Facing The Gulf Cooperation Council Countries' Illiberal Migration Regime: Making Sense of Kafala System and its Impacts on Migrant Workers

By

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Migration governance regimes play a significant role not only in expediting orderly mobility but also in ensuring the dignity of the migrant workers in their new homes.[1] Studies on migration governance framework focus on the Global North neglecting the Global South perspectives and experiences. Gulf countries stand at the epicenter of the South-South migration attracting a significant number of migrants from Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.[2] Against this backdrop, the South-South migration and its governance regimes received scant scholarly attention and have remained untheorised in relative terms.[3] The conventional migration governance theories, for instance, liberal paradox neglected the migration governance regime of authoritarian immigrant-receiving states.[4] The liberal paradox is an analytical framework that unpacks how liberal developed states in the Global North experience a dilemma regarding migration governance facing a stark stand-off between economic incentives of liberalising migration governance regimes and the security concern of tightening immigration restrictions.[5]

[6]contends that Western Europe and North America trapped a liberal paradox, experiencing difficulties to reconcile the economic benefits and security risks of migration regimes liberalisation. To maintain a competitive advantage, governments must keep their economies and societies open to trade, investment, and migration. The liberal paradox is a Western centric theory, and its application is narrowly confined to liberal Western nations and democratic regimes neglecting the circumstances of non-democratic regimes, migrant-receiving nations and their immigration governance practices. However, the non-democratic regimes especially Arab Gulf rentier states standout as the third largest recipient of migrants only next to Northern America and the European Union following the discovery of oil which resulted in the boom in economic

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and infrastructural growth of the Gulf region and precipitated the sharp demand for foreign labour.[7] Migrant workers played a pivotal role in the rapid transformation of the infrastructural and economic development in the Gulf countries[8] who came to work attracted by oil-induced economic growth in the region. Religion-induced migration and mobility in the Gulf countries can be dated back centuries. The religious pilgrimages to Mecca known as Hajj and Umrah played a phenomenal role in attracting Muslims from across the world into the region.[9]

Following the discovery of oil which altered the economic landscape of the Gulf countries, the demand for labour force exponentially increased resulting in large-scale and substantial migration of foreign workers into the region.[10] The oil-induced economic boom in the 1970s further led to an influx of foreign migrant workers from Southeast Asia, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa into the region which further consolidated with economic diversification in multiple sectors such as real estate, construction industry, tourism, finance, and technology which created job opportunities and attracted numerous foreign migrants.[11] Today, migrants make up a significant proportion of the population in most of the Gulf countries. For instance, in Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait, the percentage of foreign-born workers often exceeds 80-90 per cent of the total population.[12] Yet, unlike in the case of Global North, where asylees, refugees, and economic migrants are accommodated, Gulf countries accept only economic migrants who often work on temporary contracts which is often criticised as a setback to permanent settlement and integration into the host society.[13] To ensure the better governance of steadily growing labour migration into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, and Lebanon, the kafala system introduced in the 1950s as a migration governance regime.[14]

Since the mid twentieth century kafala system has been a regulatory regime that defined the relationship between migrant workers and their employers in the Gulf countries[15] creating a surplus of cheap labour by attracting millions of migrant workers from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa which played a phenomenal role in the economic and infrastructural growth of the countries in the region.[16] The migrant workers are drawn into the region by promising economic opportunities in the Gulf region but often face unexpected challenges regarding their working conditions, human rights issues, legal protection, and payments generated by kafala sponsorship system. Kafala migration governance regime attracted the attention of human rights organisations, academia, and experts and became the subject of intense scrutiny over the years due to the concerns about the gross abuse of human and labour rights of migrant workers in the countries where the employers have unlimited power over the migrant workers curtailing their freedom of movement, confiscating passports, withholding wages, and confining them in unsafe working conditions.[17]

This paper studies the kafala system and its socio-economic and human rights implications in the Gulf countries' socio-economic and political governance architecture and its impacts on the migrant workers in the region.[18]

Methodologically and theoretically this paper is based on intersectionality theory[19] to draw a nuanced understanding of how migrant workers in the Gulf region are exposed to layers of marginalities including gender, race, and class under the kafala migration governance regime. The paper also draws insights from Foucault's analytical framework **of** biopolitics to offer a comprehensive account of how the authoritarian Gulf countries utilised kafala regime to regulate the migrant workers' bodies and labour to protect the social order and exercise control. This paper explains the genesis of the kafala regime, and its rationalities that gradually evolved into illiberal migration governance regime affecting the migrant workers as the kafala becomes a regime of frontier production and consolidation of divides that are exclusionary and discriminatory migration governance regime.

