CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES OF JUDICIAL PROTECTION OF LABOR RIGHTS IN THE DISMISSAL REASONS NOT RELATED TO THE EMPLOYEE' GUILTY ACTIONS

GARANȚII CONSTITUȚIONALE DE PROTECȚIE JUDICIARĂ A DREPTULUI LA MUNCĂ ÎN CONDIȚIILE REZILIERII CONTRACTULUI DE MUNCĂ ÎN ABSENȚA ACȚIUNILOR CULPABILE ALE SALARIATULUI

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Abstract: The paper discusses the guarantees of human rights in the labor sphere and the issues of judicial protection of labor rights. Attention is paid to the issues of termination of an employment contract in the absence of culpable actions of the employee.

A comparative legal analysis of the current legislation of the Republic of Moldova, European law, international legal norms and standards of labor is carried out. Special attention is paid to the practice of legal regulation of relations that arise during the dismissal of employees, as well as challenging the decisions made by the employer in court in the practice of foreign countries.

Constitutional guarantees and their effective compliance are analyzed in the phase of legal proceedings in courts of general jurisdiction. Proposals are formulated to improve the efficiency of the legal regulation of labor relations in order to increase the protective functions of labor law and ensure constitutional rights and guarantees in the labor sphere.

Key words: right to work, constitutional guarantees, judicial protection, dismissal.

Rezumat: Articolul discută garanțiile drepturilor omului în sfera muncii și problemele protecției judiciare a drepturilor muncii. Se acordă atenție problemelor de încetare a unui contract de muncă în absența acțiunilor vinovate ale salariatului.

Se efectuează o analiză juridică comparativă a legislației actuale a Republicii Moldova, a dreptului european, a normelor și standardelor juridice internaționale ale muncii. O atenție deosebită se acordă practicii reglementării legale a relațiilor care apar în timpul concedierii angajaților, precum și contestarea deciziilor luate de angajator în instanță în practica țărilor străine.

Garanțiile constituționale și respectarea lor efectivă sunt analizate în faza procedurilor judiciare în instanțele de jurisdicție generală. Se formulează propuneri de îmbunătățire a eficienței reglementării legale a raporturilor de muncă în vederea creșterii funcțiilor protectoare ale dreptului muncii și asigurării drepturilor și garanțiilor constituționale în sfera muncii.

Cuvinte cheie: *dreptul la muncă, garanții constituționale, protecție judiciară, concediere.*

Introduction

Article 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova defines human dignity, his rights and freedoms, the free development of the human personality as the highest values of a democratic state (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994). The Basic Law of states determines priorities in the normative legal regulation of social relations in all spheres of social life. At the same time, guidelines in the legal regulation of public relations in terms of compliance with guarantees and protection of human rights are the norms of the international framework. The provisions of the main law declare the provision that "Constitutional provisions on human rights and freedoms are interpreted and applied in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, covenants and other treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party (c. 1 of Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova)" (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994).

Within the framework of the presented article, the constitutional right of everyone will be examined and analyzed independently in legal ways to the violation of their rights and freedoms (clause 2 of Article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova), in conjunction with the constitutional right to work and labor protection (Article 43 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova). Constitutional provisions are reflected in sectoral labor legislation, the norms of which regulate the grounds and procedure for terminating a labor contract with an employee (Article 82 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova: Termination of an individual labor contract due to circumstances beyond the will of the parties).

The purpose of the study is to issue constitutional guarantees of labor rights upon termination of a labor contract with an employee as specified in Art. 83 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova, the basis is a legal analysis of compliance with the constitutional rights of a person in the field of labor relations, identification of problematic issues in the practice of law enforcement, formulation of proposals to improve the efficiency of the guarantee functions of the current legislation and protective mechanisms of labor legislation.

To achieve these goals, the author conducts a detailed legal analysis of the legal numbers of constitutional provisions on labor and legal guarantees in conjunction with guarantees of judicial protection of human rights. As part of the comparative legal analysis, the experience of legal regulation at the level of legal acts of the European Union and the national legislation of the EU member countries, as well as the norms of the international labor framework, in particular the conventions of the International Labor Organization, was studied.

