

'They told us they hated black Africans'

Shocking testimonies of African migrant workers in
the UAE, imprisoned, tortured, and deported.

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor
ImpACT International for Human Rights Policies

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Executive summary

On 24 and 25 June, the UAE authorities in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi carried out a massive campaign of arrests against about 700800- African migrant workers. The Rapid Intervention Forces (SWAT), the Criminal Investigation Department and the police stormed the workers' apartments and rooms late at night and arrested and took them to Al Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi. Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor and ImpACT International for Human Rights Policies interviewed more than 100 migrant workers from various African countries, mostly Uganda, Cameroon and Nigeria, who had been arrested, imprisoned and deported. Most of whom who were in possession of documents confirming their legal right to be present in the UAE, with residency and work visas valid for months or years.

The vast majority of those interviewed were subjected to various forms of violation of their rights, including:

- **Excessive use of force:** The forces that stormed the workers' apartments and rooms used excessive force against the unarmed civilians; forcing entry of apartments and rooms, although there was no resistance. The authorities used stun guns, beating, residents, handcuffed and violently forced the workers into police vehicles.
- **Sexual harassment:** Dozens of female workers reported that they were sexually harassed during their arrests, carried out at night as

they were asleep in their nightwear.. As the police stormed their rooms, several touched workers' private parts and “laughed,” according to workers' testimony. Some of the female workers said they were not allowed to dress although they were almost naked.

- **Racial discrimination and insults:** Apparently, these raids, arrests, imprisonments and deportations were carried out on a racial basis. Most of the workers said that they were subjected to racist insults from the police officers and jailors who told them that the Emirati authorities intend to “clean” the streets of Abu Dhabi of black Africans and how much they hated them. Other workers said police officers called them “blacks with stinking smell.”
- **Arbitrary arrests and imprisonments:** The vast majority of the arrested and imprisoned workers had valid residency and work visas and said they had not committed any offence that called for their arrest and were doing their jobs.. None of the workers were informed as to why they had been arrested and imprisoned while others were accused of prostitution, which accusations were uniformly denied.
- **Lack of due legal process and denial of access to lawyers:** All the migrant workers who had been arrested were denied contact with family members, colleagues or their workplace. They were also denied their right to appoint or contact a lawyer. Some reported that although the companies for whom they worked sent representatives or lawyers to seek their release, the prison administration refused to allow

them access.. In addition, the workers were forced to sign documents in Arabic that they could neither read or understand.

- **Physical and psychological torture:** In addition to the use of stun guns and beatings during the arrests, the authorities applied physical and psychological torture against them. Workers were forced to remain during the day under the scorching heat of the sun and then in the evening were forced into freezing cold cells where the temperature had been lowered to the minimum degree. On top of that, the workers were not given bedding or mattresses and had to sleep on the floor. Further, dozens of workers faced being handcuffed and shackled periods up to two weeks, constituting cruel and inhumane treatment.

- **Denial of health care:** All the interviewees reported that they were denied access to all hygiene and health care products in the cells, including not being allowed to take showers, change their clothes or use soap – especially during the first two weeks of imprisonment. Women were denied access to sanitary pads during their menstrual periods. All of this caused skin complaints to spread in the prison. Notably the prison administration did not provide the workers with medical care, regardless of pre-existing conditions, according to the testimony of the workers who said that all they received was a few tablets of Panadol (painkiller), even if he/she had a broken bone.

- **Confiscation of personal property:** The workers said that they were deported to their countries empty-handed except for their passports

and tickets. The Emirati authorities confiscated all what most of them had, including their official papers, cash, phones and valuables, none of which they were not allowed to take on their arrest.

- **Forced deportation:** The UAE authorities deported hundreds of African migrant workers without clear explanations or informing their embassies; workers who resisted deportation were threatened with imprisonment and violence.

Introduction

About 10 million people live in the United Arab Emirates, with citizens constituting only 12%, with the balance being some 9 million migrant workers, most on temporary contracts with 90% in the private sector. Locals, or those with citizenship mainly work in the public sector which has greater stability and has relatively higher salaries.⁽¹⁾

There is a clear pecking order in how all labour is managed and rewarded according to nationality and ethnicity; privileges are granted to citizens, next are Europeans, then migrant workers from other nationalities, migrant workers of Arab origin, with penultimately Asian workers who are often employed in non-professional jobs, and finally black African workers being ranked last.

These latter – the Black Africans - are subject to a variety of privations , frequently being employed in physically demanding roles, with low salaries, live in segregated accommodation and suffer discrimination in all aspects of their daily lives.

These abuses peaked in June 2021, when the UAE authorities broke into several buildings where hundreds of African workers lived, arrested and detained them for 40 to 60 days before deporting may to their home countries, with many still being imprisoned. There is no legal justification for this action.

According to testimony given by deported workers, police and and members

1 https://www.ilo.org/beirut/countries/united-arab-emirates/WCMS_614087/lang--ar/index.htm

from Special Weapon And Tactics (SWAT) teams broke into their homes and rooms during the night of June 24 and 25 2021, arresting and taking them to Al Wathba prison near Abu Dhabi. They were subjected to beatings; deprived of access to health care, bathing facilities, with the hands and feet of a large number being handcuffed for the first 14 days of detention.

Some reported that they were subjected to sexual harassment during the arrest, as officers and police deliberately touched them inappropriately while they were semi-naked.

ImpACT International for Human Rights Policies interviewed dozens of African migrant workers, taking their testimony on their forcible deportation from the UAE to their home countries despite having valid residence visas, apparently based entirely on racial On 2425- June 2021, forces from the

Data collection methodology

Last July, Euro-Med Monitor received complaints from African migrant workers who said that they had arrived at their home countries a few days after being forcibly deported from the United Arab Emirates along with hundreds of others. Our research team conducted individual interviews with more than 100 of these workers virtually, via e-mails, Whatsapp or through field interviews.

