



World Organisation Against Torture  
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## **P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

### **12 June 2006 : World Day against Child Labour**

#### **The World Organisation Against Torture denounces violence against children at work**

**Geneva, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006.** The World Day against Child Labour, inaugurated on 12th of June 2002, aims to motivate public opinion to fight against the worst forms of child labour. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) has been denouncing child labour for fifteen years, and especially violence perpetrated against children at work.

In this respect, OMCT has recently carried out a study entitled “Poverty, Inequality and Violence: Is there a human rights response?”, already available on OMCT’s website and soon to be published, reporting on the recruitment of children in armed conflict by Maoists in Nepal. As the work of their children is regarded a necessary contribution to the family’s resources by the community, education is often neglected in that region. Consequently, parents are particularly reticent to send their children to school, especially the girls, who must remain in their traditional role within the family. The study also stresses that agriculture is one of the areas in which children are most exploited, as in Egypt where they are hired by agricultural cooperatives under the authority of Egypt’s Agriculture Ministry.

In an alternative report on the rights of the child in Benin, which is available on OMCT’s website, OMCT exposes numerous testimonies of children working in agriculture and trading activities or as domestic workers. Not only do children have to bear difficult and degrading working conditions, but they are also victims of ill-treatment and violence while working. This situation largely represents other African countries. There is the example of a sick thirteen-year-old girl, moved from family to family since the age of eight, beaten when she did not sell enough products at the village or when she worked too slowly in the field. There is also the case of another girl who worked in the fields and was beaten and tortured by her aunt, who introduced pepper in her vagina when she was not sufficiently productive.

OMCT welcomes the encouraging decrease in child labour around the world and the decrease of the worst forms of child labour as announced by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). However, OMCT remains concerned by the significant number of children still working in hazardous conditions, including those victims of violence at work and sexual and economic exploitation. Child labour in itself affects the welfare and best interest of the child.

But the economic and social vulnerability of children also exposes them to serious violence, both physical and psychological, perpetrated by employers, other workers and gangs or other predators at their place of work.

The vulnerability of child workers to serious violence is aggravated by their age, sex or the activities where they are employed. Even worse, authors of violence against children at work are generally not sued. Indeed, victims of their perpetrators' abuse of authority, the children rarely denounce them. Moreover, labour rules do not exist or are not fully implemented in many countries.

For years, OMCT has highlighted strongly that some situations can be considered torture and ill-treatment in violation of international norms regarding the sensitivity and the vulnerability of children. Some forms of work tolerated by the authorities of the related countries constitute inhuman and degrading treatment, such as sexual exploitation, trafficking and slavery and cause serious injuries to children. OMCT works to classify this violence and pain as torture according to the definition of the Convention against Torture, which binds each signatory State.

In conclusion, it is fundamental to understand that families' lack of resources constitutes the main cause to child labour. Fighting against poverty is necessary to achieve the elimination of child labour. Free access to education must also become a priority in the States. The encouraging decrease in child labour as announced by ILO has been made possible by worldwide mobilisation, which must carry on. The fight against child labour involves the participation of public actors as well as private agents such as employers. It is fundamental to continue alerting and informing people of the plague of economic exploitation of minors and violations of children's rights at work.

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*The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), based in Geneva, Switzerland, is the largest coalition of non-governmental organisations fighting against arbitrary detentions, torture, summary and extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances and other forms of violence. The OMCT leads the SOS-Torture network, which comprises more than 280 NGOs, at the local and regional level, and regularly sends out urgent appeals and urgent cases of grave violations to thousands of recipients.*

*Visit our website: [www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org)*

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