

Case Study – Child Labor in the City of Qamishli, Hasakah

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Introduction

The spread of child labor is a serious problem that has spread widely in the Hasakah province, particularly in the city of Qamishli. Recently, the Syrian Civic Platform (SCP) has attempted to monitor this phenomenon and investigate it further in order to find solutions and reduce the harms caused by the spread of child labor.

The SCP attempted to investigate the prevalence of child labor in Hasakah but was not able to verify how widespread the issue is in the province. However, the SCP was able to gather information about the causes and effects of the spread of child labor on children. In pursuit of this information, the SCP observed the spread of child labor in the city of Qamishli, which suffers from an absence of control over employers who hire children. This absence is mainly linked to the non-compliance of the Kurdish Self-Administration –as the dominant force in the region – with the law that limits child labor.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the causes and effects of child labor in the city of Qamishli and to appeal to both international organizations and all decision-makers in the region who can help reduce its spread.

I. The causes and spread of child labor

There are two important factors causing the spread of child labor:

1. Poverty: Poverty is one of the largest forces that compel children to work. Because of the h

- M.H's mother says her 14-year-old son works in car repair and that the family is not able to secure the basic necessities of life unless he continues to work. According to his mother, there is no other breadwinner for the family, and his education is no longer a priority.
- The child R.S works in a restaurant so that he can complete his education. He attends school in the morning while going to work at night. *"I will work hard to complete my education, no matter what,"* he said.

f living, children often become either a sole breadwinner or co-breadwinner for the family.

2. **Education:** The number of students dropping out of school is another important factor in pushing children to work. Many Syrian government schools, which are recognized by the

- *“It is better for my son to learn a trade that will benefit him in his life rather than education that is no longer useful,” S.K’s father said.*
- M.S, a 12-year-old boy, works for a mechanic. He left school to learn the trade, and he stated that education is useless, and that it is better for him to learn a profession that will benefit him in his life.

Kurdish Self-Administration, have been closed. While in some cases new schools have been opened, some of these schools have been reopened without formal recognition or certification by the Kurdish Self-Administration. The lack of certification justifies the families’ reluctance to send their children to these schools. Additionally, families can face a loss of hope for the possibility of education amid the general deterioration of the education process.

II. The effects of child labor

Child labor deprives children of their most basic rights and hinders their proper health and psychological adaptation. Child labor conditions have often been linked to exploitation and can create circumstances where children are employed in hard labor. Children often work in industries including car repair, cleaning, and catering for long hours with very low wages. Such working conditions have detrimental effects on the child's health,

psycho-social development, and adaptation. These effects are confirmed by the social worker, R.S., who is working in a consultative center. “The cognitive development of a child who leaves school and goes to work is affected as the child's ability to read, write, and calculate is reduced, so is his/her creativity and emotional development,” she explained. “Working children may lose respect for themselves and their family as a result of long absence from homes, sleeping in the workplace at times, and being subjected to violence by employers or by their colleagues; thereby losing their ability to accept others and be attached to them.”

Ahmed, a 16-year-old boy, works in a blacksmith's center in the city of Qamishli. He is the youngest son. Ahmed had to leave school and work in blacksmithing to help his elderly father secure the family's needs.



- Health consequences: Child labor in occupations that require physical effort and long hours is detrimental to the health and development of children.

M. A, a 16-year-old girl, has been working in agriculture for six years and is currently working in a confectionery shop in the city of Qamishli. She suffers from a curvature in the back and arches in the feet due to working at an early age, which affects her health negatively and has resulted in her having a permanent disability.

- Psychological consequences: Children are often insulted and humiliated by their employers. They may also be subjected to verbal, physical- and in the case of girls- sexual harassment.
- The negative effects on social development: Child labor negatively affects children's sense of belonging and the ability to cooperate with others. In addition, their ability to distinguish between right and wrong is affected, as well as their future behavior due to the harsh conditions a child experiences during work, which in many cases resemble slavery. Over time, the most prominent behaviors that appear in children working are fear, introversion, aggression, loss of confidence in themselves and others, as well as weakness of personality and permanent negativity.



Finally, the SCP finds that the spread of child labor poses an overall real threat to society, especially with the absence of controls that restrict child labor and violates children's rights.

Accordingly, international organizations, as well as authorities located in the region, must therefore, take legal action and practical measures to implement the law that limits the exploitation of working children.