

Bahrain

Although the problem does not appear widespread, some children in Bahrain are engaged in the worst forms of child labor. The Government supports a number of shelters to assist children who have been exploited in trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation or street begging. Gaps in the legal framework regarding hazardous work and domestic service remain, and there is no evidence of programs to reach out to child domestic servants.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	Unavailable



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the problem is widespread, some children in Bahrain are engaged in the worst forms of child labor.³⁵⁴

Children are trafficked to Bahrain for work as domestic servants.³⁵⁵ Child domestic labor may involve long hours of work and may expose children to mental and physical abuse from their employers. Children are also trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.³⁵⁶ There have been reports that children are sometimes involved in begging on the streets,³⁵⁷ which commonly involves hazards such as severe weather, accidents caused by proximity to automobiles and vulnerability to criminal elements.

Children in Bahrain work in family-run businesses, although there is no evidence to determine if such work constitutes the worst forms of child labor.³⁵⁸

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Law sets the minimum age for work at 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at 16.³⁵⁹ Children ages 14 to 16 must obtain authorization to work from the Ministry of Labor (MOL) and must complete a medical examination prior to employment.³⁶⁰ The Government has stated that, in practice, work permits are only issued for persons younger than age 15 in cases of apprenticeships and work during summer holidays.³⁶¹

The requirements to obtain medical examination and authorization from MOL prior to work are waived for minors ages 14 to 16 working in enterprises that only employ family members.³⁶² The Government reports that work by children on family farms is almost nonexistent.³⁶³ The lack of preauthorization requirements for children working with their families may expose children working in other types of family businesses to hazardous situations.

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	16
	Compulsory Education Age	15
	Free Public Education	Yes

Ministerial Order No. 6 outlines a list of 25 types of hazardous work that minors younger than age 16 are prohibited from performing.³⁶⁴ The Government continues to consider changes to the Labor Law to increase the minimum age for hazardous work to 18. However, the current minimum age for hazardous work is below the age recommended in international standards.³⁶⁵

The Labor Law explicitly exempts domestic and agricultural workers from all provisions in the law.³⁶⁶ Ministerial Order No. 21 of 1994 stipulates that the conditions of employment for non-Bahraini workers must be in writing and conform to the specifications of a model contract. The order includes a model contract specifically designed for domestic servants, some of whom are non-Bahraini children.³⁶⁷ However, the Labor Law, Ministerial Order No. 23 of 1976, explicitly exempts domestic servants and agricultural workers from all provisions in the law, and the ILO Committee of Experts has noted that this exemption may leave such workers unprotected.³⁶⁸ It is unclear whether Ministerial Order No. 21 of

1994 carries the full force of the law for domestic servants.

The Vagrancy Act of 2007 prohibits adults from inciting children to beg.³⁶⁹

The Constitution prohibits forced labor.³⁷⁰ The minimum age for military service is 18.³⁷¹ The 2008 Law to Combat Trafficking in Persons prohibits all forms of trafficking, including trafficking of children, for the purposes of prostitution or any other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor or slavery.³⁷² The Penal Code prohibits inciting a child to engage in “immorality,” which has been interpreted to cover pornography. It also prohibits prostitution as well as operating a brothel or using the services of a child prostitute.³⁷³ The code further states that any person who relies on prostitution or immorality for his or her livelihood will be punished with imprisonment. While penalizing adults who profit from child prostitution and pornography, this prohibition, in theory, may enable prosecution of children for involvement in such activities.³⁷⁴

The Constitution mandates free and compulsory basic education.³⁷⁵ Education is free up to age 12 and compulsory to age 15.³⁷⁶ The Government may impose fines in cases of truancy.³⁷⁷ Since education is not free for children between ages 12 and 15, children in some families may be pushed into the worst forms of child labor.

