



**PUBLIC SERVICES
INTERNATIONAL**

PSI MENA

PSI SUB REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ARAB COUNTRIES
Quality Health Services for all and Social protection in time of crisis

Virtual meeting, April 8th 2021, 15.30 -18.30 Beirut Time

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/96489505782>

Meeting ID: 964 8950 5782

Introduction

The Arab sub region is continuing to witness multidimensional crises, taking the form of conflicts, wars, economic and social inequalities exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic that widespread in March 2020. The pandemic exposed the scarcity of the public health sector, while only few wealth people can benefit from the private health services where profit comes first. The pandemic also led to severe repercussions at the economic, social, and political levels. Unemployment is expected to increase by 1.2 percentage points, meaning the loss of around 1.7 million jobs¹. The Arab region registers some of the highest rates of inequality around the world, and informal employment accounts for 50% of jobs. It also lacks universal social protection systems and is thus unable to protect workers and ensure their dignity during work stoppages.

Public services have been neglected in many countries of the region, with International Monetary Funds - IMF financing conditional on fiscal consolidation rather than on the provision of quality, affordable and accessible basic services. The most recent injection of emergency loan funding has made this even more apparent. The IMF has pumped \$3.9bn² in emergency loans into MENA in response to the pandemic, but with strong guidance to prioritize the resumption of fiscal consolidation once the crisis abates. This focus on fiscal consolidation rather than on people is a worrying indicator that continuing, or even deeper austerity will be the status quo across the region once the health crisis begins to subside.

How the representatives of the workers describe the situation? What is their response to ensure quality public services accessible to all for free or at affordable prices? What was the governments' response to the crisis in terms of providing social protection, occupational safety and health to the workers women and men? What are the governments' policies related to the vaccines.

To answer these questions, PSI in collaboration with its affiliates in the Arab world will organize a webinar on April 8th 2021, with the aim to formulate a trade union strategy to respond to the health crisis.

The main topics that will be tackled during this webinar are:

- 1- Quality Public health for all in time of Crisis and workers protection, including the access to the vaccine.
- 2- The policies of the International Monetary Funds during the Pandemic and its social and economic impacts.

Time: April 8th , 2020, 15.30-18.30 Beirut time

The Languages of the Webinar are English and Arabic

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¹ ESCWA and UN Women. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in the Arab Region. Policy Brief No 4. https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/impact_of_covid_on_gender_equality_-_policy_brief.pdf

² <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bp-mena-inclusive-recovery-260820-en.pdf>

Agenda

Moderator:

Chahnaz El Zein: PSI project coordinator for the Arab countries

Opening

- Rosa PAVANELLI, PSI General Secretary: Opening Remarks and PSI Covid-19 Global mobilization
- Sani Baba Mohammed, PSI Regional Secretary for Africa and Arab Countries: Update on Regional engagements and mobilisation.

Session 1: Quality Health Services: Challenges facing the health Sector:

- o Othman Jallouli, General Secretary Public Health workers Federation, Tunisia 7 min.
- o Mohammad Ghanem, President of General Trade Union of Workers in the Health Services and Pharmaceutical Industries – Jordan, 7 min.
- o Wael Sarhan, president of the Egyptian ambulances workers – Egypt, 7 min.

Discussions 15 minutes

Session 2: Shed light on the Situation of women workers:

- o Nassira Ghozlane, GS SNAPAP, PSI EB titular – Algeria, 7 min.
- o (Dr.) Naima Nabih, Member of the Executive board of the General Federation for health workers – Member of Union Marocaine du Travail – Morocco, 7 min

Discussion 10 minutes

Break: 10 minutes

Session 3: Social protection and Occupational Health and Safety

- o Mohammed Abdullah Arada, president of the Municipality workers – GS of the Kuwaiti trade Union Federation - Kuwait
- o Intesar Al Khafagi – President of the general trade union of workers in Electricity – Iraq
- o Roudaina Merhi, Representative of the syndicate of workers in Electricity of Lebanon – Women committee chair at the General federation of workers in Lebanon – Lebanon.

Discussion 15 min

Session 4: TRIPS Waiver to speed up COVID vaccine production:

- o Najwa Hanna, PSI Sub regional Secretary for Arab countries

Discussion 7 minutes

Session 5: The IMF conditionality of financing: Social and Economic impact

- o Khalil Zaiter, General Secretary of the Syndicate of workers of Port of Beirut - Lebanon

Discussion 7 minutes

Conclusions, Wrapapp and recommendations.