of recruitment and obtaining a workers’ residence permit. See: ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment; ILO’s Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs, which is to be read in conjunction with the ILO General Principles, https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_703485.pdf.

38 ILO, “Operational indicators of trafficking in human beings”, 2009, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_105023.pdf

39 Majid Al Futtaim, Employment Conditions Policy, available at: https://www.majidalfuttaim.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/employment-conditions-policy.pdf?sfvrsn=5bd56839_3#:~:text=All%20employees%20shall%20be%20treated.inhumane%20treatment%2C%20or%20sexual%20harassment.

40 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.



Migrant workers queue outside the Dhaka airport before their flight to Saudi Arabia On September 25, 2021.
©Future Publishing via Getty Images.

Some of the workers had to sell land, or their family jewellery, or take on high-interest loans to cover these recruitment costs, including in some cases from informal money lenders. Such extortionate and upfront charges can significantly increase the risk of workers ending up in situations of debt bondage, whereby an individual is forced to work to pay off debts. Debt bondage is an indicator of forced labour and can restrict people from leaving employment before their loans are repaid.⁴¹

Biraj, an Indian national employed by Badoor Najed, said he had worked at three different Carrefour locations in Saudi Arabia since his arrival a few years earlier.⁴² He told Amnesty International he paid almost USD 1,800 to a recruitment agent in India and was interviewed by an individual claiming to be a manager at Carrefour, who falsely told him that the French company would directly hire him. He said he was still struggling to pay off debts he incurred to get his job:

“I paid 150,000 Indian rupees to come to Saudi Arabia... I didn’t have that money, it was a loan... The interest rate is 7.5% annually and I am still paying the loan. I couldn’t repay it because my money went towards other household expenses. My dad died and I’m the breadwinner of my family. I’m the only son.”

41 See: United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Slavery, including its Causes and Consequences, A/HRC/33/46, 4 July 2016. For a detailed analysis of risks to migrant workers of debt bondage and other abusive recruitment practices, see: Amnesty International, “Turning people into profits: abusive recruitment, trafficking and forced labour of Nepali migrant workers”, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ASA3162062017ENGLISH.pdf>

42 Interview conducted remotely, February 2024.

Parwan, a Nepali national who began working as a stocker in a Carrefour store in 2021 and was still doing so when interviewed, explained:

“Altogether, I spent about 150,000 Nepali rupees (USD 1,125) to come here. This money was a loan from the bank. We got it by putting our land certificate as collateral. I don’t know exactly about the interest rate, but my parents say that we have to pay 30,000 to 40,000 rupees (USD 225 to 300) every month to pay the interest. We have other old loans as well.”⁴³

Baburam, also from Nepal, described the powerlessness he felt on finding out that he had been deceived by the recruitment agent and prospective employer after paying out more than USD 1,000. Like so many of those Amnesty International interviewed, when he learned that he would in fact be working for a labour supplier, he had already spent so much to secure the job that he felt he had no choice but to continue:

“I was interviewed on a video call when I was in Nepal. The manager of Al-Mutairi [labour supply company] interviewed me. I realized he was a manager when I went to Saudi. But when I was in Nepal, I thought he was someone from Amazon. Because the manpower company told me that I would be interviewed by Amazon people... Soon before flying, when I had already paid money, they said that it was a supply company. What could I do when they had already taken the money and said it was a supply company when they were giving me my flight ticket? It made me very angry... But I couldn’t do anything at that point in time.”⁴⁴



43 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

44 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.



A busy Riyadh street, Saudi Arabia. © Tim E White/Getty

OVERWORKED AND UNDERPAID

Most workers interviewed said that their recruitment agents or contracts stated that their standard duty hours would be eight hours a day, six days a week, plus a food allowance and paid overtime. One Badoor Najed contract seen by Amnesty International stated the basic hours were 10 hours a day, six days a week. This breaches Saudi Arabia's labour law, which limits working hours to 48 hours a week except for certain categories of worker.⁴⁵

Once in Saudi Arabia, many of the workers interviewed discovered that working hours and rest time were actually determined by the number of orders being processed and the individual supervisors or managers on shift in the Carrefour facility at any given time. As a result, many said they regularly worked 10 hours a day, at least six days a week, and complained that they did not usually get adequate rest during their shifts. At busy periods, such as “salary week”, usually at the end of each month when many people in Saudi Arabia are paid their wages, and during the month of Ramadan, when Carrefour orders soar, workers described having to work up to 16 hours a day and being denied their weekly day off. Under Saudi Arabian law, Muslim workers should work no more than six hours a day during Ramadan, and all workers should receive a higher rate of pay for all working hours.⁴⁶

The work at Carrefour stores was exhausting, interviewees told Amnesty International. They were often required to walk and sometimes run around the stores for their entire shift, to meet high targets, which for the store's “pickers” meant gathering upwards of 800 items a day. One described the work “**like oxen ploughing land**”.⁴⁷

45 See Article 98 of the Labour Law.

46 See Article 107 of the Labour Law.

47 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

Another, Anand, a former picker, said:

“Inside Carrefour stores, workers are not treated as humans. They treat workers as animals. They keep on saying, ‘yallah, yallah’ [‘let’s go’, ‘let’s go’]. They cling to our T-shirt to make us work fast.”⁴⁸

Many of the workers said that what was hardest to cope with was not being paid properly for these overtime hours, often being denied dozens of additional hours’ pay a month, amounting to hundreds of dollars each year.

Biraj, who most recently worked in a dark store checking orders and collecting items, said:

“I work 13 to 14 hours a day during the salary week. I start working at 12pm and finish at 1am or 2am. They don’t pay for full overtime duty hours. For example, if I work 50 overtime hours in a month, they only pay for 10 to 12 hours. Furthermore, they don’t pay for overtime every month. For example, if we do overtime duty every month throughout the year, they only pay for two to three months.”⁴⁹

Jagdish from the Mahottara district of Nepal explained:

“I’m a picker. I must run non-stop for eight hours. When work is slow, we get a one-hour lunch break. But when it’s busy, we have to eat in half an hour. They [managers at the Carrefour facility] ask us to ‘help’ for more hours. But they don’t say, ‘Do overtime, and we’ll pay you’... If we do 50 hours of overtime in a month, they just pay for five to 10 hours. Even to get paid for those hours, we have to plead with them.”⁵⁰

Describing himself as a **“a poor man”**, Jagdish said that he nonetheless feels unable to quit his job. **“You know what poverty means”**, he said, **“I’m working here because [I have to].”⁵¹**

Having frequently accepted jobs in Saudi Arabia on the promise that their basic monthly salaries will be increased by working overtime, workers found themselves struggling to send money home to their families or pay off debts – the most regularly cited reasons for having migrated in the first place.

The majority of workers interviewed said that when orders were high, managers at the Carrefour stores would cancel their weekly rest day and make them come into work, without ensuring their labour supply company paid them sufficient additional overtime pay and without giving them an alternate day off, as required by Saudi Arabia’s labour law.⁵² **“If there are many orders to process, they cancel our days off,”** Biraj explained, **“but they don’t give replacement days off. That’s the problem”**.⁵³

48 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

49 Interview conducted remotely, February 2024.

50 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

51 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

52 See Article 104 and 107 of the Labour Law.

53 Interview conducted remotely, February 2024.

HAVING FREQUENTLY ACCEPTED JOBS IN SAUDI ARABIA ON

THE PROMISE THAT THEIR BASIC MONTHLY SALARIES WILL BE INCREASED BY WORKING OVERTIME,

WORKERS FOUND THEMSELVES STRUGGLING TO SEND MONEY HOME TO THEIR FAMILIES OR PAY OFF DEBTS



Workers had different theories about who or what lay behind their underpayment. Some reported that there was no automated system to register their attendance at work, or that the clocking-in machines were broken, requiring them to fill out timesheets manually on paper instead. Consequently, they suspected that managers at the Carrefour franchise or their respective supply company were under-reporting their overtime on the timesheets, leading to them being underpaid.

Most of the workers interviewed said that generally they did not receive pay slips which might have provided clarity. **“It was mysterious who actually didn’t give payment for our overtime”**, Tej said.

“We asked and [managers at the Carrefour store] said, ‘We have given you a salary for all your work hours. We’ve sent a timesheet to Al-Mutairi.’ But Al-Mutairi said, ‘We’ve paid you as per your Carrefour timesheet.’ We were confused. They didn’t coordinate with each other, but we suffered.”⁵⁴

Exasperated by repeatedly being underpaid, some of those interviewed told Amnesty International that they and other contracted workers would on occasion refuse to report to work in protest at conditions or lack of overtime payment. Workers referred to such protests as “strikes”, though trade unions and collective action are not authorised in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁵

Workers from various stores reported that such “strikes” had happened on several occasions since 2022, with managers from Carrefour franchises coming to their accommodation to convince them to return to work. Often, the protests would result in the workers being paid – at least partially – for that month’s overtime, but the underpayment usually continued subsequently, they said.

54 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

55 While trade unions are not explicitly prohibited, the law only authorises the establishment of worker committees for Saudi citizens, and only in companies that employ more than 100 Saudi nationals. See: Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, “Rules for forming workers committees and their executive regulations”, article 1 and 4, <https://www.snc.org.sa/%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86/>



Gopal described what happened during a strike in mid-2022:

“When we went on strike, [the Carrefour franchise manager] came to our room and said they would pay us. We continued working. After some time, they paid, but they only paid a little, not the full amount... What’s the point of going on strike? It went in vain. After that, the manager was also changed, and the issue was totally dismissed.”⁵⁶

Tej said that a day following strikes in his workplace, someone who he understood to be from Majid Al Futtaim’s “head office in Dubai” came to the store, but he said that workers were not given a chance to talk to them directly. **“The store people might have feared that we would tell the real story to the people from the head office”**, he surmised.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Interview conducted remotely, January 2024.

⁵⁷ Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

NO OPTION BUT TO WORK

Under threat of penalty, in a country where the labour system continues to afford employers vast power over employees; where migrant workers often arrive indebted and in dire need of a job to pay off these debts; and where changing jobs without the current employer's permission remains highly restricted for foreign nationals, many workers told Amnesty International that they felt no option but to do as instructed and work overtime, even when they knew they may not be paid. Upendra, for example, said, **"I worked for two years without questioning and disputing because I didn't want to lose my job. I was afraid that the company could terminate workers any time, so I gave my best to work."**⁵⁸

Workers described facing threats from managers at the labour supply company that employed them or the Carrefour franchises where they worked. Baburam said he worked 15-hour days during Ramadan:

"It was tough to work that long. But the manager [at the Carrefour franchise] wouldn't let me go to the room [accommodation]. He would say, 'You must complete the order process, then you can go.' What could I do? If we didn't work 15 hours, he would also say, 'I will terminate you. I won't pay for your overtime'."⁵⁹

Gopal said that on the occasions when he and his colleagues in one of Carrefour's dark stores tried to resist working additional hours, **"the Carrefour [franchise] manager and supervisor would force us to work. They would even come to our room to bring us to work if we stayed in the room."**⁶⁰

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS AND SICK PAY

Working such long hours and often having to walk up to 20km per shift around the shop floor without proper breaks had taken its toll on several of the workers Amnesty International interviewed, especially those employed as pickers. Tej explained that his mobile phone would track his movement and he would usually clock up around 17km a day while he worked in one of Carrefour's dark stores in Riyadh. As a result, he told Amnesty International,

"I didn't have time to cook food daily. I would eat stale food. I also had to overwork. Perhaps because of work and food, I fell sick. Sometimes, I had back pain. I had a fever. I became extremely weak. Now, I'm home [in Nepal], and I'm fit. I was fit before going to Saudi, too."⁶¹

58 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

59 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

60 Interview conducted remotely, January 2024.

61 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

Baburam felt similarly after a long shift on his feet:

“The [furthest] I walked in a shift was 26 kilometres. I would get extremely exhausted. My body would hurt. I couldn’t even cook food when I returned home. I would buy khuboos [Arabic bread] and yogurt and eat... My body would ache. I would take painkillers and work. I didn’t have money to go to the hospital.”⁶²

Some workers said that even when they were sick, they would be penalized for not attending work every day. Most workers said they had a basic salary package of SAR 1,200 (USD 320), which included SAR 200 (USD 54) for food,⁶³ and they were entitled to a further monthly ‘attendance allowance’ of SAR 100 (USD 27) that they would get only if they were present at Carrefour’s facilities for every working day of the month. If they missed any time, even if due to health issues, workers said that the supply company may not pay them this allowance, and would also deduct the day’s wage from their salary, in breach of article 92 of Saudi Arabia’s labour law.⁶⁴ Pradeep told Amnesty International:

“We have a WhatsApp group of Carrefour workers. We were told that we should inform the group if we become sick and can’t work. But even if we inform the group and don’t go to duty, they still deduct the money. They deduct one day’s wage [around SAR 40, USD 10.6] and the attendance allowance.”⁶⁵

As described below, a culture of fear permeated the lives of the workers Amnesty International interviewed. This meant they felt unable to stand up for their labour rights or raise concerns about their living and working conditions with either Carrefour franchise management or their direct employers, the labour supply companies.

The treatment some described suggests that the two key elements of forced labour as defined internationally – involuntary work and threat of penalty – may be present in Carrefour’s franchise operations in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁶ Although often associated with physical violence, forced labour is frequently exacted through more subtle and insidious means, with the withholding of wages, or the threat of this, being the most common form of coercion experienced by people forced to work.⁶⁷ Forced labour is nearly always related to limitations on the rights of workers to form and join trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining – fundamental freedoms that do not exist in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁸

62 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

63 Two workers from India and employed by Badoor Najed said they were paid a higher total salary of SAR 1,600 per month, including SAR 1,200 basic and SAR 400 food allowance, and this was reflected on a contract seen by Amnesty International.

64 Wage deductions are prohibited except in narrow circumstances.

65 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

66 ILO Convention 29 on Forced Labour, Article 2(1). See also, the ILO’s 11 indicators for forced labour are: abuse of vulnerability; deception; restriction of movement; isolation; physical and sexual violence; intimidation and threats; retention of identity documents; withholding of wages; debt bondage; abusive working and living conditions; and excessive overtime. See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf

67 ILO, “Ending forced labour by 2030: A review of policies and programmes”, 2018, pp. 38-39, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_653986.pdf

68 ILO, “Ending forced labour by 2030”, p. 75.



By pressing contracted workers to work excessive overtime, on their day off, or when they are unwell, under the threat of losing their job or not being paid, Carrefour's franchisee Majid Al Futtaim may be subjecting its contracted workers to practices amounting to forced labour given that in Saudi Arabia, migrant workers are heavily dependent on their employers for every aspect of their stay in the country. This makes them especially vulnerable to pressure from supervisors who impose work under the threat of punishment. It is also in breach of article 104 and 107 of Saudi Arabia's labour law.

NO JOB, NO PAY

A few of those interviewed said that their financial precarity, and that of colleagues, was exacerbated by periods when they were "jobless" in Saudi Arabia. While they had signed contracts for two years that stated a monthly salary, the workers were reliant on the supply companies placing them in jobs. For periods when there was no job available, workers employed by Al-Mutairi and another supply company, Company A, said the companies did not pay them, contrary to Saudi Arabian law and international standards.⁶⁹

For example, Baburam said that after around 18 months working at one Carrefour store in early 2023 he was told not to return to duty following a disagreement with a manager at the store about his shift patterns. Subsequently, his labour supply company – Al-Mutairi – stopped paying his wages and did not find him another job. He explained:

"After I lost the Carrefour job, I became jobless for a month in Saudi. [The Carrefour franchise] terminated me... Then I stayed a month [in Saudi Arabia]. They [Al-Mutairi] didn't give a salary for that period. During this time, I used my savings to buy food. My friends also provided me with food."⁷⁰

Navin, a worker deployed in a Carrefour store in Al Qassim, said that on arrival in Saudi Arabia in 2021, Al-Mutairi left him without a job placement for the first six weeks, paying him just SAR 500 (USD 133) for the period to cover his food. Later, only a few months after eventually starting a job at the Carrefour

⁶⁹ Articles 61 and 62 of Saudi Arabia's Labour Law state that employers must not "use a worker without pay", nor "withhold the worker's wages or any part thereof", and that if the employer prevents their employee from working even when that person is ready to do so, the worker is nonetheless "entitled to the wage for the period during which no work is performed". See also the ILO Convention on the Protection of Wages, to which Saudi Arabia is a state party.

⁷⁰ Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

store, he said he was “fired” from the store without explanation once Ramadan ended. Al-Mutairi neither reassigned him to a different job nor compensated him for that time, leaving him with no choice but to return to Nepal with the help of his recruitment agency. **“I was under immense mental pressure when I lost my job,”** Navin told Amnesty International:

“I was jobless for a long time. I needed to ask my brother for everything. I ate less during those times because I didn’t have enough money. I only ate khuboos [Arabic bread] and vegetables. . . After losing my job, I was depressed. My family didn’t understand me. This was the hardest thing in my life.”⁷¹

Even those who had not experienced any periods without work described the fear that came from seeing their colleagues face joblessness and no pay. As described above, the kafala system continues to restrict migrant workers’ ability to change jobs without their employer’s permission, and employers continue to hold power to report workers as having “absconded”, which in turn can lead to arrest and deportation, as mentioned above. As a result, “jobless” workers feel trapped and unable to leave their company, even when they are receiving no income.

A few workers said that their labour supply company would not facilitate workers’ return home from Saudi Arabia if they lost their job in Carrefour stores before the end of their two-year employment contract, unless they paid an “exit fee” to the company.⁷² Biraj, employed by Badoor Najed, said:

“If a worker loses a job in the middle of the contract, he cannot go home. He has to pay [to Badoor Najed] 4,000-5,000 riyals [USD 1,066-1,333] as an exit fee to go home. Otherwise, he cannot leave. The jobless worker is also not paid when he is staying in the room. He just sits and waits for the job.”⁷³

Dinesh said that his employer – Company B – had a similar policy of charging workers if they wanted to leave the country before their contract officially ended, which also spread fear amongst colleagues. He added:

“The [company] must be changed. It should allow workers to go home when the contract is ended. Now it doesn’t allow them to go home. It just makes them jobless and troubles them.”⁷⁴

Amnesty International’s previous research found this practice was commonplace across Al-Mutairi,⁷⁵ and a senior Carrefour franchise employee interviewed for this report confirmed that he would receive complaints from workers whose supply companies failed to provide them a new job or prevented them from returning home after losing their job in a Carrefour store.

71 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

72 For more details on the process of migrant workers’ leaving Saudi Arabia, see Amnesty International, *“Don’t worry it’s a branch of Amazon”* (previously cited), pp. 17-18.

73 Interview conducted remotely, February 2024.

74 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

75 For more on this practice, see: Amnesty International, *“Don’t worry it’s a branch of Amazon”* (previously cited). All of the Al-Mutairi workers interviewed for Amnesty International’s 2023 report on contracted Amazon staff said they had experienced periods of joblessness during which they weren’t paid a salary. See also, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, “Workers at Amazon warehouses in Saudi Arabia claim they were deceived, exploited, trapped”, 10 October 2023, <https://www.icij.org/investigations/trafficking-inc/amazon-warehouse-workers-saudi-arabia-exploited/>



Accommodation provided by Al-Mutairi for workers. © Private

GROSSLY INADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS

“We’re placed in a room that is like a cowshed,” Pradeep told Amnesty International. “We cook here, we eat here, we sleep here, our toilet is also here. We six people stay together.”⁷⁶

Most of the workers Amnesty International interviewed described the accommodation provided by the labour supply companies while they worked at Carrefour’s facilities as overcrowded and inadequate, contrary to Saudi Arabia’s regulations and international law and labour standards.⁷⁷ They repeatedly talked of bed bug infestations and not being provided with cleaning staff to keep their shared accommodation sanitary.

Upendra’s description of his living quarters in Riyadh typifies what many of the workers told Amnesty International:

“The accommodation where I lived during my job was not good. It was dirty. We had water shortages and power cuts. We had such problems because Al-Mutairi didn’t pay the rent of that building. So, the building owner would cut the water and electricity supply. The room was air-conditioned. There were bed bugs. In our small room, eight workers stayed together.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

⁷⁷ See: Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing, 2021 Guidelines on Conditions of Collective Housing, pp. 3-7, 14-19, available at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8a37v6>. See also, Article 25 of the UDHR and Article 5 of the ICERD; and ILO Workers’ Housing Recommendation 115.

⁷⁸ Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

Many workers said that they had to buy their own water because the water in their accommodation was too salty to drink and would leave them with itchy skin. One worker employed by Badoor Najed said he collected drinking water **“from other public places, for example, the roadside tap”**.⁷⁹ Others complained that air conditioning units were faulty and rarely repaired, or that they had to buy their own cooking gas as this was not provided by their employer.

Supply companies rarely took action to improve conditions. **“It’s been two years [Al-Mutairi] hasn’t come to check out beds, etc”**, Jagdish told Amnesty International, **“The company only wants us to work. It doesn’t care about other things.”**⁸⁰

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT

Some of the contracted workers interviewed by Amnesty International said they felt that workers hired directly by Majid Al Futtaim to work in Carrefour stores tended to be treated more favourably than those employed via third party labour supply companies, including in relation to pay and working conditions, leaving them feeling marginalized, disrespected and expendable. Several believed that staff directly employed by the Carrefour franchise often received higher wages and better benefits than them. Some said they faced harsher working conditions, including heavier workloads, fewer breaks and longer working hours, often feeling overworked and undervalued, particularly compared to their directly hired colleagues in similar roles.

Amnesty International was not itself able to document the working conditions of those employed directly, but a senior Carrefour franchise employee interviewed by Amnesty International said he also witnessed such differential treatment in his managerial position. He said:

“I’m a direct worker. I have many benefits compared to supply company workers. There is a big difference in terms of benefits given to those two types of workers. The direct workers get paid leave every year; they get a bonus... A direct stocker for Carrefour [franchise] gets a two-year contract. The company pays for their flight ticket. They get two months of paid leave. They can go home or wherever... We try to take more advantage of the supply company workers. But we don’t do the same for the direct workers. We see two different types of workers.

“We don’t ask direct workers to work more than the regular duty hours. But the supply company workers work more if we say we give them 5-10 riyals [USD 1.30-2.60] ... I can tell it’s very hard for supply company workers. They work 10 hours while direct staff do an eight-hour shift. Plus, they get a little salary. They don’t get much or specific time to eat. They work 10 hours, go home, and cook for themselves.

“How can they manage to talk with their family? It’s very hard to manage time. They sometimes talk with their family while working in the store, but security guards shout at them.”⁸¹

79 Interview conducted remotely, February 2024.

80 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

81 Interview conducted remotely, February 2024.

A CULTURE OF FEAR AND UNHEARD COMPLAINTS

A few workers told Amnesty International that they had complained to managers from the Carrefour franchises or their respective labour supply companies about aspects of their working and living conditions. Many others said that their lack of job security as a contracted worker as well as threats from management in both Carrefour stores and their labour supply companies meant they felt unable to raise their concerns for fear of losing their jobs and being sent to their home countries without any money to show for their labour, or being deported. Nearly all workers reported feeling that, in general, workers' concerns at Carrefour facilities were not dealt with properly.

Gopal explained why he kept quiet, even after repeatedly being underpaid while working at a Carrefour store:

“I couldn’t complain to the company [Majid Al Futtaim] because I was a [third party] contract worker there. I was not directly hired. Had I complained, I could have lost my job. That’s why I couldn’t complain. Once, 14 to 15 workers complained, and they were expelled from the job. When a worker loses his job, the supply company makes him jobless for four to five months. I didn’t complain because I didn’t want to be jobless but wanted to work to earn money.”⁸²

Jagdish said managers at the Carrefour store would sometimes make him work 12 to 16 hours a day. He knew he would not be paid overtime, but like so many others Amnesty International interviewed, the threat of losing his job hung over him:

“I’m not a rich person... I came here to earn money. If they kick me out of my job, I end up in an even worse situation. If they send me home, I’ll have to pay again to go to another country [to work]. It may also take a long time. So, I don’t argue with the people at Carrefour [franchise].”⁸³

Those who did complain said this usually led to little action by the Carrefour franchise, or their labour supply company. Pradeep explained,

“[Al-Mutairi] doesn’t do anything about our accommodation even if we complain. They just say, ‘Do it yourself’. We repair the fan ourselves. We repair the lights ourselves... We have complained to Carrefour [franchise] and Al-Mutairi about our salary deduction and overtime payment. They point fingers at each other. We don’t get money.”⁸⁴

82 Interview conducted remotely, January 2024.

83 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

84 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

Biraj said that he had complained to the labour supply company that hired him, Badoor Najed, about the lack of overtime pay **“but didn’t get any response from them.”** When he raised the issue with a manager at the Carrefour franchise, Biraj said the response was simply, **“I don’t know. Maybe it’s because of HR.”**⁸⁵ Anand, who worked at a Carrefour store until early 2024, reported often experiencing a similar apathy from managers at the Carrefour franchise: **“Carrefour doesn’t listen to our complaints... they say, ‘Talk to head office in Dubai.’ But how could we talk to them?”**⁸⁶

Some workers reported facing threats or penalties from their labour supply companies when they did complain. Baburam said that when he told managers at Al-Mutairi that his duty manager at the Carrefour facility was forcing him to work on his day off, they simply replied, **“do whatever the manager asks you to do”**. He added, **“The Carrefour [franchise] manager’s behaviour would make me angry, but he would say, ‘You won’t get a salary if you don’t come to duty’. What could I do? I would fear going to work.”**⁸⁷

Anand described the impact of such threats on workers’ ability to stand up for themselves in the face of abusive working and living conditions, and how ineffective or even counterproductive Carrefour’s franchise grievance management seemed:

“We had a fear of losing our job, so we didn’t raise our voices much. If we raise [our] voice, Al-Mutairi will lay off workers for four to five months. They don’t give money for food. So, who would speak up? Many workers are in trouble. But they hesitate to speak up. If workers complain to the Carrefour [franchise] during the day, the supply company person comes to the room and says, ‘Get out of the room [accommodation]’ in the evening. Who would dare to speak then?”⁸⁸

Workers said it was not only labour supply companies that threatened them for raising concerns. Several also reported threats from management at Carrefour facilities in Saudi Arabia. Gopal explained:

“We didn’t raise voices at Carrefour [stores]. Because the Carrefour [store] manager would warn us. If we said, ‘we don’t do overtime duty’, he would say, ‘I’ll kick you out from this work. And I’ll tell your supply company manager not to send you for another job.’ He would threaten like this.”⁸⁹

85 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

86 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

87 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

88 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

89 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

Nitin, from Pakistan, described a similar impact such threats had on workers from Badoor Najed:

“They don't have the courage to say and talk about their overtime [issues] in Carrefour [franchise], because if [workers] talk, if they discuss on this matter, [Majid Al Futtaim] will terminate them straight away. This is the weapon they have, they use. They say, ‘Just do work. If you want to work, do work. If you don't work, we will terminate you.’ There is no overtime payment.”⁹⁰



Tej reported that the behaviour of managers at Carrefour stores towards contracted workers would briefly improve when inspectors or auditors came to the stores. **“At that time, they made us feel that we, too, were Carrefour employees”**, he said. **“But as soon as they left the store, they would get back to their actual behaviour.”⁹¹**

A senior employee working in a Carrefour store confirmed to Amnesty International that contracted workers would raise concerns with him and other senior employees about multiple issues, including pay and accommodation, but these were rarely heeded. **“The most repeated complaint is about delayed salaries and overtime”**, he explained, **“because the supply company workers are forced to work 10 hours a day”**. He said he would do what he could to resolve workers’ issues, but in general problems faced by contracted workers were not discussed in middle management meetings. **“It’s totally a business of higher-up management. We just follow whatever they decide. The General Manager and other senior people might have discussed it, but I don’t know.”** He concluded that, **“generally, Carrefour [franchise] doesn’t care about the supply company workers’ problems... I don’t recommend anyone to come to the supply company.”⁹²**

The fear Dinesh felt in even speaking about the abuses he faced in Saudi Arabia was clear during his interview. He is employed by Company B and told Amnesty International:

“Don’t tell them that I told all these information to you. I’m going back [after my vacation at home], and they can do anything. They might file a case against me, they can do anything.”⁹³

90 Interview conducted remotely, April 2024.

91 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

92 Interview conducted remotely, December 2023.

93 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

FLAWED COMPLAINTS SYSTEMS

In their responses to Amnesty International’s letter initially flagging its concerns about treatment of contracted workers, both Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim pointed to grievance mechanisms in place within their operations in Saudi Arabia. In order to “encourage an open reporting culture”, they said, Majid Al Futtaim had implemented an “ethics hotline”, available in Arabic, English, Georgian and Urdu, through which “employees and any other external party” can register their concerns anonymously. Majid Al Futtaim stated that it prohibits retaliation against anyone sharing a “good-faith concern”.⁹⁴ Carrefour Group also offers a similar online reporting platform which it said was available to franchise partners,⁹⁵ though this does not appear to be available in any South Asian languages.

Despite Majid Al Futtaim stating in its June 2024 letter to Amnesty International that the ethics hotline is advertised in all stores, and “can be easily seen by any third-party hire working for the company”, workers Amnesty International spoke to had not used it or did not know it existed. They spoke about feeling dehumanized and reported that, to their knowledge, there was no platform for raising their complaints or issues. For example, Anand, who worked in various Carrefour stores in Saudi Arabia until early 2024, said when showed a picture of the number:

“We, supply company workers didn’t have [this] ethics hotline number. It was only for direct Carrefour employees, I think. I never saw this phone number before. Not only me, nobody knows about it.”⁹⁶

After Amnesty International told one worker about the ethics hotline, he asked his boss about it. ***“I asked what it was, and he said, ‘it’s for Carrefour staff, not for you’.”⁹⁷***

Nitin, who was employed by Badoor Najed, said:

“We are from the outsource [labour supply] company, so it is like we are not human, so there is no platform to raise our complaints or issues. We really don’t know about this reporting system, and nobody ever raised a complaint for all the behaviours they have done with us.”⁹⁸

In Carrefour Group’s correspondence with Amnesty International, the company acknowledges receiving 5,909 alerts in 2022 via its local ethics alert lines, “however no alert has been received from Saudi Arabia”.⁹⁹ This sheds serious doubt on the effectiveness of Carrefour Group’s hotlines and grievances mechanisms. Similarly, in its 2022 Environmental, Social and Governance report, Majid Al Futtaim says, “During 2022, zero cases of forced or compulsory labour in our operations were identified”.¹⁰⁰

94 Letters from Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim to Amnesty International, 31 May and 13 June 2024, respectively.

95 Carrefour, “Our Ethical Principles”, <https://ethics.carrefour.com/>

96 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

97 Interview conducted remotely, June 2024.

98 Interview conducted remotely, July 2024.

99 Letter from Carrefour Group to Amnesty International, 31 May 2024. .

100 Majid Al Futtaim, “2022 ESG Report: Dare Together”, p. 119, https://www.majidalfuttaim.com/docs/default-source/reports/maf_esg_report_2022.pdf

Make the right call...

Speak to the ethics hotline:



 Armenia	1) Dial the country operator 2) Reverse charge call to 9805007401 3) Operator will connect you to the Navex call handler who will accept the call and charges
 Bahrain	8000 6138
 Egypt	0800 006 0154 / 0150 171 8037
 Georgia	0800 10 02 83
 Hong Kong	800 962 065
 India	000 800 0502 222
 Iraq	066 240 8188
 Jordan	(06) 429 6286
 Kenya	0800 211 173
 Kuwait	2227 9522
 Lebanon	1) Dial the country operator: 01-426-801 2) At the English prompt dial: 8336280156
 Oman	800 74574
 Pakistan	0800 900 44452
 Qatar	00800-101-035
 Saudi Arabia	800 850 0316
 Uganda	0800 113243
 UAE	800 0320912
 UK	0800 048 8721
 Uzbekistan	1) Dial the country operator: 0^641-744-0010 (^ Indicates second dial tone) 2) At the English prompt dial: 8336280156



NAVEX GLOBAL

- Independent operator of the Majid Al Futtaim Ethics Hotline
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- Available 24/7, 365 days a year
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FORCED LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING



The human rights abuses Amnesty International documented should also be analysed through the lens of forced labour and human trafficking. Forced labour is defined as **“[A]ll work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”** and is internationally prohibited.¹⁰¹ 28 million people were estimated to be in forced labour globally in 2022,¹⁰² and the ILO has identified 11 key indicators of forced labour.

The 11 indicators are:

- Abuse of vulnerability
- Deception
- Restriction of movement
- Isolation
- Physical and sexual violence
- Intimidation and threats
- Retention of identity documents
- Withholding of wages
- Debt bondage
- Abusive working and living conditions
- Excessive overtime.¹⁰³

Many of these were described by workers during interviews with Amnesty International for this report. Further, some of the workers interviewed for this report are likely to have been subjected to practices amounting to human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, which is prohibited under both international law¹⁰⁴ and Saudi Arabia's domestic law.¹⁰⁵ Human trafficking for labour exploitation involves the use of force, fraud or coercion to compel someone into undertaking labour with the aim of exploiting them for profit.¹⁰⁶

101 ILO Convention 29 on Forced Labour, Article 2(1)

102 ILO, Forced labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons, <https://www.ilo.org/topics/forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-trafficking-persons>

103 ILO, “Indicators of Forced Labour”, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf

104 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), 15 November 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

105 Saudi Arabia's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law, Royal Decree No. M/40 July 23, 2009, <https://laws.boe.gov.sa/Files/Download/?attId=6b2e41e2-baf7-4274-83da-adbb010e882f>

106 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), 15 November 2000.

The UN Palermo Protocol defines it as:

“... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, or the removal of organs.”¹⁰⁷

The ILO breaks down this definition into three key elements:

- 1 Activities:** recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person.
- 2 Means:** force, deception, abduction, coercion, fraud, threats, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability.
- 3 Purpose:** exploitation, including forced labour, or removal of organs.¹⁰⁸

Carrefour Group’s “Respect for Human Rights” policy prohibits both forced labour and human trafficking.¹⁰⁹ Majid Al Futtaim states that its contracts with suppliers “clearly prohibit” forced labour.¹¹⁰

As described above, some of the workers interviewed were indeed deceived in their home countries by recruitment agents, and in some cases by supply company representatives themselves, about the nature of their employer and the terms and conditions of their job before they left their home countries. Once in Saudi Arabia and while engaged to work in Carrefour stores, they were housed in wholly inadequate accommodation and had their overtime pay withheld by labour supply companies. In some cases, particularly when contracted workers raised complaints about their living and working conditions, managers from both the supply companies and Carrefour stores subjected them to threats of job termination to pressure them into working additional unpaid overtime hours. Additionally, in some cases they would cancel workers’ weekly rest day without providing them an alternate day off. Further, once the workers’ engagement ended at Carrefour stores, the third-party contractors sometimes rendered them “jobless” by failing to find them alternative jobs and stopping paying them their contractual wages. Given that under Saudi Arabia’s sponsorship system workers’ visas were tied to their employers, such workers were then effectively trapped and unable to make any income or move jobs.

107 Palermo Protocol, Article 3(a).

108 “Forced labour and human trafficking: A handbook for inspectors”, 2008, p. 5, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_097835.pdf. The ILO has also published a series of operational indicators for characterizing the various elements of trafficking for labour, which include deception during recruitment, transfer and transportation; coercion during recruitment, transfer and transportation: recruitment by abuse of vulnerability; exploitative conditions of work; coercion at destination and abuse of vulnerability at destination. See ILO, Operational indicators of trafficking in human beings, 2009, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_105023.pdf

109 P.3 of the “Respect for Human Rights” section of Carrefour’s Corporate Social Responsibility Policy states: “Carrefour and its franchises undertake not to resort to forced or compulsory labour in any form – in accordance with the strictest rule between local or regional laws and regulations, branch agreements and ILO Conventions 29 and 105. All forms of human trafficking, directly or through providers, are strictly prohibited”.

110 The company states in its Employment Conditions Policy that it “makes a number of commitments pertaining to wages and benefits, working hours, annual leave, insurance, basic workers’ rights, child labour, forced labour, health and safety, labour accommodation and education”, and in its 2022 Environmental, Social and Governance report says that its template contract with suppliers “clearly prohibit” forced labour, though Majid Al Futtaim did not share an example of such a contract with Amnesty International. See https://www.majidalfuttaim.com/docs/default-source/reports/maf_esg_report_2022.pdf, p. 119.

SAUDI ARABIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

Saudi Arabia is not a party to several key international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers.¹¹¹ However, it is a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol).¹¹² Despite general reservations to international conventions to the extent they contradict Islamic law, Saudi Arabia, as a UN member, is expected to uphold human rights standards and adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹¹³

Saudi Arabia has ratified 16 ILO conventions, including those on forced labour and discrimination. In particular, Saudi Arabia is a party to the ILO's Forced Labour Convention, the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, the Discrimination (Occupation and Employment) Convention, and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. It has also ratified the Labour Inspection Convention, though it has not ratified conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless Saudi Arabia must still uphold all fundamental labour principles due to its ILO membership.¹¹⁵

Saudi Arabia is obliged to protect workers from being exploited by companies operating in its territory, by taking appropriate measures to prevent human rights abuses by private actors and proactively monitoring and investigating these abuses when they occur; holding perpetrators to account; and ensuring effective remedy for harm caused.¹¹⁶

SAUDI ARABIA HAS RATIFIED 16 ILO CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING THOSE ON FORCED LABOUR AND DISCRIMINATION, AND IS A PARTY TO THE ILO'S:

- ✓ **Forced Labour Convention**
- ✓ **Abolition of Forced Labour Convention**
- ✓ **Discrimination (Occupation and Employment) Convention**
- ✓ **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention**

111 For further details of Saudi Arabia's international legal obligations and the status of core treaty ratifications, see: *"Don't worry, it's a branch of Amazon"* (previously cited), pp. 36-39.

112 Saudi Arabia is also a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

113 Resolution 60/251, para. 9, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 3 April 2006.

114 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work and its Follow up, 1998, ILO Constitution, 1919 and Declaration of Philadelphia annexed to the ILO Constitution, 1944.

115 ILO, "The ILO in Saudi Arabia", <https://www.ilo.org/beirut/countries/saudi-arabia/lang--en/index.htm>

116 The right to remedy encompasses the victim's right to equal and effective access to justice, and adequate, effective and prompt reparation for the harm suffered. See Article 6 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); Articles 13, 12 and 23 of the Arab Charter. The right to remedy is also guaranteed by Article 23 of the UDHR.



Foreign labourers wait in a long queue outside the Saudi immigration offices at the Al-Isha quarter of the Al-Khazan district, west of Riyadh, on May 28, 2013. ©AFP via Getty Images.

The findings of this research echo Amnesty International's 2023 investigation on Amazon, again revealing that Saudi Arabia's approach to regulating migrant labour remains inadequate and often facilitates serious human rights abuses and exploitation, including human trafficking and forced labour. The reforms since 2021 have not fully dismantled the kafala system and enforcement of labour protections remains weak. In general, migrant workers continue to face significant barriers to justice and are often unable to hold perpetrators accountable.

In the case of abuses carried out by the companies named in this report, the government of Saudi Arabia has failed to implement and enforce laws and regulations capable of protecting the rights of their workers, and subsequently failed to hold perpetrators to account, depriving the victims of justice and remedy. According to the 2024 US Trafficking in Persons Report, upon being notified of labour abuses in warehouses in 2023, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development conducted its own investigations into the facilities, which identified 40 "potential trafficking victims".¹¹⁷ The report does not state what remedy and access to justice the government provided to the victims, nor what action, if any, it took to hold the employers and recruiters involved accountable and to ensure non-repetition and the government did not provide this information to Amnesty International when requested. Indeed, as this research shows, similar abuses continue in the same labour supply companies into 2024, indicating that any measures taken by the Saudi Arabian government were insufficient.

While the government of Saudi Arabia is obliged to respect and protect the human rights of migrant workers in the country, companies like Carrefour Group, its business partners and contractors also have human rights responsibilities to ensure respect for human rights, independent of the state.

117 US Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Saudi Arabia.

COMPANIES' FAILURE TO MEET HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES

HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUSINESSES

The responsibility of companies to respect human rights extends to workers throughout their value chains and operations globally. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN Guiding Principles) establish a global consensus across states and companies that businesses should take measures to not cause or contribute to negative human rights impacts linked to their operations, products or services. Companies should implement ongoing due diligence processes to identify, prevent and mitigate any potential adverse impacts, as well as act on findings, track responses, and communicate how they are addressed.¹¹⁸ Additionally, the UN Guiding Principles state that companies should have processes that enable remediation of any adverse human rights impacts that they cause or to which they contribute.¹¹⁹

The UN Guiding Principles clearly state that a business may be involved in adverse human rights impacts either through its own activities (which includes action and omission) and/or as a result of its business relationships, which are defined as partners, entities in its value chain, and any other entity directly linked to its business operations, products or services. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Conduct (OECD Guidelines) detail this link further by stating that the term “business relationship” includes relationships with “business partners, subcontractors, franchisees, investee companies, clients, and joint venture partners, entities in the supply chain which supply products or services that contribute to the enterprise’s own operations, products or services or which receive, license, buy or use products or services from the enterprise, and any other non-State or State entities directly linked to its operations, products or services”.¹²⁰ As an international instrument that is binding on signatory governments, the OECD Guidelines reflect the expectation from governments to businesses on how to act responsibly, and OECD member countries such as France are required to ensure the Guidelines are implemented and observed by companies such as Carrefour Group.¹²¹

As stated previously, Carrefour Group operates stores in Saudi Arabia via a franchise agreement with Majid Al Futtaim. In general, a franchiser grants a licence to a franchisee for it to operate its products, branding and knowledge, often in exchange for an initial start-up fee and annual licensing fees. In addition to these fees, a franchiser may request royalties or a percentage of the operation’s sales or revenue to be paid by the franchisee. A franchise agreement lays out the obligations and rights of both parties, including those related to training and quality control support, performance expectations, fees to be paid, and other relevant issues. Through this model, a franchiser can expand its operations and

118 UN Guiding Principles 18-21.

119 UN Guiding Principle 15.

120 OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, 2023 edition, p. 18, para. 17, <https://www.oecd.org/publications/oecd-guidelines-for-multinational-enterprises-on-responsible-business-conduct-81f92357-en.htm>

121 OECD, “Members and partners”, <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/members-partners.html>

THE UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A BUSINESS MAY BE INVOLVED IN ADVERSE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS

EITHER THROUGH ITS OWN ACTIVITIES (WHICH INCLUDES ACTION AND OMISSION) AND/OR AS A RESULT OF ITS BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS, WHICH ARE DEFINED AS PARTNERS, ENTITIES IN ITS VALUE CHAIN, AND ANY OTHER ENTITY DIRECTLY LINKED TO ITS BUSINESS OPERATIONS, PRODUCTS OR SERVICES.

revenue through a partnership, while the franchisee is able to take advantage of established marketing campaigns and brand recognition to focus on growth and customer satisfaction. One of the key advantages of this model is that franchises offer established policies and procedures with an existing positive reputation linked to the brand.¹²²

As explained below, Carrefour Group has reported to Amnesty International that it requires its franchisees – including Majid Al Futtaim - to follow its human rights policies and procedures. This includes, for example, requiring franchisees to permit Carrefour Group or its representatives to conduct unannounced visits to check compliance, demonstrating that it has made efforts to use the leverage of its franchise agreement to ensure human rights due diligence. However, as Amnesty International's research indicates, efforts by both companies have fallen short of adequately addressing the clear human rights risks in their labour force in Saudi Arabia.

Drawing upon these concepts for the analysis of human rights responsibility in this report, the following sections explain how companies at all four levels of Carrefour Group's labour business model in Saudi Arabia are involved in adverse human rights impacts and have failed to fulfil their responsibility to respect human rights.

CARREFOUR GROUP AND MAJID AL FUTTAIM'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES

Carrefour Group's policies commit to several international human rights standards, including the UN Guiding Principles, the UDHR, core ILO Conventions and the OECD Guidelines. Among others, its commitments include prohibiting forced labour and human trafficking, complying with national labour laws, ensuring a safe working environment, and providing sufficient remuneration for workers.¹²³ Further, the company commits to ensuring respect for such human rights throughout its franchisees, and states that it includes a 'human rights charter' in franchise contracts, requiring compliance from employees, suppliers and subcontractors, and unannounced visits to monitor adherence.¹²⁴ Amnesty International requested a copy of Carrefour Group's human rights charter, but this had not been provided by the time of publication.

122 Forbes, "Franchise Foundations: Building A Business On Proven Success", 14 July 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rhettpower/2024/07/14/franchise-foundations-building-a-business-on-proven-success/>; International Franchise Association, "What is a franchise?", <https://www.franchise.org/faqs/basics/what-is-a-franchise> and; International Franchise Professionals Group, "What are Franchise Royalty Fees?", <https://www.ifpg.org/buying-a-franchise/what-are-franchise-royalty-fees>

123 Carrefour, "Respect for Human Rights", 2022, p. 3.

124 Carrefour, "Respect for Human Rights", 2022, p. 9. In an email dated 16 July 2024, Amnesty International requested a copy of Carrefour Group's human rights charter, but at the time of publication this had not been provided.

Additionally, as a French company, Carrefour Group is bound by France's Duty of Vigilance Law (see Background section).¹²⁵ In its annual 'duty of care' plan, Carrefour reiterates its commitment to promote respect for human rights for all of its employees and those of its franchises, and refers to its ethical principles. These include, among other things: prohibition of forced labour; respect for freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; prohibition of any discrimination; and decent wages, benefits and conditions of employment.¹²⁶

Carrefour Group states that to assess human rights risks in its operations, it instructs "external social audits of direct suppliers of certified products" depending on the supplier's identified risk level, as well as of "indirect suppliers in certain circumstances".¹²⁷ When issues of non-compliance are identified, the company requires the supplier to implement an action plan, which is "monitored through follow-ups". Carrefour Group states it has identified forced labour as a key human rights risk facing its operations and "a critical non-compliance issue" that will warrant the auditor informing Carrefour Group within 48 hours and "action is then taken by Carrefour and/or the supplier".¹²⁸ However, Carrefour Group did not confirm to Amnesty International whether or not these risk assessments and mitigating measures laid out in the duty of care plan apply to Carrefour's franchisees and their subcontracted workforce, and what corrective actions are taken when non-compliance issues are identified such as those detailed in this report.

Overall, based on the policies Amnesty International has reviewed,¹²⁹ Carrefour Group appears to lack a specific plan of action to address the clear risks faced by migrant workers in its franchises in Saudi Arabia and the wider Gulf region where this franchise labour model is common. For example, the company does not appear to have any policy specifically prohibiting worker-paid recruitment fees or committing to reimburse such fees when paid, a common practice within these contexts that contravenes international human rights standards and can greatly increase the risk of workers falling into situations of debt bondage and forced labour. Nor does Carrefour Group appear to have any policy addressing the risks posed by the kafala sponsorship system to migrant workers' freedom of movement. In fact, its general policies appear not to make any specific mention of migrant or foreign workers.

Majid Al Futtaim's human rights policies reference international standards and include prohibitions on harassment and abuse in the workplace, and, importantly, worker-paid recruitment costs.¹³⁰ The company also requires guarantees on workers' overtime pay in line with local regulations; provision of pay slips; accommodation in line with company standards or local regulations; limits on working hours; provision of adequate breaks and at least one full day off per week; and provision of a "no-objection letter" at the end of contract if required to allow workers to change employer.¹³¹ On recruitment fees specifically, Majid Al Futtaim's Employment Condition Policy - which it says is incorporated into all supplier contracts - states: "Where a third-party recruiter is used, all fees and expenses shall be covered by the employer and shall not be reclaimed from the employee at any time".¹³² However, Majid Al Futtaim's policies fall short in terms of the right to freedom of association, as they only permit workers to organize and form profession-related organizations to bargain collectively, if they are legally permitted to do so.¹³³

125 Carrefour Group, "Universal Registration Document" 2023, pp. 118-168.

126 Carrefour Group, "Universal Registration Document", p. 120.

127 Carrefour Group, "Universal Registration Document", p. 138.

128 Carrefour Group, "Universal Registration Document", p. 138.

129 Amnesty International has reviewed the following Carrefour Group documents: "Respect for human rights"; "Universal Registration Document 2023"; and "Carrefour International Partners: CSR Appendix". Amnesty International requested a copy of Carrefour Group's country risk assessment for Saudi Arabia, as well as its franchise agreement with Majid Al Futtaim, but neither had been provided by time of publication.

130 Letter from Majid Al Futtaim to Amnesty International, 13 June 2024. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/8582/2024/en/>

131 Majid Al Futtaim, "Supplier Code of Conduct", Pp. 3-7.

132 Majid Al Futaim, "Employment Conditions Policy", 2022, p. 3.

133 Letter from Majid Al Futtaim to Amnesty International, 13 June 2024; and Majid Al Futtaim, "Employment Conditions Policy", 2022, p. 3.

BASED ON THE POLICIES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS REVIEWED,



**CARREFOUR
GROUP**

APPEARS TO LACK A SPECIFIC PLAN OF ACTION TO ADDRESS THE CLEAR RISKS FACED BY MIGRANT WORKERS IN ITS FRANCHISES IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE WIDER GULF REGION WHERE THIS FRANCHISE LABOUR MODEL IS COMMON.

Majid Al Futtaim’s commitments are further referenced in its Supplier Code of Conduct, which sets out the company’s expectations in the event of non-compliance with the Code. This includes requiring its suppliers to provide a “detailed remedial action plan” within a month, and reserving the right to terminate the contractual relationship if such action is considered inadequate.¹³⁴

INADEQUATE DUE DILIGENCE

Journalists, NGOs and UN bodies have for many years documented the inherently abusive nature of Saudi Arabia’s labour system, which provides weak human rights protections and often relies on migrant workers who are fed into the system through a web of third-party recruitment agencies and labour supply companies that is prone to serious abuses.¹³⁵ They have also documented the involvement of Saudi Arabia in widespread, systemic and serious human rights violations, as well as complicity in the endemic abuse of the rights of migrant workers through failing to hold the perpetrators, including businesses, to account for the abuses.

As a result, any company involved in business activities in Saudi Arabia should be aware that they need to undertake an elevated level of human rights due diligence, commensurate with the high likelihood and severity of risks in the country and paying specific attention to migrant labour issues. Drawing on these widely accepted norms from the UN Guiding Principles and OECD Guidelines, Carrefour Group should conduct such an elevated process of human rights due diligence across its value chain, including of the labour rights of all workers at its franchises. Likewise, the franchisee Majid Al Futtaim should conduct elevated due diligence of its own labour policies and practices to ensure that its human rights responsibilities are being fulfilled throughout its facilities and value chain. Importantly, the UN Guiding Principles clarify that a state’s failure to implement international human rights obligations does not diminish the expectation that enterprises respect human rights.¹³⁶

The existing policies and processes of Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim, as well as their responses to Amnesty International’s communications, provide some insight into the due diligence measures these companies designed to identify, prevent and mitigate human rights risks in their operations. These documents indicate that the companies are well aware of global human rights standards and their responsibilities to respect workers’ rights – including throughout their value chains – and have taken some steps to meet these. However, the persistence of such abuses from at least 2021 and into 2024, as confirmed by Amnesty International’s research, demonstrates that the human rights due diligence processes of both Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim are inadequate and their policies insufficient, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia’s labour system where the severity and frequency of labour abuses necessitate strict measures.

134 Majid Al Futtaim, “Supplier Code of Conduct”, p. 9.

135 See, for example: <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2024/03/saudi-companies-opt-for-subcontracting-over-direct-hires-resulting-in-acute-and-unchecked-exploitation/>

136 UN Guiding Principle, Principle 11 including commentary.



THE PERSISTENCE OF SUCH ABUSES FROM AT LEAST

2021

AND INTO

2024



DEMONSTRATES THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS
DUE DILIGENCE PROCESSES OF BOTH CARREFOUR GROUP AND MAJID AL FUTTAIM ARE

INADEQUATE AND THEIR POLICIES INSUFFICIENT

For example, human rights due diligence should cover all human rights issues and be ongoing and continuous throughout the duration of a business relationship. Even if the companies' past and current due diligence processes and grievance mechanisms did not identify issues to be addressed, an ongoing monitoring of human rights in Saudi Arabia should have alerted the companies of the human rights abuses faced by Al-Mutairi employees following publication in October 2023 of investigations by Amnesty International and other media outlets into their labour conditions in Amazon warehouses.¹³⁷ However, a human rights investigation into one of Majid Al Futtaim's own labour suppliers does not appear to have triggered a thorough internal review of Carrefour Group or its franchisee's policies and practices in Saudi Arabia, including direct engagement with contracted workers to examine their conditions, address any concerns, and remedy any abuses.

Additionally, in Amnesty International's follow-up interviews with several of the workers at the end of June 2024, none reported being aware of any efforts in the prior six months to address their working or living conditions. This indicates that either such a review was not conducted following the October 2023 revelations, or that any action the companies did take was insufficient to adequately address and remediate the abuses.

INEFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

Operational grievance mechanisms are a vital part of a company's human rights due diligence and can provide important feedback on their effectiveness from those directly affected, allowing the company to address any issues before they escalate into more severe abuses.¹³⁸ To this end, the UN Guiding Principles lay out effectiveness criteria for an adequate grievance mechanism: legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable and transparent.¹³⁹ In the case of Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim, an adequate human rights due diligence process and grievance mechanism would have flagged to the companies the risks in Carrefour facilities and the companies' value chains in Saudi Arabia, thereby leading to adequate policies that respond to those risks.

Amnesty International's research, which covers cases from 2021 to 2024, found that contracted workers reported taking "strike" action on several occasions over unpaid overtime in 2022. Workers

137 See, for example: NBC News, "'Kill us or send us home': Amazon workers in Saudi Arabia say they were exploited by labor supply and recruiting firms", 10 October 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/amazon-workers-saudi-arabia-say-exploited-labor-nepal-rcna118614>; The Guardian, "Revealed: Amazon linked to trafficking of workers in Saudi Arabia", 10 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/oct/10/amazon-trafficking-links-claims-saudi-arabia-workers-abuses>; Kathmandu Post, "Nepalis 'deceived, cheated and exploited' at Amazon warehouses in Saudi Arabia", 10 October 2023, <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2023/10/11/nepalis-deceived-cheated-and-exploited-at-amazon-warehouses-in-saudi-arabia>; and Barron's, "Saudi Probes Alleged Abuses At Amazon Warehouses: Statement", 12 October 2023, <https://www.barrons.com/news/saudi-probes-alleged-abuses-at-amazon-warehouses-statement-358e03eb>. More recently, abuses of workers employed by Al Mutairi and working in warehouses of Gulf-based e-commerce company Noon were also highlighted in an investigation by The Athletic. See: <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5545510/2024/06/12/newcastle-united-noon-worker-mistreatment/>

138 UN Guiding Principles, Principle 29.

139 Un Guiding Principles, Principle 31 including commentary.

also told Amnesty International that they had raised their concerns directly with Majid Al Futtaim managers at Carrefour stores, including on issues related to working and living conditions and underpayment of overtime work, yet reported that these were rarely heeded by the company. One senior employee in a Carrefour store confirmed to Amnesty International that workers did approach him with concerns, but these were rarely discussed by middle management and were largely ignored or not dealt with systematically. Rather, any measures taken were down to individual managers' initiative or care, indicating the lack of a systematic approach to addressing concerns as they arise in operations.

Concerningly, some workers reported facing threats of having their jobs "terminated" by both third-party labour supply companies and managers at Carrefour stores for speaking out, which intimidated others into silence and compliance with abusive working and living conditions. As highlighted above, workers interviewed had no knowledge of or had not used Carrefour Group's online reporting platform or Majid Al Futtaim's ethics hotline, and a few said that managers at Carrefour stores told them that the hotline was only for direct employees. Indeed, Carrefour Group told Amnesty International that it received no alerts on its platform from Saudi Arabia in 2022.¹⁴⁰

Likewise, in its 2022 Environmental, Social and Governance report, Majid Al Futtaim states that, "during 2022, zero cases of forced or compulsory labour in our operations were identified."¹⁴¹ This statement contrasts sharply with the findings of this investigation, raising the question of whether the company's grievance mechanisms are up to the job of conducting adequate human rights due diligence on labour issues within this context.

MULTIPLE LEVELS OF FAILURE TO MEET HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES

Both the UN Guiding Principles and the OECD Guidelines note that responsibility to respect human rights requires that business enterprises avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities. Where a company identifies that it may cause or contribute to – or is already causing or contributing to – a human rights abuse, companies should cease or prevent these impacts from taking place.¹⁴² The OECD Guidelines further explain that an enterprise "contributes to" an impact "if the activities of the enterprise cause, facilitate or incentivize another entity to cause an adverse impact." Even if a company has not contributed to these impacts, businesses should prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships. To do so, businesses should exercise leverage to ensure the harm is prevented and/or ceased, or seek to increase their leverage, including through collaboration if appropriate. If they are unable to do so, the enterprise should consider ending the relationship, though only after conducting a credible human rights impact assessment to ensure that such an approach does not cause further adverse impacts to workers.

In terms of the **four labour supply companies** Al-Mutairi, Badoor Najed, Company A and Company B used by Majid Al Futtaim to provide workers for Carrefour Group, Amnesty International's research indicates that they all failed to conduct adequate human rights due diligence in vetting the recruitment agencies used in India, Nepal and Pakistan to recruit workers in order to ensure that the workers did not bear the costs of the recruitment process and were provided with accurate and timely information about the nature of their employer and terms and conditions of the job. Amnesty International also found that the four companies caused human rights abuses by failing to provide adequate payment of wages and accommodation for workers. Badoor Najed may additionally have caused labour abuses by

140 Letter from Carrefour Group to Amnesty International, 31 May 2024.

141 Majid Al Futtaim, "2022 ESG Report: Dare Together", https://www.majidalfuttaim.com/docs/default-source/reports/maf_esg_report_2022.pdf

142 UN Guiding Principles, Principle 19 including Commentary.

charging workers an “exit fee” in order to facilitate them leaving the country before the end of their two-year contract, even when it provided employees with no work or pay. The failures of these companies also constitute violations of various provisions of Articles 40, 61, 62, 92, 104 and 107 of Saudi Arabia’s labour law as well as provisions of the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing’s 2021 Guidelines on Conditions of Collective Housing.

Having been deceived, cheated and abused, some of the 17 men featured in this report are likely to be victims of forced labour and human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation.

By subcontracting workers from these labour supply companies without adequate due diligence, **Majid Al Futtaim** has facilitated their exploitative practices, thereby contributing to abuses of workers’ human rights. **Carrefour Group** has played a key role in this by providing Majid Al Futtaim with its franchise without adequately identifying and then preventing, mitigating and addressing human rights abuses within its value chain in Saudi Arabia.

Given Carrefour Group’s franchise agreement with Majid Al Futtaim, the company has also contributed to the human rights abuses suffered by contracted workers by failing to use its leverage sufficiently to prevent and then redress these abuses.

Finally, both companies have benefited from the abusive labour practices by having a third of Carrefour Group’s workforce in Saudi Arabia outsourced via labour supply companies, a hiring model that carries severe human rights risks that have clearly not been adequately addressed.

Amnesty International is also particularly concerned that some workers reported that managers at Carrefour stores in Saudi Arabia – understood to be direct employees of Majid al Futtaim, not subcontracted labour from the labour supply companies – coerced contracted staff to work unpaid overtime hours, and denied them rest days, under threat of being “fired” from the Carrefour franchise. Such actions may amount to Majid Al Futtaim causing serious human rights abuses, including treatment amounting to forced labour, and breach Majid Al Futtaim’s and Carrefour Group’s own human rights standards, as well as national law and international human rights law and standards.

HAVING BEEN DECEIVED, CHEATED AND ABUSED



SOME OF THE 17 MEN FEATURED IN THIS REPORT ARE LIKELY TO BE VICTIMS OF

FORCED LABOUR AND **HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

FOR THE PURPOSES OF LABOUR EXPLOITATION

RESPONSIBILITY TO REMEDY

Fundamental to the UN Guiding Principles is the responsibility of companies to provide for or cooperate in the remediation of adverse human rights impacts that they have caused or to which they have contributed. When a business identifies such a situation, it is required to actively engage in remediation.¹⁴³

Having caused human rights abuses, the labour supply companies featured in this report should take urgent action to provide remedies to the victims.

Similarly, having caused some of these human rights abuses and contributed to others identified in this report, Majid Al Futtaim has a responsibility to provide and cooperate in their remediation, as does Carrefour Group, having also contributed to these abuses.

ENSURING NON-REPETITION

As part of their remedy efforts, Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim should ensure the non-repetition of abuses, a key measure of reparation under international human rights law. This means that Carrefour Group should ensure its franchisee in Saudi Arabia progressively reduces its reliance on third-party labour supply companies and increases the proportion of directly hired employees in an effort to ensure greater oversight of workers' rights. Additionally, Carrefour Group should update its policies and procedures to account for the specific risks faced by migrant workers, especially in specific contexts where labour rights are not in line with international human rights standards, review the working practices of managers in its franchisee's facilities, and conduct immediate and ongoing inspections in all its stores and fulfilment centres in Saudi Arabia and beyond. Regular inspections of all franchises and third-party labour supply companies are also essential to ensure that workers' rights are fully respected. Crucially, Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim should urgently review and reform their grievance mechanisms to ensure they are fit for purpose to mitigate human rights risks and capable of effectively addressing workers' concerns.

Considering the abusive labour system under which it operates in Saudi Arabia, the lack of freedom of speech and association, and the risks of retaliation against those who dare to raise their concerns, Carrefour Group should take all necessary steps to empower workers in its facilities. This should include a special focus on migrant and contracted workers to establish a safer environment for them to speak up about the issues they face, without fear of reprisal.

CARREFOUR GROUP AND MAJID AL FUTTAIM'S RESPONSES

Amnesty International wrote to Majid Al Futtaim and Carrefour Group on 16 August 2024, detailing the allegations in this report and providing the companies the opportunity to respond to them. The organization also urged both companies to urgently address the issues detailed, including by ensuring workers receive timely and effective remedy and strengthening their human rights due diligence.

In its response, Carrefour Group confirmed on 30 August 2024 that "human rights and worker protection are both a high-priority concern for the group and an important challenge" and stated that since May when Amnesty International initially alerted it to human rights concerns, it had launched an internal investigation in collaboration with Majid Al-Futtaim. It did not share further details but stated this process is still ongoing, and that it is in "close dialogue" with Majid Al Futtaim. Further, "considering the importance of the matter", Carrefour Group stated it had "decided to commission an immediate third-party audit of the situation of migrant workers in the operation of its franchise partner in Saudi Arabia" and would "implement relevant measures" depending on the findings of the audit.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ UN Guiding Principles, Principle 19 including Commentary.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from Carrefour Group to Amnesty International, 30 August 2024. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/8582/2024/en/>

On 16 September, Majid Al Futtaim also responded, stating that it does not tolerate violations of its policies and seeks to “bring our third-party vendors with us on a journey of continuous improvement”. It said that in “recent months” it had “taken a number of steps to review and seek to remediate the issues” Amnesty International raised, including by reviewing working conditions of contracted migrant workers in its facilities; auditing contractors’ accommodation and moving some Al-Mutairi workers as a result; reviewing its policies and procedures on overtime and the prohibition of recruitment fees; strengthening due diligence measures, including through use of third-party audits and “increased screening for new suppliers”; expanding its human rights training to include contracted migrant workers; and improving access to its ethics hotline. Because the work is “ongoing”, Majid Al Futtaim further stated it would “welcome the opportunity to report back with further information about our remediation efforts in the months to come”. Neither company committed to reimbursing worker-paid recruitment fees, or providing other compensation for abuses suffered.¹⁴⁵

Serious questions remain as to why neither Carrefour Group nor Majid Al Futtaim identified and sought to address serious long-standing human rights abuses in their value chains prior to Amnesty International alerting them in mid-2024. Nonetheless, if effectively implemented, the measures Majid Al Futtaim states that it is now taking could result in some progress for contracted migrant workers in its operations, although it is not possible to say to what extent without the company providing further details. It is therefore imperative that both Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim conclude their investigations and current audits in a timely manner, in order to develop and make public a more detailed remediation plan which adequately addresses all the human rights risks and harms to contracted Carrefour workers in Saudi Arabia. In addition to steps to ensure non-repetition, the companies should also urgently reimburse to current and former workers any unpaid wages or illegal recruitment fees paid, and compensate them for the harms suffered.

Neither Al Mutairi nor Badoor had provided a response to Amnesty International's allegations by the time of publication.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Majid Al Futtaim to Amnesty International, 16 September 2024. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/8582/2024/en/>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International's second investigation into the human rights risks and abuses associated with the operations of multinational businesses in Saudi Arabia once again highlights the devastating human cost when companies fail to implement adequate measures and safeguards to protect migrant workers and their labour rights.

This research has shown a pattern whereby migrant workers contracted to Carrefour stores and warehouses in Saudi Arabia have been misled and cheated during the recruitment process. They are being overworked and underpaid, suffer illness because of gruelling work over long hours without proper breaks, risk destitution when they became “jobless” but are still under contract to abusive third-party labour supply companies, and often live in appalling accommodation. They also live in fear, knowing that if they complain they will likely be punished and, in any case, have no hope they will receive justice for their grievances or redress for the abuses they have suffered.

Despite having some human rights due diligence processes in place, neither Carrefour Group nor its franchisee Majid Al Futtaim effectively identified, prevented and mitigated human rights abuses connected to their operations in Saudi Arabia. As a result, both companies contributed to and in some cases Majid Al Futtaim caused such abuses. As such, both companies should remediate these abuses effectively, including by ensuring workers are adequately compensated and abuses are not repeated.

The structural flaws of Saudi Arabia's labour and migration systems, which in practice continue to bind migrant workers to their employers and make it virtually impossible for them to leave exploitative situations, only exacerbate the labour abuses that these migrant workers face. These abuses are made worse by the government's lack of enforcement and failure to hold perpetrators to account as well as its repression of the rights to freedom of speech and association.

This reality in Saudi Arabia, which persists despite some recent government reforms to the labour system, means that companies that do business connected to the country face an inherently high risk of human rights abuses in their value chains, especially when outsourcing labour supply to a third party.

With Carrefour Group increasing its reliance on the franchise model, and where such franchise partners may choose to engage third party labour suppliers, it is essential that its human rights due diligence is strengthened and monitored on an ongoing basis, especially where the labour regulation framework puts workers in a particularly vulnerable situation. By continuing to partner with labour supply companies despite knowledge of their exploitative practices, Majid Al Futtaim has perpetuated a system that disregards the rights and well-being of its workers. This failure not only undermines Carrefour Group's human rights responsibilities but also implicates the company in a broader spectrum of human rights abuses within its operations.

