



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KENYA

AT MACHAKOS

CIVIL APPEAL NO. 10 OF 2018

TILE & CARPET CENTRE LTD.....APPELLANT

VERSUS

GEOFREY KIPKORIR LANG'AT.....RESPONDENT

(Being an appeal from the Judgement of Hon L.P. Kassan (SPM) in Mavoko PMCC No.1143 of 2015 delivered on the 30.1.2018)

BETWEEN

GEOFREY KIPKORIR LANG'AT..... PLAINTIFF

VERSUS

TILE & CARPET CENTRE LTD..... DEFENDANT

RULING ON DIRECTIONS

1. This an appeal from the Judgement of Hon L.P. Kassan delivered on the 30.1.2018 in **PMCC No. 1143 of 2015 at Mavoko**. However in view of my findings below it is prudent not to handle the same. A perusal of the pleadings in the trial court indicates that the suit relates to a cause of action brought about as a result of a work injury claim under the Work Injury Benefits Act 2007. The issue for determination are whether this court has jurisdiction and what orders may be made.

2. In law no court or person assumes jurisdiction. Jurisdiction is a creation of statute. In Kenya all courts derive their power from the constitution under Article 159. The constitution provides for the establishment of the superior courts under Article 162 and subordinate courts under Article 169. Judicial power is exercised by the courts which consist of:

- a) The Supreme Court
- b) The Court of Appeal
- c) The High Court
- d) Subordinate courts including Magistrates Courts, Kadhis courts, Court Martial.

3. The guiding principles to all courts is that where a suit is filed in a court that lacks jurisdiction to hear and determine the suit, then the suit would be deemed a nullity as per the decision of Nyarangi JA in the case of **Owners Of Motor Vessel "Lillian S" V. Caltex Oil (K) Ltd (1989) KLR 1** as follows:

“Jurisdiction is everything without which a court of law has no power to make one more step. Where a court of law has no jurisdiction there would be no basis for a continuation of proceedings pending other evidence. A court of law downs its in respect of the matter the moment it holds the opinion that it is without jurisdiction.”

4. In selecting a court with power the type of litigation, regard must be made to the enabling law which empowers such court to hear such a case. This matter relates to a work injury where the respondent sustained injuries while in the course of employment with the appellant. Hence the dispute is basically an employment and labour relations one and which should be handled by the Employment and Labour

Relations Court. Parliament enacted the Employment and Labour Relations Act No. 20 of 2011. Section 12(1) of the said Act provides jurisdiction thereof as follows:

12. Jurisdiction of the court

(1) the court shall have exclusive original and appellate jurisdiction to hear and determine all disputes referred to in accordance with Article 162(2) of the constitution and the provisions of this Act or any other written law which extends jurisdiction to the Court relating to employment and labour relations including:-

- (a) disputes relating to or arising out of employment between an employer and an employee;**
- (b) disputes between an employer and a trade union;**
- (c) disputes between an employers' organization and a trade union's organization;**
- (d) disputes between trade unions;**
- (e) disputes between employer organizations;**
- (f) disputes between an employers' organization and a trade union;**
- (g) disputes between a trade union and a member thereof;**
- (h) disputes between an employer's organization or a federation and a member thereof;**
- (i) disputes concerning the registration and election of trade union officials; and**
- (j) disputes relating to the registration and enforcement of collective agreements.**

5. The Employment Act No. 11 of 2007 at Section 87 provides as follows:

87. Complaint and jurisdiction in cases of dispute between employers and employees

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act whenever –

- (a) an employer or employee neglects or refuses to fulfill a contract of service; or**
- (b) any question, difference or dispute arises as to the rights or liabilities of either party; or**
- (c) touching any misconduct, neglect or ill-treatment of either party or any injury to the person or property of either party, under any contract of service, the aggrieved party may complain to the labour officer or lodge a complaint or suit in the Industrial Court.**

(2) No court other than the Industrial court shall determine any complaint or suit referred to in subsection (1).

(3) This section shall not apply in a suit where the dispute over a contract of service or any other matter referred to in subsection (1) is similar or secondary to the main issue in dispute.

6. It is not in dispute that the Industrial Court is no longer in existence following the establishment of the Employment and Labour Relations Court. As the relationship between the respondent and appellant is one of employee and employer it follows that the dispute herein ought to be tried before the ELRC. Even though the suit might have been pending before the magistrate's court or that it had been finalized there the next forum to determine the appeal should be the Employment and Labour Relations Court. Hence the appeal ought not to have been lodged here in the first place as this court lacks the requisite jurisdiction.

7. Having established that this court lacks jurisdiction the next issue for determination is whether the appeal should be struck out or dismissed for want of jurisdiction. I find that striking out or dismissing it will be a drastic measure. The justice of the case demands that it should be transferred to the relevant court since the parties herein have a legitimate expectation to have their dispute determined on merits. There will be no prejudice suffered by the parties if the order is made.

8. In the result, I order this matter be and is hereby transferred to the Employment and Labour Relations Court for determination.

It is so ordered.

Dated and delivered at Machakos this 4th day of February, 2020.

D. K. Kemei

Judge