



BUREAU
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Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Newsletter

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Submitted by: the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR)

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1. Global Developments on Children's Rights

Round table on child slave in Ottawa

A round table on child slave is organised on 2 March 2010 at the University of Ottawa by the School of International Development and Global Studies, in collaboration with the International Bureau for Children's Rights. The speakers at the round table are Dr. Najat Maalla, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; Nadja Pollaert, from of the International Bureau for Children's Rights and the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of the Child; Marco Sotelo, also from the International Bureau for Children's Rights; Linda Dale, from Children/Youth as peace builders; and Nadine Grant, from Plan-International Canada.

SEYAJ to launch a project to enhance democracy and HR values among school-age children funded by European Commission

8 February 2010

[See Seyaj's website](#)

UNESCO releases a report on attacks against the educational system

The number of politically and ideologically motivated attacks on teachers, students and school buildings is rising, says the report "Education Under Attack 2010", launched by UNESCO on 10 February. These attacks are perpetrated by non-state armed groups and state actors alike. Education was attacked in at least 32 countries between January 2007 and July 2009. Often, an attack on the educational system represents an attack on the State. Conversely, certain States or paramilitary organizations may target academics in order to neutralize real or imagined opponents.

[Full report](#) – UNESCO



2. MENA Regional Child Related Activities (events, conferences, news, vacancies, announcements, reportages, campaigns)

The Geneva academy of international humanitarian law and human rights gives a course on economic, social and cultural rights

The Project on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights is pleased to announce that it is now accepting applications for its third annual training course on Monitoring Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The course will be held in Geneva, Switzerland from May 10 – 14, 2010. The deadline for applications is 15 March 2010.

[For further information and for online applications](#)

The UN Human Rights Council holds its annual debate on the rights of the child

An annual debate on the rights of the child will be held in Geneva, Switzerland on 10 March 2010. The aim of this discussion is to raise awareness about the question of sexual violence against children, reaffirm existing standards and commitments, highlight good practices and lessons learnt from work over the years, identify key challenges and anticipate future work. Panellists will most likely include: Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Ms. Najat M'jid Maalla, and Radhika Coomaraswamy, Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. There will also be NGO representatives on each panel as well as a representative of UNICEF.

[For further information](#)

RMIT University offers postgraduate programs on human rights

The Australian Centre for Human Rights Education (ACHRE) at RMIT University offers two exciting postgraduate programs which explore what it means and what it takes to build a culture and practice of human rights. The programs have been developed by a team of staff from a diverse range of discipline areas. They benefit from ACHRE's experience in creating and delivering training programs and products for key government and non government organisations.

[See website for more information](#)

Formation en droits de l'homme offertes par le Collège universitaire Henry Dunant

Le Collège universitaire Henry Dunant organise des formations en droits de l'homme de niveau universitaire destinées aux acteurs non gouvernementaux et gouvernementaux en collaboration avec le Haut Commissariat aux droits de l'homme et l'UNESCO. Les sessions de formation se déroulent aux Nations Unies, pendant les réunions du Conseil des droits de l'homme et de ses organes subsidiaires et sont axées sur les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels.

[Veillez visiter le site pour plus d'information](#)



Employment: UNICEF

UNICEF is seeking a Regional Adviser for its office in Dakar, Senegal. Under the overall guidance of the Deputy Regional Director, The successful candidate will work to strengthen UNICEF's regional level capacity by monitoring, analysing and assessing changes in the socio-economic situation of West and Central African Countries, with particular attention to poverty and vulnerability of children and policies and strategies aiming at overcoming them. The deadline for applications is 5 March 2010.

Visit <http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/> to register and apply to this vacancy, quoting I-VN-2010-000232

Employment: The International Service for Human Rights

ISHR is currently seeking two human rights officers who will be based in Geneva. One will work with the International Human Rights Defenders Programme while the other will be in charge of the Regional and National Human Rights Defenders Programme. The deadline for applications is 12 March 2010. To get a full description of the positions and to find out more on how to apply, please consult the link here below.

[ISHR's website](#)

3. Sub-Regional and Country Updates:

In the Levant:

Iraq – Children figure among victims in a suicide bombing

4 February 2010 – A suicide attacker yesterday ploughed a bomb-laden vehicle into Shiite pilgrims in central Iraq, killing 23 of them, including women and children, the second deadly assault on devotees this week. The bomber struck pilgrims walking on foot on the outskirts of the shrine city of Karbala, south of Baghdad, where Shiites are massing to observe Arbaeen rituals. The attack also left 147 people wounded.

[Full article](#) – Kuwait Times

Iraq – Family of eight killed by gunmen

23 February 2010 – Gunmen with silencers killed a family of eight in Baghdad yesterday, beheading some of their victims, amid a spate of deadly attacks less than two weeks before Iraq's general election. Several other killings, including children as victims, were also carried out. The violence comes ahead of parliamentary elections on March 7, the second legislative polls since American invasion in Iraq.

[Full article](#) – Kuwait Times

Israel/Opt – The Committee on the Rights of the Child issues its Concluding Observations and recommendations

1 February 2010 – The Committee on the Rights of the Child concluded its three-week fifty-third session, adopting its report and issuing its Concluding Observations and recommendations on 16 reports, among which the State of Israel was evaluated. After a review of the initial report of Israel under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of



children in armed conflict, the Committee expressed his concern, among other things, over the violations of the right to life, survival and development of children within the jurisdiction of Israel.

[See the Committee's Concluding Observations](#)

Israel/Opt – Psychological trauma among Gaza children

2 February 2010 – Like a number of other children who witnessed horrific events during last year's 23-day Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, Mona al-Samouni, 12, is depressed and has nightmares about the day when she witnessed her parents and a number of relatives being shot by Israeli soldiers in their home in Zeitoun, southeast of Gaza City. Ayesh Samour, The director of the Psychiatric Hospital in Gaza, Ayesh Samour, indeed says that "there is a significant deterioration in the psychological well-being of Palestinian children who are living in the Gaza Strip, especially after the recent war".

[Full article](#) – IRIN

Israel/Opt – Israel's response to Gaza investigation totally inadequate, says Amnesty International

2 February 2010 – Israel's latest response to the UN on its investigations into alleged violations of international law by its forces in Gaza a year ago is totally inadequate, Amnesty International said today. Crucial questions about the conduct of attacks in which hundreds of civilians (many of whom were women and children) were killed and thousands were made homeless are not credibly addressed in Israel's update to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

[Full statement](#) – Amnesty International

Israel/Opt – Gaza school children struggling to learn

5 February 2010 – Nearly half a million children in Gaza returned to overcrowded and dilapidated schools on 1 February, many attending in a shift system, with missing textbooks, stationery or uniforms. Israel's 23-day military offensive on Gaza which ended on 18 January 2009 had "devastating consequences for the education system", according to a report submitted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The OCHA report in fact states at least 280 schools were damaged in the conflict, including 18 that were completely destroyed.

[Full article](#) – IRIN

Israel/Opt – Israel bulldozes area around Palestinian family park near Bethlehem

10 February 2010 – According to Middle East Children's Alliance, Israeli bulldozers prepared for the military take-over of a family recreation park in the town of Beit Sahour on Wednesday afternoon, preventing local journalists from accessing the area.

[Full article](#) – MECA

Israel/Opt – MECA conducts an interview with the director of DCI

15 February 2010 – Defence for Children International-Palestine Section aims to protect the rights of children and minors living in occupied Palestine. Rifat Kassis was elected as



president of the executive council of Defence for Children International (DCI) in 2005 and is currently serving his second term. Click on the link below to read the interview the Middle East Children's Alliance conducted with Mr. Kassis.

[Full interview](#) – MECA

Israel/Opt – Dozens of children born to raped mothers

15 February 2010 – An Israeli man who kept a cult-like harem of women and fathered dozens of children with them was charged in a Tel Aviv court yesterday with enslavement, rape, incest and other sexual offenses. The 25-page indictment accused 60-year-old Goel Ratzon of setting himself up as a "godlike" figure who preyed on troubled women while treating them like "chattel." According to the indictment, Ratzon kept at least 21 women who bore him a total of 49 children.