Kafala Migration Governance System: Genesis and Rationalities

Kafala migration governance framework has been widely practiced in the Gulf countries since the mid twentieth century to regulate unskilled and low-skilled domestic workers.[20] The kafala system does not allow long-term stay, permanent settlement, or naturalisation of migrant workers since they usually migrate to Gulf region with short-term contracts.[21] The kafala system is an extensive and institutionalised migration governance framework that is designed to attract millions of people in the form of a cheap labour into booming economies of the Gulf countries and generate billions of dollars for sending countries in the form of remittances. The kafala system remains a critical tool of the Gulf countries' capacity to ensure political control and social order by managing the migrant workers who constitute a substantial proportion of the population in comparison to national citizen.[22] The introduction of kafala migration governance was prompted by national security concerns including the need to preserve national identity amidst steadily growing labour migration in the region without compromising the significant economy of cheap labour and maintain a safe and stable society anchored in the rule of law.[23] The kafala system managed to meet the demand for labour with migrant workers in the region while ensuring that these workers are only temporary residents in the country maintaining the status quo of national identity and security.[24] The term kafala originates from Islamic tradition and the Arab root Ka-fa-la which refers to feeding, supporting, or vouching foreigners and strangers without expecting financial gain in return.[25] However, the application of kafala into labour system reversed the original concept and created an institutionalised exploitative and oppressive migration governance system where employers are given excessive power to control workers, including limiting their ability to change jobs or leave the country leading to forced labour and gross human rights abuses.[26]

With the discovery of oil in the Gulf region during the twentieth century, countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE experienced an economic boom that created a high demand for labour forces, especially in construction, domestic work, and other manual sectors. The local population was too small to fill the labour gaps. The population of these countries was

small, and their citizens were often not interested in working in the manual labour sectors. The kafala system was introduced to fill these gaps and labour shortage by organising migration based on the temporary scheme.[27] The kafala system became a way to regulate the influx of foreign workers while also providing an organised structure that allowed for temporary employment contracts, mainly in sectors that required low-skilled labour. The system was designed to ensure that labourers could stay only for the duration of the contract, which was typically tied to the employment relationship.[28] This allowed governments of the Gulf countries to manage migration flows in a way that avoided permanent settlement and kept foreign workers as a transient labour force. The kafala system allowed the Gulf states to retain significant control over foreign workers' movements, ensuring that workers could not easily change jobs or leave the country through outsourcing the migration governance system to private citizens, sponsors, and agencies. Kafala migration governance was configured to maintain social order and avoid a potential surge in unemployment or labour unrest in the region which is a threat to Gulf monarchies' authoritarian grip.[29]

Kafala Regime as Frontier Production and Exclusionary Practices

The kafala system symbolises how authoritarianism regulates bodies, borders, space, and labour of migrant workers by institutionalised control and dependency.[30] The kafala regime offered unrestricted power to kafeels (sponsors) which stripped migrant workers of autonomy, agency, dignity, and rights, reducing them to a vulnerable labour force that is bound by the whims of their sponsors who has a mandate to control their legal status, mobility, and employment conditions.[31] The kafala system also exemplifies how authoritarian systems leverage on law, race, and class to maintain tight control over migrants' bodies and labour to ensure control, and social order and keep any threats to its authoritarian grips at bay. The kafala system is the most decentralised illiberal migration regime where the states outsourced the migration governance system to private employers, agencies, and companies empowering the multiple actors to exploit the structural loopholes and legal flaws of the kafala system for their benefits and resulting in the inconsistencies and irregularities in its implementation.[32] Kafala migration regime also entails temporalities and embodies racial and gender differentiation against migrant workers. The system was designed to attract cheap labour during the period of economic growth and return them when the economic progress weakened which is a long-standing barrier to immigrants' integration into the host society making the system oppressive and exploitative which is also a testament to the temporalities of kafala regime.[33] The kafeel migrants hierarchical and racial power imbalance left the migrant workers without agency and autonomy over their destiny, identity, and legal status. The employers withhold the passports of employees and determine the legal status which leaves them with uncertainties regarding the next step in their lives.[34]