The team compared and analyzed the data they obtained from the workers to ensure its validity to conclude that most of the data provided match. The team also obtained official documents confirming the authenticity of the account of those interviewed, such as valid residence visas and work permits, along with video clips and photos that were taken inside the apartments in Abu Dhabi when they were stormed or from within the deportation center in Dubai.

Euro-Med Monitor and ImpACT International analyzed the submitted data and verified its accuracy, confirming that the information contained in this report was all based on the victims' version of the events.

The Raid

(Excessive use of force - sexual harassment – racial discrimination and insult)



Picture taken by an African migrant worker of the mess caused by storming one of the flats

police and the Special Weapon And Tactics (SWAT) unit surrounded several buildings housing hundreds of African workers, including the La Gym building, al-Manasir, al-Madina, and al-Mushrif buildings in Abu Dhabi, before breaking in and arresting about 700800-African workers, over a period of about four hours, from 11.00 p.m. to 3.00 a.m.

According to the testimonies taken, armed forces stormed the apartments and rooms of

the African workers, forcibly entering those where there was no response. Many of the residents were taken from their beds while they were asleep. According to the workers, all the surveillance cameras in the buildings, and the wireless internet connection werer all disabled, to prevent any outside communication.

Melachio Keanfe Carlos



Age:	34
Nationality:	Cameroon
Job:	waiter
Company:	Eighties restaurant – Abu Dhabi
Date of arrival in UAE:	15 October 2019
Date of arrest:	25 June 2021
Date of deportation:	6 August 2021

“I was kidnapped on 25 June, at 2 a.m. on my bed sleeping. They took me and asked about my ID, passport, valid residency permit, and phone. They stole everything in my room. They beat me and took me half naked, only with my sleeping clothes, to Al Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi. We arrived there and they put us in prison. They also took our wives, some of them were pregnant.”

Full testimony: page 32

All the workers interviewed by ImpACT reported that they were asked to show their IDs and valid residence visas, and although they complied, they were driven to prison. According to testimonies, SWAT personnel used excessive force, breaking doors of apartments and rooms, using tasers , beating and handcuffing them, and subjecting them to verbal



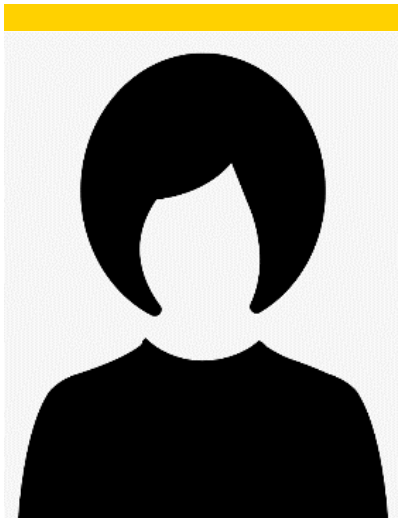
An African migrant worker taken to the deportation center

abuse. Police officers also broke or scattered their possessions before arresting them. Even though most of the workers were wearing night or underwear during the raid, they were prevented them from dressing, and were not given enough time to collect money or personal possessions.. Further they were prevented from making any phone calls or contacting families or friends, or their lawyers .

Many of the those interviewed by ImpACT reported that they had been sexually harassed during the raid, they were in their their sleepwear, and while handcuffing them, the police deliberately touched them inappropriately. and refused to allow them to dress.

“SWAT broke into our rooms and pulled us out of our beds naked. Then they started touching intimate parts of our body while laughing. Then they handcuffed us and took us to prison,” Ugandan Catherine Kuheisa, 30, told ImpACT in her video testimony.

Queen Nkechi



Age: **30**

Nationality: **Nigeria**

Job: **Cleaner**

Company: **Gross Contracting Company
(Crystal) + Mafraq Jail**

Date of arrival in UAE: **2019**

Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

Date of deportation: **4 August 2021**

“I was half naked and they were touching [parts] of our bodies in the name of arrest. The Criminal Investigations Department CID [officer] that took me was touching my buttocks and breast. In that building, they were touching people’s private parts in the name of arrest. He kept touching until I shouted, before they took us inside the bus. I never knew a day like that day would come knowing fully well I am legal in the country.”

Full testimony: page 34

When the workers asked why they were being arrested despite having the required legal documents for work and residence, the officers did not reply ordering the workers to keep silent; others said that is part of the routine procedures to ensure that they had the correct legal status, while some were reported as saying that they «hate Africans and want to remove them from the streets of Abu Dhabi.»

“It is true that what they did is pure racism, they hate Africans,” said Ayonga Standl, 34, from Cameroon. “Currently, it is very difficult for Africans to rent a house in Abu Dhabi. We were looking at [people from other nationalities] asking: God why did you give us black color? We are cursed in the eyes of white [people], we don’t know what we have done. We are all human, but why is our case different?”

Gideon Samgwa Tapak



Nationality: **Cameroon**

Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

Date of deportation: **22 August 2021**

“They told us that they hate Africans and want to get them out of the streets of Abu Dhabi. They chased them in the streets while they were running for their life. There are still people in jail until now. Racism is spread too much in Abu Dhabi. Even in the workplace, Africans are taken as slaves and dogs.”

Full testimony: page 46

In addition to the African workers, the UAE police arrested a limited number of Asian workers who were present in the accommodation. When they asked why they were arrested, although they were not African, the officers told them that it was because they were «stupid» to live in shared apartments with African workers. The officers did not respond to the demands of the Asian workers, and insisted on treating them like the African workers- taking them to prison, deporting a number whilst at the time of this report ,others remain in in prison awaiting deportation.