[Full article](#) – Kuwait Times

Israel/Opt – Children as young as twelve arrested in a night raid

16 February 2010 – A number of children suspected of stone throwing were unlawfully taken from their homes in the middle of the night in Silwan, East Jerusalem by Israeli police and security forces, according to Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem. In four cases investigated by B'Tselem, children aged 12-15, were handcuffed and taken to a police station at the Russian Compound in West Jerusalem for interrogation. The children's parents were prevented from accompanying them. According to B'T Selem, the authorities' actions severely violated the human rights of the minors, all of whom are Israeli permanent residents.

[Full article](#) – CRIN

Jordan – Human Rights Watch report on Jordanians deprived of their nationalities

1 February 2010 – Jordan should stop withdrawing nationality arbitrarily from Jordanians of Palestinian origin, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today. Authorities stripped more than 2,700 of these Jordanians of their nationality between 2004 and 2008, and the practice continued in 2009, Human Rights Watch said. Jordan thus deprives its citizens who were originally from the West Bank of their nationality, thereby denying them basic citizenship rights such as access to education and health care. Jordanian officials have defended the practice as a means to counter any future Israeli plans to transfer the Palestinian population of the Israeli-occupied West Bank to Jordan.

[Full press release](#) – Human Rights Watch

[Full report](#) – Human Rights Watch

Jordan – Inauguration of youth development program

24 February 2010 – Her Majesty Queen Rania attended on Tuesday the launch of the Youth Work Jordan (YWJ) programme, an initiative to support the long-term development of young Jordanians. The programme is a five-year, youth-led community-based initiative aimed at improving livelihoods through providing life, technical and entrepreneurial skills to young Jordanians.

[Full article](#) – The Jordan Times



Lebanon – Sidon youth perform for child-rights video

23 February 2010 – A video clip promoting children's rights was filmed at the citadel of the southern coastal city of Sidon. The event, organized by the Social Solidarity Association (SSA), which houses more than 300 orphans in Lebanon, strives to draw attention to the suffering of children who seek peace, and to the violations of children's rights in Palestine, Iraq and the rest of the world.

[Full article](#) – The Daily Star

Syria – Hundreds of thousands of families affected by drought

17 February 2010 – Drought in eastern and north-eastern Syria has driven some 300,000 families to urban settlements such as Aleppo, Damascus and Deir ez Zour in search of work in one of the largest internal displacements in the Middle East in recent years. Those with livestock have seen the cost of feed rise 75 percent, according to FAO, resulting in the deaths of up to 80 percent of livestock on small and medium-sized farms. This has of course made it much more difficult for the head of the family to get enough food to feed his children.

[Full article](#) – IRIN

In North Africa:

Algérie – Construction de 30 nouveaux lycées

19 février 2010 – La wilaya de Tlemcen vient de bénéficier d'une opération de construction de 30 nouveaux lycées. Le secteur bénéficiera aussi de 35 nouveaux CEM, niveau scolaire entre le primaire et le lycée, qui seront construits en particulier dans les centres urbains à forte densité démographique, afin de réduire la pression sur les installations disponibles et de rapprocher les élèves des établissements scolaires en leur épargnant des longs déplacements, a noté le directeur de l'éducation.

[Article complet](#) – El Moudjahid

Algérie – Nouvelles infrastructures pour le secteur de la jeunesse et des sports

22 février 2010 – Le secteur de la jeunesse et des sports à El Tarf vient de bénéficier de l'inscription de six auberges de jeunes et d'un camp de jeunes, a indiqué lundi le directeur de la jeunesse et des sports (DJS). Dotées d'autorisations-programme (AP) totalisant 485 millions de dinars, ces nouvelles infrastructures seront réalisées dans les communes d'El Tarf, de Bougous, de Drean, de Berrihane, de Bouhadjar et de Besbes, tandis que le camp de jeunes sera érigé à El Kala en même temps que d'autres structures d'accompagnement telles que des aires de jeu et de terrains de sport.

[Article complet](#) – El Moudjahid



Algérie – Opportunité de scolarisation pour les enfants trisomiques dans la wilaya de Skikda

23 février 2010 – Après deux ans de promesses et d'attente, les enfants trisomiques de Skikda viennent enfin de bénéficier d'une salle de cours. Onze enfants suivent déjà, depuis plus d'une semaine, leur cursus scolaire adapté au niveau de l'école El Irchad, au centre de Skikda. Depuis son ouverture, le centre de scolarisation a reçu plusieurs demandes de la part de parents qui souhaitent que leurs enfants trisomiques reçoivent une éducation. Ceci représente donc un net avancement pour la réalisation du droit à l'éducation des jeunes vivant avec une déficience intellectuelle.

