

MALAWI

but the number of labor inspectors was insufficient to enforce the law effectively. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. Workers, particularly in industrial jobs, often worked without basic safety clothing and equipment. Workers harvesting tobacco leaves generally did not wear protective clothing and absorbed up to 54 milligrams of dissolved nicotine daily through their skin, the equivalent of 50 cigarettes.

Workers have the right to remove themselves from dangerous work situations without jeopardy to continued employment. Workers dismissed for filing complaints regarding workplace conditions have the right to file a complaint at the labor office or sue the employer for wrongful dismissal; however, these processes were not widely publicized, and workers were unlikely to exercise these rights. Authorities did not effectively protect employees in this situation.

The government did not effectively enforce laws related to OSH, wages, or overtime. Workweek and annual leave standards were not effectively enforced and employers frequently violated statutory time restrictions. The Ministry of Labor's enforcement of health and safety standards was also poor. The law specifies fines and imprisonment for violations, but these penalties were not commensurate with those for similar crimes, and no reports of jail terms were ever reported. Because the law is limited to the formal sector, it did not apply to the more than 88 percent of the working population that worked in the informal sector.

In April prison guards in Blantyre went on strike to demand personal protective equipment and hazard pay amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Police attempts to break the strike resulted in violence and injuries, according to media reporting.