



## **Statement regarding workplace harassment of Arab citizens in the wake of current political events**

Kayan Feminist Organization

26 May 2021

In the wake of recent events, members of Arab society have experienced a dramatic increase in discriminatory and abusive treatment by Israeli institutions, including the police, as Arab citizens have attempted to engage in their right to demonstrate and strike. Kayan Feminist Organization has been responding to the urgent needs of Arab society, and as a feminist organization has been focusing on the needs of Arab women.

Over the past two weeks, Kayan has been addressing and advising women on issues related to workplace rights, as many members of Arab society have experienced threats and other workplace violations simply for expressing their political opinions. Through its emergency hotline, Kayan alone has already received at least 62 complaints representing approximately 200 people, not including the inquiries addressed directly to lawyers volunteering on behalf of the organization. These figures indicate that violations of labor rights made on a political and ethnic basis has become a phenomenon and that these are not isolated cases.

Some of the women who have contacted Kayan's hotline reporting receiving threats of dismissal on the basis of their political views, for example due to their participation in the general strike planned by Arab communities on 18 May. Many women relayed warnings made by their employers against posting their political opinions on social media or expressing empathy for family members detained by the police; others reported that they were subject to investigation by their employer and by security personnel in their workplace. Female students also complained about online harassment and incitement in response to their opinions posted on social media.

Most of the women who have approached Kayan for assistance are afraid to speak to the press, for fear of losing their jobs. Some are also waiting for a hearing scheduled for them by their employer. It should be noted that many of the women experiencing harassment work for large Israeli companies or commercial chains that employ a significant number of people.

We at Kayan take very seriously these workplace rights violations against Arab workers who are simply expressing their political views, even if the employer is technically carrying out the dismissal process through legal means. Arab women experience multiple layers of discrimination and are the weakest members of society in Israel. The scope and severity of the consequences of these harassments and rights violations will undoubtedly cause far-reaching and long-term negative consequences for Arab women, which cannot be underestimated or ignored.