

Hearing on first ever criminal case arguing slavery and slave trading of migrant domestic worker in Lebanon

On 19 October 2021, the opening hearing of a criminal case filed against the former employer and recruitment agency of a migrant domestic worker, named MH, will take place in Baabda, Mount Lebanon. MH, a 38-year-old woman from Ethiopia, was held in her former *kafeels's* (sponsor) apartment for more than eight years, without payment for more than seven years. MH was locked in the apartment all day and night, apart from when she was taken to the *kafeel's* place of work to clean there, when she was locked in again. MH did not have a day off, and worked 15 hours a day, every day. The court will hear and consider for the first time, arguments that MH's treatment constitutes slavery and slave trading, as well as racial, national and gender discrimination. While MH's case is extreme, it is not unique, and it is indicative of the treatment suffered by migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. This case highlights the systemic violation and abuse of migrant domestic worker rights, that is pervasive under the *kafala* system, opening the door to further legal challenges and action against slavery and slave trading in Lebanon. This requires the inclusion of migrant domestic workers under national labour laws. The case, and this first hearing, is therefore critically important and we are calling on all stake holders: donors, advocates and the broader community, to attend the hearing in support of MH's case, and the hundreds of thousands of migrant domestic workers facing exploitation and abuse, to encourage the judicial system and the authorities to put an end to slavery in Lebanon.

For more information on LAW's work in Lebanon, see [here](#), and for further details, please contact: Shehade@legalactionworldwide.org