

## PRESS RELEASE

### Statement:

#### **Migrant leaders in Europe condemn forceful deportation of Bangladeshi migrant workers from Kuwait**

The Hague, 4 August: The Netherlands-based Bangladeshi migrant organisation, BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group), the broad platform of 38 migrant organisations of different nationalities in the Netherlands, Diaspora Forum for Development (DFD) and migrant leaders of Bangladeshi origin in other European countries in a joint statement yesterday expressed grave concern and strongly condemned the unwarranted police atrocities, arrest and forceful deportation of Bangladeshi migrant workers by the Kuwait government for demanding promised pay and other facilities as per job contract.

Terming the action by the Kuwait government as 'unacceptable' and 'inhuman' the migrant leaders said, around 5000 Bangladeshi migrant workers resorted to indefinite strike in Kuwait city recently protesting underpayment and lack of other facilities promised earlier by their employers. But they added, instead of resolving the years-long exploitation of thousands of Bangladeshi workers by their employers, the Kuwait government resorted to violence and force arresting more than 1000 workers on charge of 'instigating labour unrest' and has already deported more than 565 (until Sunday) workers to Bangladesh. Those who are still behind the bars are awaiting similar fate, the statement added.

It may be mentioned that these workers were engaged in most essential menial labour such as cleaning in the royal palaces, hospitals, oil installations, educational institutions and other key establishments under different ministries of the Kuwait government. It said, the workers received only 10 to 20 kuwaiti dinar a month while the original contract was 50 dinar. Not only that, in many cases, they were not receiving their salaries for more than 4 months and had to live in an inhuman condition.

BASUG, DFD and other migrant leaders also deplored the role of the Bangladesh embassy authorities in Kuwait for their passive action in resolving the sufferings of the striking Bangladeshi workers. Quoting the returnee migrant workers the statement said, despite repeated requests by the workers the Bangladesh embassy officials in Kuwait did not show minimum interest in the whole affair and did not intervene to redress their grievances. The statement further went on saying, it is most regrettable and unacceptable that the migrant workers who play a key role in country's economy by sending hard earned remittance, are being treated by the embassy authorities in such a way. The attitude of the embassy people in Kuwait and in other parts of the world where most Bangladeshi migrants live need to be improved as one of the tasks of the embassies abroad is to look after the welfare of the Bangladeshi migrants, they added.

The statement continued, although the caretaker government of Bangladesh promised that the government would sign a protocol with 16 different countries for protecting the rights of Bangladeshi migrant workers living in those countries, no step has yet been taken although 16 months have already elapsed. The migrant leaders urged the Bangladesh government to immediately ratify the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their families, which assures the rights of the migrant workers. Bangladesh signed the convention in October 1998 but has not yet ratified the Convention.

The statement urged the Bangladesh government to take up the issue urgently with the Kuwaiti counterpart and resolve it without wasting any time. At the same time the statement urged the Kuwait government to honour the rights of the migrant workers who are contributing to the development process of Kuwait too. The European migrant leaders also demanded that Kuwait government make an enquiry into the allegation of non-payment and underpayment by the Kuwaiti employers and give exemplary punishment to the perpetrators.

**The signatories to the statement are:** BASUG President & Vice President of DFD Bikash Chowdhury Barua, Secretary Sudhier Nannan, DFD President Santo Lewis Deng, Secretary Ms Doris Alfafara, Chairman of Habagat Foundation, Netherlands Ms Grace Cabactulan, Chairman of Darfur Women Organisation (Sudan) Dr. Ms. Mekka H. Abdelgabar, Advisory Board members of BASUG Dr. Ahmed Ziauddin & Dr Nahid Hasan, UK-Bangladesh Forum Convener Ansar Ahmed Ullah, German Bangladesh Group President Sharaf Ahmed, ICDB, the Netherlands Secretary M M R Monwar, Forum for Secular Bangladesh Sweden President Shabbir Rahman Khan and Project Director of London School of Economics and Political Science Social Vision, Zakir Khan.