The labourer's rights to mobility, living conditions, and privacy are at the mercy of their sponsors making the kafala migration regime something that resonates a modern-day slavery which sparked concerns and drew criticism from international human rights and labour organisations.[35] The kafala system consolidates the structural asymmetries and configurates frontiers between domestic workers and their employers keeping the migrant labourers in a peripheral and fringe position, socially, legally, and politically[36] also configuring divides based on race, class, legal and ethnic, embodying spatial and differential exclusion which is concurrent with the intersectionality theory. The kafala system had detrimental impacts on migrant workers since it resulted in unpaid wages, trapping migrant workers in the precarious conditions, and leave them with the inability to change jobs or leave the country without their sponsor's permission tying migrant workers legal status to their sponsors which rooted in the historical colonial practices.[37]

Under the kafala system, migrant workers face exploitation and abuse (both physical, sexual, and emotional) from their sponsors (kafeel), agencies, and private employers, and are excluded from national labour regulating laws and norms of Gulf countries which stipulate maximum working hours, minimum wages, overtime, vacation and other relevant benefits.[38] Since migrant workers employment and residency visas are tied to sponsors who has the mandate to renew or terminate their work permits and visa, the kafala regime grants unchecked power to private citizens and agencies rather than the state to control migrant workers legal status creating a power asymmetry that favours sponsors.[39] In many cases employers often have complete control over migrant workers ability to stay in the country, and secure work permits, and visas. This unchecked mandate given to the sponsor (kafeel) exposes the labourers to multiple challenges including poor working conditions, experiencing delayed wage payments, or no payment and traps the migrant workers in a condition where they are unable to change jobs or leave the country without their employer's consent.[40]

Kafala System as an Illiberal Migration Governance Regime and Its Impacts on the Migrant Workers

The kafala system is regarded as an illiberal migration governance regime due to several reasons. First, the system resulted in the erosion of human rights and violation of fundamental freedom of migrant workers since it grants unchecked power to the sponsors over migrant workers.[41] The migrant workers are stripped off their agency and rights leaving them powerless to make decisions about their employment, visas, and work permits, and left without legal protections making them vulnerable to multiple abuses. The system curtails migrant workers autonomy, agency, and erodes their dignity, which are typically valued in liberal democratic systems, such as freedom of movement, equal protection under the law, and the right to work in conditions of dignity.[42] The kafala system is also a decentralised abusive[43] and exploitative migration governance scheme that enable multiple non-state actors including private

citizens, pseudo agencies, and companies to exercise migration governance power. The kafala regime resulted in the delegation of state responsibility regarding the migration governance to the private employer, individuals, and agencies to oversee both a migrant worker's immigration and employment status.[44] Kafala regime also systematically limits freedoms, increases their vulnerability to abuse, and perpetuates a deeply unequal power dynamic between migrant workers and their employers which also includes racial and gender based discriminations.[45]

The involvement of multiple actors in the regulation of the migration process not only resulted in inconsistencies and fragmentation in its practical applications but also exposed labourers to multiple stigmatisation and discrimination by different actors, creating a fertile condition for traffickers and smugglers to easily intervene and exploit the precarious condition of the migrant workers with little to no legal protection from the state institutions.[46] Second, the structural flaws and legal loopholes of the kafala system generated an institutionalised exploitative and oppressive system tying the migrants legal residency, work permits, and visas to their employer or sponsor (*kafeel*) which makes the migrant workers dependent on their sponsor.[47] The migrant workers receive no protection from national labour laws and law enforcement agencies when they face multiple cases of abuses from their employers. Migrant workers have no say regarding safety of their jobs, they are compelled to stay in confined spaces, subjected to multiple abuses by employers where they face deportation threats if they attempt to speak out about their conditions.[48] In multiple cases, migrant workers are not given days off, starves for food and deprived of water, physically abused, restricted access to movement and communication, and not provided with proper living conditions. Their passports get confiscated by their sponsors, and freedom, and basic human dignity are disregarded by the kafeel who invested money into their acquired worker in the process of the migration.[49] Third, the kafala system is incompatible and inconsistent with the international migration governance regime and international refugee law including the 1951 Refugee Convention. The 1951 Refugee Convention is designed to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, ensuring that they are not forcibly returned to situations of danger or persecution.[50] The temporalities ingrained in the kafala system thwarts long-term integration of migrants in the host society which is stark evidence of kafala system's contradiction to the refugee convention and international migration laws.