Lawrence Kingsley Ikechukwu



Nationality: **Nigeria**

Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

Job: **Waiter**

“They made it known to us that this was pure racism, and that they don’t need black Africans anymore in the country. In some of the flats of black Africans, we have two Asians; Sri Lankan and Indonesian who were also affected by the raid and abduction. The Sri Lankan asked why they were arrested although they were not Africans, they [the officers] told them that they were stupid to live in flats occupied by black Africans. Their only offence was staying with black Africans. The total number of Asians who live in our flats is not more than 10, some of them have been deported, and others are waiting to be deported.”

Full testimony: page 41

None of the detained workers knew what was happening, why the police dealt violently with them, or where they were going to be taken. When some tried to take key possessions, they were told that this was a routine procedure to ensure that their presence in the country was legal, and that after answering some questions, they would be returned. Therefore, all the arrested workers left without taking anything, even their official papers, believing that they were going to return to their apartments, but in fact they were taken directly to prison and then to the airport for deportation. The Emirati authorities did not only arrest the workers, but members of their families as well, including the elderly. Lawrence Kingsley Ikechukwu, from Niger, said that his 60-year-old mother was also arrested and imprisoned before they were both deported back to Niger.

Imprisonment and enforced disappearance

After their arrest, the African and Asian workers were taken directly to Al Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi, without informing them of the reason for their arrest or allowing them to contact families or lawyers or any other third party; their phones and possessions were confiscated, and, in prison, they were forced to put on prison uniform, and were restrained with their hands and feet tied. The prison administration conducted coronavirus (Covid-19) tests for some workers without advising them of the results.

The workers were shunted from one office to another in the prison to complete the imprisonment and deportation paperwork. As these procedures were conducted the workers were frequently asked questions related to accusations of “prostitution,” for example, how many women or girls live in your house; how many women have you had sex with, and, how many women sleep in the same room as yourself? Although the workers denied the allegations, allegations they were silenced and confined in the cells, and their requests to communicate with families and lawyers rejected. One of the African workers, Iloh Obinna Samuel, 14, from Nigeria, reported to ImpACT that the company he was working for, Alshaya LLC, had sent lawyers to the prison to ask to see him, but the prison administration refused to allow them access or speak to him directly..

Because there was no news of the detainees for some days and weeks, their families outside the UAE assumed something wrong had happened to them prompting them to send money to other friends and colleagues in Abu Dhabi to help them search for their sons, but without success as they would go to the prison but the prison administration would deny that they were imprisoned.

All of the workers interviewed by ImpACT said that the first 14 days of detention were the worst, with hands and feet, they were denied showers, a change of clothes, or access to hygiene products including soap, toothpaste, or towels, which led to some developing skin diseases. Women were often denied access to sanitary pads, but this often depended on the jailer who was present- some would provide them with very limited number, but others kept telling that that none were available.

“Women were denied access to sanitary pads upon arrival at the prison to the extent that blood was running down their legs, and when they asked the jailers for sanitary pads, they laughed and made fun of their appearance,” Ugandan Catherine Kuheisa, 30, told ImpACT.

Veronica Ebude Mbide



Age: **37**

Nationality: **Cameroon**

Job: **Office girl**

Company: **Dutch International Construction
Company L.L.C**

Date of arrival in UAE: **2017**

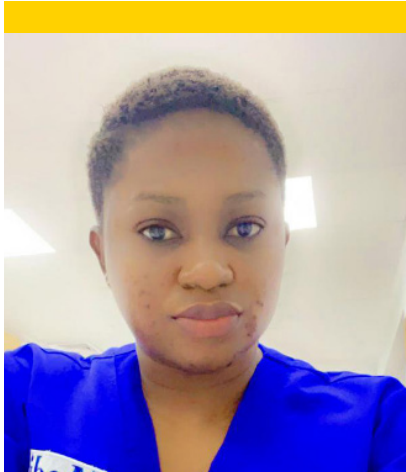
Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

“Many of us there, women and men, were asking what was happening. We all had valid visas. They undressed us, ladies. They undressed us and gave us prison dresses, green and white, then pushed us into one big hall. I couldn’t realise what was happening because I’ve never ever been in a police station before. They treated us, Africans, like we are criminals, like we are slaves, like we are not human beings.”

Full testimony: page 38

The prison contained a limited number of toilets, which were insufficient for the large number of detainees. Melachio Keanfe Carlos, 34, from Cameroon, told ImpACT that 61 people were in a cell with access to only three toilets.

Bijuh Elisabeth



Age: **31**

Nationality: **Cameroon**

Job: **Assistant nurse**

Company: **Reem Hospital**

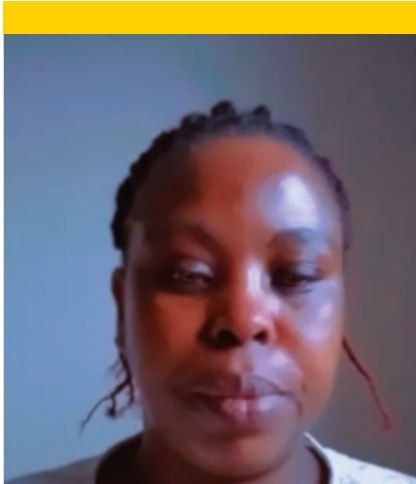
Date of arrival in UAE: **2017**

Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

“During the first two weeks [of imprisonment], they did not provide women with sanitary pads. If the officer didn’t want to provide us with them, we would shout.”