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

Although the Government of Bahrain has established a National Committee on Childhood under the authority of the Ministry of Social Development, research found no evidence of a government agency or other body tasked with coordinating government efforts to combat child labor.³⁷⁸ However, the Government has established agencies to address trafficking. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs heads a committee to coordinate trafficking policies.³⁷⁹

MOL and the Labor Market Regulatory Authority have responsibilities for enforcing child labor laws. These agencies have systems in place for sharing information on child labor cases, including referring cases to the judiciary when warranted.³⁸⁰ MOL inspectors enforce child labor laws.³⁸¹ Some inspectors from the Labor Market Regulatory Authority also perform inspections, particularly concerning foreigners' work permits and working situations.³⁸² There are 43 MOL labor inspectors who investigate violations of the labor laws, including child labor.³⁸³ Labor inspectors have been trained on international child labor standards by ILO.³⁸⁴

The Ministry of the Interior is the lead agency responsible for enforcing criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor, such as those against trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. The ministry coordinates actions with the Ministry of Social Development and the Public Prosecutor, as needed.³⁸⁵ These agencies have processes in place for sharing information on such cases.³⁸⁶ During the reporting period, there were at least two cases in which child victims of trafficking were sent to shelters and criminal investigations were initiated.³⁸⁷ The Ministry of the Interior's Criminal Investigation Directorate oversees a 10-person unit that investigates potential cases of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.³⁸⁸ During the reporting period, two cases of trafficking of minors were prosecuted, resulting in convictions for several traffickers.³⁸⁹

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government has stated that the worst forms of child labor are not a significant problem in the country and, therefore, it has not allocated resources to develop a national action plan to combat child labor.³⁹⁰ There is no evidence that the government has participated in specific research to determine to what extent children are engaged in

the worst forms of child labor. Furthermore, while there is currently no evidence of a widespread problem, there have been reports of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in domestic service, commercial sexual exploitation and begging, and there is no policy or plan to address these issues.

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government funds an NGO-run shelter, Dar Al Aman, which provides services for victims of trafficking, labor exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation, including children.³⁹¹ The shelter provides legal, medical and psychological services.³⁹² The Government also supports the Bahrain Child Protection Center, which provides treatment and counseling to victims of sexual exploitation.³⁹³ Under the Vagrancy Act, the Ministry of Social Development established the Social Welfare Dignity Home, which provides services to homeless persons and beggars, including children.³⁹⁴

The Government participates in two USDOS-funded programs to combat trafficking.³⁹⁵ One aims to raise awareness of the problem and build the capacity of government and other officials.³⁹⁶ The second is a regional project that seeks to encourage cooperation between relevant actors, such as trade unions and government officials, to combat trafficking from India and Sri Lanka to Bahrain and Qatar.³⁹⁷

The Ministry of Social Development also supports a mobile library for children.³⁹⁸ The impact of such a program on the worst forms of child labor does not appear to have been assessed. Furthermore, despite the programs described here, research found no evidence of outreach programs specifically aimed at protecting the rights of children involved in domestic service.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Bahrain:

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Enact revisions to the Labor Law to increase the minimum age for hazardous work to 18 and ensure that these provisions apply to children in family businesses.
- Adopt legislation to provide protections for children engaged in domestic service.
- Amend the Penal Code to ensure that children exploited in prostitution and pornography are not treated as criminals.
- Adopt legislation to provide free basic education to children up to age 15.

IN THE AREA OF POLICY:

- Conduct research to determine the scope of children's involvement in the worst forms of child labor in Bahrain.
- Develop a national plan of action to address the worst forms of child labor in domestic service, commercial sexual exploitation and begging.

IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS:

- Assess the impact that the mobile library program has on the worst forms of child labor in Bahrain.
- Develop outreach programs to protect the rights of children involved in domestic service.

³⁵⁴ Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the “Children’s Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions” section.

³⁵⁵ Sigma Huda, *Expert on Trafficking in Persons Ends Visit to Bahrain*, Press release, November 1, 2006; available from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=3009&LangID=E>.

³⁵⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Bahrain,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2010*, Washington, DC, April 8, 2011, section 7d; available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/160073.pdf>. See also Habib Toumi, “Bahrain, Thailand bust international trafficking rings,” [online], June 19, 2010 [cited February 21, 2011]; available from <http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-thailand-bust-international-trafficking-rings-1.643192>. See also Rasha Al Qahtani, “Police break up girl trafficking ring,” *Gulf Daily News*, [online], July 29, 2010 [cited February 19, 2011]; available from <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=283318>. See also Geoffrey Bew, “Trafficking Horror Revealed,” *Gulf Daily News*, [online],

January 28, 2006 [cited February 19, 2011].

