



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

L'Agence Méditerranée pour la Coopération International organise le 3ème Forum Méditerranéen International des ONG

26/27/28 Juin 2009 - Sous le Thème de l'Excuse et la Compensation des Époque Coloniales sont deux Éléments Essentiels pour la Construction d'une Réconciliation Internationale, le Forum aura lieu le 26,27,28 Juin 2009, en Fès au Maroc. Un des points dont le Forum cherche à mettre l'accent est sur la Jeunesse, en élaborant des réponses aux questions inquiétants la Jeunesse et en contribuant à l'élaboration de solutions qui leur permettent de s'intégrer dans le tissu économique et social, et ainsi leur permettre de contribuer à la productivité de la société par le soutien de leurs initiatives et de leurs projets.

[Pour plus d'informations](#) – Agence méditerranée pour la Coopération Internationale

A Guide to Child rights Mechanisms by CRIN

01 April 2009 - The purpose of this guide is to help readers understand the 'mechanisms' working on child rights, such as different treaty and non-treaty bodies of the United Nations, or regional bodies like the African Union.

The guide also discusses what the League of Arab States is, how it addresses children's rights, the Arab Charter on Human Rights and how its provisions conflicts with the CRC.

[Full Guide](#) – CRIN

Annual report of the Secretary General to the UN Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict

24 April 2009 - This Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict examined by the Security Council during an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict scheduled for 29 April 2009.

The report covers compliance and progress in ending 6 grave violations against children by parties to armed conflict: recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children.

The Secretary-General's report documents grave violations against children in 20 situations of concern, including Iraq, Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories.

[Full Report](#) – CRIN

New Growth Measures by the World Health Organization help fight Infant Mortality

29 April 2009 - New World Health Organization (WHO) growth standards will help to detect which infants are at risk of malnutrition much more quickly, allowing for faster and less costly intervention, say aid workers.

The WHO standards were first introduced in 2006 based on a study of weight-to-height, height-for-age and body mass index, gathered from 8,440 healthy breastfed infants and



young children from diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultural settings in Brazil, Ghana, India, Norway, Oman and the US.

The risk of mortality from acute malnutrition can be better evaluated with the new standards as the most at-risk children are detected earlier, and as a consequence their chances for successful treatment greatly improve, meaning shorter stays in therapeutic programmes (children recover more quickly), lower default rates, and better compliance, which adds up to more lives saved.

[Full Article](#) – UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) via ReliefWeb

Human Rights Council: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education includes children

02 April 2009 – Current global statistics suggest at least 1 million children are detained, with boys significantly outnumbering girls. In contrast to a comprehensive set of international juvenile justice standards that promote education and rehabilitation over punishment, States globally maintain a punitive response to young “offenders”, a response dominated by institutionalization

If evidence of participation rates of detained children in education is rare, evidence of the quality of educational provision is even more scarce. However, there are welcome signs that some States are addressing the issue

The report states that the juvenile justice system has been unable to provide sufficient quantity and quality of training and education to the children detained. It also states that even though there have been improvements in some countries, for the most part they received inadequate education, ill-suited to their needs.

[Full Report](#) – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

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

Food security in the Middle East and North Africa – an interview with Julian Lampietti, Lead Rural Development Sector/World Bank.

21 April 2009 - There is significant danger of focusing only on agriculture instead of on more integrated rural development that enables people to secure good productive jobs in agriculture as well as in other sectors.

In this interview, Julian Lampietti Lead Rural Development Sector presents several policy options to address the current food crisis in the MENA region. He also shares his insights to advancing the rural development agenda in the MENA region.

One interesting example is linking support in the agriculture sector to use of health and education services. Global experience confirms that conditional cash transfer is worth



exploring as an alternative in order to improve the livelihoods of farmers and children in rural areas.

[Full Interview](#) - ReliefWeb

3. Sub-Regional and Country Updates:

In the Levant:

Iraq – Crisis in trafficking Iraqi Children Grows

06 April 09 - Child trafficking, including the abduction and sale of children, is a growing crisis in Iraq, with officials and aid agencies claiming scores of young people, including babies, are sold both internally and outside of the country. Aid agencies and police say they believe the number of stolen children has increased since 2005 by a third, to at least 150 a year.

