

Tunisia

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Tunisia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and Seniors established a notification mechanism for the National Authority for Combating Human Trafficking to ensure that suspected cases of child trafficking and sexual exploitation are reported to the relevant authorities. The government also increased payments as part of its AMEN social support program by 9 percent to benefit 574,126 children and provided grants to 597,000 families to improve access to education to prevent children from dropping out of school to work. However, despite these efforts, the labor inspectorate's budget for staffing, fuel, and transportation was inadequate to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of the country. In addition, the government lacks a centralized system for digitization of court records, resulting in a limited availability of data on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of child labor crimes. Moreover, programs are insufficient to remove barriers to education access and mitigate child labor risks for rural children.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	3.5% (Unavailable)
Boys	5 to 14	4.5%
Girls	5 to 14	2.5%
Urban	5 to 14	2.5%
Rural	5 to 14	5.4%
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	0.9% (Unavailable)
Boys	15 to 17	1.4%
Girls	15 to 17	0.4%
Urban	15 to 17	0.9%
Rural	15 to 17	1.0%
Attending School	5 to 14	94.2%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	5.8%

Children in Tunisia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, forced domestic work, street begging, and drug trafficking.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Farming, fishing, animal husbandry, forestry.
Industry	Manufacturing and industrial work. Construction.
Services	Domestic work† and street work.† Working in small businesses, including mechanics’ shops.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in domestic work and begging. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Use in illicit activities, including organized crime and drug trafficking.

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Tunisia's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Criminalize and prescribe punishments for the use of all children in prostitution.
Enforcement	Provide adequate staff and other resources, including fuel and transportation, to enable the labor inspectorate to conduct a greater number of inspections, particularly in remote areas and in the informal economy. Increase the number of labor inspectors in the field from 194 to 269 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of nearly 4 million workers.
	Provide labor inspectors with sufficient training to identify child labor.
	Increase the amount imposed for penalties for those who employ children in violation of child labor law protections to deter potential violations and reduce recidivism.
	Collect, digitize, and publish information related to the financial penalties collected for violations of child labor laws.
	Implement a digital tracking system for civil worst forms of child labor inspections.
	Collect, digitize, and publish information on efforts to enforce criminal prohibitions on the worst forms of child labor, including on the number of child labor investigations that were conducted, prosecutions initiated, and convictions secured.
	Ensure that law enforcement and the judiciary are fully informed as to the existence and application of anti-human trafficking penalties and impose these penalties when appropriate.
	Ensure that exploited children are not prosecuted for their involvement in trafficking activities and are instead referred to social and psychological services.
Government Policies	Implement a national action plan that covers all forms of child labor present in the country.
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.
	Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including rural children, by improving access to transportation, water, and non-Arabic learning resources, and providing a sufficient number of teachers.
	Ensure that services for survivors of human trafficking are accessible to those with disabilities.
	Expand existing programs to fully address the scope of the child labor problem, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Children from the Northwest region of Tunisia are vulnerable to child labor in agriculture, and girls often drop out of school to serve as domestic workers. Children whose parents lack legal documentation, including children from sub-Saharan African countries and neighboring Arab countries, are vulnerable to labor exploitation as their parents do not have the status to legally work in Tunisia.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Tunisian schools lack a sufficient number of teachers, and some schools have failing infrastructure or lack access to water. In rural areas, some families cannot afford transportation costs associated with schooling. Students lacking documentation may face difficulties enrolling. Additionally, Arabic is the sole language of instruction, creating barriers for students who are not proficient in Arabic.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tunisia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. However, Tunisia's laws do not meet international standards because the law does not prohibit the use of a child for prostitution. Additionally, financial penalties for child labor violations are too low to serve as an adequate deterrent.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	16	✓	Article 53 of the Labor Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 58 of the Labor Code
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Ministry of Social Affairs Order of April 1, 2020
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		✓	Articles 2, 3, 5 and 8 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Articles 2, 3, 5, 8, and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		X	Articles 226 <i>bis</i> , 232–234 of the Penal Code; Articles 20 and 25 of the Child Protection Code; Article 2, 3, 5, 8 and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Articles 5 and 11 of Law No. 92.52 on Narcotics
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Article 2 of the National Service Law
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		✓	Article 2 of the National Service Law
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		✓	Article 2(5) of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons; Articles 3 and 18 of the Child Protection Code
Compulsory Education Age	16	✓	Section 1 of the Law on Education
Free Public Education		✓	Articles 38 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the Law on Education

Tunisian law does not meet international standards because it does not prohibit the use of a child for prostitution.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of digital law enforcement records makes it challenging to monitor trends, and labor inspectors do not have the resources to monitor the informal sector in all parts of the country.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
<p>Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA): Conducts labor inspections and assesses fines and penalties for infractions. Employs social workers and medical inspectors to assist in addressing child labor. Monitors the implementation of labor legislation and initiates prosecutions through the General Directorate of Labor Inspection. Implements social programs to assist those affected by child labor through the General Administration for Social Development. Fines assessed for infractions are reported to be insufficient to deter violations.</p>
<p>Ministry of the Interior (MOI): Investigates reports of the worst forms of child labor, including complaints that fall outside of the labor inspectorate's mandate and those pertaining to the informal sector. Through its Child Protection Service under the National Police, addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of children and coordinates with MSA and the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and Seniors regarding violations. Through its Judicial Police, coordinates with MSA to refer cases of at-risk youth to social services. The lack of digitized court records makes it difficult to compile data and evaluate trends in convictions and penalties for the worst forms of child labor violations.</p>

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts	
Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes
Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2024, **194** labor inspectors conducted **13,550** worksite inspections, finding **19** child labor violations. The government also conducted an **unknown** number of investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes, and prosecuted and convicted an **unknown** number of worst forms of child labor crimes.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Tunisia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor
<i>The National Authority for Combating Human Trafficking:</i> Operates within the Ministry of Justice and acts as the main coordinating body for responding to cases of human trafficking, including child labor, and refers them to judicial authorities. In 2024, the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and Seniors established a notification mechanism for the National Authority for Combating Human Trafficking to ensure that suspected cases of child trafficking and sexual exploitation are reported to the relevant authorities.

Research found no evidence that Tunisia established policies to address child labor. The government formerly had a Child Labor National Action Plan and a National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons, but both have lapsed and not been replaced.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor
<i>National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2018–2023):</i> Aimed to establish a global evidence-based approach to address trafficking in persons by coordinating national and international actors. This policy lapsed in 2023 and was not renewed in 2024. However, the National Authority for Combating Human Trafficking drafted an updated strategy during the reporting period.

Tunisia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs do not cover all worst forms of child labor in the country, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor
<i>Support Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking (2014–2024):</i> U.S. Department of State-funded project implemented by the International Organization for Migration to carry out anti-human trafficking activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, MOI, MSA, and the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and Seniors. Included three objectives: (1) building the capacity of relevant institutions and agencies to identify and assist survivors of human trafficking based on their individual needs; (2) strengthening cross-sector cooperation and the sharing of information through the implementation of a national referral mechanism; and (3) conducting an awareness-raising campaign to keep children in school and prevent human trafficking. Active in 2024.
<i>Centers to Provide Aid to Victims of Child Labor:</i> Serve up to 6,000 children engaged in child labor or vulnerable to child labor through the maintenance of 79 youth centers. Many of these centers are located in Tunis and provide education and health care to children who would otherwise be on the street. The centers were active during the reporting period.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Shelters and Services for Victims of Human Trafficking:‡ Serve survivors of human trafficking, predominantly children, through shelters operated by the Government of Tunisia. Provide lodging, food, clothing, and legal aid through a network of pro bono lawyers, and free medical care in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Two shelters, specifically for minor victims of human trafficking, operate in Tunis and Sidi Bouzid. Active in 2024.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Tunisia.

† The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports