



WORKER RIGHTS · NIGERIA

Working in Nigeria: Your Rights

What every hospitality worker should know, in plain language.
No legal jargon.

Read this first — who this guide covers. Nigeria’s main employment statute, the Labour Act, sets legal floors for “workers” — people doing manual or clerical work, which includes most junior and front-line hospitality staff: servers, cooks, cleaners, front-desk and housekeeping staff. If you are a manager or a professional, much of the Labour Act does not apply to you directly — your contract is your main protection, backed by the National Industrial Court (see “Where to Complain”). Some laws in this guide — the minimum wage, pension, and workplace-injury compensation — cover employees more broadly. The guide says which is which. Pay in Nigeria is monthly, and this guide quotes monthly figures.

General information only — not legal advice.

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Your Contract in Writing

- Within 3 months of starting work, your employer must give you a written statement of your terms (Labour Act s.7): the employer's name, your name and address, the nature of the job, any end date, the notice period, your wage rate and how and when you're paid, and the terms on hours, holidays, and sick leave. If you never received one, ask for it — it's your right, not a favour.
- For staff outside the Labour Act, your written contract does the same job. No written terms at all is a red flag (see below).

Your Pay

- National minimum wage: ₦70,000 per month (National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act 2024), for public and private employers alike. Any agreement to pay less is void. The law is reviewed every 3 years — the next review falls due in 2027, and unions are already pressing for it, but ₦70,000 is the law today.
- Exceptions: the minimum wage does not cover establishments with fewer than 25 employees, part-time or commission/piece-rate workers, or seasonal workers. If your workplace is a hotel or restaurant chain, you are almost certainly covered.
- About Lagos's ₦85,000: you may hear Lagos pays ₦85,000. That figure is what the Lagos State government pays its own public servants. It does not raise the legal floor for private employers in Lagos — for a hotel or restaurant, the floor stays ₦70,000 unless your contract or a union agreement says more.

- **Deductions:** your wages must be paid in money (legal tender), at intervals of no more than one month. Your employer cannot deduct for fines, damage, or shortages except as the law allows or with your consent — and total deductions in any month cannot exceed one-third of that month's wages. An employer also cannot tell you where or how to spend your wages.
- **Tax (PAYE):** your employer deducts income tax and pays it to your state tax authority. Under the Nigeria Tax Act 2025, the first ₦800,000 of annual income is tax-free, and minimum-wage earners pay no income tax.

Rest, Leave, and Sick Pay

- **Rest:** on any day you work 6 hours or more, you're entitled to rest intervals totalling at least 1 hour; and you're owed at least one full rest day (24 hours) in every 7 days.
- **Annual leave:** after 12 months of continuous service, at least 6 working days of paid leave a year. That's the legal floor — many contracts give more, and your contract is where to check.
- **Sick leave:** up to 12 working days a year of paid leave for temporary illness, certified by a registered medical practitioner.
- **Maternity leave:** 12 weeks — 6 weeks before and 6 weeks after the birth — at not less than 50% of your wages, if you've been in continuous service for at least 6 months.
- **Overtime:** the Labour Act sets no national overtime premium rate — extra-hours pay is set by your contract or workplace policy. That's a gap to check before you sign, not after.

Ending the Job

- Notice (Labour Act scale, where your contract doesn't say more): 3 months' service or less — 1 day; more than 3 months up to 2 years — 1 week; 2 to 5 years — 2 weeks; 5 years or more — 1 month. Notice of a week or more must be in writing, and either side can pay in lieu of notice instead.
- No statutory severance: the Labour Act does not guarantee a severance or "gratuity" payment when you leave. If your contract promises one, that promise is enforceable — another reason the written terms matter.
- Redundancy: if jobs are cut because of excess manpower, the employer must inform the union or worker representatives and apply "last in, first out" within the affected category (subject to skill and reliability). There is no fixed redundancy-pay formula in the Act — payments are negotiated.
- Managers and professionals: your contract sets the terms, and the courts enforce it as written. But you are not without protection: the National Industrial Court can examine terminations against standards of fairness and international best practice, and it has, for example, held dismissal for pregnancy wrongful.

Your Pension — Check It, Don't Assume It

- If your employer has 15 or more employees, you are in the contributory pension scheme: 8% comes out of your pay and your employer adds 10%, paid into your own Retirement Savings Account (RSA) with a Pension Fund Administrator (PFA) of your choice. The money is yours — it follows you from job to job.
- Your employer must remit both shares within 7 working days of paying salaries. Late remittance costs the employer a penalty of at least 2% per month — and that penalty is paid into your RSA, not to the government.
- Your employer must also hold group life insurance for you of at least 3 times your annual total pay.
- The classic abuse: pension shows as a deduction on your payslip but never reaches your RSA. Check your RSA statements. If deductions aren't landing, complain to the National Pension Commission (PenCom) — it can recover the arrears plus the penalty into your account.

If You're Hurt at Work

- Under the Employees' Compensation Act, your employer pays at least 1% of payroll into the compensation fund run by the NSITF — you contribute nothing. The fund pays compensation for workplace accidents, injuries, occupational disease, disability, or death, including medical care and payments to dependants. Claims run through your employer to the NSITF.

Health Insurance

- The NHIA Act 2022 makes health insurance mandatory in law for every resident, and enforcement is rolling out — in practice, cover usually runs through your state scheme (in Lagos, ILERA EKO, enrolment is compulsory for residents) or an employer HMO plan. If your employer offers a plan, take the details in writing; if you're in Lagos, expect ILERA EKO to come up when you start work.

Unions

- Joining a union is your choice: a contract term that makes hiring depend on joining — or on refusing to join — is prohibited, and dismissing or penalising you for union membership or lawful union activity breaches the Labour Act. Union dues can be deducted from your pay by the check-off system where a union is recognised. Nigeria has no “right-to-work” law.

If You're Foreign

- Working in Nigeria as an expatriate requires your employer to hold an expatriate quota approval for the role and you to hold a CERPAC (residence permit). Those are immigration requirements — but your labour protections are the same as any Nigerian employee's: the minimum wage, written particulars, deduction limits, pension (unless you're exempt because you're in a comparable home-country scheme), injury compensation, and access to the National Industrial Court all attach to the job, not the passport.

Red Flags

- No written terms after 3 months — or no contract at all.
- Pension deducted on your payslip but missing from your RSA.
- “Casual” status that never ends. There is no law that automatically converts casual work into a permanent job after a set period — anyone who tells you otherwise is guessing — but indefinite casualisation to dodge pension and leave obligations is exactly what the courts criticise, and your real working pattern matters more than the label.
- Pay below ₦70,000 a month in a workplace with 25 or more staff.
- Deductions you never agreed to — or deductions eating more than a third of your pay.

Where to Complain

- National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN): the court with exclusive jurisdiction over employment disputes — unpaid wages, wrongful termination, unfair labour practice.
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment: its labour officers inspect workplaces and take complaints about Labour Act breaches (no written terms, illegal deductions, no rest day) — often the fastest first step.
- PenCom: pension deducted but not remitted.
- NSITF: workplace injury compensation claims.

Deadlines and procedures vary, so don't wait. And when in doubt, consider talking to a lawyer — the NICN also has an alternative dispute resolution centre.