Full testimony: page 48

Catherine Kuheisa



Age: **35**

Nationality: **Uganda**

Job: **Nanny**

Date of arrest: **Date of arrest: 25 June 2021**

«They took us to the prison, and when we got there, they did not give sanitary pads for the women who were during their menstrual cycle, blood was running down their legs and when we went to ask for pads they were just laughing at us.»

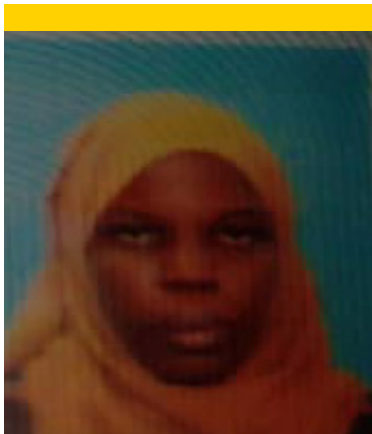
Full testimony: page 36

The workers reported that they were beaten and subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment inside the prison; thrown into prison cells without beds or mattresses, and having to sit and sleep on the floor. Some stated they were subjected to various tortures, for example being forced during the day to stay in direct sunlight and outside in the hot weather, and then in the evening back to the cold cells where they had no blankets or covers. These practices were used as punitive measures against workers who demanded to see lawyers, what were the charges against them, went on hunger strike, or avoided sedatives which they said claimed were put in

their food to weaken and calm them. Anyone who refused food was taken to another cell, handcuffed and left in the cold for a few days without blankets or mattresses.

Gina told ImpACT that she was sure that the prison administration was putting sedatives in the food, so this made them lethargic - even after their return. After being deported, Gina went to a doctor, who told her that she had received sedatives extensively.

Nalubwama Regina



Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

“They used to put drugs [sedatives] in our food. I personally am battling with the results now- all my veins turned blue. Upon my arrival home, I was checked [by a doctor] who told me I was given sedatives.”

Full testimony: page 43

Sarah Emmanuel



Job: **Teacher**

Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

“During my stay there [in prison], on the 4th day, I was crying profusely, asking why I was there, and I needed to speak to my family. After about 30 minutes, an officer came in and dragged me out half naked, he threw me out on the floor and after a while I and 13 other ladies who refused to eat because we were protesting our arrest, were chained hand and feet for 14 days, and some of us were on our monthly cycle, we slept on the floor with A.C. at its highest point as I learnt that’s how they punish inmates. On the 3rd day I was sick as in really sick and all I was given was Panadol.”

Full testimony: page 49

Because of the poor conditions in prison, constant exposure to high and low temperatures, and the lack of hygiene, many of the workers suffered various ailments, including skin complaints, influenza, and sporadic joint pain and

bodily discomfort.. When they asked for health care or medicine, their demands were rejected, although occasionally given Panadol analgesic. The workers said that «Panadol» in prison was the solution to all kinds of diseases no matter how severe they were, even those who had bone fractures were only offered Panadol. Furthermore, it was also given randomly, after having been requested several times, and then the jailers might put a few pills (between 510-) into a cell of 61 people.

Further the interviewees reported that they had insufficient food; being given only Arabic bread for breakfast and dinner, and white rice for lunch. If the workers refused to eat any meal, they would be punished and the conditions under which they were kept would be harshened.

The workers were kept in prison for 30 to 60 days, and at the date of this report, dozens of workers are still detained, according to the testimonies of the released workers. During the preparation of this report, new detainees were deported on a daily basis.

Throughout their stay in prison, the workers' embassies were not informed of their whereabouts or given any information regarding their arrest, imprisonment, or the intention to deport them.

Deportation



A picture taken from a video for an African worker during deportation

After the majority of the workers had spent 4045-days (some less, some more, and others are still in prison) inside Al Wathba Prison the administrative procedures needed to deport them, were finalised, including the cancellation of their residency visas. The workers to be deported were handcuffed to be taken to the deportation center and the airport in Dubai. Since they were not allowed to take anything with them

from their apartments, the workers were unable to take any personal possessions with them, and their passports were not returned until after they boarded the plane.

On the day of deportation, the workers, were forced to sign papers written in Arabic that the majority could not read. In some cases where workers



The only bag the workers were given upon deportation. It contained their passports and the flight ticket

refused to sign them , they were threatened with being shot or kept in prison without informing anyone of their whereabouts. They would then be taken without notice to the deportation center where they then would realise that they were being repatriated.

As the workers' passports, and other official documents including personal IDs, birth, current passports, study certificates and similar documents along with valuables, money . mobile

phones which were confiscated at the time of their arrest the Emirati authorities, the Emirati authorities used their expired passports for their exit stamps and return them to their respective countries.

«I lost everything I had in my life; my study certificates, phones, and money. I was deported with empty hands,» Ugandan Aliu Sani,²⁸ told IMPACT.

Katende Bashir



Age: **30 years**

Nationality: **Uganda**

Job: **Electrician**

Company: **Ajad Facilities Management**

Date of arrival in UAE: **August 2015**

Date of arrest: **24 June 2021**

“They returned us without any money, they just gave us the ticket and took us to the airport. We were still handcuffed, they only gave us our passports in the plane, that is how they deported people. I worked so nicely and never had any criminal case in any police station in Abu Dhabi or Dubai.”

Full testimony: page 31

In addition it was noted that the UAE authorities gave them incorrect results of Coronavirus (Covid-19) tests on the day of deportation, as many were not even tested - they were handed documents stating that they were not infected in order to expedite the procedures for their deportation.

