

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

The Government of Bahrain has developed a national action plan to help implement ILO Convention 182.<sup>257</sup> The government has established educational training programs for school dropouts,<sup>258</sup> and also funds the Child Care Home for children whose parents can no longer provide for them.<sup>259</sup> The protection of children from exploitation and neglect, as well as assisting their physical, spiritual, and moral growth, is considered a role of the State.<sup>260</sup>

## 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 and vendors.<sup>261</sup> Child trafficking is a problem throughout the Middle East and the Gulf States, although there are no official confirmations of such activities in Bahrain.<sup>262</sup>

Primary education is compulsory and free under the Constitution and generally lasts until the age of 12 or 13.<sup>263</sup> In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 103.0 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 96.0 percent.<sup>264</sup> The net primary attendance rate in 2001 was 85 percent for male children and 84.0 percent for female children.<sup>265</sup> In 1999, 100.7 percent of children in primary school reached grade five.<sup>266</sup> Bahrain's Shura Council approved a draft Education Law on October 9, 2001, that will enforce the compulsory aspect of education by imposing fines of up to 100 Bahraini Dinar (USD 263) on parents of students who fail to attend school.<sup>267</sup> The government has never promulgated the law.<sup>268</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Law of 1976 establishes 14 years as the minimum age for employment.<sup>269</sup> Under the Labor Law, juveniles between the ages of 14 and 16 may not be employed in hazardous conditions, at night, or for more than

<sup>257</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 3448*, October 2001.

<sup>258</sup> ILO, *Review of Annual Reports- The Effective Abolition of Child Labor: Bahrain*, GB.277/3/2, Geneva, March 2002, 212.

<sup>259</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Bahrain*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18273.htm>.

<sup>260</sup> *Constitution of the State of Bahrain*, (December 6, 1973), Article 5a; available from [http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/ba00000\\_.html](http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/ba00000_.html).

<sup>261</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 2602*, June 2000. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Bahrain*, Section 6d.

<sup>262</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Bahrain*, Section 6f. See also Protection Project, "Bahrain," in *Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children* Washington, D.C., March 2002; available from <http://209.190.246.239/ver2/cr/Bahrain.pdf>.

<sup>263</sup> *Constitution of Bahrain*, Article 7(a) [cited July 25, 2002]. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Bahrain*, Section 5.

<sup>264</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003. For an explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report.

<sup>265</sup> *At a glance: Bahrain*, UNICEF, [online] 2003 [cited September 4, 2003]; available from [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bahrain\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bahrain_statistics.html).

<sup>266</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indications 2003*.

<sup>267</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 3448*. For currency conversion, see *Universal Currency Converter*, XE.com, [online] 2003 [cited September 4, 2003]; available from <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>. Information on the current status of the draft law is not available.

<sup>268</sup> U.S. Embassy- Manama, electronic communication to USDOL official, February 25, 2004.

<sup>269</sup> *The Labour Law for the Private Sector, 1976: The Employment of Juveniles*; available from <http://www.bah-molsa.com/english/chap8.htm>.

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6 hours per day.<sup>270</sup> 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.<sup>271</sup> Labor laws do not apply to child domestic workers.<sup>272</sup> Forced or compulsory child labor is prohibited by the Constitution.<sup>273</sup> Prostitution is illegal under the Penal Code, and encouraging a child less than 18 years of age to enter into prostitution is punishable by 2 to 10 years of imprisonment.<sup>274</sup>

The Government of Bahrain has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on March 23, 2001.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *unclassified telegram no. 3448*.

<sup>271</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Bahrain*, Section 6d. See also Ambassador to the U.S. Khalifa Ali Al-Khalifa, Response to Information Request, USDOL official, August 26, 2003.

<sup>272</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Bahrain*, Section 6c. 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. Foreigners make up two-thirds of the workforce.

<sup>273</sup> *Constitution of Bahrain*, Article 13(c).

<sup>274</sup> 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. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Bahrain*, 6f. See Penal Code of Bahrain, Articles 324-329, as cited in Protection Project, "Bahrain." See also *Legislation of Interpol member states on sexual offences against children: Bahrain*, Interpol, [database online] [cited June 13, 2003]; available from <http://www.interpol.int/public/Children/SexualAbuse/NationalLawsold/csaBahrain.asp>.

<sup>275</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited June 13, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.