In light of these findings, and with the aim of continuing to improve migrant workers' rights in Saudi Arabia, Amnesty International makes the following recommendations:

TO CARREFOUR GROUP AND MAJID AL FUTTAIM

- As an immediate priority, Carrefour Group and its franchise partner Majid Al Futtaim should undertake a thorough and transparent human rights impact assessment, **reviewing working practices in Carrefour facilities and across the whole value chain**, to establish the scale and scope of any possible human rights risks and existing abuses and address them adequately. They should conduct immediate and ongoing inspections in all facilities in Saudi Arabia as well as suppliers' accommodation, to ensure that all contracted workers are provided timely remedy and that these situations are not repeated. Moreover, Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim should ensure all workers – including former workers - are:
 - paid outstanding overtime pay and sick leave in line with local labour laws;
 - reimbursed any recruitment fees and associated costs they might have incurred in the process of moving to Saudi Arabia for work at Carrefour facilities;
 - adequately compensated for any harms suffered;
 - living in adequate accommodation that conforms with international standards;
 - able to safely raise their grievances, organize collectively and report their concerns without fear of retaliation;
 - immediately offered alternative decent employment by Carrefour's third-party contractors, following termination of their engagement with Carrefour during their two-year contract period; and
 - paid by third-party contractors their contractually entitled monthly salary and allowances during periods in which they are not provided alternative work.
- Majid Al Futtaim should **immediately undertake adequate due diligence in its recruitment processes of workers that will work in Carrefour facilities in Saudi Arabia** to ensure all workers are:
 - protected from deception by being made fully aware, ahead of travelling to Saudi Arabia, of the true identity of their direct or indirect employers and full nature of their engagement with Carrefour, including that they will not be directly employed by Carrefour Group or Majid Al Futtaim and will instead be deployed on a temporary, contracted basis at its facilities;
 - not charged any recruitment fees or other associated costs.
 - made aware of the full terms and conditions of their employment prior to their deployment at Carrefour's facilities, including details of their salaries, overtime and sick pay, end-of-service benefits, working and living conditions and length of their engagement with Carrefour Group by being given a contract in an appropriate language well in advance of their departure for Saudi Arabia and are able to ask and have responses to any questions they might have; and
 - receive information about where and how they can raise concerns and grievances to ensure risks can be addressed in a timely and effective manner.

- Ultimately, Carrefour Group should require Majid Al Futtaim to reduce its reliance on third-party licensed temporary labour agencies – often associated with the most serious forms of labour exploitation and trafficking – and increase the proportion of directly employed workers, to ensure adequate recruitment processes and working conditions of those working across its operations in Saudi Arabia. **In the meantime, as long as the use of third-party labour supply contractors continues**, Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim should:
 - significantly strengthen their due diligence mechanisms to properly vet third-party contractors prior to engaging them to ensure they are compliant with their own policies and standards, and only work with companies and recruiters that comply with international human rights standards;
 - adopt far more rigorous and comprehensive monitoring and inspection mechanisms throughout their supply chain;
 - strengthen their monitoring and grievance mechanisms to allow them to detect human rights risks and abuses in a timely manner;
 - act swiftly to stop and redress any harm caused and publish all the findings of audits and internal investigations; and
 - require all their suppliers to facilitate the right of all contracted workers in Carrefour facilities in Saudi Arabia to change jobs and leave the country freely, especially in cases where they face labour abuses.
- Overall, Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim **should strengthen their human rights due diligence** in all countries where forms of the kafala system persist, freedom of expression and association are severely curtailed, labour laws are not enforced and/or workers are vulnerable due to high levels of debt incurred to pay recruitment fees, to ensure that they meet their human rights responsibilities.

ADDITIONALLY, TO CARREFOUR GROUP

- Carrefour Group should review its existing **due diligence policies and practices related to its franchisees** to ensure these adequately align with its human rights commitments around the world, with heightened scrutiny in countries where labour systems present additional human rights risks. The company should ensure due diligence processes begin prior to entering a franchise agreement, and on an ongoing basis, and **use the full extent of its leverage with franchisees** to assess any potential risks and ensure respect for human rights of all workers throughout its value chain. This should include:
 - Reviewing the franchisee’s human rights policies and grievance mechanisms and assessing their implementation and enforcement measures;
 - Reviewing the labour policies and practices of the franchisee, including its use of migrant workers, agency staff etc;
 - Requiring disclosure of all identified human rights risks and abuses, as well as remedial actions taken;
 - Including in the franchise agreement that any breach of the human rights-related undertakings gives Carrefour Group the right to terminate the agreement and responsibly exit the business relationship.

- In addition to its individual aforementioned responsibilities, Carrefour Group and other companies with business relationships in Saudi Arabia should **work together to bring human rights due diligence policies and practices in line with international standards** across their value chains to adequately **address common risks and prevent harms**, especially when companies work with the same third-party contractors (for example, sharing lessons learned and developing common solutions). These companies can also **increase their leverage** to play a positive role in this context by requiring common policies and practices of their shared supply base.

TO THIRD PARTY CONTRACTORS

Third party contractors, including the four labour supply companies identified in this report, should:

- Urgently review operational practices and policies and where needed modify them to bring them into line with international laws and standards at a minimum.
- In the process of recruitment, ensure all workers are:
 - protected from deception and the risk of human trafficking by being made fully aware ahead of travelling to Saudi Arabia about the full nature of their employer, including that they will be employed by a labour supply company and will be deployed on a temporary basis;
 - not charged any recruitment fees or other associated costs;
 - made aware of the full terms and conditions of their employment before they travel to Saudi Arabia, by being given a contract in an accessible language well in advance of their departure and being able to ask and have responses to any questions they might have: this should include details of their salaries, overtime and sick pay, end-of-service benefits, working and living conditions and length of their engagement with companies where they will be deployed for work; and
 - receive information about where and how they can raise concerns and grievances to ensure risks can be addressed in a timely and effective manner.
- Ensure all employees are paid all their contractual dues – including overtime – on time and in full every month, from the moment their contract begins and throughout the contract period, whether or not they are placed in a job.
- Ensure all workers' accommodation and living conditions conform to international standards.
- Urgently ensure any workers who wish to change jobs or leave the country are provided with the necessary documentation and flight tickets. More broadly, respect workers' rights to freedom of movement and refrain from preventing them from changing employer or leaving the country, especially when the company fails to find them jobs.
- Put in place adequate due diligence systems to enable the company to become aware of and prevent, address and remedy human rights abuses in its operations, including a grievance mechanism whereby workers can file complaints.
- Provide timely and adequate remedy to all current and former workers who faced human rights abuses, including by compensating them for all harms suffered and reimbursing their overtime pay and unlawful fees paid in the course of being recruited to the company, even without proof of payment.

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia must recognize and meet its clear obligations to respect, guarantee and protect workers' rights. It should take urgent steps to continue to improve migrant workers' rights in the country. To this end, it should:

- Urgently conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the abuses detailed in this report, ensure redress to the victims, hold perpetrators to account and publicly report on the findings.
- Publish the findings of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's investigation into treatment of contracted workers in Amazon's warehouses, as well as any remedial action taken as a result and efforts to hold perpetrators of abuse accountable.
- Fully dismantle the sponsorship system by:
 - removing all requirements for foreign nationals to obtain the permission of their current employer before moving jobs;
 - removing all requirements for foreign nationals to notify or obtain the permission of their current employer to leave the country;
 - Penalizing employers who file spurious cases against migrant workers, or falsely report them as "discontinued from work" as a retaliatory measure, for example when they are informed about workers' intentions to change jobs; and
 - taking steps to further reduce migrant workers' dependence on their employers, including for their entry, exit and legal presence in the country.
- Penalize all employers requesting unlawful fees to allow workers to exit the country.
- Strengthen the Wage Protection System to ensure timely and accurate payment of wages, including overtime pay, and punish employers who fail to pay workers their contractually entitled salaries and food allowance.
- Strengthen enforcement of labour laws and thoroughly investigate abusive employers and hold them to account.
- Improve migrant workers' access to justice and remedy.
- Allow all workers, including migrant workers, to form and join independent trade unions.
- Ratify in particular the following international instruments, incorporate their provisions into domestic law, and implement them in law, policy and practice:
 - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
 - the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
 - the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and
 - all the outstanding ILO core conventions and other relevant ILO conventions.

TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF INDIA, NEPAL AND PAKISTAN

The governments of migrant workers' countries of origin have an obligation to protect their nationals migrating to work from human trafficking, forced labour and other abuses under a range of international treaties they have ratified, including the ILO's Forced Labour Convention.


To this end, Amnesty International calls on these governments to:


- Align laws and regulations governing recruitment companies and agencies with international laws and standards, and strengthen their enforcement to protect workers from predatory recruiters.
- Monitor, investigate and sanction the illegal conduct of recruitment businesses and local agents and ensure that those who breach regulations face appropriate penalties.
- Establish better pre-travel training and orientation for migrant workers recruited to work in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries.
- Increase the scope of support and legal aid provided by diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia to improve their efforts to assist nationals facing abuses and exploitation in destination countries.
- Ensure that all migrant workers have access to an effective complaint mechanism through which they or their families can seek redress if they were trafficked and forced to work under exploitative terms or conditions, or if they are deprived of the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Closely monitor the enforcement of existing bilateral agreements with Saudi Arabia relating to migrant workers and work in partnership with the Saudi Arabian authorities to ensure that worker



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“I WOULD FEAR GOING TO WORK”

LABOUR EXPLOITATION AT CARREFOUR SITES IN SAUDI ARABIA

This report reveals how migrant workers employed by third-party labour supply companies and contracted to staff Carrefour stores in Saudi Arabia were cheated and deceived, overworked and underpaid, while the French supermarket giant took insufficient action to prevent these abuses.

The Carrefour Group, one of the world's largest supermarket chains with over 14,000 stores globally, operates in Saudi Arabia through franchisee Majid Al Futtaim. In the course of Amnesty International's research, men from India, Nepal and Pakistan described how they were lured by recruitment agents to the Saudi kingdom with false promises about the nature of their job and employer, and then subjected to exploitative conditions, including excessive working hours, unpaid overtime, and inadequate housing. Workers reported a culture of fear amongst contracted staff in Carrefour stores, where complaints and attempts to resist exploitation were at best ignored and at worst met with threats of job loss or wage cuts. Given the deception and threats of penalty they faced, and in the context of Saudi Arabia's abusive kafala sponsorship system, some of the workers interviewed are likely to be victims of forced labour and human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation.

Both Carrefour Group and Majid Al Futtaim are well aware of global human rights standards and their responsibilities to respect workers' rights across their value chains. Nonetheless, both companies failed to conduct adequate due diligence, commensurate to the severity of risks, in their Saudi Arabia operations and thus contributed to serious human rights abuses. As a result, they now bear responsibility to ensure these are remediated, including by ensuring migrant workers are compensated and abuses are not repeated. The Saudi Arabian government also failed in its obligation to protect the rights of all workers in its territory, and it too must step in and provide remedy for all affected workers.