In an article written by Afif Sarhan, the *Guardian*, reported that criminal gangs are taking advantage of poor families while profiting from the cheap cost of buying infants (prices of children range from \$300 to \$5,900). The paper also asserts that a broken and corrupt bureaucracy, weak law enforcement, and lack of border security make it easier for such trafficking to operate.

[Full Article](#) – CBS News

Iraq – Iraqi security forces arrested children recruited by Al-Qaeda

20 April 2009 - Iraqi security forces have arrested four children who were recruited by Al-Qaeda to carry out suicide attacks in and around the northern city of Kirkuk. The group relies on children and is connected to Al-Qaeda. It works to recruit children and young people to carry out suicide attacks and to aid the terrorist groups in detonating roadside bombs.

The children were arrested west of Kirkuk, the main oil hub in northern Iraq that is the subject of a long-standing dispute between Baghdad and the autonomous Kurdish region and has seen several recent attacks.

[Full Article](#) – *Asharq ALAwsat* Newspaper

Iraq – Iraq air raids hit mostly women and children

16 April 2009 - Air strikes and artillery barrages have taken a heavy toll among the most vulnerable of the Iraqi people, with children and women forming a disproportionate number of the dead.

12% of those killed by suicide bombings, mainly the tool of militant Sunni groups, were children and 16 % were females. One in five (21%) of those killed by car bombs, used by both Shia and Sunni fighters, was a child; one in four (28%) was a woman.

[Full Article](#) – The Independent

Iraq – Iraq humanitarian update No. 5, 2009 by the UN OCHA

27 April 2009 - World Food Program (WFP) has announced a shift of its strategic focus in Iraq from food aid to food assistance to produce more effective durable solutions to hunger. WFP's Emergency operation for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) will be extended until the end of 2009. The agency plans to assist 1.4 million vulnerable people, including IDPs, children, female-headed households and small farmers in the most food insecure areas of Iraq.

[Full Article](#) - ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Defence for Children International (DCI)/Palestine Section condemns Bat Ayin attack against Israeli children in the West Bank.

04 April 09 - DCI-Palestine is shocked and saddened by the attack in Bat Ayin settlement on Thursday, near Bethlehem, resulting in the death of a settler child aged 13 and serious injury to another settler aged 7 years old.

While strongly condemning the attack on settler children in Bat Ayin, DCI-Palestine urges that the lives of all children – Israeli and Palestinian alike – be equally respected, and in all cases of violence perpetrated against children, an immediate and thorough investigation should be conducted and perpetrators brought to justice.

[Full Article](#) - ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Palestinian Child Day: Children face an increasingly insecure environment

04 April 09 - This year, Palestinian Child Day falls amidst an unprecedented rise in violations of Palestinian children's rights in the oPt. Children, who make up 56% of the population of Gaza, bear the brunt of suffering from actions such as the 22-day military assault on the Gaza Strip, and continue to suffer today, while the blockade is continuing

DCI/Palestine Section suggests that we must redouble our efforts to fulfil our commitment to all Palestinian children by protecting and promoting their rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Palestinian Child Law adopted in 2004. It is not just the responsibility of the Israeli government or the Palestinian Authority, but the responsibility of all of us as individuals to realise the rights of Palestinian children.

[Full Article](#) - ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Gaza orphans in the spotlight

01 April 2009 - An estimated 1,346 children were left without one or more of their parents as a result of the recent 23-day Israeli assault on Gaza, according to Islamic Relief in Gaza. There are currently about 5,200 orphans under Islamic Relief's definition in Gaza. "There has been a dramatic increase in [the number of] requests for sponsorship [of such children] in Gaza".

Al-Salah Islamic Society in Gaza is providing emergency food baskets and 100-200 Israeli shekels (\$50-100) per month to several hundred of the new orphans. Their website [www.alsalah.org] requests sponsors for the orphans. Other Palestinian NGOs are also providing emergency cash assistance and food packages.



It is worth mentioning that the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is currently conducting an assessment of the number of orphaned children in Gaza.