[Article complet](#) – El Watan

Algérie – Les écoles dans la wilaya de Tlemcen sont dans un état lamentable

23 février 2010 – 50% des 496 écoles primaires de la wilaya de Tlemcen sont mal équipées et ont besoin d'être restaurées. Il y a même des écoles dans lesquelles le toit risque de s'effondrer. De plus, les enseignants affirment que les écoliers ont peine à se concentrer en période hivernale à cause du froid puisque les salles de cours sont mal chauffées. La bonne nouvelle est que le gouvernement a décidé d'investir 125 milliards de centimes dans la réparation de ces établissements scolaires.

[Article complet](#) – El Watan

Egypt – The Arab Council for Childhood and Development organises a Civil Society Forum in Cairo

Egypt – Despite progress, millions of children still live in poverty, according to a study conducted by UNICEF

18 February 2010 – A study looking at the impact of poverty on children in Egypt reveals that while significant progress has been made, vulnerable children continue to face serious deprivations. According to the study, more than 7 million children are deprived of one or more of their rights, which include the right to nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health care services, shelter, education, participation and protection. Around 5 million children are deprived of appropriate housing conditions and some 1.5 million children under the age of 5 suffer from health and food deprivations.

[Full article](#) – UNICEF



Maroc – 200 bébés séropositifs chaque année au Maroc

22 février 2010 – Moins d'une femme séropositive sur dix a accès aux services visant à prévenir la transmission du VIH au nouveau-né. Ainsi pas moins de 200 bébés séropositifs naissent chaque année au Maroc. L'accès aux services de santé pour les femmes enceintes, et notamment les femmes atteintes du VIH/SIDA, est loin d'être satisfaisant, selon l'Association de lutte contre le Sida (ALCS). En fait, seulement 68% des femmes marocaines ont accès à au moins un examen prénatal pendant la grossesse, et seulement 63% des naissances sont assistées par des professionnels de santé. Les femmes marocaines portent de plus en plus le fardeau du VIH. Elles représentent aujourd'hui 38% des cas de sida, une augmentation spectaculaire par rapport à 1990 où elles ne représentaient que 19%.

[Article complet](#) – Le Matin

Maroc – Initiative communautaire pour aider les jeunes d'un quartier défavorisé

25 février 2010 – L'association « Oulad al-Hay » du quartier Hay Al-Inbiâat, un endroit défavorisé où règnent la pauvreté et la délinquance, offre une opportunité aux adolescents de s'intégrer à la communauté. Durant cinq ans d'existence, l'association compte à son actif plusieurs projets visant leur réinsertion socioprofessionnelle. Il semble que la tâche n'est pas mince, eu égard à la complexité des problèmes socio-économiques qui pèsent encore sur la vie des jeunes du quartier. Pour démêler l'écheveau de ces problèmes, l'association adopte une approche multidimensionnelle ciblant trois axes vitaux: la santé, l'éducation et l'emploi.

[Article complet](#) – Le Matin

Tunisia – Increased cooperation between Tunisia and UNICEF

5 February 2010 – United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) representative in Tunisia, Maria Luisa Fornana, voiced pride at the level of bilateral co-operation, notably in matters of improving children's conditions and consolidating their rights. The talk between Fornana and The Women, Family, Children and Elderly Affairs Minister Bebia Bouhnaq Chihi allowed examining the implementation of the 2010 joint action programme and the partnership and co-operation programme between Tunisia and UNICEF during the 2012-2016 period.

[Full article](#) – Agence Tunis Afrique Presse

Tunisia – Basma Association assists 400 families in Thala

15 February 2010 – The solidarity momentum keeps going to help needy families following the cold wave that hit the country and in materialisation of President Ben Ali's will to support low-income families nationwide. Over 400 families benefited from different kinds of aid, consisting, in particular, in foodstuff, clothes and woollen blankets, in addition to financial assistance.