The kafala system also does not align with this idea of protection or rights migrants enshrined in the international human rights laws and migration law, instead, it is rooted in a system of control and exploitation that undermines the freedom and security of migrant workers.[51] One of the central principles of international migration law is the idea of freedom of movement**,** the protection of migrant workers' rights, and fair treatment for workers, including migrants.[52] The kafala system, however, restricts migrant workers ability to change employers or leave the country without their employer's consent, often trapping them in exploitative and precarious situations. The international refugee regime ensures that refugees are granted basic rights such as the right to work,

movement, the right to have access services, and remain in the host country. Under the kafala system, migrant workers often do not have the same rights as citizen, and in some cases, they may not have access to legal protection and resources if their rights are being violated. This lack of legal protection can be seen as a fundamental incompatibility of kafala system with international migration regimes and human rights law.[53] Unlike the international liberal migration governance and international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which regulate the movement of people in ways that respect human rights, dignity, and the rule of law, kafala system limits the mobility of workers and placing them under the control of employers, operates outside the principles of fair labour practices and equitable governance.[54]

The refugee conventions and other international instruments provide protections not just for economic migrants but also for people fleeing conflict, persecution, or human rights violations which are entitled to protections such as asylum and non-refoulement (the principle that a person cannot be returned to a country where they face danger). However, kafala system does not provide such protections for refugees and asylum seekers, who may be subjected to deportation or forced return to unsafe situations if they attempt to escape abusive employers or difficult circumstances. This is a testimony to kafala regime's stark contrast to the international migration governance efforts to govern migration in a way that respects the human dignity and rights of all migrants, whether they are refugees, asylum seekers, or labour migrants. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol which are the foundation of the international refugee regime.[55] This is a key reason why kafala migration governance system is substantially incompatible with international migration regime and provisions of international refugee laws including those established under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The kafala migration governance framework is primarily structured to accommodate temporary labour migration to the Gulf region with the objective of securing a much-demanded surplus of cheap labour for a booming oil economy excluding refugees and asylum seekers.[56].Most migrants are temporary workers who migrated to the Gulf region to work in construction, domestic, and service sectors often in the temporary bases. This has created a significant gap in their approach to international migration governance. While they are major recipients of labour migrants, they do not offer the same protections for refugees as countries that have signed the 1951 Convention and its protocols. Hence, the kafala migration governance framework is categorically illiberal due to its restrictive, hierarchical, and human rights depriving structure which is incompatible with the contemporary international refugee governance regime.[57]

Kafala Regime: Mirror of the Gulf Countries' Socio-Political Governance Architecture

The Kafala system reflects the broader socio-political structures and governance architecture of the Gulf monarchies where citizens rely on the ruling family for privileges, subsidies, and economic benefits with little political agency.[58] The political structure in the Arabian Gulf functions on the patron-client relationship and rentier state dynamics where the royal families act as the protector and provider of their citizen offering economic benefits, subsidies, and privileges in return for political loyalty.[59] In the political governance model of the Gulf countries, citizens rely on states, and ruling families for welfare, social benefits, and jobs[60] and royal families use citizenship as a tool to gain and consolidate loyalty from citizen where revocation of citizenship applied in the case of disloyalty.[61] Congruently, in the kafala migration governance regime, migrant workers depend on their sponsors' mercy to secure employment, residence permits, switch jobs, and exit visas.[62] The kafala system in the Gulf states extends the region's broader patronage-base hierarchical governance model into the labour system, reinforced and perpetuated power dynamics rooted in control, dependency, and exclusion. The Gulf's political systems and governance model is based on an asymmetrical governance architecture, where authority, loyalty, and access to resources are heavily influenced by relationship of dependency and patron-client relationship.[63] The hierarchical nature of this system ensures that power remains concentrated in the hands of a few, while the broader population, particularly foreign workers, remains in subordinate roles and status.

Political power is often concentrated within the ruling families and elites who control the state apparatus and its resources. These elites extend their influence through patronage networks, offering resources and protection to those loyal to them, while others are excluded from the decision-making process. This patronage structure maintains a rigid class divide with the objective of ensuring a social order where citizens receive privileges based on their loyalty to the ruling family or state, while non-citizens or migrants remain marginalised and occupy lower social, economic, and legal status. The kafala system extends this hierarchical and asymmetrical model of governance into the labour market by creating a system where migrant workers are relying on their employers (sponsors) for their legal status, residency, and ability to work.[64] The power dynamics is further entrenching and embedded in the existing power architecture in Gulf countries. In the kafala system, the employer or sponsor assumes the role of a patron, the worker's ability to stay in the country, change jobs, or even leave the country depends entirely on the sponsor's consent. The worker, therefore, is bound by the patronage relationship and has limited autonomy. This creates a power imbalance like the broader political patronage system where citizens hold power while migrants (the clients) are dependent on their sponsors.[65]

Similar to the patron-client relationships in political spheres that establish power imbalance and dependency, the kafala system fosters an

environment where workers have little control over their lives. Employers control not only the workers' employment but often their living conditions, wages, and mobility.[66] After their arrival through the kafala sponsorship system, the migrant workers become the property of their sponsor, they are not allowed to leave the country nor change jobs since their passports are confiscated by the agents and sponsor leaving migrants without agency and bargaining power regarding their wages, working conditions, and visas. This dynamic perpetuates the sense of inferiority and subordination of migrant workers, reflecting the social hierarchies of the Gulf's broader political governance architecture. Kafala system not only extended the Gulf's hierarchical, patronage-based model of governance architecture into the migration management system but also exacerbated the exclusionary approach of governance by preventing migrant workers from exercising rights, accessing legal protection, health facilities and economic benefits accessible for citizens. The hierarchical and asymmetric nature of the kafala system is deeply embedded and ingrained in the political systems of the Gulf countries which is reinforced in the labour sector for the purposes of ensuring the social order and social control by ensuring that migrant workers remain within a controlled and subordinated environment. Migrant workers who defy their sponsors or attempt to leave the country without permission are often punished, further entrenching the social stratification that is characteristic of Gulf society.[67]

Kafala system symbolises how authoritarianism regulates the bodies, borders, space, and labour by leveraging on law, race, and class[68] which is congruent with Michel Foucault's analytical framework of biopolitics. Biopolitics help us to comprehend how modern state operates to discipline bodies, border, and labour to ensure social order and national security. Foucault's biopolitcs unpacks how states extend the neoliberal governance into modern life and manage it not through punishment but by *fostering, optimising, and regulating populations.*[69] Kafala system exemplifies how Gulf countries regulate life through biopolitical differentiations between citizen and migrant workers where citizen is fostered and migrants are regulated, often made disposable.[70] Gulf countries treat migrant workers as *human capital* valuable when productive, expendable when not, where their bodies are tightly governed to optimise productivity and minimise risks to the host society which aligned with neoliberal paradigm of governance. Kafala migration governance regime epitomises a two-tier biopolitical regime **of** citizen which nurtured as a population to be preserved, protected, and expanded and migrants which optimised as a temporary workforce, but excluded from long-term care, political rights, and reproductive belonging.[71]

Kafala Migration Governance Regime: Layers of Vulnerabilities, Systematic Exclusion and Discriminatory Practices

Kafala system in the Gulf countries entails a model of deferential exclusion that intersects with both race and gender**,** reinforcing societal hierarchies and perpetuating marginalisation along multiple aspects where migrants occupy the

lowest inferior social and legal status.[72] The system is not only a mechanism of labour control but also a structure that institutionalises discrimination based on race, nationality, and gender, generating intersectional hierarchies in gender, race, and nationalities.[73] Kafala perpetuates racialised exclusion**,** where migrant workers, primarily from Asia and Africa are placed in subordinate roles, often defined by their nationality and race. This creates a racialised labour market where a worker's opportunities are largely determined by their ethnicity and nationality.[74] It also perpetuates and institutionalises gendered and racial exclusion**,** where women are disproportionately affected by its exploitative practices which is concurrent with intersectionality theory a framework that offers a nuanced understanding of how the intersect and overlap of gender, race, class, and sexuality creates layers marginalities.[75] Female migrant workers, particularly those engaged in domestic works like cleaning, childcare, and caregiving faces a double layer of marginalisation since these positions are often undervalued and poorly compensated, with long working hours, isolation, and abuses in different forms including physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual.