Taking into account that Article 82 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova provides for reasons for termination of an employment contract due to circumstances beyond the control of the parties, nevertheless, a number of these grounds in practice raise questions and difficulties in terms of assessing the legality of applying the corresponding grounds for termination of employment relations.

For example, legal reasons such as force majeure circumstances, confirmed in the prescribed manner, excluding the possibility of continuing the employment relationship (c.j)) and reinstatement at work by decision of the court of the person who previously performed this work, if the transfer of the employee to another job in accordance with this code is impossible $(c.j^1)$), the practice raises a number of questions, including those related to the procedure for appealing the employer's decision and applying to the court for the protection of violated rights.

The problem is also given practical interest by the fact that, unfortunately, at present, state regulatory authorities and when conducting inspections of compliance with labor legislation by trade unions, reveal a fairly large number of violations. This confirms the need for careful monitoring of the application of labor legislation. For example, according to the General Labor Inspectorate during 2022, labor inspectors issued prescriptions containing 22,918 deviations and violations detected in the field of labor relations, safety and health at the workplace, including prescriptions for the withdrawal from work of minors trained in prohibited conditions (Raportul privind activitatea Inspectoratului de stat al muncii pentru anul 2022). Control measures of trade unions show the following data: during the work visits, 8825 deviations from the provisions of the legal framework, of which, 635 - in the field of labor relations (labor legislation) and 8190 - in the field of occupational safety and health (Nota informativi cu privire la activitatea Inspectoratului Muncii al Sindicatelor in anul 2022).

It is important to note that the reasons for termination of a labor contract due to circumstances not related to the employee's guilty actions also include termination of an employment contract by written agreement of the parties (Article 82¹); on the initiative of one of the parties, (c. b) part 1 of art. 81 Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova), as well as on the reasons provided for in clauses a-d) part 1 of Art. 86 Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova. In case of dismissal and termination of an employment contract on the specified grounds - dismissal of an employee, the questions of the motives that served as the reason for termination of employment remain outside the scope of legal regulation. In practice, an employee's decision to dismiss may be associated with illegal actions of the employee.

Research Methodology

The methodological basis of the study is an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis and presentation of the material. Legal analysis of the norms of the current constitutional framework, civil procedural and labor legislation is carried out by the author on the basis of general legal and special legal research methods. The author uses comparative historical, systemic logical and comparative legal research methods. Formal legal, statistical research methods, systemic and comparative legal approaches are used.

In addition, given the subject of research within this material, an integrated methodological approach is required. This is due to the close relationship and dependence of the legal regulation of issues of guaranteeing constitutional rights of membership and the consolidation in sectoral legislation of specific measures and regulations that are a manifestation of constitutional guarantees. To complete the issues under study, examples of the practice of legal regulation of labor relations in foreign countries are given.

Findings

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the right to defense (c. 1 of Article 26) (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994). The right to judicial protection is intended to be used by every entity that considers that his rights were violated.

It seems possible to group all cases of an employee's possible appeal to the court regarding the protection of his labor rights in the event of termination of an employment contract in the absence of guilty actions of the employee as follows:

applying for restoration of violated rights in the labor sphere not related to reinstatement at work;

appeals on grounds related to challenging the termination of the contract and reinstatement at the previous job place.

Based on the content of Articles 81-83,85-86 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova, it is advisable to consider all grounds for termination of labor relations, in the application of which the employee's labor rights may be violated, based on their division into grounds that do not depend on the will of the parties and grounds for dismissal at the initiative of the employer.

The practical significance of such a division of the grounds for termination of an employment contract will be important in the process of judicial proceedings and the presentation by interested parties of the appropriate justification for their position on the fact of termination of the employment contract. In accordance with paragraph 2 of Art. 89 of the Labor Code"... when considering an individual labor dispute by a court, the employer is obliged to prove the legality and provide reasons for the transfer or dismissal of the employee."