³⁵⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention: Second and third periodic reports of States parties due in 1999: Bahrain*, prepared by Government of Bahrain, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, March 25, 2010, para 352.

³⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Bahrain,” section 7d.

³⁵⁹ Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector, as amended*, No. 23, (June 16, 1976), articles 50-51; available from <http://www.mol.gov.bh/MOL/En/Legislations/ListArticles.aspx?ChnlNm=Chapter%20One&ChnlDspl=The+Labour+Law+for+the+Private+Sector&ChnlPrnt=Labour+Law&ChnlPDspl=Labour+Law>. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request Concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Bahrain (ratification: 2001)* 2009 2008; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/pdconv.pl?host=status01&textbase=iloeng&document=23480&chapter=9&query=%28C182%29+%40ref+%2B+%28Bahrain%29+%40ref&highlight=&querytype=bool&context=0>.

³⁶⁰ Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector*, articles 51, 58.

³⁶¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second and third periodic reports of States Parties: Bahrain*, 501.

- ³⁶² Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector*, article 58.
- ³⁶³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second and third periodic reports of States Parties: Bahrain*.
- ³⁶⁴ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request Concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Bahrain (ratification: 2001)*
- ³⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶⁶ Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector*, article 2.
- ³⁶⁷ ILO NATLEX National Labor Law Database, *Order No. 21 of 1994 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to specify the conditions and procedures to be observed in contracts concluded by employers with intermediaries for the procurement of non-Bahraini labour from abroad*, June 2, 2011; available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.details?p_lang=en&p_isn=40272.
- ³⁶⁸ Government of Bahrain, *Labour Law for the Private Sector*, article 2. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, March 3, 2010*. See also ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request Concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Bahrain (ratification: 2001)*
- ³⁶⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second and third periodic reports of States Parties: Bahrain*, 502-503.
- ³⁷⁰ Government of Bahrain, *Constitution*, (2002), article 13; available from http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ba00000_.html.
- ³⁷¹ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 1, 2010*.
- ³⁷² U.S. Department of State, “Bahrain,” in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2010*, Washington, DC, June 14, 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142759.htm>. See also Government of Bahrain, *Fighting and Combating Trafficking in persons*.
- ³⁷³ Government of Bahrain, *Penal Code and its Amendments*, articles 324-329; available from <http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default.asp?action=article&id=939>. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, e-mail communication, March 30, 2011.
- ³⁷⁴ Government of Bahrain, *Penal Code*, articles 324-326. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, e-mail communication, March 30, 2011.
- ³⁷⁵ Government of Bahrain, *Constitution*. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 14, 2011*.
- ³⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Bahrain,” section 6. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second and third periodic reports of States Parties: Bahrain*, 358.
- ³⁷⁷ International Bureau for Children’s Rights, *Making Children’s Rights Work: Country Profile on Bahrain*, approximately 2006, 6.
- ³⁷⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second and third periodic reports of States Parties: Bahrain*, para 1.
- ³⁷⁹ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, March 3, 2010*.
- ³⁸⁰ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 14, 2011*.
- ³⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Bahrain,” section 7d.
- ³⁸² U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 1, 2010*. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, e-mail communication, March 30, 2011.
- ³⁸³ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports- 2010: Bahrain,” section 7d. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 1, 2010*.
- ³⁸⁴ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 14, 2011*.
- ³⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy- Manama, e-mail communication, March 30, 2011.
- ³⁸⁶ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, February 14, 2011*.
- ³⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁹⁰ ILO Committee of Experts, *Individual Direct Request Concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Bahrain (ratification: 2001)*
- ³⁹¹ U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, March 3, 2010*. See also U.S. Embassy- Manama, e-mail communication, March 30, 2011, para 6.
- ³⁹² U.S. Embassy- Manama, *reporting, March 3, 2010*.
- ³⁹³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Second and third periodic reports of States Parties: Bahrain*, 508.
- ³⁹⁴ Ibid., 503.
- ³⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Projects by Region and Country,” 2010; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/other/2010/143270.htm>.
- ³⁹⁶ IOM, *Bahrain*, [online] January 2010 [cited February 22, 2011]; available from <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/bahrain>.
- ³⁹⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Trafficking in Persons Projects by Region and Country.”
- ³⁹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Manama, e-mail communication, March 30, 2011.