

Childs' Rights Abuses Nationally and Globally

This compilation of children's rights abuses is by no means an exhaustive listing. It is only a fraction of abuses committed in the US and abroad. Millions of children are today denied basic rights and suffer unconscionable abuse. Over 125 million children are not in school; 250 million children are involved in child labor, including millions who are victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking; 2 million children have died in ten years and up to 25 million have been uprooted by armed conflict. 10 million children a year die from malnutrition and preventable diseases. It is important to note how widespread and pervasive these abuses are in order to understand the urgency of the need for US ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. US ratification would not automatically stop the abuse of children at home and around the world, but it would add critical political will and focus to leadership in the pursuit of protection for children. For more information on each specific abuse, please follow the links below.

CHILD LABOR

INDONESIA: Hundreds of thousands of girls in Indonesia, some as young as 11, are employed as domestic workers in other people's households, performing tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and child care. Most girls interviewed for the report worked 14 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week, with no day off. Almost all are grossly underpaid, and some get no salary at all. In the worst cases, girls reported being physically, psychologically, and sexually abused.

“Workers in the Shadows” (2009)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/02/10/workers-shadows>

UNITED STATES: Agriculture is one of the most dangerous types of youth employment in the United States. US labor laws allow even young children to work in commercial agriculture. Human Rights Watch has found that child farmworkers work longer hours, at younger ages, and under more hazardous conditions than other working youths.

“US: Adopt Stronger Laws for Child Farmworkers” (2009)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/09/15/us-adopt-stronger-laws-child-farmworkers>

EDUCATION

UNITED STATES: Human Rights Watch found that students with disabilities made up 18.8 percent of students who suffered corporal punishment at school during the 2006-2007 school year, although they constituted just 13.7 percent of the total nationwide student population. At least 41,972 students with disabilities were subjected to corporal punishment in US schools during that year. These numbers probably undercount the actual rate of physical discipline, since not all instances are reported or recorded.

“Impairing Education” (2009)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/08/11/impairing-education-0>

HIV/AIDS

UNITED STATES and GLOBALLY: Deportation of HIV positive migrant communities, including children. "Migrants living with HIV are often explicitly excluded from treatment," said Katherine Todrys, researcher with the Health and Human Rights Division at Human Rights Watch. "If they are detained, they are often denied access to antiretroviral drugs, and then if deported they can't get care."

“Returned to Risk: Deportation of HIV-Positive Migrants” (2009) <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/09/24/deporting-hiv-positive-migrants-threatens-lives-global-goals>

JUVENILE JUSTICE

MID EAST-AFRICA: Juvenile death penalty. Failures in law and practice that since January 2005 have resulted in 32 executions of juvenile offenders in five countries: Iran (26), Saudi Arabia (2), Sudan (2),

Pakistan (1), and Yemen (1). The report also highlights cases of individuals recently executed or facing execution in the five countries, where well over 100 juvenile offenders are currently on death row, awaiting the outcome of a judicial appeal, or in some murder cases, the outcome of negotiations for pardons in exchange for financial compensation.

“The Last Holdouts” (2008)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/09/10/last-holdouts-0>

UNITED STATES: Approximately 227 youth have been sentenced to die in California’s prisons. They have not been sentenced to death: the death penalty was found unconstitutional for juveniles by the United States Supreme Court in 2005. Instead, these young people have been sentenced to prison for the rest of their lives, with no opportunity for parole and no chance for release. Their crimes were committed when they were teenagers, yet they will die in prison. Remarkably, many of the adults who were codefendants and took part in their crimes received lower sentences and will one day be released from prison.

“When I Die, They’ll Send Me Home: Youth Sentenced to Life without Parole in California” (2008)

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/us0108/>

MIGRANT CHILDREN

GREECE: Some 1,000 unaccompanied migrant children who have entered Greece in 2008 without parents or caregivers struggle to survive without any state assistance. Although a member of the European Union, Greece flouts its most basic obligations when it comes to meeting the rights of these children, many of whom come from war-torn countries. Unaccompanied children are at risk of incidents of torture, such as mock executions, and inhuman or degrading treatment, including routine kickings and beatings.

“Greece: Government Failing Migrant Children” (2008)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/12/21/greece-government-failing-migrant-children>

STREET CHILDREN

VIET NAM: Police routinely round up street children in arbitrary sweeps and deposit them at state “rehabilitation” centers – euphemistically called “Social Protection Centers” – where they are detained for periods ranging from two weeks to as much as six months. Drawing on testimonies from street children interviewed over the past three years, Human Rights Watch details the particularly harsh treatment at one of the rehabilitation centers, Dong Dau Social Protection Center.

“Children of the Dust” (2006)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2006/11/12/children-dust>

CHILD SOLDIERS

BURMA: Based on an investigation in Burma, Thailand and China, this 135-page report found that Burmese military recruiters target children in order to meet unrelenting demands for new recruits due to continued army expansion, high desertion rates and a lack of willing volunteers. Non-state armed groups, including ethnic-based insurgent groups, also recruit and use child soldiers, though in far smaller numbers. Military recruiters and civilian brokers receive cash payments and other incentives for each new recruit, even if the recruit clearly violates minimum age or health standards.

“Sold to be Soldiers” (2007)

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/10/31/sold-be-soldiers>