Gideon Samgwa Tapak



Nationality: **Cameroon**

Date of arrest: **25 June 2021**

Date of deportation: **22 August 2021**

They gave us fake COVID-19 test results to deport us, we were not even tested for COVID-19. They took my expired passport and when I asked them, they said they don't have it and yet I gave them. I only came [home] with my new passport that I made a week before the arrest. When I reached Entebbe Immigration Uganda, they wanted to see the old passport because it was the one I used when I left the country. They wanted to even arrest me for losing Government property but when I explained what happened, one of them had pity on me and let me pass.

Full testimony: page 46

Recommendations

Based on the testimonies, collected by Euro-Med Monitor and ImpACT, of dozens of African migrant workers who were arrested, imprisoned, and then deported from the UAE, **we call on the local authorities to:**

- immediately release all migrant workers in prison,
- stop the policy of racial discrimination towards migrant workers of specific races
- investigate the incidents and testimonies contained in this report,
- hold the perpetrators of the aforementioned violations accountable,
- put an end to arrest campaigns against migrant workers, which have continued until the date of the report, and
- reduce the mass forced deportation of hundreds of migrants.

Embassies of (Uganda, Nigeria, Cameroon) in the UAE

The workers' testimonies indicate that the embassies of workers' countries ignored all their families' demands to contact the UAE authorities to release them or bring any information about them. Therefore, embassies of Uganda, Cameroon and Nigeria should:

- follow up on the cases of hundreds of their migrant workers in the UAE,
- urge UAE authorities to immediately release of all their detained workers and
- follow up on the affairs of their nationals in the UAE in light of their exposure to racial discrimination and violations without accountability.

Testimonies

▪ Testimony No. 1: Katende Bashir

- Gender: Male
- Age: 30 years.
- Nationality: Uganda.
- Date of arrival in UAE: August 2015
- Date of arrest: 24 June 2021.
- Date of deportation: 6 August 2021.
- Position: Electrician
- Company: Ajad Facilities Management.

Testimony: Actually, I was kidnapped, I wouldn't say that I was called, but I was kidnapped by the UAE, Abu Dhabi government [and taken to] the Criminal Investigation Department. I was in my room sleeping, they came in my room, they raided our building, I was in the La Gym building in Hamdan Street. When they came to our buildings, they broke all the cameras to [conceal] evidence. They came and raided us, just on black people mostly, then took us to the al-Wathba prison with no reason. We don't know why they raided us. Some of us spent one month and twenty days [in prison], and some people are still there. We were treated so badly; we put on chains [were chained] both on legs and hands, so it was not good for us. We asked the cops why we are here, he was like saying he doesn't know why.

That was the most difficult time. We couldn't even access to our families

or companies. We were just in jail, we didn't know anything that was happening. We slept almost four days with handcuffs on legs and hands. We are just asking why this happened and what's the reason behind the arrest, or the kidnap. I worked so nicely and never had any criminal case in any police station in Abu Dhabi or Dubai. They returned us without any money, they just gave us the ticket and took us to the airport. We were still handcuffed, they only gave us our passports in the plane, that is how they deported people.

At night [in prison], they used to set the AC to the minimum temperature, and during the day, they kept us directly under the sun for the whole day.

▪ Testimony No. 2: Melachio Keanfe Carlos

- Gender: Male
- Age: 34
- Nationality: Cameroon.
- Date of arrival in UAE: 15 October 2019.
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021.
- Date of deportation: 6 August 2021.
- Position: Cashier and supervisor.
- Company: Eighties restaurant – Abu Dhabi

Testimony: I was kidnapped on the 25th [of June], at 2 am. on my bed sleeping. They took me and asked about my ID, my passport, my valid [residency permit], my phone. They stole everything in my room, now I don't have my

national ID card of [birth] certificate, my driving license, everything. They beat me, hit me, then took me half naked, only with my sleeping clothes, to the al-Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi. We arrived there and they put us in prison. They also took our wives, some of them were pregnant.

We faced a lot of torture there. We [had to eat] terrible food. I stayed there for 40 terrible days. They didn't provide us with medical treatment, only Panadol tablets. They told me that if my documents are clear I would go back to the city and continue my duty [work]. But after that they told me that I had only two options; either to go back to jail, or I go back to my country. I said no I need a judgment [trial]. I don't have any case, they sent me back home without any documents. There is too much pain in us.

We were 61 people in a cell that contained only 3 bathrooms. When we fell sick, they gave us nothing, only Panadol, and they would give it to us after days [of begging], and only 10% of us could get it. Sometimes you'd be lucky to get 1 pill a day.

They hate Africans. The Moroccan officer said it to my face that he is not an African.

▪ **Testimony No. 3: Aggrey Donijah (+256 704 355133)**

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Uganda
- Date of arrival in UAE: 27 December 2019.
- Position: Oil and gas contractor
- Company: Abudhabi National Oil Company

Testimony: I was raided at La Gym building, Hamdan street, and taken away for 51 days with my other colleagues. Some of my other colleagues are left there. I don't know when they will come out. We were tortured and subjected to psychological torture, all sorts of torture. We were chained up for several days both day and night, we were locked up inside all day. They told us it was about identification issues but deported people with legal documents,

▪ **Testimony No. 4: Queen Nkechi**

- Gender: Female
- Age: 30
- Nationality: Nigeria
- Date of arrival in UAE: Month 2019.
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021.
- Date of deportation: 4 August 2021.
- Position: Cleaner
- Company: Gross Contracting Company (Crystal) + Mafraq jail

Testimony: The first thing they did when they arrived in my flat was destroy

the camera, so that they would not be [documented]. It was the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officials and SWAT. I lived with my husband in Abu Dhabi. We were there legally. That night on the 25th of June, they came into my room, and they were shouting. They told us that this was just for checking our IDs to see if they were valid, and that it would take only five minutes. But they kidnapped us, and took us to the al-Wathba prison. I was half naked when they took me. We were chained, tortured, and life there wasn't easy. We were crying and asking what we did. They didn't have any answers for that. They were treating us so badly.

