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The labour court in Abu Dhabi yesterday denied the existence of any case related to South African labourers or drivers working at the Emirates Taxi Company, who were allegedly defrauded by an employment company.

- By Abdullah Rasheed, Abu Dhabi Editor
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Abu Dhabi: It is the responsibility of the countries from which workers hail to protect their rights when they seek employment in the UAE, a senior official said.

The labour court in Abu Dhabi yesterday denied the existence of any case related to South African labourers or drivers working at the Emirates Taxi Company, who were allegedly defrauded by an employment company.

Cape Argus, a South African newspaper reported that 11 South African labourers and taxi drivers have filed a case in the Abu Dhabi Labour Court against Emirates Taxi Company.

"This kind of case is carefully reviewed by the legal department of the Ministry of Labour prior to sending it to the Labour Court," an official in the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, told *Gulf News* on Monday.

False promises

Hassina Travel, a South African company had reportedly promised the South Africans high salaried jobs with Emirates Taxi. However, once they arrived in Abu Dhabi, the workers were shocked by the low wages and inappropriate housing conditions.

As a result, they opted to terminate their contracts, had their passports confiscated, and were asked to pay Dh6,000 as compensation, claimed the South African newspaper.

The Ministry of Labour, on the other hand, said no case had been filed against Emirates Taxi's Abu Dhabi Branch.

"The Legal Department in the Ministry of Labour did not receive any labour complaint against Emirates Taxi's Abu Dhabi branch," Humaid Bin Deemas, the acting director-general in the ministry told *Gulf News*.

He added that the company has a record free of labour violations.

"There are many similar situations where the employment companies draw a non-realistic bright picture to job-seekers and make false promises.

Media's role

"It is the responsibility of the countries [from which labourers' hail] to protect the rights of their labourers who come searching for a job in the UAE. I would like to stress to the media to make sure of its sources before reporting such incidents," Bin Deemas said.

Speaking exclusively to *Gulf News*, an official from Emirates Taxi said: "No complaints have been filed against Emirates Taxi by the South African labourers. The detailed contracts are always sent to the employment companies. If the labourers were subject to fraud, it would have been by the South African company and Emirates Taxi has nothing to do with this."

"Taxi drivers are paid a monthly salary of Dh850. The company issued each of them [the South Africans] a driving licence and a labour card which are normally issued only after the labourer signs the contract. They worked for five days and then stopped."

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