[Full article](#) – Agence Tunis Afrique Presse

Tunisia – Tunisia celebrates Maghreb Children's Day

16 February 2010 – Tunisia celebrates Wednesday, February 17, Maghreb Children's Day established by the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) to promote childhood. The opportunity was taken to publish a declaration that places emphasis on President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's

initiatives and the gains achieved in Tunisia for the benefit of children, including notably the signing in 1991 of the UN Convention on Children's Rights, the promulgation of the Child Welfare Code in 1995 and the setting up of an observatory for information, training, documentation and survey on children's rights protection in 2002.

[Full article](#) – Agence Tunis Afrique Presse

In the Gulf:

Bahrain – The kingdom keen to boost education

24 February 2010 – Bahrain will continue its bid to upgrade and enrich educational standards through training programmes and boosting capabilities. Bahrain is acting within a well-defined target represented in the 2030 Economic Vision, where education occupies a special place as an effective tool to boost its future, potentials and productivity, says Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander.

[Full article](#) – Gulf Daily News

Kuwait – Children to express their creativity in an art project

4 February 2010 – The Discovery Center, which was unofficially inaugurated in May, 2009, offers children a place where they can play and have fun, but most importantly express their creative ideas and expand their knowledge through games and educational concepts. The Center recently launched an art projects in which children participate in the making of canvases. Tours in hospitals will also be organised, so that sick and disabled children have the chance to take part in the activity.

[Full article](#) – Kuwait Times

Kuwait – Bedoons children are denied their rights, says the pressure group '11/11 Power'

18 February 2010 – The '11/11 Power,' a Kuwaiti pressure group that advances the rights of bedoons (stateless), has met with former Minister of Justice Ahmad Baqer on Tuesday to discuss what is now known as the issue of Kuwaiti bedoon children. According to '11/11 Power', these children are denied medical care, free education, and are growing up without being officially registered with the civil registry. Despite the fact that the parliamentarians and government officials have not taken any action to stop this so far, measures must be taken immediately to address this ongoing problem.

[Full article](#) – Kuwait Times

UAE – Schools to introduce e-content in curriculum

24 February 2010 – Interactive e-content will soon complement classroom lessons with the Ministry of Education planning to roll out the online education scheme in 50 public schools this year. The programme will be introduced in phases and will eventually cover all public schools in the UAE. The e-content has been tailored according to the National curriculum by SIVECO, an education solutions provider. More than 3,200 subject modules for secondary school education have been created in English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. The ministry is also developing e-content in Arabic and Islamic Education.



[Full article](#) – Khaleej Times

UAE – Father and Son on Trial on Human Trafficking Charge

28 February 2008 – The lawyer of a man and his son on trial on the charge of human trafficking argued in the Court of First Instance that his clients were not running a prostitution racket. The Public Prosecution has accused the man, his son and their wives of human trafficking. The family is accused of bringing female teenagers into the country by allegedly falsifying documents listing them as daughters and later forcing them into flesh trade.

[Full article](#) – Khaleej Times

Yemen – Female genital mutilation continues

10 February 2010 – Nearly a decade after a ban on health workers performing female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in Yemen, the harmful practice continues unabated, with the government saying more research is needed before an outright ban can be imposed. Since the ban entered into force, girls get genital mutilation in the home instead of the hospital, increasing the risk of infection and other health problems.

[Full article](#) – IRIN

Yemen – 10 year old girl forced into marriage

21 February 2010 – A 10 year old Yemeni girl was forced into marriage by her father. The girl was drugged against her will in order to have sexual relations with her husband. She has been unable to get a divorce for over two years. Just under half of Yemeni girls, 48 percent, are married before they turn 18, according to the Washington DC-based International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). This is classified as underage, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[Full article](#) – IRIN

Yemen – Children hit hardest by northern conflict

23 February 2010 – Hundreds of children have either been killed or used as child soldiers in fighting between Yemeni government forces and Houthi-led Shia rebels in the north of the country since August 2009, according to a new report by Seyaj Organization for Child Protection (SOCP), a local child rights NGO. Furthermore, the conflict has caused thousands of children to be internally displaced. 42 percent of children in camps (estimated at 35,000) are affected by malnutrition, 19 percent have diarrhoea, 25 percent have respiratory infections, and 3 percent malaria.

[Full article](#) – IRIN