

Yemen

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Yemen made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government maintained child protection units in all military regions and monitored for recruitment and use of children in 2024. Additionally, the Joint Technical Committee conducted trainings with the Ministry of Legal Affairs for military contacts on identifying and preventing the recruitment and use of children. However, despite this initiative, government and government-affiliated armed forces continued to recruit and use children in hostilities in contravention of Yemeni law. Furthermore, the government failed to make efforts to address discrimination in schools against children from the *Muhamasheen* (“marginalized”) community, leading to their increased vulnerability to child labor. It also did not conduct any labor inspections or enforce criminal labor laws due to the lack of budgetary resources. Moreover, research found no evidence of a government policy on any of the worst forms of child labor outside of child soldiering. In areas outside of government control, non-state armed groups such as the Houthis deliberately recruited children for use in combat and support roles in their forces. The Houthis also subjected children to military training and indoctrination as part of “summer camps,” increasing their vulnerability to being recruited as child soldiers.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children’s Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	12.5% (Unavailable)
Boys		15.8%
Girls		8.8%
Urban		4.8%
Rural		15.4%
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	2.6% (Unavailable)
Boys		4.7%
Girls		0.3%
Urban		3.3%
Rural		2.3%
Attending School	5 to 14	67.2%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	11.9%

Children in Yemen are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment for and use by state and non-state armed groups in armed conflict, as well as use in illicit activities, including in the trafficking of drugs by non-state armed groups.

Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Farming [†] and fishing. [†]
Industry	Construction, [†] carpentry, [†] working in metal workshops, and blacksmithing.
Services	Street work, including selling items, and begging. Selling goods in stores, working in auto repair, mechanic shops, [†] and car washes.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor [‡]	Recruitment of children by state and non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict. Use in illicit activities, including in the trafficking of drugs. Commercial sexual exploitation. Forced labor in agriculture. Forced labor in markets, including selling qat.

[†] 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.

In 2024, armed groups, especially the Houthis, but also government and pro-government militias, recruited and used child soldiers in combat and support roles. According to the UN, the Houthis recruited and used 182 children, while Yemeni Armed Forces recruited and used 23 children. Pro-government militias recruited and used an additional 74 children in 2024. In areas under Houthi control,

children are indoctrinated in schools and recruited into armed forces; these practices have been documented in 34 schools in 6 governorates. Additionally, children are indoctrinated and exposed to military training in "summer camps" organized by the Houthis. Boys recruited by the Houthis are often used in combat roles, and girls are used as recruiters, guards, and spies, and in other non-combat roles. Children are also used by the Houthis to transport drugs to the front lines and neighboring countries.

SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

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

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits forced labor.
	Ensure that trafficking of children, including recruitment, harboring, transportation, transfer, and receipt, for purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, is criminalized and that punishments are prescribed.
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.
	Ensure that the law adequately prohibits and provides punishments for using, procuring, or offering a child in pornography and pornographic performances, and using a child in prostitution.
	Raise the minimum age for work from age 14 to age 15 to align with the compulsory education age.
Enforcement	Enforce laws prohibiting children under age 18 from joining the Yemeni Armed Forces. Ensure that any children under age 18 already in the Yemeni Armed Forces and pro-government militias do not engage in combat.
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has the capacity to enforce labor laws. Employ at least 191 labor inspectors to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 7.6 million people.
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	Ensure that authorities enforce minimum age protections in all sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are prevalent, including in temporary employment, farming, and domestic work.
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies enforce child labor laws and publish information on enforcement activities.
Coordination	Ensure that the National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor is active and able to carry out its intended mandates.
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.
	Implement the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces.
Social Programs	Implement programs to address the worst forms of child labor and expand programs to improve children's access to education, particularly for <i>Muhamasheen</i> children.
	Institute a rehabilitation and reintegration program for children engaged in armed conflict and children involved in other worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and fishing.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