I was there for 44 days before I was finally deported. I was chained for 14 days hand and leg, fell ill and the only drug for all sickness was Panadol. We were sleeping on the floor and the AC was at 18 degrees. They refused to give us toothbrushes and toothpaste or even sanitary towels. We used to bathe without soap, which caused us skin diseases.

They didn't allow us to make phone calls. They told us that nobody knows our whereabouts. Even when people came to look for us they were telling them that we are not there. They took different Africans from different nationalities. We need help as soon as possible. I lost all my money in my room. They stole my phone, my property, my laptop, my documents, everything. They did this unjustly.

I worked as a cleaner in Mafraq jail, and although some of the officers recognized, they said they could not do anything because it's beyond their

power. Our [colleagues] in the UAE are scared to post [about what happened] because if you try to put it on Facebook or Twitter, they will track and arrest the person through their location.

I was half naked and they were touching [parts] of our bodies in the name of arrest. The CID [officer] that took me was touching my buttocks and breast. In that building, they were touching people's private parts in the name of arrest. So he was touching until I shouted, before they took us inside the bus. I never knew a day like that day would come knowing fully well I am legal in the country.

▪ **Testimony No. 5: Catherine Kuheisa**

- Gender: Female
- Age: 35
- Nationality: Uganda
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021.
- Position: Nanny

Testimony: We came back to our countries without shoes or money.

It was a Thursday night [Friday early morning. I was in our room with my husband and one of our cousins, they came and broke the door, and [took me] from my bed. I was only in my underwear and they didn't give us time to put our clothes on. They dragged me out [of the room] and [handcuffed] me backwards, then they took me to prison. They used to give us Arabic

bread and rice for food. I stayed there for almost two months, and they didn't allow me to see the judge. And they didn't [tell] us the reason why we were in prison until the day we were deported. There were pregnant women, they needed medical attention but they didn't give them anything. They wouldn't give us towels, and whenever we ask for towels they would tell us that we are stinking black Africans. Our hearts are bleeding.

They didn't tell us the reason [of the arrest]. They told us that after 24 hours, we will be coming back. They didn't tell us anything only to torture us. They took all our things.

When they came to our building, they broke all the cameras and disconnected the wifi.

▪ **Testimony No. 6: (Prefers to remain anonymous)**

Testimony: I lost everything I have in my life all my school certificate and my phones and my money I was deported with empty handed.

▪ Testimony No 7: Veronica Ebude Mbide

- Gender: Female
- Age: 37
- Nationality: Cameroon.
- Date of arrival in UAE: 2017.
- Position: Office girl.
- Company: Dutch International Construction Company L.L.C

Testimony: “On 24th of June, Thursday, I came back from work. And around 2 am., I heard so much noise [outside my room], so I got up from my bed to see what was happening, I opened my door and saw them, I closed my door and went back to bed. After that they came and opened my curtain and said “yalla yalla” [come on], and asked me to give my [valid visa]. I got up from my bed, and before I realised they handcuffed me backwards. They took us outside and put us in the car, the distance was about two hours, then I found myself in the prison.

Many of us there, women and men, were asking what was happening, we all had valid visas. They undressed us, ladies, they undressed us. They gave us prison dresses, green and white, then pushed us into one big hall. I couldn't realise what was happening before I've never ever been in a police station. They treated us, Africans, like we are criminals, like we are slaves, like we are not human beings. They even cut my hair. We didn't have access to our families or businesses. They never gave us hygiene [kits]. They treated us so badly that we thought we were dreaming.

The torture and the trauma were too much. God kept me alive, because I could have lost my life in that place. All the assets that we had remained there, I came back to my country only with my phone. My birth certificate and my documents are still there. These people kidnapped us and sent us back home. We don't know what to do with our lives now.

After I came back to my country, I sent my colleagues to my room to look for my documents and stuff, they had stolen everything. Everything that I had in the UAE for 34- years was lost. I am trying so hard to not think about [my experience], because all of my years of work in Abu Dhabi, I was [treated] like half a human.

Veronica had a valid visa until 24 December 2021.

▪ **Testimony No. 8: Adeniran Yunus Owoseni**

- Gender: Male
- Age: 27
- Nationality: Nigeria
- Date of arrival in UAE: 6 December 2020.
- Date of arrest: 24 June 2021.
- Date of deportation: 8 August 2021.
- Position: Waiter
- Company: Kuwait Food Co (Americana)

Testimony: My visa is valid and my contract is going to end in 2024. I am not an illegal migrant, I was deported for no reason. I was held in the al-Wathba

prison for 45 days with no good medical attention, despite having all my papers legal, many blacks were picked from the street and I was arrested at my lodge with many other blacks. The police used electric-shock weapons on us. They didn't give our ladies time to put their clothes on, they harassed them sexually. They kept touching their breasts and private parts. I saw them.

Ladies were arrested naked because it was a raid late at night, with handcuffs on our legs and hands. We were forced to sign some documents written in Arabic. Which we could not understand. They threatened us that if we didn't sign the documents, we would be shot.

I work with Kuwait food company Americana, with a valid visa and residence. Yet I was deported without any particular crime against me. I came back only without my papers and I wasn't given any opportunity to take my belongings. This is my bitter experience in UAE.

▪ Testimony No. 9: Lawrence Kingsley Ikechukwu

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Nigeria
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021
- Position: Waiter

Testimony: We were all abducted, kidnapped & jailed (never tried in any UAE court). Over 700 black Africans in Hamdan building, in Abu Dhabi [were arrested]. They broke all the cameras and disconnected the wifi and beat us. We were not notified before this happened, we were sleeping. They took us directly to jail, without any trial. For 14 days, we were chained and handcuffed, it was so difficult, they did not allow us to shower. During these days, we were not given enough food, only white rice and Arabic bread. They took us from one office to another, accusing us of several allegations. They accused us of prostitution in our rooms, then they forced us to sign documents that were written in Arabic. We did not have access to anything. They made it known to us that this was pure racism, that they don't need black Africans anymore in the country. In some of the flats of black Africans, we have two Asians; Sri Lankan and Indonesian who were also affected by the raid and abduction. The Sri Lankan asked why they were arrested although they were not Africans, they [the officers] told them that they were stupid to live in flats occupied by black Africans. Their only offence was staying with black Africans. The total number of Asians who live in our flats is not more

than 10, some of them have been deported, and others are waiting to be deported.

My first entry to the UAE was in April 2016 (tourist visa), then I got a veterinary medical assistant job in a veterinary hospital in Sharjah and worked there for two years (2017 - 2019) until the hospital's closure. In 2019, I got a restaurant waiter job in Abu Dhabi, until the ugly incident happened. Abu Dhabi police and SWAT team surrounded and invaded our unarmed civilian residential building La Gym. They broke all CCTV cameras and wifi connections in each floor of the building. They broke into all the flats occupied by black African nationals, beat us, shot us with electric guns, sexually abused and assaulted us (females more), abducted, kidnapped, and whisked us away to an unknown destination, which we later knew was the al-Wathba prison. The illegal operation lasted for five hours (11 pm. - 3 am.)

At the al-Wathba prison, we were stripped naked and given inmate clothes, and chained in hand and leg cuffs for two weeks during which we did not bathe. They fed us Arabic bread in the morning and night, and white tasteless rice in the afternoon. The drinking water was so chlorine diffused, coloured and smelly. They fed us like dogs, same like slaves. In the prison, they would bring in a trainee COVID test worker with one or two pills of Panadol. For all the diseases, the cure was Panadol, including bone fractures.

Bound in chains, we were taken to various offices inside the prison yard on foot. They were beating and shouting on us, and forced us to sign documents

written in Arabic. They were asking us questions like ‘how many ladies are there in our flats, and how many ladies we [slept with]. After one month and one week, they started deporting us all, cancelling our residency permits and visas without letting anyone see or take to us, even our embassies.

A few Asian nationals were affected because of living with us, and they were told that their only offence was living with us. It was like their were on a mission, to clear the UAE of black Africans with or without valid residence documents.

▪ **Testimony No. 10: Nalubwama Regina**

- Gender: Female
- Age: 31
- Nationality: Uganda
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021
- Date of deportation: 21 July 2021
- Position: Nanny

Testimony: The police guys touched our private parts and breasts. They started to force their hands in our private parts and breasts after having handcuffed us. [In the prison], we were given only Panadol [when we fell sick]. They used to put drugs [sedatives] in our food, I personally am battling with the results now, all my veins turned blue. Upon my arrival home, I was checked [by a doctor] who told me I was given sedatives.

▪ Testimony No. 12: Ayonga Standl

- Gender: Male
- Age: 34
- Nationality: Cameroon
- Date of arrival in UAE: March 2021
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021
- Date of deportation: 29 July 2021.
- Position: Visitor visa.

Testimony: It is true that what they did is pure racism, they hate Africans. Currently, it is very difficult for Africans to rent a house in Abu Dhabi.

I entered the UAE in September 2017. I worked before as a maintenance painter with Abudhabi Sana General Enterprise where I had an injury at work, and it led me to a spine surgery, so my company terminated my contract because of my temporary inability to perform my duty as before. I came back to Abudhabi in March 2021 as a tourist to follow up with my health situation while looking for a new job. I was kidnapped on the 25th of June at 3 am for no crime committed. I had just renewed my tourist visa just 4 days before I was kidnapped.

Sometimes, [in prison], they would give us 10 or 5 pills of Panadol to a cell of 61 people.

On the day of deportation, we were chained and they kept the chains until we arrived at the deportation center in Dubai. (VIDEO ON WHATSAPP). Some

[of us] could not [fetch] their original passports, so they used our expired passports to deport us. Our original passports are still left there [in our flats]. When we refused to be deported with the expired passports and money, they intimidated us saying: “You will not go? That’s ok we will book you another ticket maybe after three months” to make people afraid to lose this opportunity to be out [of prison]. We were like: we have no option because we are not Europeans and no human right is our right, we cannot fight for what belongs to us. We had no option so we left, because they could keep us and bury us, there is no evidence, they made sure we didn’t have any evidence of what they did. We were looking at [people from other nationalities] asking: God why did you give us black color? We are cursed in the eyes of white [people], we don’t know what we have done. We are all human, but why is our case different?

[On the day of deportation] they said that they were taking us to the CID [Criminal Investigation Department] for more questions. But when we entered the car we were taken directly to the airport at the deportation center. On my day of deportation, I also met some Africans from Dubai and Ajman who were facing the same case [deported].

Before leaving, we asked them: “where is my money? I kept it in my wallet and I saw it there when you were identifying me” they removed the money. I don’t know what I can say, I am traumatised.

Ayonga’s visa was valid until 20 September 2021.

▪ Testimony No. 13: Gideon Samgwa Tapak

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Cameroon
- Date of deportation: 22 August 2021

Testimony: They told us that they hate Africans and want to get them out of the streets of Abu Dhabi. They chased them in the streets while they were running for their life. There are still people in jail until now. Racism is too much in Abu Dhabi, even in the workplace, Africans are taken as slaves and dogs.

They used to put drugs [sedatives] in our food to make us weak. I am totally weak until now.

They gave us fake COVID-19 test results to deport us, we were not even tested for COVID-19. They took my expired passport and when I asked them, they said they don't have it and yet I gave them. I only came [home] with my new passport that I made a week before the arrest. When I reached Entebbe Immigration Uganda, they wanted to see the old passport because it was the one I used when I left the country. They wanted to even arrest me for losing Government property but when I explained what happened, one of them had pity on me and let me pass.

▪ Testimony No. 14: (Prefers to remain anonymous)

· Gender: Female

Testimony: There are still people in that prison since June 25 till present, including pregnant women. When they were taken by the police, their documents were missing, now they don't have passports to be deported with.

When those in prison refused to eat [because of the sedatives in the food], the officers would punish them by keeping them under the sun for 24 hours, then later taking them to a very cold room and they had to sleep on the floor.

Even our coronavirus test results that we traveled with were all fake. When we entered the prison, they did a coronavirus test once and kept the results in their system, then the day they deported us, they edited the document and put "negative".

▪ Testimony No. 15: Bijuh Elisabeth

- Gender: Female
- Age: 31
- Nationality: Cameroon
- Date of arrival in UAE: 2017
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021
- Date of deportation: 29 July 2021
- Position: Assistant nurse
- Company: Reem Hospital

Testimony: During the first two weeks [of imprisonment], they did not provide women with sanitary pads. If the officer didn't want to provide us with them, we would shout. Sometimes when we used to shout asking for a lawyer of why we were there, they would put drugs [sedatives] in our food. The police officer told us in our face we don't like black [people].

▪ Testimony No. 16: Andrew Junior Masagazi

- Gender: Male
- Age: 35
- Date of arrest: 25 June
- Date of deportation: 4 August 2021
- Position: Cleaner
- Company: MBM

Testimony: I have worked for two or three years [with my employer]. I have

been communicating with the company to ask for our end of service [rights]. They didn't even buy me a [flight] ticket, when the police called the company, the company just rushed with the passport, they didn't even ask what was my crime. We need to get in touch with these companies to compensate us.

Andrew's visa is valid until October 2021.

▪ **Testimony No. 17: Sarah Emmanuel**

- Gender: Female
- Position: Teacher

Testimony: I lived there for seven years. Just like others, I was arrested the same night. The officer that arrested me said: "Pick all your valuables because you are not coming back." I was shocked and told him why and he shouted: "Pack all your important stuff." That was it. Straight to jail and after 44 days, I was deported alongside others.

During my stay there [in prison], on the 4th day, I was crying profusely, asking why I was there, and I needed to speak to my family. After about 30 minutes, an officer came in and dragged me out half naked, he threw me out on the floor and after a while I and 13 other ladies who refused to eat because we were protesting our arrest, were chained hand and feet for 14 days, and some of us were on our monthly cycle, we slept on the floor with A.C. at its highest point as I learnt that's how they punish inmates. On the 3rd day I was sick as in really sick and all I was given was Panadol.

▪ Testimony No. 18: Rawlings Kaba Kaba

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Cameroon.
- Position: Carpet layer.

Testimony: We were kidnapped by the police for no reason, no crime. We were sleeping, they broke the door and kidnapped us. They put us in jail for maybe one and a half months just to make us suffer. There were pregnant women and they treated us badly.

▪ Testimony No. 19: Ferdinand

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Cameroon.
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021.
- Position: Carpet layer.

Testimony: The CID officers took me from the cafeteria in the La Gym building, taking my evening coffee after work. In the cafeteria, there were many white people, and only two blacks; I and another Cameroonian guy called Abdulwahab. They saw me and asked for my COVID test, I showed it to them. Then they asked for my ID card and I showed it to them. Then they asked the other guy for the same things and he presented them. Then they seized our phones, handcuffed us, and forced us into the vehicle, then took us to the al-Wathba prison, where I stayed 53 days.

During the first three days, they kept asking us where we work and what our salary was, things like that, we didn't know what they were looking for. After our stay there, they asked me if my passport was with me or with my company, I told them that it was with my company. So they surprised me with the flight ticket after they took my passport from my company. They took us to the airport and gave us the flight ticket and the COVID test, and told us that they were sending us back to our countries. I just found myself in Cameroon, with no money.

▪ Testimony No. 20: Ndubuisi Jeremiah Onwuka

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Cameroon.
- Date of arrival in UAE: April 2016.
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021.
- Position: Electrician

Testimony: At midnight of 2526- June, I was in my apartment in the La Gym building, I heard noise outside then they broke the door. It was the police, they asked me to bring my ID to prove that I was a [legal] resident of the UAE, so I showed it to them. They handcuffed me and took me straight to jail without allowing us to make calls or call lawyers. They treated us like slaves, and they treated our ladies and pregnant women so badly.

▪ Testimony No. 21: Tapak Gideon Samgwa

- Gender: Male
- Nationality: Cameroon
- Date of deportation: 23 August 2021

Testimony: I came back here yesterday, we were six people who were released, three men and three women.

▪ Testimony No. 22: Kabirat Olokunde Oluwanifemi

- Gender: Female
- Nationality: Nigeria
- Date of arrival in UAE: 2019
- Date of deportation: 3 August 2021
- Position: Cleaner, bus attendant and caretaker
- Company: Indian International School

▪ Testimony No. 23: Iloh Obinna Samuel

- Gender: Male
- Age: 25
- Nationality: Nigeria
- Date of arrival in UAE: 2019
- Date of arrest: 25 June 2021
- Date of deportation: 30 July 2021
- Position: Crew member
- Company: Shake Shack restaurant (Alshaya LLC) Testimony:



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