It should be especially noted that in this case, when we are talking about an

employee appealing the very fact of dismissal, i.e. dismissal in the opinion of the employee is illegal, the obligation to provide evidence, as stated in the labor code, rests with the employer. However, in the event of termination of the employment contract and the employee applies to the court with demands not related to reinstatement at work, the issue of providing evidence will be decided by the court on the basis of the provisions of Article 26 of the Civil Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova, which enshrines the principle of adversarialism and procedural equality of the parties. In addition, paragraph 2 of Article 352 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova specifies the right of each of the parties to the dispute during the consideration of the application to explain their position and present to the labor jurisdiction body all the evidence and justification that it considers necessary.

These regulatory provisions indicate the consolidation of constitutional norms regarding the right of everyone to judicial protection of their violated rights (Article 20), as well as the right to defense (Article 26), and the right to work (Article 43) (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, 1994).

Speaking about constitutional guarantees for the protection of human rights, we should pay special attention to the relationship and mutual influence of constitutional guarantees, constitutional rights and constitutional principles. Considering the provisions of sectoral labor legislation, it is obvious that the specification of constitutional legal regulations - specific legal norms. Within the framework of the problem under consideration, the issues of dismissal of an employee (termination of an employment contract) are considered from the standpoint of assessing the legality and possible violations of the right to work. Therefore, constitutional provisions, including constitutional guarantees, are analyzed in relation to issues of compliance by the parties to an employment contract with their rights.

At the same time, the constitutional provisions mentioned above, guaranteeing the labor rights' protection, are reflected in the norms of civil procedural legislation, as well as legislation on trade unions. A special place in the system of guarantees for the labor rights' protection is occupied by laws and regulations regulating the powers of public administration bodies. Their competence includes the authority to monitor compliance with labor rights, as well as to promptly eliminate violations committed by the employer and third parties. As S. Cornea notes, considering various aspects of the democratization of society, "... public authorities are empowered to exercise public power along with other government institutions at all levels of government also took care of the implementation values of a democratic society". (Cornea S., 2016, p. 36). As we noted earlier in our research on the constitutional right to work in the system of social human rights, along with other social rights, the right to work presupposes the active actions of the subject himself to achieve the goals of labor

activity and the desired results of labor.ⁱ It is the right to appeal for protection of the violated right to work within the framework of the topic under consideration that presupposes the activity of the subject-person himself, namely, an appeal to the labor jurisdiction for the protection of his right. Moreover, the dismissal of an employee in the absence of culpable actions on his part, and the employee's dissatisfaction with the employer's decision, necessitates a thorough analysis of the evidence of the legality of the dismissal. For example, when it comes to dismissal due to a reduction in the number or staff of employees or the liquidation of an enterprise (organization) (p. b), c), cl. 1 of Article 86 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova).

In relation to such cases of termination of an employment contract, it seems that an out-of-court method of resolving disputes can be applied to a lesser extent. Nevertheless, speaking about the procedure for considering labor disputes, we should point out ILO Recommendation No. 130 "On the consideration of grievances in the enterprise with a view to resolving them" of 1967, which indicates that initially when a labor dispute arises, attempts should be made to resolve it through negotiations between the employee and his direct manager. At the level of ILO legal acts in the sphere of regulation of the relations under consideration, ILO Convention No. 158 "On termination of employment relations at the initiative of the employer" and ILO Recommendation No. 166 "On termination of employment relations at the initiative of the employer" have also been adopted (Михальская А., 2022, p. 199). A comparative analysis of these international legal acts with the legislation of the Republic of Moldova regarding the regulation of relations in connection with the termination of labor agreements was carried out by B. Sosna and P. Tabere (Sosna B., Tabere P., 2009, p. 41). The authors came to the conclusion that there are significant contradictions in the content of the national labor legislation and ILO acts, despite the fact that Convention No. 158 was ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1997.