The *Muhamasheen* ("marginalized") minority group, generally of African origin and estimated to number 3.5 million, suffers from general poverty and severe societal discrimination, making *Muhamasheen* children highly vulnerable to child labor. Begging is prevalent among the community's children. Over half of *Muhamasheen* children have never attended school, with 7 percent of boys in one survey reporting work as the reason for not attending. *Muhamasheen* families also have difficulty affording school supplies and obtaining identity documentation. Research did not discover any government efforts to address this discrimination.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children in Yemen face significant barriers to education access due to limited government financial resources, a lack of family income, the use of schools for military purposes, and attacks on schools by armed groups. In Houthi-controlled areas, obstacles include vandalization and destruction of schools, a lack of schools in many areas, a lack of financial ability by families to pay for education, and Houthi recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. According to UNICEF, over 2 million boys and girls are not attending school due to poverty, conflict, and a lack of educational opportunities. Direct effects of the war, including the destruction of schools, have prevented children from attending classes. In addition, around 170,000 teachers in Houthi-controlled areas have not received salaries since 2016. Many families also continue to be unable to afford transportation costs to schools, and Yemen's multiple crises have pushed families further into poverty, making it increasingly difficult to access education. Many *Muhamasheen* children do not have birth certificates, which are required for enrollment in schools. They face harassment, bullying, and violence at school, and are dismissed from school or asked to clean the bathrooms; this treatment leads some to drop out of school.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Yemen has not ratified key international conventions concerning child labor, including the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. In addition, Yemen's laws neither meet international standards on the prohibition of forced labor because the legal framework does not appear to prohibit or provide punishments for forced labor, nor the prohibition of child trafficking because it only provides criminal penalties for someone who has bought, sold, or dispensed of a child.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	14	✓	Articles 5 and 27 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 48 and 49 of the Labor Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Article 7 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 49 and 154 of the Labor Code
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Articles 7, 8, and 15 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		X	Articles 6 and 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Article 248 of the Penal Code
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		X	Articles 6 and 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		X	Articles 147 and 163 of the Child Rights Law; Article 279 of the Penal Code; Articles 6 and 25 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		✓	Section 24 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 148 and 162 of the Child Rights Law
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	18	✓	Article 149 of the Child Rights Law
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		N/A	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		X	Article 6(b) of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013
Compulsory Education Age	15‡	✓	Article 18 of the General Education Law
Free Public Education		✓	Article 87 of the Child Rights Law

‡ Age calculated based on available information

Although Article 248 of the Penal Code criminalizes buying, selling, and dealing in human beings, the legal framework does not appear to prohibit or provide punishments for forced labor. The law related to child trafficking is insufficient because it only provides criminal penalties for someone who has bought, sold, or dispensed of a child. The legal framework does not adequately prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child in pornography and pornographic performances, or using a child in prostitution. The minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, which may encourage children to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

Enforcement agencies in Yemen took no documented actions to address child labor in 2024.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement	
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's (MOSAL) Child Labor Unit:	Enforces child labor laws, conducts inspections, informs the Ministry of Interior of any violations, and refers children found during inspections to appropriate social services.
Ministry of Interior:	Enforces child labor laws. Police departments within the ministry handle human trafficking investigations.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts	
Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Unknown
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	No
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes
Has a Complaint Mechanism	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	No
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	No
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	No

In 2024, labor inspectors conducted 0 worksite inspections, finding 0 child labor violations. The government also conducted 0 investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor, initiated 0 prosecutions, and convicted 0 perpetrators. The government was not able to take any actions to combat child labor, including the worst forms of child labor, such as the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, due to a severe lack of resources. It was also unable to fund civil or criminal law enforcement entities.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Yemen established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, this mechanism did not carry out coordination activities during the reporting period.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor	
National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor:	Coordinates child labor issues in Yemen. Comprises representatives from MOSAL, other state agencies, ILO, and local NGOs. The National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor was not active during the reporting period.

Yemen established a policy related to child labor. However, research indicates this policy is ineffective and inactive, and it does not cover all the worst forms of child labor that exist in the country.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces: Ensures that national laws comply with international standards, prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed forces, investigates allegations of violations, and facilitates UN access to monitor compliance. Research indicates that this policy is ineffective and inactive. In 2024, the government maintained child protection units in all military regions and monitored for recruitment and use of children. Additionally, the Joint Technical Committee conducted trainings with the Ministry of Legal Affairs for military contacts on identifying and preventing the recruitment and use of children.

Research found no evidence that Yemen funded or participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports