

Bahrain

Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Bahrain is in the process of drafting a new labor legislation that is intended to bring the country into full compliance with ILO Convention 182.¹⁰⁸ The government has also established educational training programs for school dropouts.¹⁰⁹

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under the age of 15 years in Bahrain are unavailable. Children work in family businesses and in the informal sector as car washers, vendors, and porters.¹¹⁰ Child trafficking is a problem throughout the Middle East and the Gulf States, although there are no official confirmations of such activities in Bahrain.¹¹¹

Primary education is compulsory under the Constitution and generally lasts until the age of 12 or 13.¹¹² In 1996, the gross primary enrollment rate was 105.6 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 98.2 percent.¹¹³ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Bahrain. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.¹¹⁴ Bahrain's Shura Council approved a draft Education Law on October 9, 2001, that would make education compulsory and impose fines on parents of students who fail to attend school.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Embassy—Manama, unclassified telegram no. 3448, October 2001 [hereinafter unclassified telegram 3448].

¹⁰⁹ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports, The Effective Abolition of Child Labor: Bahrain*, GB.277/3/2 (Geneva, March 2000), 212.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Embassy—Manama, unclassified telegram no. 2602, June 2000. See also unclassified telegram 3448 and *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000—Bahrain* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2001) [hereinafter *Country Reports 2000*], Section 6d, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/nea/index.cfm?docid=781>.

¹¹¹ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5. See also UN Commission on Human Rights, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women*, E/CN.4/2000/68 (Geneva, February 2000); *Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Women and Children: Bahrain*, The Protection Project Database [hereinafter *Human Rights Report*], at <http://ww.protectionproject.org> on 12/20/01; and Swedish International Development Agency, *Looking Back, Thinking Forward: The Fourth Report on the Implementation of the Agenda for Action Adopted at the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden, on August 28, 1996*.

¹¹² Constitution of Bahrain (1973) [hereinafter Constitution of Bahrain], Article 7(a), at http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ba00000_.html on 10/25/01. See also *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5.

¹¹³ *World Development Indicators 2001* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001) [CD-ROM].

¹¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see *Introduction* to this report.

¹¹⁵ Unclassified telegram 3448.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Law of 1976 establishes 14 years as the minimum age for employment. According to the Labor Law, children between the ages of 14 and 16 may not be employed in hazardous conditions, at night, or for more than six hours per day.¹¹⁶ The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has inspectors to enforce legislation in the industrial sector, and reports indicate that the mechanisms in place are effective.¹¹⁷ Labor laws do not apply to child domestic workers.¹¹⁸ Forced or compulsory child labor is prohibited by the Constitution.¹¹⁹ Prostitution is illegal under the Penal Code, and there are increased penalties for offenses involving a child less than 18 years of age.¹²⁰ The Government of Bahrain has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on March 23, 2001.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Order No. 6/1979 on the Employment of Juveniles has an extensive listing of occupations and working conditions that are considered “hazardous” and thereby forbidden for children between ages 14 and 16. In addition, according to the State Department, employment of juveniles is strictly regulated. See Government of Bahrain Labour Law for the Private Sector, 1976, at <http://www.cyber.law.harvard.edu/population/cgi-bin/dbtcgi.exe> on 9/26/01. See also unclassified telegram 3448.

¹¹⁷ *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6d.

¹¹⁸ There are no available statistics on the numbers of domestic child laborers and servants. Also, laws are intended to protect Bahraini citizens, and there is no reliable way to monitor or control working conditions for foreign or illegal workers. See *Country Reports 2000* at Section 6c.

¹¹⁹ Constitution of Bahrain at Article 13(c).

¹²⁰ The Penal Code prohibits solicitation for the purposes of prostitution, enticing a person to commit acts of immorality or prostitution, living off the profits from prostitution, and establishing a brothel. Punishments range from 2 to 10 years of imprisonment depending on the crime and the age of the victim. Bahraini authorities actively enforce the laws against prostitution, and violators are dealt with harshly and can be imprisoned or, if a noncitizen, deported. In some cases, authorities reportedly return children arrested for prostitution and other nonpolitical crimes to their families rather than prosecute them, especially for the first offense. See Penal Code of Bahrain, Articles 324-329, as cited in *Human Rights Report*. See also *Country Reports 2000* at Section 5.

¹²¹ ILOLEX database: Bahrain at <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/> on 10/30/01.

NOTE: Hard copies of all Web citations are on file.