**Submission by the Citizen Outreach Coalition to the Committee for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in advance of its 73rd session, January 2023**

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This submission focuses on the dire issue of child labor in Yemen which violates the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

**Child Labor**

***Background of Child Labor in Yemen***

In recent years, Yemen has gained international notoriety for the dire issue of child labor. An outstanding 13.6% of the children population aged 5 to 14 is subjected to forced labor. 70% of these working children are forced to work in agriculture, where they face dangerous working conditions in fishing and harvesting.[[1]](#footnote-1) 27.8% of them are forced to work in service industries, where they perform grunt labor tasks in auto mechanic repairs and car washes. Finally, 2.2% of them are forced to work in industrial sectors, where they face the health risks that come with mining, welding, and quarrying.[[2]](#footnote-2)

These dreary circumstances represent a significant and urgent issue in Yemen; moreover, through these unfortunate circumstances, it is clear that Yemen directly violates part 3 of Article 10 of *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* which so clearly expresses the harms of child labor on a child’s well-being and daily life.[[3]](#footnote-3) Although laws such as Article 248 of the Penal Code criminalizes the dealing of human beings, the law fails to prevent or prohibit many forms of forced work, which can lead to child trafficking and child sex trafficking, especially under the guise of a “family business.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

This has led to widespread direct oppression of children, some of the most vulnerable populations in Yemen. The current legal system fails to protect these vulnerable children and opens them up to human trafficking, with what seems like nothing being done to solve these problems. As a result, estimates place millions of students out of school and forced to work. This threat to young people is even more dangerous and seems almost unmanageable without parents and appropriate support staff. [[5]](#footnote-5)

While legislative changes such as those that place an age limit of 14 before young people can work for pay are certainly a step in the right direction, it is inadequate. Research shows that the government has yet to ensure that these laws and regulations are actually enforced throughout Yemen. The Yemeni Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor has not hired enough personnel required to manage and inspect the totality of Yemen’s workforce of over 6.9 million people. In addition to this, despite the laws and regulations, the government lacks the capacity to adequately oversee, effect, investigate, and prosecute labor violations as a criminal matter, which has allowed the child labor crisis to go unaddressed.

As a result, the Yemeni government can fairly be assessed as one that has failed to take the imperative steps that will lead to the substantial reduction and subsequent eradication of child labor in Yemen.

***We urge the Committee to pose the following questions:***

* What steps is the government of Yemen taking to ensure that its laws and regulations against the labor of children aged 5 to 14 are enforced?
* What steps is the government taking to ensure that its relevant ministries (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor Child Labor Unit, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Interior) are properly equipped with the resources that are needed to combat child labor?
* What steps is the government taking to ensure that education, the more appropriate alternative activity at a child’s age, is available to children aged 5-14 years old?
* How does the government plan to address and prosecute labor violations as a criminal matter, specifically in relation to child labor?
* What steps is the government taking to increase public awareness and understanding of the harms of child labor on children's well-being and development?
* What is the government's plan to address the lack of personnel and resources necessary to manage and oversee the workforce in Yemen?
* What is the government's long-term strategy for the eradication of child labor in Yemen?

***We encourage the Committee to make the following recommendations to the government of Yemen:***

* Pass laws to prevent forced labor and slavery, with a specific focus on protecting young people from these forms of exploitation by updating protocols for monitoring and protecting trafficked people as well as making forced labor a criminal charge.
* Ensure that all steps of the process involved with human trafficking and child labor are heavily scrutinized and laws created on these topics are thoroughly enforced; this means that there will be greater reviews of suspects of recruitment, harboring exploited people, and delivering exploited people.
* Ensure that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor execute spontaneous, unannounced investigations at large industrial workplaces to ensure that no child is being put to work.
* Pass legislation that ensures that young people have access to education for a longer period of time.
* Increase public awareness and understanding of the harms of forced labor and slavery on children's well-being and development in educational and public settings.
* Allow young people to anonymously file reports and recommendations to Yemeni authorities without fear of retaliation to report violations of children’s rights.
* Provide a public and affordable medium through which individuals can easily report any suspicions concerning child labor law violations.
* Take steps to address the lack of personnel and resources necessary to manage and oversee the forced labor and slavery in Yemen.
* Institute a rehabilitation program for children engaged in severe forms of child labor, providing services such as education, counseling, medical and psychological support, and vocational training to help children transition back into society and rebuild their lives.
* Establish long-term monitoring and a follow-up mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of changes in Yemen’s legislation.
* Regularly report on progress made in implementing these measures and achieving these goals to the Committee and the international community.
1. "Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016 - ILO." <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf>. Accessed 15 Jan. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Yeman." <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2021/Yemen.pdf>. Accessed 15 Jan. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>. Accessed 15 Jan. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. "YEMEN: What to do about child labour? - ReliefWeb." 13 Jun. 2010, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-what-do-about-child-labour>. Accessed 16 Jan. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "Child Labor Robs Children of Their Future In Yemen | UNICEF USA." 6 Jan. 2022, <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/child-labor-robs-children-their-future/39165>. Accessed 16 Jan. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)