

Bahrain

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

The Government of Bahrain is in the process of drafting new labor legislation that is intended to bring the country into full compliance with ILO Convention 182.²⁰³ In conjunction with this, a national action plan has been developed to help implement the Convention.²⁰⁴ The government has also established educational training programs for school drop-outs.²⁰⁵

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, vendors²⁰⁶ and porters.²⁰⁷ Child trafficking is a problem throughout the Middle East and the Gulf States, although there are no official confirmations of such activities in Bahrain.²⁰⁸

Primary education is compulsory and free under the Constitution and generally lasts until the age of 12 or 13.²⁰⁹ In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 104 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 97 percent.²¹⁰ 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.²¹¹ Bahrain's Shura Council approved a draft Education Law on

²⁰³ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 3448*, October 2001.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ ILO, *Review of Annual Reports- The Effective Abolition of Child Labor: Bahrain*, GB.277/3/2, Geneva, March 2002, 212.

²⁰⁶ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 2602*, June 2000.

²⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Bahrain*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 2013-16, Section 6d [cited December 19, 02]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8246.htm>.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2013-16, Section 6f. See also UN Commission on Human Rights, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women*, E/CN.4/2000/68, Geneva, February 2000. See also Protection Project, "Bahrain," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children* Washington, D.C., March 2002, [cited July 25, 2002]; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org>. See also 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, 28 August 1996*, Stockholm, 1996.

²⁰⁹ *Constitution of the State of Bahrain*, (December 6, 1973), Article 7(a) [cited July 25, 2002]; available from http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/ba00000_.html. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bahrain*, 2011-13, Section 5.

²¹⁰ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

²¹¹ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

October 9, 2001, that will enforce the compulsory aspect of education by imposing fines on parents of students who fail to attend school.²¹²

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Law of 1976 establishes 14 years as the minimum age for employment. According to the Labor Law, juveniles between the ages of 14 and 16 may not be employed in hazardous conditions, at night, or for more than six hours per day.²¹³ 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.²¹⁴ Labor laws do not apply to child domestic workers.²¹⁵ Forced or compulsory child labor is prohibited by the Constitution.²¹⁶ Prostitution is illegal under the Penal Code, and there are increased penalties for offenses involving a child less than 18 years of age.²¹⁷

The Government of Bahrain has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on March 23, 2001.²¹⁸

²¹² U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 3448*.

²¹³ 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 U.S. Department of State, employment of juveniles is strictly regulated. See *Subsidiary Legislation Enacted under the Provisions of the Labour Law for the Private Sector, 1976; Promulgated by Amiri Decree Law No. 23 of 1976: The Employment of Juveniles*, (1976), [cited December 12, 2002]; available from <http://www.bah-molsa.com/english/c7.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 3448*.

²¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bahrain*, 2013-16, Section 6d.

²¹⁵ 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. *Ibid.*, 2013-16, Section 6c.

²¹⁶ *Constitution of Bahrain*, Article 13(c).

²¹⁷ 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 brought against a non-citizen, 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 Protection Project, “Bahrain.” See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Bahrain*, 2011-13, Section 5.

²¹⁸ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited July 25, 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/newratframeE.htm>.