

## Children in Iran

Bulletin of *"The Association of Abolishing Child Labor in Iran"*

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### 15thousand children at Teheran's gates

Abassali Alssagh, the director of 'Better Life' in Teheran Province who claimed he was not in a position to answer questions, but to listen to experts, announced the number of working children entering Teheran over the last nine months as follows: between January and September 2003, 15,000 children entered Teheran via the main bus terminal and according to various inspections in Sept 2003 from around 3400 children selling their labour, 500 were Afghani and Pakistani children. He denied the claim by the expert from the bureau for the 'prevention of social harm' that the plan to collect child workers was hasty. Alssagh said: "two plans one long term and one short term were presented by the office for 'Better Life' and these plans were not achieved with any haste. The content of the plan were accepted, however if there were any objections they were to do with the implementation of the plan. Undoubtedly one organisation cannot improve the welfare of 15000 children in six months on its own, under circumstances when 70per cent of these children had travelled from other provinces.

### "We are not rubbish, we are children of slums"

Regarding the place where street child workers are held, Majid who is a 20 years old sports teacher says: "there are 3 kinds of children in this place. Iranians, Afghans and foreigners. Afghan children are keenest to attend school. All sorts of trouble happens between Iranian and foreign children. Majid has been working in the 'Children's House' since the house was opened and is used to the harms and troubles. But Mona who also works in the house, looking after the children with no pay or thanks, is not so happy. Children call her 'aunt Mona'. She was brought up in

the slums of Darvazeh Ghar and she knows about poverty.

Mona says: many of the foreigners don't understand what 'foreigner' means. When I asked them about it many thought it meant someone who is sad, in exile or offended.

We return to the class with Mona, Majid and Reza the children's helpers as well as some of the children. Ali is 13years old, he has a good voice and sings Los Angeles songs

(Pop songs by Iranian living in California) , he dances with 4 years old Arezoo. Ali says he has recently got married and his wife is younger than him. Little Afsaneh who has faced much pain says: between selling chewing gum she also begs. Ehsan is 11 years old.

Children here have lovely names, Hirmand, Reshad, Tarikh, Puneh, Maryam Gol, Latife, Marya and Mila. I tell Mona this, she gives a sad smile: "most of these children have no Birth certificates or they have sold their birth certificates. Their names are given names"

"They fly over the mindless city

In the circles of death, in a dead end

soaked in the smoke of furnace, smuggling and open wounds

colourful frames in pocket and bow and arrow in hand children of slums "

I go to school

What do you do?

I pick flowers

The teacher explains she picks the petals, for perfume extraction.

How much do you earn?

80 tomans for a kilogram .

The girls are mostly 12 years old. But some of the boys are much younger. Some Afghan families don't let their daughters to go out of the house on their own.

The little girl sings: "although I have a harsh life but I can improve it with efforts".

### **Report from the helper on the bus collecting street children:**

Bahman shows his clean clothes while crying and he says I have a family; I am not a street child. Liza is 5 years old, she is staring at the soldier who has stopped her with wide eyes, she is giving him her bag, the soldier seems to only one word: "silent"

Liza is silent, Bahman is silent Fayaz is silent.

Mrs DolatAbadi is against separating children from their parents and says: on the 21 Jan 2002 to 1 June 2003, 11000 children were picked up in Tehran Bus terminal. Those in charge of Children care houses differ in their opinions with those responsible for 'Better Life' a government organisation. The latter call voluntary social workers sentimental and do not accept their work.

The social deputy of the 'Better Life' organisation says: "in the first six months of 2004, more than 14,000 children have been held in Tehran's various entry points. From these 55per cent are boys seeking work, 25per cent are guests, 11per cent are runaways, 8 percent are street sellers and 1 per cent have no abode. Amongst girls 36 percent are runaways, 34per cent are guests, 15 percent are street sellers, 10 percent are job seekers and 5 percent have no abode. Khorassan province with 19 per cent has the highest level

of child labour and street children, Tehran has 18 per cent, Hamedan 8 per cent, Lorestan

6 percent, Khuzestan has 5 per cent . Despite the fact that Child labour is illegal (for children of under 15 years old) children younger than 15 work in carpet weaving workshops and furnaces. The children's wages are around 3to 4000tomans. (1000tomans =around 1Euro)

### **25 October 2003- Journal Danaii - from Nasser Peyvand**

According to the schools' official regulation, passed by the Supreme Educational Council in 1379 (2000) , the school is defined as follows: the school is the most important social educational, training entity in society and the most essential pillar of education and training which will educate correctly pupils in religious, moral, educational, social spheres and discover talents, direct and help children's development while making sure that the moral and physical development

of the pupils ate in accordance with the regulations and the dictate of the Ministry of Education and Development.

(for many years, since the middle ages, modern humanity has eliminated religious education from the curriculum. The school is no more a religious seminary, and the schools to educate 'talabe'(Islamic disciples) have been abolished even in many Islamic countries. But in Iran's Islamic regime , religious education is named as the most essential and the first pillar of school education. Schools should be a place to learn sciences, education, learning and teaching , recreation and happiness of children. The education and training described in the school regulation can only mean one thing: to destroy the sensitive soul of children and create obstacles against their free scientific development and the imposition of strict religious regulation which will even forbid their free biological development. The Islamic Republic confuses schools with colonies for training religious sects' disciples .S.B)

### **26 Oct 2003 Mehr News Agency**

14,000 street children have been arrested over the city. Social group: the deputy director of the social services of the Public Health organisation announced that : "in the first 6months of the current year, 14,308 street children have been collected by the various offices of this organisation in train stations, bus stations and the streets. In an interview with the social reporter of Mehr News agency, Doctor Alam Ahadaii said: from the 14,308 street children gathered in the city, 86.2percent were boys and 3.8 percent were girls. From these 55per cent of boys were looking for jobs, 25 per cent were guests and 11 percent were runaways, 8 per cent were street peddlers and 1 per cent were just lost in the streets. He added that most of the children collected by this organisation were below 18 and 5percent were boys were 19-21 years old, 16.66percent were under 18, 22 percent were 13-15 years old, 10.5percent were under 12 and 2percent were under 9. Amongst the girls , 4 percent were 19-21 , 56percent were 16-18 years old, 25 per cent were 13-15 years old and 8 percent were 10-12 years old, 4percent were under 9.

Regarding the education of these children, Alam Alhadai said: 43 percent of the boys had finished guidance schools, 30percent were in high school , 17 percent were in primary schools, 8percent were illiterate and 2 percent were university students.



Amongst the girls , 30 percent were in high school, 29 percent were educated to guidance school level , (middle school) 18percent were illiterate, 17percent were educated to primary school level and 6percent were students. He added that most of these children had come to Tehran from the provinces: Khorassan province was top of the list with the highest percentage of runaway children with 20percent , after that 18percent of the children came from Tehran province, Hamadan had 7percent , Lorestan 6percent and Khouzestan 5 percent. In addition 600 children were foreign subjects , mainly Afghans. The deputy director of social services in the Public Health organisation said: " from the children collected in the streets , 11,700 children belonged to families and 2500 were sent to the Central headquarters of street children in Yasser street and 1500 were returned to the families , while 1000 children who had no family were held long term in these centres.

Alam Alhadaii added: 80percent of street children have a job and family. The other 20 percent were street children who once recognised by social workers were returned to their families. Otherwise they were kept following a 3 weeks quarantine in residential correctional schools .

### **6th November 2003- Newspaper Jamee**

Paying no attention to children's rights, failure to set up and pass legislation to protect children effectively, have resulted in children facing all sorts of threats as well as open and hidden harm. Experts also believe that poverty, addiction of the parents, mental illness, divorce have damaged children. During a 15 months survey by the National Society in Defence of Children's Rights it became clear that: 90percent of street children were escaping abuse by parents

especially their father or mother. The review of the case of 135 children showed that : violence against children is 25% attributed to the father or the mother, 19 percent from both, 18percent by the step mother, 7 percent by the step father. Open violence, beating, torture, causing injury is the first instance when all institution legally connected to the child , i.e. schools, child care, hospitals must report the issue to legal authorities.

### **17th November 2003 Etemad Newspaper**

Girls who runaway from home , at the best of circumstance are very lucky to escape prostitution. However they are left wandering in the cruel city. They are hungry, they are humiliated. "often in this cruel city I look for that look". 90 per cent of street children come from 5or 6main cities in the country. The problem of street women and children has nothing to do with refuse collection. But in this waste city, there must be a unit or an organisation that can help them. Every now and then they arrest street women, they remain in prison and no one cares about their plight. Public Health organisation strongly denies the rumour that these women have insurance.

### **17th November 2003, Etemad Newspaper**

"For God's sake buy a 'horoscope'"

Street children and women are not rubbish to be collected by the city council. They are not criminals to be arrested by the security services. They are victims of economic, educational poverty in society. The relevant organisations should be equipped with such a view. Samira was saying: "For God's sake buy a 'horoscope', if I don't sell all of these my father will not let me back in the house."

Samira was forced to return the unsold 'fortunes' back to the house. She was talking of a father who is wasted by opium addiction and a mother who washes clothes, It was 10 pm. She talks of her younger sister who has sweet dreams in the night.

The former deputy Mayor of Teheran says: "the responsibility for street children and other social problems does not lie with the city council. " Now where are all the legal organisations with all their might and their huge budgets to help? Poor Samira sells 'horoscopes' until the dead of the night.

### **24th November 2003- Archives of Newspaper Iran**

"Elements crucial in growth of the number of street

children, 35,000 street children in Tehran" (This while the authorities claim the total number of street children in the country is 20,000- S.B)

### **25th November 2003- Archives of Newspaper Iran**

The murder of a 12 year old girl by her father : in a mad act a middle age man has killed his daughter with knife wounds. The girl's 16 year old sister who tried to help her was injured.

### **27th November 2003- Archives of Newspaper Iran**

A four year old child crying in the offices of the Newspaper tells his mother: "why did you leave me alone?"

The child's father had left the child on a street corner. The mother says: following separation he left the child with me. I asked for maintenance, he took the child away and said he was leaving him with a family whose children had grown up and gone abroad. But he left the child on a street corner. He was supposed to give me the family's address a week later.

### **27th November 2003- Archives of Newspaper Iran**

Bandar Abbas - Safe house for homeless children  
Hamid is a 15 year old youngster, he talks of his family, 8 people in total, engulfed in poverty and drug addiction. He says he run away to Alshatr Khoram Abad to escape a similar destiny.

Mostafa is a 13 year old who is kept in the central quarantine of the centre for homeless children in Bandar Abbas, because he is suffering from scabies. He talks with fervour about his memoirs prior to the dispersion of his family, he talks of their trip 11 people in a small Renault car to the North (Caspian region). Those days no one called him a street child, an orphan, until his father decided to remarry and divorced his mother ....

Ahmad is a sweet tongued 8year old from Ahwaz, who talks of the pain of separation form his mother. His mother is in prison for transporting drugs. The deputy director of Social Services in the Public Health offices of Hormozgan province describes the reasons for the large number of street children in Bandar Abbas as the growth of the Free Economic Zones and pressures caused by these zones on families, the variety of false jobs, smuggling and cultural poverty . While announcing that 500 children sleep in the streets

he said: shouldn't we be concerned that the number of street children has increased 100per cent? The sad truth is that more than 38per cent of street children are victims of physical, mental and emotional harm and this does not arose any sensitivity amongst those responsible, He added: the fact that according to those responsible more than 54percent are Afghans and nothing can be done to prevent their plight.

### **9th December 2003 Journal Jamee**

Children of poverty in cross roads (Foroutan lake)  
When you go passed the cross road a young boy stops you with a pile of Hafez fortune telling sheets and a love bird on his finger, insisting you buy a fortune. A piece of paper costing 100 tomans and an hour of debate with an impudent child... After each red light, a large group of street children rush to the street! The girls are wearing torn clothes and sandals instead of shoes. She burns wild rue (the smoke is supposed to bring good luck) . Young boys sell chewing gum and at times cigarettes or papers. I cross the pedestrian bridge, I see a beggar with a new born on her back. Her bowl is full of ten, twenty toman notes. I say hello, she doesn't answer. I put a hand on her shoulder and ask why do you do this, she bursts into tears and says: every day two or three of you ask this question. Why don't you ask how you can help?

Seller of 'fortune'

-Do you go to school?

-Yes she shakes her head

-When do you do your homework?

-At night, the time to sleep, some times in the day in the park or the side of the pavement.

I see marks of wounds and blisters on her hand- I ask what are these?

-at night when my father is smoking cigarettes and other stuff, he calls me to go to him , to holds my hand so that he can light up. If I don't go he beats me up. I go myself. My mother sits in a corner and cries and swears. My mother always sits with my father and laughs with him. In the young girls' eyes I can see hatred and anger.

She is no more than 19 or 20 years old. She is wearing a dark red headscarf , she has wrapped her hejab (long head/body cover) round her waist and she is carrying a child on her back. I have no father, my mother has gone and I have no news of her. From the time when the landlord threw my stuff in the street

,she is gone and there is no sign of her. I live below the graveyard amongst dismantled cars. I live in huts built behind the cars. I point out the child on her back, is it your baby?

She smiles. Does it look as if I could have children? The baby belongs to an old lady, she has 7-8 children. So you think they are her children? No she looks after them. She hires them out to us so that we can beg. Some of the children she sells. Their families have no money so they sell them. Some time ago she sold one of the children to someone in my family.

-How much is the price of a child?

-It depends , once someone came to sell her child for the price of 2-3days drugs. She was dying of addiction.

### **11th December 2003- Archives of Iran Newspaper- source Newspaper "Shargh"**

Social Group- On average every week 35 girls escape from their home and every day a girl is sexually abused. The reporter from the society Supporting Children's Rights who attended the meeting regarding social abuses says: 92 percent of street children in the age group 14-18 have physical, mental, sentimental difficulties and 8percent have some addiction. 50percent of these children have tried to steal, 41percent have tried to sell drugs and 85 percent have been involved in damaging property. The results of this research shows that 50percent of street children have been sexually abused. It is said that the children's physical development is also severely damaged. To such an extent that 84percent are anaemic, 80percent are short in height, 86percent suffer from weight loss, 77percent have teeth and mouth illnesses, 73 percent have eye ailments, 61percent have respiratory problems, 64percent have heart trouble, 82 percent have skin disease and 6percent have digestive illnesses. In addition in a part of the report we see a study of the educational situation of street children. 56percent are illiterate, 11percent of the children in the survey earn less than 30,000tomans a year . 28percent earn 30-50thousand tomans, 33 percent earn 50-80thousand tomans, 16 percent earn 80-100,000 tomans and 9percent earn more than 100thousand tomans. (one pound= 1300 tomans) ,. 26 percent of the children in the survey worked between 4-6hours, 24percent worked more than 10 hours a day. According to the results of this survey 56percent of these children have mothers and fathers and live in families where there are 5-8 children. In the continuation

of this gathering, Professor Mohammad Hossein Farjad ,expert on mental /social damage and university lecturer said : I call the trend in quantitative rise in social damage as "social Fear" .

He then listed the priority in the list of social damages on the psychological standing of the society as : problems of children, youngsters, youth, addiction, divorce and prostitution. He said: "currently , 114 issues are classified as social damage by judges and legal authorities." He pointed out that during this survey he often spoke to the children on the side of the pavement, adding: "while speaking to some of these children I became so upset that I couldn't continue the discussion. Especially when I saw that most of these children were highly intelligent and thought that if they were brought up in favourable conditions , by a well to do family , they could have achieved academic, scientific success. On many occasions I noticed that the children were sad about the fact that they couldn't go to school."

### **A passage through Tajrish Square, children, beggars...) in the frozen parts of Tehran's most northern square.**

This is Tajrish, busy but cold. Like an old carpet , where everyone has left their mark on it with no restrictions! No patch matches another one, but this is how it is. In one corner this little girl who has no dolls, in the dawn of an innocent life is wasted in clear water pools that lead to the marshes.

The street is full of people displaying their handicapped arms and legs. Some are pleading ,others crying and begging for money. More troubling than the beggars are the 5-7 year old children who in the freezing weather are wearing thin colourful torn clothes with sandals with their toes poking out of old socks. They walk from Tajrish Square to Ghods Square. A little boy is playing an old drum with a terrible sound. A 5year old boy is holding an old shoe box to collect money. His hands are frozen and stick to the box. This is not the only disturbing incidence. Every kilometre, one or two children are either begging or selling chewing gums and plaster bands. A child is crying from the cold in one corner, he is unhappy that no one is giving him any change and he has to go home empty handed. Little Massoumeh, with her full white veil sells me chewing gum every day. She is calm and patient but her eyes give the look of a middle age woman.

## **A look at the difficulties of children working in the street: an uncertain future awaits the child bread winners**

Mehr News agency: he appears 5-6 year old, his small hand bore no resemblance to the hands of other children his age. He was wearing clothes too big for him and he held a packet of chewing gum in his hand. Innocence made his face much bigger. He stopped passers by and would not let them go until they bought a gum. He would sell his last packet and put the empty box on his head and laughed loud, paying no attention to those around him.

He is 4-5 year old and will not leave you alone until you buy a chewing gum. This one is 5-6 years old and sells fortune. Another is 6-7 year old he sells prayers. A boy of 7-8 cleans car windows. Their arguments is not like that of other boys of the same age. They don't fight over a chocolate or a toy they have seen in a shop window. Their arguments are about more important issues, money, bread to eat and earnings.

Some people believe that in order to clean up the city and give it a better appearance, these small bread winners must be collected and held in special places, These people are unaware that 80percent of these children have families. Their families send them to the street to earn money for them.

There are no accurate statistics of the street children



in the world but the majority are in poor or developing countries. What is the share of our country from this army of millions, This isn't clearly known. If you want to hear repetitive noises such as the fact that : streets are full of child peddlers whose number rises every year ... no one will help you, even the Public Health office which seems to feel responsible for collecting these children . They say the numbers are so volatile it is impossible to hazard a guess: not only our organisation ( Public Health) but no office in the country can claim to have a figure for the number of street children.

## **50% of street children suffer form sexual abuse**

Dr Fatemeh Ghassem Zadeh, a member of the scientific community at Tehran University has done a survey regarding labour and street children. She says: amongst 14-18 year old street children, 92percent have difficulties in 4 aspects: physical, mental, social and sentimental. 89percent have a low estimate of themselves in the mental and sentimental aspects. 40percent suffer from jalousie, 58% feel animosity and revenge, and 52 percent are unstable and restless. 80percent have no trust in others and 50 percent are negative and suspicious, 45 percent are depressed, 54 percent suffer from distress, 84 percent feel insecure and scared and 77 percent have an identity crisis. She adds : street children are the result of poverty, deprivation and often the product of impoverished families in provinces who send their children to Tehran. We therefore should seek to resolve the problem in their place of birth rather than their destination and deal with the causes of this phenomenon we could find better solutions to this problem.

Seyyed Hassan Alam Alhadaii, the deputy director of Public Health believes that street children , like other social ailments grow by 10-15percent a year: "when we have around 10,000 suffering from absolute or relative poverty in the country, this implies that 15-17percent of the population are poor. There are no sufficient legislations to stop child labour. But what makes the legislation irrelevant is that there are no guarantees for their implementation.

The chair of the society for Legal Protection of children tells us that what we see of children working in the street is very different from real child labour: the true child labourers are those working in underground workshops or in furnaces, in carpet and kelim weaving workshops or in the toy manufacturing factories of

south Tehran, in atrocious conditions, 6days a week, 8 hours a day for a pay of 2000tomans a month(around 1pound 60 pence) . These are the true child labourers.

### **31st Dec2003- Archives of Newspaper Iran- Source paper Entekhab**

The deputy minister of Labour and Social Services tells the paper Entekhab: " details of the new regulation stopping child labour in 23 hard and harmful jobs have been specified. Khaje Nouri says : the employment of children of 15-18 in tasks such as mine work, tannery, welding, bakery, hospitals, well digging ... has been prohibited. Those

Violating this law will be condemned to imprisonment and cash fines."

The economic group of the paper adds: "the regulation governing a ban on child labour (15to 18year olds) has passed and will be announced soon".

Mohsen Khajeh Nouri the deputy minister of Labour and Social Services added ina conversation with the reporter form the paper Entekhab: "After Iran joined article 182 of the ILO, this organisation banned children of 15-18 years old from a number of jobs harmful to heath . Therefore , as a result of Iran's membership of ILO, new legislation was compiled , passé by the state and the Islamic Majles according to which 23 jobs are prohibited." He added:" work in mines, tunnels as well as underground mines, tannery workshops, cleaning of animal stomachs, closed warehouses, near river marshes, in rubbish dumps, where there is spraying of toxins, underwater diving, workplaces with too much noise , welding work places... are prohibited for this group." According to him:" work on electrical installation of over 63kw, sand blasting, preparing asphalt by hand, tar dispersion, working with equipment of high frequency, digging wells , working in subterranean canals, sewage and underground water tunnels, any job that could cause illness as a result of radiation, work in hospitals, bakeries and any job that endangers the health of the individual is banned for Children of 15-18. "

(The approval of this legislation itself shows the very areas where children did work in Iran and most of the country is still ignorant of this law. In addition the guarantees for adhering to this law does not deal with a major weakness of article 82 of the legislation regarding private workshops, run by members of the family. An article which leaves

family members free to exploit children. Not only youngsters of 15-18 but children of any age - S.B)

### **Parts of a speech by Mohamad Reza Ashouri, sociologist in Artists House**

- at a meeting organised by the Society for protection of children's rights:

-One out of every four marriage in Tehran ends in divorce

-Last year more than 60000children run away from home and only one third of them 20,000 were accounted for by government agencies.

-Regarding sexual harassment, the statistics show that prostitution amongst school children especially girls has risen by 635percent. According to the Newspaper Iran (15-6-1379) : given that on average every week 35 girls runaway from home, every day one runaway girl is sexually abused. The same paper writes 22 days later:

-although only 780 children (below 18) are currently in prison on drug related charges, just at primary school level, 1000 kids are involved in buying and selling drugs.

