

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

REFERENCE:
UA SAU 14/2019

13 September 2019

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 34/21, 33/1, 34/19, 35/5 and 41/17.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the human rights abuses currently faced by Ms. **Sylvia Nandawula**, a Ugandan national.

According to the information received:

Ms. Nandawula, a Ugandan national born on 6.12.1986, was allegedly employed by a recruitment agency in Uganda called Verdant Pastures Agency (U) Ltd and sent to work as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia.

She allegedly travelled to Saudi Arabia on 6 January 2019, was received on 7 January 2019 and started working as a housemaid in Almahrajan City, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia.

It is alleged that she soon started to be mistreated, beaten, and subjected to torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as demonstrated by some pictures showing wounds and scars on her body. She also allegedly reported being subjected to forced labour, being denied food and access to medical treatment.

During the week of 9th September, the recruitment agency that sent her to Saudi Arabia allegedly reported that they have been processing papers to return her to Uganda. However, family members have since then lost contact with

Ms. Nandawula, as it has been impossible to reach her over her known phone number in the past few days.

Ms. Nandawula is allegedly a victim of trafficking in persons and has expressed her desire to be repatriated back to Uganda and reunited with her family.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of this information, we are concerned at the reported abuse committed against Ms. Nandawula by her employer, in particular the allegations that she was trafficked from Uganda, subjected to forced labour, being denied food and access to medical treatment. If confirmed, these allegations would amount to acts of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment perpetrated by private actors and must be prevented and investigated in accordance with **articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture** and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acceded to on 23 September 1997.

We would also like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to **article 4 (c) and article 4 (d) of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women**, which notes the responsibility of states to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are **perpetrated by the State officials or by private persons**.

We therefore urge your Excellency's Government to take immediate measures to locate Ms. Nandawula, to ensure that she has access to adequate health and psychosocial care and that she is promptly repatriated to Uganda. We also call upon your Excellency's Government to initiate an investigation into the alleged abuse committed against Ms. Nandawula and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The full texts of the relevant human rights instruments and standards are available on www.ohchr.org or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, we would appreciate a response on the initial steps taken by your Excellency's Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person(s) in compliance with international instruments.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above mentioned allegations.

2. Please indicate which immediate measures your Excellency's Government plans to undertake to locate Ms. Nandawula and bring her to safety.
3. Please provide detailed information on the measures taken by Saudi Arabia – in law and in practice - to ensure the effective protection of migrant workers, including women domestic workers, from exploitation, abuse and domestic servitude.
4. Please indicate which measures your Excellency's Government is taking to regulate private recruitment agencies and to criminalize domestic servitude.
5. Please provide information on the availability and accessibility of complaint mechanisms for migrant workers in Saudi Arabia who may be subjected to abuse and exploitation.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

A communication regarding the concerns raised will be sent in parallel to the Government of Uganda.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Felipe González Morales
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

Urmila Bhoola
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences

Nils Melzer
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Maria Grazia Giammarinaro
Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children

Dubravka Šimonović
Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences