

19 December 2016

### **Lebanon – Human rights defender Rose Limbu detained, at risk of deportation**

On 15 December 2016, an urgent matters judge in Beirut notified the Lebanese General Security of the court's decision to prohibit the deportation of Ms **Roja (Rose) Limbu** for two weeks until a court decision is made regarding her request to be assigned a defense lawyer. The human rights defender has been in detention since 5 December 2016 and has been denied legal representation and visits by civil society organisations.

[Rose Limbu](#) is a Nepalese migrant worker in Lebanon, as well as a board member of the **Domestic Workers' Union** in Lebanon. In this role she advocates for the rights of migrant workers in Lebanon, many of whom are subjected to exploitative labour practices. On [29 December 2014](#), six Lebanese workers requested that the Lebanese Labour Ministry recognise a union to protect the rights of domestic migrant workers. The request was met with strong opposition by the Labour Minister who announced that the union is illegal. The Domestic Workers' Union, to which both Rose Limbu and Ms **Sujana Rana** belong, continues to operate informally and acts as a forum for the promotion of migrant domestic worker rights.

On 15 December 2016, the urgent matters judge in Beirut notified the Lebanese General Security (LGS) of their decision on 14 December to issue a two week ban on the deportation of Rose Limbu until a decision is made by the court regarding her request for access to legal counsel. The urgent matters judge gave the Lebanese General Security one week to submit comments regarding the case.

On 5 December 2016, Rose Limbu was arrested at her employer's home. The human rights defender has not been informed of the reasons for her arrest. Rose Limbu is legally authorised to work in Lebanon and is in possession of the appropriate immigration documents. Since her arrest and detention on 5 December 2016, the LGS have refused to grant Rose Limbu access to legal counsel. In light of this, the National Federation of Workers and Employees Trade Unions in Lebanon (FENASOL) submitted a request on her behalf for legal counsel based on concerns that Rose Limbu's arrest is directly linked to her engagement with the Migrant Workers' Union. Civil society organisations and various lawyers have expressed concern that she could be deported without reason, or access to legal counsel like her recently deported colleague, [Sujana Rana](#).

In a parallel case, on 10 December 2016, Lebanese authorities [deported](#) Sujana Rana, who is also a Nepalese migrant worker who was involved in the struggle for the rights of migrant domestic workers. She was arrested by the members of the Lebanese general security agency at her employer's home on 30 November 2016. The general security agency did not allow her to call a lawyer, and reportedly questioned her about her involvement in activism for the rights of migrant domestic workers. Sujana Rana was never informed of the reason for her arrest and was subsequently deported despite having had all the appropriate papers and authorisation to work in Lebanon.

There are an estimated 250,000 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon who are excluded from labour law protections and benefits. Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are systematically subjected to

bureaucratic procedures referred to as kafala that tighten immigration rules for migrant workers by requiring sponsorship in order to work in the country. Due to the nature of this sponsorship program, migrant workers do not have job security, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation from their employers.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest and detention of Rose Limbu, and is concerned by the risk of her deportation, as it believes these actions to be connected to her legitimate and peaceful human rights activities in Lebanon.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Lebanon to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Rose Limbu and cease any further judicial harassment against her, including deportation;
2. Ensure that human rights defenders working on migrant worker rights can register their organisations and carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities legally and without hindrance;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Lebanon are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.