



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR



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Internationally recognized labor standards establish that workers everywhere, regardless of income or status, are entitled to certain universal rights. We are committed to promoting these fundamental rights as globalization opens markets and expands international trade.”

--Barbara Shailor, Special Representative for International Labor Affairs

Promoting Labor Rights and Decent Work for All

Advancing internationally accepted labor standards in the global economy

Worker rights are a core U.S. value and the foundation for durable democracies, sustained prosperity, and inclusive economic growth.

The continuing global economic crisis and recent political events have created new space for promoting labor rights. To avoid a global race to the bottom on wages, working conditions and social protections, the U.S. must help amplify the voice of labor organizations, women, informal sector workers and vulnerable populations.

Labor Diplomacy in Action

- **Trade:** Negotiating and implementing labor provisions of U.S. free trade agreements and trade preferences programs.
- **Convening:** Promoting social dialogue and tripartite engagement to raise awareness of labor rights abuses.
- **Supply Chains:** Increasing public and host government attention to labor issues and strengthening efforts to combating exploitative and hazardous conditions in global supply chains.

Labor Challenges and Abuses

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Freedom of Association is a cornerstone of democratic representation and good governance; however, this right is not universally recognized.

In **Bahrain**, for example, the government restricted the rights of workers to organize and punished or restricted worker actions, sometimes by force.

International Labor Challenges

- Protecting Freedom of Association;
- Combating Child and Forced Labor;
- Ensuring Acceptable Conditions of Work; and
- Fighting Discrimination of any kind in the Workplace.

FORCED AND CHILD LABOR

People in situations of exploitative and forced labor are deprived of basic freedoms, access to education, and lack opportunities to rise to their full potential.

In **Uzbekistan**, NGOs continued to report observing government-sponsored forced and child labor in the cotton harvest.

ENSURING ACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS

Workplace tragedies remind us of the importance of government attention to ensuring safe workplace standards.

In **Bangladesh**, 1100 workers in five garment factories were killed when the Rana Plaza building collapsed.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race, gender, disability, or social status, occurs across the world on a daily basis.

For instance, in **Algeria**, some leaders of women’s organizations reported that discrimination was common, and women face challenges obtaining equal pay or promotions.

For more information, contact the State Department’s Office of Labor Affairs (DRL/ILA) DRL-IL-DL@state.gov.

