

SPECIAL REPORT

insight

A conversation with **Falah Al-Mutairi**

New law on human trafficking imposes severe penalties

Shelter protects runaway domestic workersBy **Abubakar A. Ibrahim**
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If it is proven that a domestic worker was beaten or tortured by his sponsor, an inspector from the shelter will issue a report and refer it to the Public Morals and Human Trafficking Protection Department. The sponsor will be summoned and interrogated. If there are suspicions of a criminal act, the case will be referred to the Public Prosecution for legal action.

The new law on human trafficking was enacted in 2013 and imposes severe penalties ranging from 25 years to life imprisonment. If a murder has been committed, the punishment will be death penalty.

Head of Expatriate Labor Shelter Center Falah Al-Mutairi explains to Arab Times the kind of services and protection that the center provides to runaway domestic workers residing in the center. He also talk about the rights of these domestic workers, and the rules and regulations they have to follow in the center.

Question: When was the Expatriate Labor Shelter Center opened? When was it established originally?

Answer: This center was established in 2007 in Khaitan under the supervision of Ministry of Interior. The center was later shifted to Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and reopened with higher capacity on Dec 23, 2014 under the supervision of Manpower Public Authority affiliated to Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

Q: What are the main purposes and objectives behind establishing this center?

A: The objectives behind establishing such a center are to protect expatriate domestic workers, provide them with physical and legal protection and send them voluntarily back to their countries. In cooperation with other governmental authorities, we also give them an opportunity to work if they want.

Q: Can you elaborate to us about the workflow here? How do you receive runaway housemaids? How do you shelter them and how do you solve their problems?

A: We receive runaway housemaids from their embassies or based on their own request to stay in the center. They have to undergo medical tests and they are examined by an inspector, psychologist and sociologist. Following this process, the housemaids, if qualified, will be accepted in the center after which their sponsors or their domestic workers' bureau and Ministry of Interior will be contacted to find solutions to their problems.

Q: Are there any conditions that the runaway housemaids have to meet in terms of health condition, pregnancy, infectious diseases etc? Have you received any runaway housemaid who violated such conditions?

A: Of course there are conditions. For instance if a housemaid has an infectious disease, she will be placed in an isolated room and provided treatment.

The center does not accept any housemaid who has committed a crime like murder, theft, etc. Such housemaids are immediately handed over to the General Department for Criminal Investigations.

Q: In your view, what are the reasons for housemaids to run away? Who is to blame for this problem? Is it the sponsor (Kafeel)'s fault or the housemaids'? Do you blame the housemaids? How do you solve such problems?

A: In most cases, they are deceived by recruitment agents who promise to give them jobs as nurses and teachers, in hotels, supermarkets, etc. So the problem starts from their countries where their agents or bogus domestic workers offices do not reveal to them the truth about the actual work they will be doing in Kuwait. Eventually, they find themselves working as housemaids instead of the jobs promised by their agents, and they later run away from their sponsors. We have asked the embassies to solve such problems in their respective countries. Some housemaids run away because they are not paid by their sponsors.



Falah Al-Mutairi

biography

Falah Al-Mutairi, who currently serves as the Director General of Expatriate Labor Shelter Center affiliated to Manpower Public Authority, holds a Master's Degree in International Law and a Bachelor's Degree in Law.

He worked as the head of inspectors in the Work Relations Department at Manpower Public Authority. He is a member of Kuwait Society for Human Rights and he has participated in many local and international human rights conferences.

kind of questions do they put forth to you? What are their reactions?

A: Besides the embassies in Kuwait and other neighboring countries, we are also visited by United Nations, International Immigration Organization, Kuwait Human Rights Society and Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

These organizations normally ask questions related to the care and protection given to the residents of the center. We explain to them about the center's internal regulations, talk about issues and discuss about addressing problems of domestic workers residing in the shelter. They normally react positively to our answers.

Q: What are the future projects of the center?

A: Our future projects are to implement ways to facilitate work and improve better, and to open special shelter for men and more centers for women. We have also requested Ministry of Interior to provide us with fingerprint machines for quick inquiries as part of our work expansion plan and to link the center and the ministry for enquiry purposes. We also need employers of foreign ministry to

visit the center to attest the documents of domestic workers.

Q: Presently, how many domestic workers do you have in the center? What is the bed capacity of the center?

A: Currently, there are in total 360 residents. The center has the capacity to hold 500 beds besides bedrooms, a television hall and a football ground.

Q: What are the nationalities of the residents of the center? Of which nationality is the highest and least number of residents in the center?

A: From Asia we have people from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Philippines. From Africa, we have people from Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Togo, Ethiopia, Guinea and Ivory Coast. The largest number of residents is from Sri Lanka followed by Nepal and India while the least number of residents are from Africa.

Q: What is the organizational structure of the center? Who supervises the work of the center?

A: The center is under the supervision of Manpower Public Authority. There are permanent offices in the center which represent Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Ministry of Interior,

Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Regarding Ministry of Interior, we cooperate with five departments related to ethics, deportation, domestic workers, immigration investigations, and public morals and human trafficking.

Q: What are the security measures taken to protect the residents of the center?

A: Inside the center, we have security women and surveillance cameras installed everywhere except in bedrooms and bathrooms. Sponsors are not allowed access to their runaway housemaid without the consent of the latter. The center also accepts personal requests of the housemaids when they seek shelter in the center and when they leave.

Q: Please tell us about the rules and regulations of the center. What actions are taken when a resident of the center violates these regulations?

A: The center does not accept women under the age of 20 years. The housemaids must sign or stamp their fingerprint on the paper of acceptance. They must not carry any infectious diseases and should not hold a criminal record.

Normally, we coordinate with the concerned authorities to rectify violations.

Q: What are the sanitary and health measures taken in the center?

A: The center has a clinic that provides healthcare services to the residents and ensures they are not suffering from infectious diseases. We also provide them with sanitary products. The center has employed cleaners who clean the center every day.

Q: What are rights and obligations of

the residents in the center?

A: Regarding the rights of the residents, they are entitled to proper treatment whereby their humanitarian dignity is to be respected by all employees of the center. They shall not be subjected to any moral or physical harm. They shall be provided with all services, programs and activities without any form of discrimination based on their nationality, religion or doctrine. They shall not be prevented from any visits inside or outside the center within the minimum limits for security reasons and in their interests. They have the right to express their complaints, demands and needs by meeting the concerned specialists in the center or the manager based on the rules and regulations. They can enjoy all rights and warranties ensured by the Constitution, laws and international conventions applicable in the country.

The obligations of the residents are that they must follow the internal regulations of the center, the systems and the decisions issued as well as all instructions they receive from the specialists and supervisors who deal with them. They must also attend all investigation sessions without any objection. Furthermore, the residents must maintain the limits of decency when dealing with the center's employees. They must be committed to good behavior in words and deeds. They must maintain the property, furniture, devices and items of the center. They must maintain personal hygiene in line with the health instructions of the center.

Al-Zaid's rich legacy for Kuwait literary movement lives on

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 11, (KUNA): On the 14th anniversary of demise of notable Kuwaiti man of letters and poet Khaled Saud Al-Zaid, lovers of poetry and literature pay tribute to the creative writer who left rich and immortal legacy.

The name of Al-Zaid (1937-2001) remains in the vivid memory of the country for his contributions to the advancement

of the literary movement which started to flourish during the reign of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah — Mubarak the Great — who ruled the country between 1896 and 1915. Al-Mubarakia School and Al-Jam'iyah Al-Khairiya (charity) were founded to play a pioneering role in the scientific and cultural advancement in Kuwait side by side with

Al-Ahmadiya School, Al-Ahliya (national) Library and the Literary Club which were established during the reign of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak (1885-1950).

The icons of the literary movement in the pre-independence era include Khaled Mohammad Al-Faraj, Hejji bin Qasim, Suleiman Al-Adani, Youssef bin Issa Al-

Qena'ie, Abdulaziz Al-Rashid and Issa Al-Qutami.

Kuwait's literary movement is traditionally classified according to major local and global political incidents; it falls into three stages that preceded utilization of the country's huge oil resources.

The first and longest stage spanned

between the emergence of Kuwait as a State and breakout of WWI (World War I); its literature is deemed apathetic and dull due to the then high rate of illiteracy. The second stage was featured with growing numbers of literary symposiums, clubs, libraries - whether public or private, and visit exchanges between Kuwaiti men of letters and their peers

from other Arab countries. The third stage was marked by the growth of scientific clubs and the emergence of Arabic newspapers and magazines.

Al-Zaid, born on January 27, 1937, started his education at Qibliyah School in 1942 and then joined Al-Mubarakia School in 1951; during this period his poetic talent started to crystalize.