### **Newspaper Abrar writes on the 2-1-1380:**

Every day 500,000 of the country's youth join the ranks of drug addicts. According to the paper Iran: One million of the definite 2million drug addicts are less than 18 years old. Paper Ressalat 17-6-1380 writes:

more than 50percent of the country's addicts are school pupils in Guidance or secondary level.

### **Paper Iran in the language of statistics:**

The census of 1375 shows that 9million 800hunderd thousand and 676 of the country's population are aged between 10-13 and from this number 1,860,013 are deprived of any education. According to the statistics of the ministry of Education, in the same year when the total number of children of school age, i.e. between 6 and 19 (primary school, Guidance and secondary school) were announced as 17million, 206 thousand and 136 , around 5million, 181 thousand and 225 were deprived of any education. In the age group 10-14 around 368thousand and 31 children were working and 366 thousand 475 children had no clear employment situation. In the age group 15-19 , 457 thousand 149 are mentioned as employed most of them in the industrial, agricultural sector or as peddlers, transport, repairs. Of course this figure does

not cover street children employed in false jobs , children who attend school some of the time. The sad thing is that a considerable

number of these children is not recognised. In addition to the 1million 600thousand girls aged between 10 and 19 who are married and are housewives, others who are working in fields and plantations , in small private family workshops, carpet weaving workshops, in furnaces and as small retailers. (quote from Zohre Khosh Namak, paper Jamee , Saturday 5th Ordibehesht 1377 (25April 1998).

-500thousand Iranian children live below the poverty line . The Representative of a UN agency in Tehran said: 14 percent of children still work in Iran.

### **87th session of ILO on child labour**

In Iran one million and 80thousand children work. As one of the experts of the Ministry of Labour admits in an interview with the paper Jamee number 50( 25th April 1998) and there is no way of inspecting the figures due to a shortage of human resources.

According to UNICEF in Iran around 1/3 percent of children aged between 6 and 14 work and do not attend school. This figure is 2/4 of a percent and in rural areas is 0.5percent/ In addition in rural areas more than 10 percent of girls and 17percent of boys work more than 7hours a day and therefore have no time to pursue their education. In the age group 10to 14, the number of girls who work to earn a living is twice the number of boys. In rural areas, the number of girls who bring an income to the household or who work from home and do not attend school, is 3times that of boys. (quote from Ahmad Ameli - Khordad newspaper- 15th June 1999)

### **Year 2004**

5th Jan 2004- A year has passed since the start of the plan to collect street children. Working Children deprived of education.

Golnaz Athari- His name is Khodadad. Two months after his birth, he is called divorce. He was living in his grandfather's house until the old man died. From the age of six he is called a street child. When you look at his eyes you realise that for a long time tears have dried up in his eyes. When you acknowledge his calm, he is happy but soon afterwards he tells you of his addiction. Now he is 13years old. Saïid, Milad and Kazem are Khodadad 's friends or in his words, his brothers. Children of poverty are addicts. They could be aged 6 to 18. Their

collective name is 'street children'. You can call them what you want. They have many names.

### **The plan to collect street children**

Following the 'Plan to collect street children' in late 1381 ( 2002) an independent headquarter has been set up in Yassere centre called "Children's Settlement". Street children are collected by security forces, specialist forces and social workers from the Public Health office throughout Tehran and sent to this centre. The situation is reviewed by medical staff, social workers and abuse specialists.

Regarding family poverty, street children fall into two categories. The first group are children who work with the consent of their family to earn income for the family in jobs that we see every day. The second group are children who have runaway form home or have no parents or their families have abandoned them. These are children who consider the street their home.

Ghassem is 14 years old. He has lost his mother last year and his addict father threw him out of the home. His grandmother has accepted to keep him on condition that he leaves school and pays her 5000 tomans a week. After 3 months work, he asks his grandmother for money and she burns his hand with a hot spoon. Ghassem flees the grandmother's home and walks the streets until security forces transfer him to Yassere headquarters.

Keyhan Ziyaii, abuse expert of the Public Health organisation, says : "Ghassem and his friends are kept in quarantine for 2 days , when they arrive. During this period, they are seen by psychologists, doctors and social workers who review their families. Those who have families and their families want to take them back are returned to their homes. Those who are suspected of criminal activity are sent to correctional facilities , those who are of working age are sent to 2 work centres in Teheran and those who are not of working age and their families don't want them , because they are poor or because of other problems are sent to orphanages for keeping such children, in 2 centres in Tehran.

Mir Mohamadi the social worker from the Public Health working in the children's home says : boys are divided into two categories 6-12 and 12-18 and sent to the appropriate house.

He thinks most of the children collected in the street are either petty criminals or addicts and their families rarely accept responsibility for them. He classifies their intelligence as low and their learning capabilities as

limited. Most of them are illiterate or semi literate.

Mir Mohamadi says the centre can take 30 children adding: "there shouldn't be more here, we only have 2 rooms 12 square meter each. Limited child playing area, a ping pong table and 2 table footballs.

I ask one of these children : what have they taught you? What have you taught the others?

He says: I neither learned anything nor did I teach anything.

How long were you here?

It is about 2 months.

Do you want to get out of here?

My aunt is waiting for an opportunity for me to run away and she will take me. She likes me very much.

I ask him where he sleeps. He says in a room with 25 others with a double decked bed. During the day he goes to school and in the afternoon he doesn't do much.

The Society for the Protection of Children's Rights has complained about the plan to collect street children and says this was done with no attention paid to the children's identity and that most of these children are not beggars. According to a social worker, the statistics regarding children over the last 6 months show that 17,285 children (15,717 boys and 565 girls) were collected.

### **11 Jan 2004- Archives of paper Hamastegi**

25 per cent of children work between 6-10 hours, 35 percent between 5 to 10 hours and 24 percent more than 10 hours a day. 83 percent of these children live with their parents and 54 percent spend their earning on their families. 56 percent have both a mother and a father and their immediate family is 5-8 persons.

An expert on social harm names peddling, smuggling, exchange of goods, prostitution as the main areas of children's employment activities. As these children are less likely to draw the attention of the police they are very good prey for mafia style gangs or even their family for drug smuggling.

This expert believes that many street children have suffered sexual abuse, especially girls who have often been abused by their step father or even their father . As the abuser is in front of their eyes at home, they escape to the street.

### **We guess there are 20,000 street children!!**

Yet the same report claims that 17176 street children have been collected in 6 months in Tehran so how

could there only be 20,000 such children in total? The statement by this expert and similar claims by various experts of the government set up, Public Health office , is a denial of the truth, the state's attempt to avoid responsibility for the plight of children, working class and low income families is a breach of the Convention on Children's rights , including the ban on street labour considered by convention 189 of ILO as dangerous work . In 1989 following a demonstration by children against hard labour , Iran's Islamic Republic also signed this convention. Leaving all the responsibility for such pain and suffering on the parents or mafia style bands is denying the truth and a fallacy. S.B)

### **Violence in the place of work for 16 year old boy.**

A young boy who following a theft in his place of work was given the responsibility of finding the thief by the proprietor, cut the fingers of another workers with a straight poniard.

### **16th Jan 2004- Paper Etemad**

An 18 year old kills another boy in a street fight, I was waiting for my friend, he was late. I asked a young girl what time it was. She thought I was being obtrusive and passed by. A group of boys approached and started a scuffle. I took out a knife in to frighten them, this was an oversight . I had hurt a 21 year old called Ismail. The police arrived just at that time and arrested me.

### **26 Jan 2004- Paper Etemad**

A young man stole a child (girl) from the hospital. A 25 year old man who was attempting to steal a child from hospital was arrested by the police.

### **26 Jan 2004- Paper Etemad**

A young boy abducted a school girl in revenge and took her from Shiraz to Tehran. 16 year old Naghme was abducted on her way to school. The father of the abductor, Amir, who lived away from his wife, had refused to go with his son to ask for the girl's hand in marriage. Amir went on his own and got a negative response that is why he abducted the girl.

### **25 Jan 2004- Paper Iran**

Legal limitations in defending the rights of young workers.

According to Abbas Rezaii, the principle legal and

criminology expert, most profiteering employers prefer to employ young (child) workers, in tasks that require no skills. The reasons are clear:

1- These workers are good for profits. To the extent that the employers demand the same amount of work from a child worker than what they ask of an adult, the only difference is that the pay for a child worker is not comparable to that of an adult.

2- Use of child (young) workers has many aspects. In addition to the work specified in the contract (that is if the employer has actually signed a contract) the employer often gets young workers to do other tasks, such as cleaning the employer's house or other jobs needed by his friends.

3- Depending on their age, child workers are full of energy. This is what employers look forward to. On the other hand, because of their considerable age difference with the employer they are scared of him. That is why as soon as the young worker does less than he should or makes an error, a scorn or a shout by the employers scares them stiff. Therefore abundant energy and complete obedience is the kind of ideal situation for employers, presented to them on a plate. (the interesting point is that these 'young workers' are children less than 15 years old. S.B)

4- The parents of such workers who have major financial difficulties, are forced to remove their children from the school and send them to work despite some reservations, in the hope of improving the financial state of the family. And as a result of this problem, they have neither the power nor the intention of overseeing their child's work. Aware of the situation, the employer takes an even worse position, depriving child labourers of benefits and their true wages, depriving them of the existing minimums.

5- It is much easier to control the workplace of youngsters compared to one where older workers are employed. This is due to the fact that attacking young workers in the form of beating them up or injuring them is much easier and this has become a tradition for some employers who believe that workers can only learn if they are beaten up. The interesting part is that due to cultural deprivation, some of these workers and their families also believe in this.



### chapter three deals in articles 79-84 with conditions of employment of young workers as follows:

#### 1- Minimum age of labour

According to article 79: "it is forbidden to employ anyone under the age of 15". However this article mentions 2 exceptions where the minimum age of employment is 18, in jobs where the nature of the work or the conditions under which work is done are harmful to workers. The Ministry of Labour and Social services has the discretion of deciding which jobs fall in this category. The other one is article 188, according to which no regulation of employment legislation nor any of the special legislations dealing with work, as well as workers do not apply for those who work for a first hand relative (or his/her spouse).

However the guarantees for the implementation of this legislation are specified in article 176 which indicates that should an employer violate the above articles, he will have to make necessary payment and corrections to the worker. In accordance with the decision of the court, the ministry of Labour and Social services can impose fines as follows:

1- For workplaces employing 10 workers, 100 to 200 times the minimum daily wage of a worker

2- For workplaces employing 100 workers, for each additional workers, 50 to 2000 times the minimum daily wage of a worker

3- For workplaces employing over 1000, for 100 additional workers, 10 to 20 times the minimum daily wage of a worker.

The minimum daily wage is determined by the number of hours the worker has spent in the service of the

employer. According to this legislation, this time cannot be more than 8 hours, and for a young worker the number of hours should be half hour less. "the way to use the legislation will be decided by an accord between the worker and the employer."

(Quite clearly poor and working class families are not in a position to achieve a suitable outcome in discussions with the employer. In reality this amendment tramples the entire legislation banning child labour. One could say, article 79 of Iran's Labour Legislation has nothing to say and its amendments reverse it. S.B)

#### 4-Ban on overtime work

Ban on overtime work, night work and harmful dangerous work. According to article 83 it is forbidden to allocate any type of overtime, night work, hard or harmful tasks to under aged workers. Regarding other workers this type of work is legislated under 2 parts of article 59 or the emergency measures of article 60. Articles 52 and 53 specify night work as work between hours 24 and 06.00 am. Regarding hard labour articles 52,62 and 82 of the Labour Legislation ban such work even for adults and article 176 specifies the penalties for those violating this legislation.

### **Children forced into the street because of poverty**

According to official statistics, 20,000 children are in Teheran's streets daily and every day their number rises by 10. According to research by the Public Health office, 87 percent of these have no jobs. The other 13 percent do tasks such as cleaning car windows, selling flowers, selling papers, carrying weight, begging . (of course this claim is not true because even the newspapers emphasise the importance of child Labour and in its 200 year report UNICEF names 87 per cent of Iran's street children as child labourers. S.B)

Continuation of the news item: In 1377 a delegation formed by representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Health, the Governor's office, security forces and the Children's section, met to establish 'Green Homes' and 'Reyhaneh' (sweet basil homes). These were places established in 1381 (2003) to cater for street children, however after a while the authorities washed their hands of the project and these houses winded up. In truth street children were presented as nasty people that no one wanted to care for. Street children earn money by begging as well as other illegal/corrupt jobs such as selling drugs, petty theft and

they gradually become more professional in such jobs. Girl street children, start begging or doing other false jobs from a young age and as they grow older they become victims of sexual abuse. According to the experts one incentive for children to run away from home is that due to traditional family relations, children face abuse. For many children, limited facilities, the fact that they are beaten up or abused by parents means as soon as their childhood patience expires, they escape the family home. In addition the phenomenon of street children is the result of inflationary economic policies which started from the mid 1360s ( 1980s). In reality the fact that the income of many urban families is not sufficient to maintain a decent standard of life has increased the number of street children in 1370-80s ( 1990's and 2000 onwards) . Every day 25-30 children are added to the number of street children in Tehran and most of them come from the provinces of Khorassan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and Lorestan.

### **16th Feb 2004- Archives of the paper Iran-source Paper Shargh**

Slowly from a large crowd, she enters the bus. She stares at the passengers with hopeful eyes . Her look is full of pleading and expectation. Her red cheeks show that she is escaping the cold weather outside. With hands , dry like a desert full of thousands of cracks and wrinkles she ties a knot in her headscarf and hides her beautiful brown hair, shining in the rays of the sun. She is not wearing warm clothes, and she seems to be cold. However she tries to show no weakness. She pulls the belt of her trousers, as if they are too big for her. The trouser legs have been turned up. The drooping sleeves of her top show that the clothes were never made for her nor did she have any choice in buying them. She picks up the small cloak she is holding under her arm. With a voice telling a lot about her plight she says: "Madame I have chewing gums and tape. Please buy the tape."

- "no I don't want any"

- "you will need it some day"

- "no I said I don't want it"

She was trying to go by the passengers standing in the bus to reach the back. Passengers who didn't want to confront her, denied her repeated pleas, depriving her warm eyes of any light. It was as if every rejection took away all hope from those bright eyes. The bus stopped and a little boy got on. It looked like it was her brother, she waved her hand at him. The little boy

started playing a tambourine. It was clear he didn't know how to play the tambourine except making a beat noise. With a voice, just beginning to break he sang a number of songs. His sweet accent creating a pleasant atmosphere in the bus. After he sang a collection of broken songs from various singers, he turned his tambourine around and moved towards the passengers. He reached out with his hands saying: "I thank your charity". He hadn't earned much and he was trying to come to term with his sadness when suddenly one of the passengers shouted with no reason: "look after your bags". The beautiful atmosphere created earlier on was replaced in a minute by a threatening mood and every passenger took the warning seriously almost unconsciously. The brother and sister, who now had become suspects, looked at each other. Work had weighed heavily on their young shoulders and now in the eyes of the passengers they were being accused of something more. But what could they do? A narrow stem needs support. "God protect them". The bus had reached the end of the line. They both got off. The girl separated from her brother. I was walking in the same direction as her. It was as if I enjoyed following her, guessing her thoughts occupied me. Her movements were masculine. It was as if she knew strength was the secret of future success. However the fact that her chewing gum and tape had not sold, was so frustrating that she didn't seem to have the strength to plead any more.

She walked faster. Her shoes were hurting her but she was going. I was sure there was a new hope that gave her this ability. The traffic light was red and as she was sure it wouldn't change for a while she ran towards a friend. She took his duster and sprinkler and started wiping car windows. The driver, who must have been rich, given the make of his car, opened the window and told her, child don't touch my window, I am not going to pay anything. But she didn't pay attention and continued. When in her own mind she thought the window was clean, she asked the driver for money. But there was no sign of any payment. The calmness of the driver regarding her service was annoying her and she started making marks on the car window at least that made her happy as she had taken revenge.

### **22February 2004 - Paper Etemad**

Another stage of 'collection of street children' started in February 2004. With the cooperation of the Public

Health office, Rassoul Khadem, the director of the cultural social commission of Tehran's Islamic Councils told ISNA: "the problem isn't gathering and collecting these children. The difficulty is classifying them and referring them to various social workers in provinces and relevant offices charge with reduction of number of street children.

### **22nd February 2004, ISNA**

The collection of over 15,000 street children in the first 6 months shows that Tehran is by far the largest centre for street children. Dr Seyyed Hadi Motamadi told the reporter from the paper Iran: from the total 15,000 children, 12,701 children were from Tehran. In Addition 560 had come from Lorestan and 350 from Khorassan. He added in 1381 (March 2002-3) 11,000 children were collected and in the beginning of the year 1381 there were only 1450 street children and the figure rose to 12,780 in the first 8 months of that year.

(The major contradictions in the figures, especially those attributed to government authorities, are quite clear from this report. The lack of proportion between the title of the report and the content is the other problem. For example pay attention to the title of the above article, the title gives the figure for runaway children yet the article says from 15,000, 12,708 are from Tehran province. S.B)

### **23 February 2004- Paper Etemad**

"An increase in the dimensions of child labour and child abuse is reported". Addiction, poverty, unemployment are the main causes of street children. The Convention on Children's Rights has been signed by the Islamic Republic in February in 1370 (1991).

In early March 1993 it was approved by the Majles (Islamic Parliament). According to the report by ISNA in a research evaluating the results of the Majles commission on the problem of child abuse in Iran, it became clear that a study of 3019 children under 18 who were referred to 3 specialist Emergency clinics (Barami, Hazrat Ali Asghar and the Children's specialist medical unit) in total 12.24 per cent of the cases i.e. 367 children were suffering from extreme abuse. The abuses were over all 12.3 per cent extreme, in 83 percent medium. The role of fathers in the abuse was 48.5 percent and mothers were responsible for 28.3 percent of abuses. (Hormoz Yazdani Znur)

29February 2004- Paper Iran

### **10th March 2004- Source Paper Shargh - Independent Kabul news, ISNA**

Afghan children residing in Iran are deprived of education

According to legislation passed by the Cabinet in Iran regarding the conditions of education of foreign subjects in Iran, from the academic year 83-84 (2003-2204) throughout Iran , the path for educating Afghan children is blocked. Article 2 of the legislation passed on 11th Farvardin 83 (30th March 2004) specifies that : "in order to adjust state support regarding the education of foreign children, the ministry of Education is allowed to accept registering those pupils who have legitimate residency documents according to the child's financial situation, paying the entire fee or part of the fee to the Provincial educational authorities , a sum which will be paid to the general income of the state."

### **15 April 2004- Paper Etemad**

Daily increase in number of child labourers

According recent research, a large percentage of children involved in under aged work have families and guardians and it is the family's financial requirements and needs that forces them to work, despite the real wishes of the family. Unfortunately the reasons behind the creation and increase in the number of child labourers is constantly ignored and denied by the authorities. If you go by Tehran's Bazaar or Molavi street you notice that many children with thin weak bodies, children whose malnutrition is obvious from their innocent faces are busy transporting heavy loads using wheels. Another large number are involved in begging, selling flowers, chewing gum, cigarettes... Amongst all this if you refer to the accident pages of newspapers you realise that unfortunately the number of criminal children is increasing. The arrest of children on the street throughout the city, feeding them for one day and releasing them the next day are the steps taken as part of 'resolving' the issue. Is this really dealing with the issue?

Issuing work permits or denying them has no effect on children. In any case these poor people are condemned to live in conditions contrary to their wishes. Isn't it rue that in our country a father is immune from charges of abusing his child and is therefore free to make his children do what he wants? The work permits for children are signed by people who have trampled upon all legislation regarding children's rights.

One wishes instead they issue permissions for the education of these children. If you go by the 'Play city' ( amusement park) , you will notice children selling fortunes and gums who behind rails look with envy at those children who play. One wishes that an order was passed for free access of street children to such facilities. I ask a child selling chewing gum if I can talk to her- (I notice cruel claw marks on her face) . She tells me that every evening she takes 5000 tomans home and as it was 500 tomans less yesterday, her cruel father blew such a slap on her face that it left the mark of his 3 fingers on her face. Fahimeh is 9 years old.

### **29April 2004 Paper Etemad**

Secrets of the large network transferring girls to Dubai  
The main members of this band were 20people and women and young girls were classified and priced then transferred to Dubai. Five hotels in Dubai were allocate for the residence of these girls and rich Sheikhs. Girls who were less beautiful were rented out to discos.

### **19 May 2004- Paper Etemad**

A man was charged with raping tens of girls. This man was 34 years old and threatened his victims with a knife and chain, causing harm on 100 women.

### **26 May 2004- Paper Iran**

A frightening report on the sale of Iranian girls in the Emirates.

According to one of the experts , preparations for this sale was done by kidnapppers of Iranian women and girls , 2 weeks before hand . These human smugglers took 5 girls amongst 386 for sale in Fajireh. According to Mostafa Ben Yahya, the Iranian born



pilot, from 9 scheduled flights and 20 non scheduled flights between Iran and Dubai, an average of 10 to 15 girls are transferred to Dubai. Many cities such as Abadan, Ahwaz, Zahedan, Tabriz, Kermanshah have high statistics in this regard. However Tehran and Mashad top other cities. Ben yahya says: " In addition to this problem, the transfer of the cadavers of Iranian girls back to the country has also increased. Most of these girls are suffering from dangerous illnesses such as HIV or commit suicide because of depression, they are killed or they die naturally. According to Mostafa Ben Yahya, the city's squares hairdressers, city tribunals, women swimming pools and gyms are the places to identify women and girls and encourage them to go to neighbouring Gulf states to earn more money. This Iranian born pilot says: most of these girls respond to ads looking for secretarial staff and are caught by the gangs. Some of them are so young that they are used as house workers following transfer to the Gulf states And later they are used in nightclubs. The visas for these girls, obtained by agencies up and down the country is valid for 15 days. Ben Yahya adds that 2 agencies in Tehran are very busy in this work and act professionally in this regard, adding:" in the 2 weeks that the girls are taken to Dubai, they are often raped . the price of these girls is between 1000-2000 dollars in the first days , depending on their appearance . Of course at the end of their stay their price drops to 5-10 dollars and many of the buyers are immigrant workers from India or Pakistan.

(the direct role of the Islamic Republic's authorities in this respect is obvious and clear, Given the regulation about strict security measures at Iranian airports, how can one envisage 9 regular flights and 20 unscheduled flights of Iranian girls to Dubai , without the authorities being aware of it? S.B)

### **27May 2004- Paper Etemad**

News blackout regarding smuggling and sale of Iranian girls in Dubai

Mohamad Reza Molavi: the news of attracting Iranian girls with a view to sending them abroad via Dubai was first announced through a web site organised by one of the stalls of an Arab country in the book fair. Although the advert was only on the site for one day, it was the lead for what became a major story in the media 3 weeks later. News about the auction and presentation of 54Iranian girls 12 km from Dubai in

Fajireh. According to this report, the Iranian born pilot, Mostafa Ben Yahya who was himself a criminologist and a member of the Emirates Police authority, exposed the extent of this 'sex show' to news agency ISNA. He had smuggled 15 women and girls to Dubai and was facing a 3 year prison sentence.

### **Smuggling parts of girls bodies**

It is said that at times smugglers demand parts of young women's bodies as they leave the country, A demand that the girls have to choice but to respond to positively. ISNA news agency quotes those responsible for social damage as being sorry for not being able to divulge the identity of those culpable of this crime adding: "we are certain the information is correct. We have tape recording, they contacted us a minute ago from the foreign ministry threatening us with spreading lies and that they will lodge complaints. In order to get a proper reply we addressed the Bureau of International Relations in the Gulf but every time the director avoids giving a direct answer. On the other hand this story is undoubtedly this story is damaging , its is ranked as a 'security' and no one wants to talk about it. But even colonel Ahmadi , the information director of NAJA who has often met reporters and with whom we have been in touch before, refuses to give any explanation or answer. Golamreza Abdolvand, a member of the social commission of the parliament says: don't broadcast this news. It will destroy national pride. Ashraf Boroujerdi, the deputy director of women's social affairs in the ministry of Interior disappears after a number of unanswered phone calls. The embassy of the Islamic regime denies the report by ISNA.

### **2 June 2004- Mehr news agency Collecting street children is not beneficial.**

The directory of social abuse in the public health office announces: collection of child labourers in the city and keeping them in camps is not beneficial and under no circumstances should we attempt to collect street children. Because such collections deprives their families of an income and the background for moral corruption and other crimes caused by poverty and financial difficulties will increase amongst all members of the family.

Dr Seyyed Hadi Motamedi adds: the streets are the workplace of these children and they are part of the family's wage earners from early morning to late night

in jobs such as selling gum, flowers, fortunes...and when we have no other place for these kids to work how can we collect them from the streets?

### **Child Labour 22 June 2004- Paper Iran**

When he was born he had no idea what was work, exploitation or profits. However the country's economic structure forced him to work. Dr Fatemeh Ghassem Zadeh, the director of the Centre for Children's Education and Investigation points out the legal vacuum regarding child labour in the country: "exempting workshops of less than 10 employees from the Labour Legislation has harmed many children, especially in carpet weaving workshops where this legislation is abused regarding child labour.

Criticising government officials she says: "government officials by passing this law have escalated child exploitation to a maximum and many workshops have reduce their employees to less than 10 so that they can exploit more children. When we inform the Ministry of Labour their answer is , "we have no way of dealing with the issue of child labour as this is totally forbidden."

Referring to a vacuum on child Labour, Dr Torabi says: we have as a vacuum on the issue of child labour as large as the number of child labourers , that is 10million. In our society child labour is still not defined. We have no specific organisation dealing with this matter and there is so much dispersion and conservatism amongst our organisations that we sometimes cannot continue the task. Even the Public Health office only mentions the problem.

Dr Ghassem Zadeh believes that the reproduction of child labour is due to social and economic structures in Iran , reproduced time and again in capitalist societies.

Child labourers are even more innocent and more helpless than other workers , and there is no protection of their work, because closed and sinister workshops are their workplaces and no one witnesses the torment and harm they face. Although there are no exact figures of child labourers in Iran, Dr Fateme Ghassem Zadeh says: according to official statistics we have a figure of 4.1 percent for child labourers. Although we know the real figure is much higher than this, because many workshops in the country are exempt from the Labour legislation and we have no statistics of them.

Even the 4,1 percent figure is high for Iran, if the country has 10million children, 4hunderd and ten

thousand children are deprived of their rights and work which in itself creates many social harms.

However the sadder news is that child labourers are used as slaves or semi slaves. In article 12 this is referred to as the harshest type of child labour. In addition according to UNICEF's information, every year 2.1 million child brides are used as house workers.

### **24th June 2004 - ILNA news agency**

600 hundred street children are collected in Tehran Social group: the reporter from the cultural social commission on Tehran council said: in June more than 600 street children throughout Tehran have been collected and 340 of them are foreign children, mainly Afghans and Pakistanis. Dr Mahnoush Motamedi Azari the rapporteur from Social Cultural commission of Tehran council told the news agency ILNA referring to the fact that 55percent of the collected children were of foreign origin said: from the total number of collected street children, 30 were girls and the rest were boys. She added that 13 of foreign children gathered in Tehran were girls.

### **26 June 2004- Paper Etemad**

It is important to adopt legal steps against parents who abuse their children

### **5 July 2004 - Paper Etemad**

A man is arrested accused of murdering his infant girl.

### **5 July 2004 - Paper Etemad**

50,000 street children are gathered.

### **26th August 2004, IRNA news**

57,000 children are the sole bread winner of the family 57,000 children and youth under 15 work illegally in the workshops of Kurdistan. According to a report by IRNA, Iraj Bahram Nejad, the executive director of Kurdistan province Khaneh Kargar (a government set up workers organisation) the total population of Kurdistan under the age of 15 is 570,000 and 10 per cent of that i.e. 57,000 work illegally. He said , poverty in Kurdistan has forced many children and young people to work under harsh, harmful conditions for little salary. Bahram Nejad added: lack of necessary inspection means that children are openly employed in garages and battery manufacturing workshops, and this is contrary to regulation.

### **24 August 2004- Paper Etemad**

Children breath in infernal glass melting workshops  
The poor boy is only half a meter away from the hatch to hell. Little Rahim is 13 years old. He suffers 10 hours of work every day in front of a furnace where the temperature is hundreds of degrees for melting glass, so hat his family get 20,000 toman of his salary every week.

This is the story of poor children in Iran working in infernal workshops. Because of the high temperature, he needs to drink a litre of dirty water every day, destroying his kidneys. In Garchack Varamin, his father is a simple construction labourer, who has arrived in Tehran with his family from Mashad. All this so that his 13 year old boy can be exploited by the glass workshop's owner.

Resisting the fire and pressure on his ribs has made his two jaws more prominent. His small hands look old because of regular contact with the metal cylinder inside the furnace carrying melted glass, his old wounds are replaced by new blisters. It isn't just the hard labour, this is a glass/china factory where the floor is covered with broken glass. Rahim walks amongst the broken glasses with deep and superficial cuts showing His feet protruding from his sandals are cut to pieces. His weak body and ribs stuck out of the body present a more complete picture of a child victim of hard labour. There are thousands of Rahims. The man in charge of the glass workshop, is in charge of the security of Rahim and 10 other kids say: older workers cannot do the jobs children do, because they become tired very quickly. While in a day children can move the product from one furnace to another tens of times without getting tired!

Although the owner of the workshop is supposed to be a gentleman, the sad eyes of Rahim and his friends some of whom are 2-3 years younger than him, all scream of exploitation. The silent cries of these children in Iran has a strange story.

Although this country is a member of the Convention Against Child Labour, under severe economic pressures imposed on families, 80percentof street children in Iran are forced to work. Underground workshops continue to exploit children and their poor families aware or unaware of the situation do nothing to present a serious protection of their children.

He shapes tens of glasses and dishes during his 10 hour work. He puts the flute on his lips, gives them shape , the skin on his lips is broken and an old wound decorates the middle of his lips. He says: when I blow in the furnace I think of my work but sometimes



I think wouldn't it be nice if I became rich one day and I could buy a car.

Because of extreme poverty children are forced to work in Iran from the age of 6. Hard labour for children under 15 causes other problems. Lack of any moral responsibility by employers in the work environment and negative examples mean that children face many moral dangers. Some face in addition to all other hardships, sexual abuse in the workplace. In one if these glass workshops covered by furnaces wall to wall, there are small doors leading to crypts of 2-3 metres height. There are warm places were glass dishes are kept to become firm. Children under ten enter these crypts to empty them. For a tiny amount of money they enter the walls of hell.

Research by the Society for the Protection of Children , on 585 children shows that the number of street children in Tajrish square has risen by 33 percent and in Ressalat square by 20 percent. 48percent of these children are 6 to 12 years old. This research shows that 16 percent of these children are under 6years old. 35percent are 12to 18 and 83 percent have parents with whom they live. The number of members of their immediate family is 5to 10. Their parents are illiterate, 80percent have migrated from other parts of Iran, 34 percent are from a rural background and 36percent are Afghans, 58percent have

birth certificates. These children look younger than their age because of under nourishment.

### **26th August 2004- Paper Etemad**

Lost hopes

According to research by Dr Seyyed Hassan Hosseini, member of the scientific board of Tehran University, 95percent of street children are boys aged 5to18. 90percent have parents and guardians.

### **10 Sept 2004- Paper Iran**

Iran's children are exploited at work despite legislation banning child labour

Collection of 3500 street children in the first three months of 1383 (March 2004- June 2004)

Dr Mozafar announced in the 78th session of the Islamic Shora that in the last year 24,000 children have been collected on Tehran streets.

(all this while other reports talk of only 20,000 street children in the whole country. S.B.)

### **20ctobre 2004- Iran Newspaper**

Legislation for handicapped children

We see many things during the day and ignore many problems, but every time we see a child in pain and suffering , we all pause to think.

Currently many children in Iran work in various sectors, some in difficult jobs including construction. It is even seen that children as young as 13 or 14 work in mines where there is no control, in welding workshops or stone cutting workplaces, doing hard and harmful work.

The legislation only concerns itself with the child's age . As a result there is no legislation for working children aged under 15. According to article 70 of the Labour legislation, it is forbidden to employ children of less than 15 years and regarding the hours of work, provisions exist to deal with this issue. Children's work can be reviewed under two categories illegal work and harmful work. Employers who use children aged below 15, employ them in hidden underground workshops with minimum facilities, endangering their physical and psychological development.

In Chapter 5 of the Labour legislation, under the title conditions of work for youth we read:" a workers aged between 15 and 18 is considered as a young

worker" . Work for this category is allowed however special conditions must be taken into account.

(Article 181 of ILO in what appears to be an example of cultural relativism specifies that in advanced capitalist countries, children of 15 and in developing countries children of 12 and over (given family traditions!) are allowed to work up to 12 hours a week provided this does not harm their physical or mental development or education.) Not that children under 18 are allowed to work full time and in any type of job. The idea of allowing children under 18 to work is a violation of the Convention on Children's rights and ILO articles by Iran's Islamic Republic. S.B)

### **3rd Oct 2004- Paper Hamshahri**

Street children, child labourers

According to the deputy director of the Public Health office : "80percent of street children are child labourers".

On the eve of 16 Mehr ( Oct) 2004, International Children's Day, Dr Seyyed Alam Alhedaii added at a press conference: "despite the fact that his organisation has no specific budget for this task, they have created 33 centres for street children throughout the country. Alam Alhedaii added: regarding the organisation of child peddlers separated from their families, i.e. 20percent of street children , there are no problems. One of the major concerns in the country is the right of children as there is no organisation acting as custodian of children's rights. One of the other problems is child abuse in the family and in most cases (66percent) the abuse is done by the father , 35 percent of child abuse happens in divorced families.

On the other hand, the director of Public Health in Tehran province claimed that employment opportunities for the deaf were very limited: in the first 6 months of this year, only 18 deaf people have found jobs throughout the province.

On the international day of the deaf, Abbasali Alssagh told news agency IRNA that finding employment for the deaf remains a serious problem and last year only 36 deaf people worked throughout the province. He said compared to other handicapped job seekers, the deaf can do more and in some noisy jobs they are better suited than others.

The director of Public Health pointed out that given the legislation demanding that 3percent of all government jobs should be given to deaf applicants, the regulation is not adhered to. He said the number

of deaf people in Tehran province has not been calculated , we only know the figure for those who come to the Public Health department.

This director estimated the total number of deaf people in the country as 134thousand adding that there are 14million people deprived of hearing throughout the world.

### **Flower Children- Flower labour**

The minimum age for labour in Iran is 15 years old, employers say they don't employ anyone below this age and there are penalties including jail sentence for doing so. Regarding family owned workshop where only the owner, his/her spouse and their children work, there are no age limits. In other word exploitation of children by their own parents is allowed. Here it is important to refer to another law on this issue.

Recently the legislation for protection of children and youth which got its third reading in the Council of Guardians was passed with the elimination of one of its main elements : "parents abusing their children are exempt from this legislation". All this in circumstances where 90% of child abuse is done by the parents.

### **15th Dec 2004- Paper Shargh International legislation regarding children**

In 1919, the international convention of ILO approved that children under 14 must not work in industrial factories. 72 countries accepted this legislation.

In 1930 the same convention abolished forced labour of children and 139 countries approved this.

In 1966 the United Nations International Convention on Civil and political rights of citizens included a section banning forced labour of children and emphasised the need to protect children from economic exploitation.

In 1973, the ILO convention on child labour specified that only those children who are at least 15 and have



finished their compulsory education can be employed and work. Minimum age for hard labour was indicated to be 18 and 49 countries signed this regulation. Later the same year the minimum age for hard labour was reduced to 16.

In 1989, the United Nations convention on Human Rights, while reviewing the social, economic, cultural and citizenship rights of children specified in article 32 the need to safeguard children from work that is harmful to their development or education. This convention has the signature of 187 countries.

In 1998 the convention to ban dangerous, slave type or compulsory labour was passed following a demonstration called Global March of Children, emphasising a ban on street labour and hard labour for children. All this lead to article 182 of ILO signed by 179 countries.

Article 138 of ILO clarifies the demarcation between safe healthy work for children as follows: minimum age for safe work in advanced capitalist countries is 13 working a maximum of 12 hours work. In developing countries the age is 12years old.

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