

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS REPATRIATED TO SRI LANKA

Around 41 Sri Lankan migrant women, who were detained in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for up to 18 months, have been successfully repatriated to Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed in a statement the repatriation on 19 May 2021 and Amnesty International also independently verified the return of the women to Sri Lanka.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Around **41 Sri Lankan women migrant workers**, along with some children who were detained in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, have been returned to Sri Lanka. While most of the women have been able to reunite with their families after many months apart, 12 of the returnees are currently undergoing Covid-19 quarantine in Sri Lanka.

The last of the remaining women migrant workers were returned to Sri Lanka on 19 May 2021. Of the 41 women and children, 29 detainees were repatriated on two earlier flights on 29 April and 2 May.

At least 41 Sri Lankan women migrant domestic workers were detained for up to 18 months at the Exit 18 Deportation Detention (*Tarheel*) Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia awaiting repatriation. While the authorities did not disclose the legal basis for the women's detention, it was believed that many of the women had been detained due to their migration status under the notorious kafala system in place in Saudi Arabia. That included reasons such as the expiration of their work permit, their employer's failure to obtain an exit permit or because they fled from an abusive employer.

After Amnesty International issued a [press release](#) and initiated an [urgent action appeal](#), several media outlets in Sri Lanka [carried the news](#). It is believed that this national and international attention on the women's plight led the government representatives to [respond and commit](#) to repatriating the women migrant workers at the earliest.

"We faced many hardships for several months being detained away from our families and children back home with no hope in sight. We are thankful to Amnesty International for raising our issue, which helped to get attention from the government", said one of the women migrant workers who returned home in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan foreign ministry [in a statement said](#) that as part of the repatriation initiative since April 2021, around 180 individuals in deportation camps, including 49 women, have been repatriated from several places in Saudi Arabia.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Group (they/them)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 39/21

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa37/3983/2021/en/>