[Full Article](#) – IRIN

Israel/oPt – Child and Family Care Centre in Khan Younis set alight by unknown persons

12 April 2009 - Unknown gunmen set alight the Child and Family Care Centre in al-Fukhari Village east of Khan Younis. The Centre was established by the Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy in cooperation with the al-Fukhari Association for Rural Development. This is the second time in two days that the Centre has been attacked. This incident is part of the security chaos currently plaguing the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights' (PCHR) investigations indicate that, at approximately 03:00am on 12 April 2009, a number of masked gunmen set fire to tents belonging to the Child and Family Care Centre.

[Full Article](#) – ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Mercy USA for Aid and Development in partnership with UNRWA will provide daily school lunches to children of Gaza

10 April 2009 - From March 14 to May 31, 2009, Mercy-USA for Aid and Development is partnering with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide daily school lunches to approximately 18,900 children attending 22 elementary and preparatory schools in Gaza. This project will help to improve the overall nutritional status of the children, as well as their academic performance.

[More Information Available](#) - ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – A report by World Vision warns of the psychological suffering that Gaza children are facing.

17 April 2009 - International aid organisation, World Vision, said in a report 'Why did you let me get hurt', that the recent conflict in Gaza has compounded the psychosocial suffering of children caused by more than 22 months of siege and ongoing insecurity. World Vision warns that levels of psychosocial suffering may now be even more severe.

The report illustrates Gaza's current conditions such as its poor economy and the widespread displacement. It also illustrates the stories of some of the children affected by the conflict.

Furthermore, the report calls on the international community to urge governments to reconsider legal restrictions that prevent NGOs like World Vision from training teachers in psychosocial support methodology. It also calls on the Government of Israel to immediately end all restrictions on goods brought into Gaza for humanitarian purposes.

[Full Report](#) – ReliefWeb



Israel/oPt – UNICEF and European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) support counselling to help Gaza’s children face the future

21 April 2009 - The conflict in Gaza took a great economic, social and psychological toll on children and families. All border crossings were virtually sealed; children and their families had nowhere to run, no refuge from the violence.

This article illustrates a few cases where counselling is helping the Gaza children to come to terms with their losses, to discharge their feelings and emotions and to give them a greater sense of normalcy. Counsellors encourage children to be patient in the face of their ordeal.

[Full Article](#) – UNICEF via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Situation of children in Gaza remains precarious 100 days after end of conflict

28 April 2009 - More than three months after the cessation of hostilities in Gaza, the Israeli blockade and inter-Palestinian tension are hampering recovery efforts. Five children have died in unexploded ordnance-related incidents since the end of the 22-day conflict and at least 14 were injured in related violence.

A recent United Nations study reaffirmed that mental health, anxiety and stress are the main health problems in Gaza. Working with partners, UNICEF is ramping up psychosocial support to children and young people, providing mine-risk education in schools and communities, supporting remedial education, and organizing vaccination campaigns. To improve maternal, newborn and child health, UNICEF is also focusing on improving skills of health care providers and caregivers.

[Full Article](#) – UNICEF via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Government of Belgium is welcoming children from Gaza for medical care

16 April 2009 - The Belgian government has offered to receive Palestinian children from Gaza and provide the care they need to recover and get better in Belgian hospitals and with the help of the Red Cross. This has been done in close collaboration and contact with the patients, the services involved and the Palestinian Delegation in Belgium.

The logistics of the return are being handled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with supervision from the Belgian embassies and consulates from the region and medical monitoring by the WHO locally. All Palestinians, with one exception, have already expressed the wish to go home as quickly as possible. After a stay of some 10 weeks in Belgium, they want to be reunited with their families back home as quickly as possible.

[Full Article](#) – ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – A report by CRIN on Israel’s implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

20 April 2009 - This report analyses Israel's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. It includes a section on avenues for redress of violations of children's rights.



[Full Report](#) – CRIN

Israel/oPt – Four persons including a child killed in two new crimes related to “family honour”

14 April 2009 - On Thursday, 9 April 2009, three members of the ‘Olaiwa family – including a child – were murdered in Gaza City. The police found three bodies belonging to Sufian ‘Arafat ‘Olaiwa, 45, his wife, Miriam al-Majdoub (‘Olaiwa), 30, and his son, Jawhar Sufian ‘Olaiwa, 5, in their houses in al-Shoja’eya neighborhood in the east of Gaza City. The victims were shot by several bullets to different parts of their bodies. On the same day, the police arrested three members of the ‘Olaiwa family for questioning. Yousef Abdul Wahab, Chief of the Police Criminal Investigation Bureau in Gaza, told PCHR that the crimes were related to ‘family honor’.

[Full Article](#) – Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network

Israel/oPt – Signs of worsening malnutrition among children

21 April 2009 – According to several UN agencies, health ministry officials and healthcare NGOs in Gaza., rising poverty, unemployment and food insecurity in Gaza, compounded by the recent 23-day Israeli offensive, have increased the threat of child malnutrition. This article illustrates that UN World Health Organization (WHO) officials are concerned by the warning signs, including rising malnutrition indicators - like increased cases of stunting, wasting and underweight children - and continuing high rates of anaemia among children and pregnant women.

In addition, it states that over the past 18 months the agricultural sector has been struggling to cope with an Israeli blockade on imports and exports, causing lower productivity and reducing access to affordable fresh food.

[Full Article](#) – ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – 70% of Palestinian Youth oppose violence – a survey by UN Development Programme

14 April 2009 -, According to a survey conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report, the majority of Palestinian youth (69%) believe that the use of violence as a means to resolve the conflict is not very helpful, while only 8 percent believe it is an important tool. More than 80 % of young Palestinians are depressed and 47% identify themselves as Muslim rather than Palestinian

UNDP commissioned the survey to understand the needs and expectations of youth organizations, levels of intervention, gaps to be filled, and set youth policies and strategies relevant to the needs of the Palestinian society and adopted by both the public and private sectors.

[Full Article](#) – Middle East Times

Israel/oPt – Israel’s Arab students are crossing to Jordan

09 April 2009 - College-age Arabs, representing nearly one-quarter of their age group in Israel, are heavily under-represented in Israeli higher education, at about eight% of the student intake, according to official statistics. Of those Israelis who pass their matriculation exams, three times as many Jews as Arabs are accepted into Israeli universities.



Obstacles to Israel's Arab minority participating in higher education have resulted in a record number of Arab students taking up places at universities in neighbouring Jordan.

[Full Article](#) – Middle East Children's Alliance

Israel/oPt – Palestinian Prisoners Day 2009: Highest number of children currently in detention since 2000

18 April 2009 - The number of children arrested and detained by Israel has risen by almost 40 per cent compared to numbers for the same period last year.

Since the beginning of the second *Intifada* in 2000, the Israeli authorities have arrested approximately 6,700 Palestinian children. There are currently 423 Palestinian children being held in detention and interrogation centres and prisons both in the Occupied Territory and inside of Israel in contravention of international law.

Palestinian child prisoners are exposed to different types of torture, abuse and degrading treatment at the hands of Israeli authorities during their arrest and interrogation.

Once Palestinian children are sentenced, in the absence of a fair trial, children are sent to prisons where they are deprived of their rights guaranteed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

[Full Statement](#) – Defence for Children International/ Palestine Section

Israel/oPt – Demolitions build Jerusalem tension

25 April 2009 – Without warning, Israeli bulldozers came to destroy a home in Jabal Mukabar area of East Jerusalem; five young children cling to their mother, crying.

“They came pounding on the doors and climbed in through the bedroom window as if it was a raid. They said I had five minutes to put on my scarf and collect our valuables, then I had to get out. It's a shock for the children. Look at their faces. I'm in despair”, said the mother.

[Full Article](#) – BBC News

Israel/oPt – UNRWA collects US\$ 4.1 million in Syria for Gaza

27 April 2009 - UNRWA announced that it has raised US\$4.1 million (195,000,000 Million Syrian Pounds) for the Children of Gaza campaign launched in Syria on 12 January. The money raised will help alleviate the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and address the needs of children in particular.

UNRWA Commissioner-General, Karen Koning AbuZayd explained that this campaign is a sign of solidarity and friendship of the people of Syria to support the Palestinian children in Gaza.

The funds will be allocated to construct, furnish and equip the Aleppo preparatory school in Beit Lahia, one of the areas most affected by the military operation and to repair 370 refugee houses demolished during the violence in the Gaza Strip.

[Full Article](#) – UNRWA via ReliefWeb



Israel/oPt – World Food Programme welcomes donation from Qatar for Gaza

28 April 2009 - The World Food Programme (WFP) has welcomed a US\$10 million donation from the Qatar Charity for WFP's emergency operation in Gaza.

The contribution is part of a US\$40 million donation from the government of Qatar to a number of UN agencies providing relief assistance to conflict-affected populations in Gaza.

The funds will be used to purchase urgently needed food assistance for 365,000 civilians in Gaza - including 50,000 schoolchildren in some 85 schools - including items such as wheat flour, cooking oil, sugar and high energy biscuits.

[Full Article](#) – United Nations Radio via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – UNRWA and EU inaugurate girls' dormitory at Damascus Training Centre

27 April 2009 -Director of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Commission in Syria Mr. Angel Gutierrez and UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd, inaugurated the European Union-funded girls' dormitory at the Damascus Training Centre (DTC) and took part in the activities of the Centre's Open Day.

The dormitory, which can accommodate 38 girls from remote parts of Syria, is part of the employment and vocational education project financed by the European Union. The project aims to alleviate poverty by enhancing employability and employment opportunities for Palestine refugees in Syria, especially the youth.

The inauguration of the girls' dormitory, the first of its kind at the Centre, took place during the Damascus Training Centre's Open Day.

[Full Article](#) – UNRWA via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – German ambassador opens UNRWA school in Wihdat camp

27 April 2009 - His Excellency Mr Joachim Heidorn, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany inaugurated a girls' school building in Wihdat Camp, constructed and equipped through a contribution of US\$1.3m from the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The new building replaces two old deteriorated structures and provides better facilities that are more conducive to the teaching and learning process.

Expressing his deepest appreciation for the generous contribution, Mr Cook said that the new school building provides better access to quality education and learning opportunities for the 1,800 girls who use the school on a double shift basis.

[Full Article](#) – UNRWA via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – UNRWA opens new health centre in Khan Eshieh

28 April 2009 - Ms. Maura Connelly, the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States Embassy in Syria, inaugurated a new health centre for Palestine refugees in the Khan Eshieh Camp on April 28th, 2009.



The United States government provided UNWRA with US\$ 311,500 to replace an old dilapidated building. The new health centre will provide health services to approximately 19,000 Palestine refugees living in the Khan Eshieh Camp. It is one of 23 UNWRA health centres in Syria

[Full Article](#) – UNRWA via ReliefWeb

Jordan – her Majesty Queen Rania launched the second phase of the 'Madrasati' (My School) initiative

14 April 2009 - The initiative, which seeks to improve the educational environment in public schools desperately in need of repair, is one of a series of projects led by the Queen for the advancement of the Kingdom's educational institutions.

"Education is today's most valuable investment. By striving to achieve the best for our children today, we ensure they become a positive force of tomorrow," Queen Rania said in her address at the launch. She also highlighted the importance of building mutual trust among all stakeholders and partners.

During the first phase of the initiative, 100 schools in Amman and Zarqa were renovated; in addition, programmes focused on enhancing the quality of education and upgrading the learning environment were implemented.

At the second launch, designed to encourage the private sector to support selected local schools, students set up their own booths detailing the needs of their schools, including safety requirements, basic amenities and heating.

[Full Article](#) – Jordan Times

Jordan – Jordanians calling for laws on violence against children

30 April 2009 - More than 200 Jordanians gathered this week to call for stricter laws to protect children from abuse, following the deaths of two toddlers. During a gathering organised by the Jordan River Foundation (JRF) at the Greater Amman Municipality square, people from different walks of life mourned the death of Yazan and Qusai, two recent victims of child abuse.

Her Majesty Queen Rania, chairperson of the JRF and a strong advocate of child rights, participated in the event, where she underscored that each and every individual and institution shoulder a responsibility in preventing violence against children.

Participants at the event, the majority of them schoolchildren accompanied by their teachers and parents, held up signs reading, "Say NO to violence against children," and "Our homes are not places for child torture."

[Full Article](#) - CRIN

Lebanon – Parliamentarians submit request to review nationality law



[Full Article](#) (Arabic) – Dar Al Hayat

Lebanon – UN chief cites use of child soldiers by factions in Lebanon

25 April 2009 - UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has implicated political factions in Lebanon as recruiting and using children for armed violence and political mobilization. In his annual report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict, Ban on Wednesday documented serious violations against children in Lebanon and 19 other countries, and listed 56 other governments or rebel militias as recruiting or purposefully targeting children during the period between September 2007 and December 2008.

[Full article](#)- The Daily Star Lebanon

In North Africa

Egypt - Ambassador Moushira Khattab appointed Minister of State for Family and Population.

12 March 2009 - President Hosni Mubarak issued a decree appointing Ambassador Moushira Khattab as Minister of State for Family and Population. Khattab's Ministry of State for Family and Population was newly established, separating population-related matters from the Ministry of Health.

According to Presidential Spokesperson Soliman Awad, Egypt has recently been experiencing a surge in population with issues that need to be addressed separately. Awad further explained that population increase is an important “national issue” that should be seriously tackled for Egypt to progress.

[Full Article](#) – Daily News Egypt

Morocco - Avis d'appel à propositions: programme acteurs non étatiques et autorités locales pour le développement

Peuvent bénéficier d'une subvention toute acteur non étatique (ANE) ou autorité locale (AL) (ou association d'autorités locales) constitué conformément à la législation en vigueur au Maroc ou dans l'un des États membres de l'Union européenne. Les actions doivent impérativement avoir lieu au Maroc. Une des priorités étatiques étant d'améliorer les conditions socio-économiques, favoriser l'insertion et l'inclusion des groupes vulnérables (enfants, personnes en situation de handicap...) et des populations marginalisées (femmes et jeunes en situation de pauvreté et de précarité...).

[Pour plus d'informations](#) - Commission Européenne

In the Gulf:

Bahrain – Be Free Centre is holding an international conference on Effective Strategies for the Prevention of Child Online Pornography, Trafficking and Abuse.

9/10/ May, 2009 - Since children and teens are spending more and more time online for various purposes, this conference will work on discussing and suggesting creative and



effective strategies, tools and laws to fight the ongoing creative way child abuse forms is taking shapes online. It requires a serious joint effort between all sectors in the society including government, NGOs, Telecommunication companies, Internet Service providers, lawyers, media, parents and caregivers. It represents the first conference in the region that tackles the issue of child online abuse. The opening ceremony is scheduled to take place on 8 May.

[More Information Available](#) – Be Free Centre

Saudi Arabia - Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman on Child Marriage in Saudi Arabia

13 April 2009 - UNICEF is deeply concerned by reports that Saudi Arabian tribunals have decided not to annul the marriage of an eight-year-old girl. Irrespective of circumstances or the legal framework, the marriage of a child is a violation of that child's rights.

UNICEF joins many in voicing concern that child marriage contravenes accepted international standards of human rights. It can also have a long term detrimental effect on the child's emotional, physical and psychological welfare.

[Full Statement](#) – UNICEF

Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia to regulate girls' marriages

14 April 2009 - Saudi Arabia plans to regulate the marriages of young girls, its justice minister was quoted as saying after a court refused to nullify the marriage of an 8-year-old to a man 50 years her senior. The justice ministry aims to put an end to arbitrariness by parents and guardians in marrying off minor girls.

Saudi Arabia bans unrelated men and women from mixing and gives fathers the right to wed their sons and daughters to whoever they deem fit.

The minister's comments suggested the practice of marrying off young girls would not be abolished. The regulations will seek to "preserve the rights, fending off blights to end the negative aspects of underage girls' marriage," he said.

[Full Article](#) – Reuters Africa

Saudi Arabia – UNICEF Chief voices concern over eight-year old girl's marriage

13 April 2009 - The head of UNICEF expressed her deep concern over reports that a Saudi Arabian court has ruled that the marriage of an eight-year-old girl is legally binding.

She noted that the right to free and full consent to marriage is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but that "consent cannot be free and full when either party to a marriage is too young to make an informed decision." Ms. Veneman warned that marriage at too young an age could have long-term harmful effects on a child's emotional, physical and psychological welfare.

[Full Article](#) – UN News Wire



Saudi Arabia – State studies child marriage law

22 April 2009 - Saudi Arabia is studying a new law to set a minimum age of 18 for marriage as domestic and international pressure grows on the country to ban child marriages.

Following a Saudi judge's refusal last week to give a divorce to an eight-year-old girl sold into marriage by her father, the consultative Shura Council is considering changes to the law, including the proposed minimum marriage age, the *Al-Riyadh* newspaper reported. According to reports, an appeals court had sent the case back to the judge to reconsider his original ruling, only to see him uphold it.

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United Arab Emirates – Government drafts new law to protect children's rights

27 April 2009 - A new law has been drafted to protect children from child labour and abuse in the United Arab Emirates. Under the law, adults who fail to act on children's complaints or inform authorities about abuses, will face penalties and fines. As well as criminalising child labour it also provides for prohibiting the airing of sexually explicit content. In the draft, crimes against children will be dealt with systematically, in keeping with the universal principles enshrined in similar laws in other nations, and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Yemen - the cabinet approved the Republican decree to establish a sector for girls' education and training

18 April 2009 - the cabinet approved the Republican decree to establish a sector of girls' education and training in the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training. The aim of the sector is to enhance the programs of girls' education and establish a database for supporting women.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Observer

Yemen – A recent government report states that about 80% of Yemeni women get married early

02 April 2009 - About 80% of Yemeni women get married early, said a recent government report. Presented to the Cabinet by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, the report noted that early marriage is one of the main reasons behind the economic, health and social problems facing development in Yemen.

Early marriage is a phenomenon in Yemen with respect to both males and females, and is widespread in both rural and urban areas, the report added. Some 48% of women under 15 years old get married early, and about 45% of males and females get married when they are around the age of 10, the report said.

The report outlined steps to be taken to reduce early marriages through a ministerial committee made up of ministers working in social affairs, justice, legal affairs, health, guidance and Islamic affairs, and human rights. The steps will include support for setting the minimum age of marriage at 17 years for both males and females.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Observer

Yemen – Street children: Is there a serious solution?

23 April 2009 - Recent statistics have shown that about 35,000 children between the age of 12 and 14 use the streets as a workplace and sometimes as a home. The environment they are exposed to promises them only a dull future.

This article illustrates a few cases of some of the children living on the streets. It states that they should not be blamed. Rather, the families should try to offer solutions to their children to ensure they have a prosperous future, before they become involved in crime or unlawful acts.

The article also states that society itself plays a role as well,. According to the same article, the authorities also share a responsibility for the spread of this phenomenon. The lack of efforts of its part contributes to the increase in the number of street children in Yemen. It also suggests that families, society and the government should be encouraged to cooperate with each other to find a radical solution to this social problem that promises more broken families and a crime-oriented society.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Times

Yemen – Gang seduces ten Yemeni children, sells their body parts

22 April 2009 - The Egyptian authorities arrested members of an international gang accused of trading human body parts. The gang was captured by the Egyptian authorities in collaboration with the Yemeni community in Egypt that accused the gang of seducing ten Yemeni kids to travel to Cairo where kidneys were pulled out in a hospital to be transplanted for patients in the hospital or be exported to other countries.

The gang was uncovered when a Yemeni family living in Egypt informed the head of the Yemeni community there that their son was seduced by some people who took him to a private hospital and pulled out his kidney in return of US\$ 5000.

However al-Gahmi affirmed that the arrested gang had links with an international criminal network that works in trading human body parts in the Arab countries and in other foreign countries. The Egyptian authorities have found the ten Yemeni children and extradited nine of them to their families in Yemen and the tenth to his family resident in Egypt.

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