Considering sectoral principles of labor law relating to the process of protecting the rights of workers and the possibility of parties turning to labor jurisdiction procedures (p.m)), as well as taking into account the principle of establishing state guarantees to ensure the rights of workers and employers (p.l)), the principle of ensuring the right to resolution of individual labor disputes and collective labor conflicts... in the manner established by this code and other regulations (p. n)) (Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova, 2003), it seems necessary to note that the legislator gives priority to the peaceful and out-of-court resolution of labor conflicts. However, cases arising from disagreements between employees and employers in the cases specified in Article 354 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova are subject to the jurisdiction of courts of general jurisdiction. The legislator's position on the importance of protecting human rights in the labor sphere as soon as possible is obvious.

In this regard, it seems important to note that the principles of legal regulation of labor relations, listed in Article 5 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova, specify the constitutional guarantees of the right to work and the right to protection. Special attention should be paid to the possibility of involving the trade union in the issue of protecting the rights of the employee in the event of termination of the employment contract. In addition to coordinating the termination of the labor contract (request for an advisory opinion from the trade union body) on the grounds specified in the law (dismissal of trade union members), the trade union organization has the right to represent the interests of the employee at the pre-trial stage of negotiations with the employer (with the consent and on the initiative of the employee himself), as well as in the judicial process proceedings.

The Law of the Republic of Moldova "On Trade Unions" in paragraph 1 of Article 16. «Protection of the right of trade union members to work», regulates the right of trade unions to protect the right of their members to work. Thus, when representing the interests of a trade union member in court on a claim for the protection of labor rights, the corresponding representative of the trade union organization acquires civil procedural rights based on the procedural status of the person he represents. The right to protect the right of trade union members to work at the level of the organization (enterprise) is that "liquidation, reorganization of an enterprise or change in the form of ownership, complete or partial suspension of production at the initiative of the employer, entailing massive job cuts or deterioration of working conditions, may be carried out only subject to prior notification, at least three months in advance, to the relevant industry trade union and the holding of collective negotiations on the observance of the rights and interests of workers (clause 3 of Article 16 of the Law on Trade Unions, 2000).

When implementing the guarantees prescribed by the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova, an employee in the event of termination of an employment contract with them must comply with the general legal principle of the inadmissibility of abuse of rights, including by the employees themselves. We consider it unacceptable for an employee to conceal a temporary disability during his dismissal from work or the fact that he is a member of a trade union or the head (his deputy) of an elected trade union collegial body of an organization, its structural divisions, who is not released from his main job, when the decision on the issue of dismissal must be adopted in compliance with the procedure for taking into account the reasoned opinion of the elected trade union body of the organization or, accordingly, with the prior consent of the higher elected trade union body.

If the court determines that the employee has abused his right, the court may refuse to satisfy his claim for reinstatement at work (while changing the date of dismissal at the request of the employee dismissed during a period of temporary disability). In this case, it is obvious that the employer should not be responsible for adverse consequences resulting from dishonest actions on the part of the employee.

Constitutional guarantees for the protection of human rights, including rights in the sphere of labor, and in the event of termination of an employment contract, should be considered comprehensively, taking into account modern social

economic conditions and imperfection of the current legislation. The complexity of legal regulation in this case is presented in several aspects:

firstly, the specification of constitutional provisions in the norms of national labor legislation;

secondly, the civil procedural procedure for protecting the rights of an employee in the event of failure to reach an agreement with the employer or on the basis of the right to judicial protection;

thirdly, legislative restrictions or boundaries of the employer's freedom when making decisions to dismiss an employee (termination of a labor contract) for a number of reasons;

fourthly, the opportunity to resort to extrajudicial procedures for protecting the rights of an employee in the field of labor (public administration bodies, supervisory and control bodies in the field of labor), which can give rise to public legal relations outside the labor framework.

Discussions

In the legal literature there is no unanimous opinion on the issue of the adequacy of the norms of sectoral labor legislation for the implementation of the constitutional right to work (including reinstatement in case of illegal dismissal). Discussions are conducted by constitutional scholars, as well as specialists in the field of labor law.