Women employed as domestic workers are often confined to the homes of their employers with limited freedom of movement without the consent of their employers.[76] Their daily lives are tightly controlled by their employers who manage not only their physical labour but also their movement and leisure time. This physical confinement extends beyond the home itself as some employers may limit or control access to the outside world, preventing workers from socialising, accessing healthcare and legal protection were leaving the premises for personal matters without their employer's consent. Women working in the domestic sector have little to no legal protection, access to justice, and legal recourse amidst issues like wage theft, mistreatment, or sexual harassment. Female migrant workers from Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia often face more significant barriers than their female counterparties from other Arab countries and male counterparts intertwining race, class, and gender vulnerabilities.[77] The kafala system is a clear example of how labour systems can be organised to embody deferential exclusion, where workers are forced to be trapped in the subordinate and inferior status both socially and legally that is justified by racial and gender hierarchies. Migrant workers under the kafala system, particularly women of colour, are subjected to exploitation and exclusion in ways that reflect broader societal and structural inequalities. These migrant workers are kept in deferential positions by a system that not only controls their labour but also limits their mobility, legal protections, and social status.[78]

Conclusion

Kafala migration governance system was structured to balance labour demands with national security and cultural preservation and ensure national economic growth by securing cheap labour without compromising national identity and social fabric. The kafala migration governance regime was introduced to regulate the supply of cheap labour into construction, caregiving, cleaning, or

domestic work sectors. Kafala allowed Gulf countries to quickly supply large numbers of cheap labours that fuelled their rapid development without the need to create extensive labour laws or provide workers full rights for foreign workers, enabled the regulated migration process where the migration governance regime decentralised and outsourced into private citizens, agents, and companies which granted extensive power to determine the wages, visas, work permits, and legal status of the migrant workers. Kafala system ingrained in the Gulf countries broader socio-political governance model is characterised by a patron-client and asymmetric system where citizens rely on the ruling elites and royal families for economic benefits, access to welfare, and other privileges with little to no political agency. The kafala system extended this governance architecture into the labour system and gave unchecked power to the sponsors over migrants which resulted in the gross human rights abuses and the erosion of fundamental freedoms of migrants enshrined in the refugee law and international human rights law. Kafala system resulted in wage theft, sexual, verbal, and physical abuses, confiscation of passports, and violation of freedom of movement of the migrant workers where female domestic workers face layers of marginality due to the intersection of gender, race, and class vulnerabilities. The kafala system embodies hierarchical, racial, and gender exclusion that creates multiple frontiers and institutionalizes social and legal divides among migrant workers and citizens which are incompatible with international refugee norms and human rights standards. The hierarchical and asymmetric nature of the Kafala system is deeply embedded and ingrained in the political systems of the gulf countries which extended and reinforced in the labour sector to ensure the cheap labour supply to un-skilled and low-skilled job sectors by ensuring that migrant workers remain within a controlled and subordinated environment during their temporary stay in the region. Kafala system symbolises how an authoritarian regime regulates bodies, space, and labour of migrant workers in the age of global migration by institutionalsing control and dependency that tied migrant workers to their sponsors (kafeel) which is inconsistent with international migration governance regime like the 1951 Refugee Convention, and international human rights standards. It is suggested that the kafala system needs to be abolished or reformed to embrace the existing liberal international refugee norms, human rights standards, and values to protect the rights and dignity of migrant workers in the Gulf region. Human rights groups, international labour organisations, media, and other concerned stakeholders should reiterate their calls on the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to reform or abolish the kafala system and protect the rights and dignities of migrant workers in the region.

Notes

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