The world of work today, more than ever, is undergoing changes caused by various circumstances and factors. Objectives are not the conditions for economic development, modernization of production, migration of labor are those processes that cause the employer's actions to adjust the number of workers and also the professional training of specialists that he needs at this moment to achieve his goals. Therefore, it is obvious that new challenges will emerge, which force us to re-evaluate constitutional guarantees in the labor sphere. In this regard, we expressed the opinion that it is necessary to "... search for a mutually beneficial combination that will protect people from the potential costs of lack of employment guarantees and will provide employers with flexibility in terms of labor resources" (IILYKNHA H., 2018, p. 129). The stability of constitutional provisions, in terms of the consolidation of human rights, constitutional

guarantees and constitutional principles, is the basis for improving the sectoral labor legislation. The constitutional regulation of key areas of development in labor market area is aimed at creating the foundations of a progressive modern model of relations between workers and employers, regardless of the form of ownership, achieving a balance of interests and harmonious development of society as a whole, the social world, and economic modernization (Дзарасов М., 2011, p. 22). Concerning the field of labor relations, Moldovan authors note the emerging trends taking into account the requirements of the labor market of tightening the norms of labor legislation, in particular, an example is given of the norms of the labor code on the dismissal, at the initiative of the employer, of persons who have reached retirement age and the possibility of concluding a fixed-term employment contract on this basis (Сосна Б., Босый Д., 2011, р. 10). It should be noted that the Constitutional Court declared the application for an exceptional case unacceptable unconstitutionality of Art. 86 part (1) paragraph y 1) of the Labor Code of the Republic, emphasizing in support of its position that the rule of law regarding dismissal due to age does not apply imperative character. Termination of individual employment

contract depends on the employer, who, analyzing the feasibility termination of employment relations, makes a deliberate decision, based on professional qualities and special requirements of certain professions and taking into account the general retirement age (Resolution of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova, 2018).

In this case, the position of the Constitutional Court is based on the principle of equality of parties to an employment contract, and the constitutional right of private property (Article 46 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova), which has already been noted by the judicial body in its Resolution No. 12 dated 20-05-2014 on control of the constitutionality of some provisions of paragraph (4) of Article 87 of the Labor Code No. 154-XV dated March 28, 2003 (consent of trade union bodies to dismissal employees (Appeal No. 17a/2014) ((Resolution of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova, 2014).

Tatiana Stahi and Mariana Robea speak about freedom of employment contract as the basis of legal regulation of termination of employment when considering the dismissal procedure in labor law. The authors note that the basis of the legal regulation of termination of an employment contract "...is a combination of the principles of freedom of contract (freedom to terminate it) and public legal guarantees of the employee's labor rights. The latter means, to a certain extent, restricting the freedom to terminate an employment contract at the initiative of the employer, but this the restriction ensures actual equality of the parties to the employment contract, protection of the economically weaker party to the contract from unjustified dismissals (Stahi T., Robea M, 2022, p. 303).

In addressing termination of employment under Canadian law, the authors base their position on common law principles applicable to employment contracts, which clearly establish that employers have an implied contractual obligation to provide indefinite notice to employees of termination unless there is no "just cause" for immediate dismissal. In this case, the agreements between the employee and the employer are of primary importance (for example, in the presence of a written employment contract with the terms of clear notice). In the absence of such an agreement, judicial practice proceeds from the application of the condition of "reasonable notice": Carter v. Bell & Sons (Canada) Ltd., 1936 CanLII 75 (ON CA), (1936)O.R. 290 (California); Machtinger v. Hoj Industries Ltd., 1992 CanLII 102 (SCC), (1992) S.C.R. 986, para. 19. In this case, dismissal is considered unlawful if there are no reasons for immediate dismissal or the notice provided does not correspond to what was agreed or reasonable (Peter M Neumann and Jeffrey Sack, 2012).

When considering constitutional guarantees and protection of employee rights, attention should be paid to the positions of the European Court of Human Rights. Despite the fact that the protection of social rights, including labor rights, is not within the jurisdiction of the court, the ECtHR, when considering disputes in connection with the violation of economic rights of a person, expresses its positions representing interests within the framework of the topic under consideration. For example, when considering an appeal on the issue of illegal dismissal of an employee, the court stated that reinstatement procedures are of "primary importance" for the plaintiffs and, in fact, they must be considered "quickly" (Мунтяну А., Русу С., Вакарчук О., 2016, р. 170).

Since the Republic of Moldova is a candidate member of the EU and is in the process of harmonizing its legislation with European legislation, it is of particular interest to indicate a number of EU legal norms regarding the regulation of relations when dismissing an employee. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in Article 30 - Protection in the event of unjustified dismissal establishes the general provision that every worker has the right to protection against unjustified dismissal, in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices. The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) is one of the latest documents (was set out in 2017) that can be considered a kind of framework act aimed at improving the situation of workers and job seekers in the European labor market. In essence, the provisions of this act correspond to the norms of national legislation and do not contradict the constitutional principles of the protection of rights and the right to defense. The pillar contains the following provision: They have the right to access to effective and impartial dispute resolution and, in case of unjustified dismissal, a right to redress, including adequate compensation.

An analysis of the constitutional legislation and labor legislation of most European countries shows that it contains provisions guaranteeing the protection by law of the rights of an employee in the event of a violation of his labor rights upon dismissal. For example, the Bulgarian labor code contains Chapter XVI -Termination of Employment Relationship deals with protection from dismissal (Labour Code of Bulgaria, 1986). In the UK, the Employment Rights Act contains Part X Unfair dismissal, the provisions of Chapter I enshrine Right not to be unfairly dismissed: An employee has the right not to be unfairly dismissed by his employer (Employment Rights Act, 1996).

The wording of the article in British law is worthy of attention: "unfair dismissal". The concept of "illegal dismissal" is more familiar to domestic legislators and judicial practice. A person who believes that his rights have been violated seeks protection of his violated rights and demands the cancellation of the unlawful decision. The issue of fairness of dismissal is considered by the court insofar as the employer's actions are a violation of the specific provisions of the article of the labor code or other law. The constitutional norm on the right of an employee to... fair and satisfactory working conditions (Article 43 of the Constitution), as well as the specification of the specified provision in paragraph d) of Article 5 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova - ensuring the right of every employee to fair working conditions, use the specified concept " fair." Accordingly, the norms - principles of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova point to doctrinal provisions regarding the meaning of the legal regulation of social labor - establishing justice and ensuring the rights of the parties to the employment contract.

Conclusions

The conducted legal analysis of the current legislation of the Republic of Moldova and a review of a number of sources of legal literature from domestic and foreign authors allowed us to consider one of the aspects of the implementation and protection of employee rights. Compliance with constitutional human rights and compliance of industry legislation with the fundamentals of constitutional legal regulation are guarantees against unjustified violations, in particular, illegal dismissals. The issue of protecting rights in the event of dismissal (termination of an employment contract) due to circumstances not related to the employee's guilty actions is not the most common in law enforcement practice. At the same time, it is particular cases of law enforcement that make it possible to identify the discrepancy between the employee's decisions and the rules of law, which lead to the infringement of the employee's rights.

It seems to us important to note the following basic provisions regarding the issues under consideration. Analysis of the issue of applying the norms of industry legislation - the labor law through the prism of constitutional norms and principles, allows us to ensure the legality and fairness of the decisions made. Moreover, this applies to both the courts and the employer and employee, since there is a threat of abuse of their rights by the parties to the employment contract.

In a global sense, improving legislation in order to increase the scope of guarantees to ensure human rights is one of the key directions for the Republic of Moldova, taking into account its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, declaring that by 2030 key actors in society will adopt measures to eradicate all forms of poverty, combat inequality... ensuring that no one is left behind (Raportul Național periodic IV definitivat privind implementarea Pactului Internațional ONU cu privire laDrepturile Economice, Sociale și Culturale în Republica Moldova pe anii 2018-2022).

The analysis shows and confirms the need for an integrated approach to the legal regulation of relations between employee and employer, taking into account the principles of legal regulation of labor relations. Increasing the effectiveness of legal regulation, which in this case is seen as reducing the number of violations of workers' rights upon dismissal, will be facilitated by the expansion of collective bargaining regulation in the labor sphere, increasing workers' awareness of their rights in the labor sphere, as well as improving control and supervisory measures with by public authorities.

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