



Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Newsletter

May 2009

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

For more information, please contact:

Rouba Al-Salem
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Programme Manager

International Bureau for Children's Rights
2715 Chemin Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montréal (Québec) H3T 1B6
Tel: +1 514 932 7656, poste / extension 227
Fax : + 1 514-932-9453
Email : r.al-salem@ibcr.org
Website : www.ibcr.org

Table of Contents:

1. Global Developments on Children's Rights	4
A letter from the NGO Advisory Council to congratulate the new appointed Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children.....	4
“See Me, Hear Me” – a Guide to Using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Promote the Rights of Children - by Save the Children UK and Sweden.....	4
Painter Ross Bleckner to be named UN Goodwill Ambassador for Human Trafficking4	4
UNICEF supports psychosocial relief in Child-friendly Safe Places	5
Childwatch Survey on Children and Family Law	5
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict launch a New Policy Paper: <i>UN Security Council Resolution 1612 and Beyond: Strengthening Protection for Children in Armed Conflict.</i>	5
<i>Forced Child Begging – A Training Manual by Anti Slavery International for Research on Children</i>	5
A guide to Child Rights Mechanisms by the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)	6
2. MENA Regional Child Related Activities (events, conferences, news, vacancies, announcements, reportages, campaigns).....	6
Call for applications for Euro-Mediterranean Training Course for Human Rights Education with Young People.....	6
Young ‘Change Makers’ to take part in World Economic Forum	6
3. Sub-Regional and Country Updates:	7
In the Levant:.....	7
Iraq – Primary school Study Reveals Major Health, Safety Concerns.....	7
Iraq – Student’s Health Status and Environmental Assessment at Primary Schools – a Survey by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization.....	7
Iraq – Government aid for marshland children	7



Iraq – LIFE for Relief and Development deliver first aid kits for Iraqi families and beds to hospitals.....	8
Israel/oPt - Palestinian and Israeli Human Rights' Shadow Report to UN Committee Against Torture includes information on children.	8
Israel/oPt – UN Committee Against Torture deeply concerned at Israel's treatment of Detained children.....	8
Israel/oPt – International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) welcomes Investigation into alleged war crimes in Gaza in 2002	8
Israel/oPt - The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reaches out to persons with disabilities in the Jericho and NW/E Jerusalem districts.....	9
Israel/oPt – War crimes against children: new report by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) on the 313 children killed during Gaza offensive	9
Israel/oPt – First blind children's school opens in Gaza	9
Israel/oPt – LIFE for Relief and Development delivers textbooks for West Bank schools and libraries	10
Israel/oPt – Most Jerusalem Arab children live in poverty	10
Jordan – His Majesty King Abdullah emphasized that the country will proceed with a reform programme that ensures respect of all human rights in the Kingdom	10
Jordan – Thousands of minors still illegally employed	10
Jordan – Queen calls for an emergency meeting to discuss child abuse cases.....	11
Jordan – Noor Al-Hussein Foundation Launches Human Rights Awareness Project .	11
Jordan – Human Rights Watch and the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights (EMHRN) call for replacing Law on Associations.....	11
Jordan – Missing five year old boy	12
Lebanon – Children take part in marathon aimed at promoting peace.....	12
In North Africa:	13
Egypt – Fears rise over spate of missing children	13
Egypt – Egyptian boy contracts bird flu	13
Egypt – Egyptian girl, 4, dies of bird flu virus	13
Morocco - Moroccan women's rights organisations call for action to be taken against child marriage.....	13
Morocco – Group report 'staggering' rise in child sex abuse	14
Morocco - La question de l'enfance au centre des préoccupations du gouvernement marocain	14
In the Gulf:	14
Bahrain – Al Wefaq Opposes Minimum Marriage Age.....	14
Bahrain – 'Rescue' award for young Bahraini	14
Bahrain – Student confirmed as first case of swine flu in Bahrain.....	15
Bahrain – Bahraini teenager kidnapped from his home	15
Bahrain – Bahrain Human Rights Monitor monthly newsletter includes information about children	15
Oman – Situation of children's rights in Oman to be reviewed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child	16
Saudi Arabia – Marriage of girl, 8, annulled	16
Saudi Arabia – Child marriages in Saudi Arabia may change.....	16



Saudi Arabia – Amnesty International: Juveniles among 5 men beheaded by Saudi Arabian authorities	16
Saudi Arabia - UNICEF Regional Director discusses children’s rights with King Abdullah	17
Yemen – New amendments aiming to improve human rights conditions in Yemen...	17
Yemen – Course on child education methodologies by the Ministry of Education concluded.....	18
Yemen – Changemakers offer solutions to youth problems	18
Yemen – Yemeni children traffickers’ gang arrested.....	18
Yemen – Over 40 Yemeni children attend workshop on children’s rights	18



1. Global Developments on Children's Rights

A letter from the NGO Advisory Council to congratulate the new appointed Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children

01 May 2009 – the NGO Advisory Council congratulates Marta Santos-Pais on her new appointment as Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children. Ms. Santos Pais brings to the job her tremendous passion, her firm commitment to the rights of the child, more than 25 years experience on human rights issues and engagement in intergovernmental processes.

The Council consisting of nine members representing international NGOs and nine representing NGOs in the nine regions in which consultation were held as part of the Study process, it has also developed sub-groups to consider follow-up on particular recommendations, including law reform, children's participation, gender dimensions, etc.

[Full Letter](#) - NGO Advisory Council for the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children

“See Me, Hear Me” – a Guide to Using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Promote the Rights of Children - by Save the Children UK and Sweden

05 May 2009 - A new guide, published by Save the Children UK and Sweden, on behalf of the Alliance, looks at how the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can be used to support disabled children, alongside the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The guide analyses the inter-relationship of the two Conventions and presents practical guidance on advocacy strategies and illustrations of good practice.

It is intended for use by child and disability rights advocates, and civil society organisations. It will also be of use to government in interpreting and implementing the rights of children with disabilities. It does assume some knowledge or understanding of advocacy and is not written for children themselves.

[Full Guide](#) – Save the Children UK and Sweden

Painter Ross Bleckner to be named UN Goodwill Ambassador for Human Trafficking

12 May 2009 - At the opening of an art exhibition displaying paintings by former child soldiers and abducted girls from Uganda, the UN anti-crime arm has name acclaimed American painter Ross Bleckner as Goodwill Ambassador to Combat Human Trafficking.

Launched in March 2009, the initiative aims to raise awareness about the millions of victims and rally support to combat this modern form of slavery. “Art is one of the most powerful advocacy tools to raise awareness and move people to take action,” said United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa. “A painting says a thousand words.” Mr. Costa noted that appointing Mr. Bleckner as UNODC Goodwill Ambassador, as well as opening the exhibition at the UN, “provides a unique

opportunity to implore others to join us in our fight against conscription of children, and other forms of human trafficking and modern day slavery.”

[Full Article](#) – United Nations News Service

UNICEF supports psychosocial relief in Child-friendly Safe Places

18 May 2009 - Through child-friendly safe spaces in crisis and post-crisis situations, UNICEF provides educational equipment and materials to re-establish learning and recreational activities, as well as psychosocial support teams of professionals to help children cope.

This year in the Gaza Strip, for example, UNICEF-supported psychosocial programmes that will reach tens of thousands of children who experienced more than three weeks of intensive bombardment and military operations that took place in December 2008 and January 2009

[Full Article](#) – UNICEF via ReliefWeb

Childwatch Survey on Children and Family Law

20 May 2009 - The Childwatch International thematic group on Children and the Law are distributing a questionnaire to all key institutions to map children's participation in family law processes related to post-separation care arrangements internationally. This is the second phase of a larger international comparative study on children and the law.

Childwatch is encouraging all key Institutions to contribute to the study by submitting the completed questionnaire to the group by 31 July 2009. The group members are also interested in increasing the participation of key Institution that are represented in the research group and which currently consists of researchers from New Zealand, Australia, Czech Republic, India and Israel.

[More Information Available](#) – Childwatch International Research Network

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict launch a New Policy Paper: *UN Security Council Resolution 1612 and Beyond: Strengthening Protection for Children in Armed Conflict.*

26 May 2009 - *Resolution 1612 and Beyond* details concrete actions that the United Nations Security Council should take to ensure that children caught in armed conflict are protected from violence and related threats to their security and well-being. The release of the policy paper follows the recent Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict and coincides with the ongoing follow-up on the Presidential Statement adopted by the Security Council in connection to that Open Debate.

[Full Report](#)– Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict via CRIN

***Forced Child Begging* – A Training Manual by Anti Slavery International for Research on Children**

26 May 2009 – This training manual provides tools that have been developed for training research teams who took part in a pilot research project on forced child begging. It also seeks to provide the reader with the basic skills needed to carry out qualitative research, with a particular emphasis on research with children.

[Full Training Manual](#) – Anti Slavery International



A guide to Child Rights Mechanisms by the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)

26 May 2009 - The purpose of this guide is to help readers understand the mechanisms dealing specifically with child rights, such as different UN human rights monitoring mechanisms, or regional bodies like the African Union.

The online mechanisms guide developed (and which can be accessed [here](#)) is part of a broader legal guide that also includes a database on international, regional and national laws relating to child rights.

An Arabic version is also available [here](#) - CRIN

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

Call for applications for Euro-Mediterranean Training Course for Human Rights Education with Young People

Scheduled to take place from 21-29 June, the course is organised by the Partnership on Youth between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Human Rights Centre of the Beirut Arab University, and in collaboration with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (Pinnacle) and Permanent Peace Movement (PPM) from Lebanon.

This course will be held at the Beirut Arab University in Debbiye, Lebanon. The working language of the training course will be Arabic. The course is open to residents of Lebanon, Jordan, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Gulf states, and of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

[Application Form](#) – European Commission

Young 'Change Makers' to take part in World Economic Forum

15 May 2009 – Eighteen young activists from 11 Arab countries and the UK took part in political and economic events at the World Economic Forum (WEF). In addition to acting as advocates to raise decision makers' awareness on issues that impact the lives of millions in the region, the young activists reported live from the forum using mobile phone messages and live blogs.

Prior to the young change makers' participation in WEF, the British Council organized four-day workshops at the Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development, where young activists discussed with experts and policy makers means to empower them with the necessary skills to represent millions of Arab youth.

[Full Article](#) – Jordan Times

3. Sub-Regional and Country Updates:

In the Levant:

Iraq – Primary school Study Reveals Major Health, Safety Concerns

11 May 2009 - According to a United Nations-backed survey that was released that week, children in nearly half of the primary schools in Iraq are studying in unsafe and unhealthy environments. The study, which was supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and conducted between 2007 and 2008, revealed that 48 per cent of the 150 schools assessed were dirty.

On a more positive note, however, the study noted that the majority of food served in school canteens was found suitable, and only a minority suffered from health problems, such as visual and hearing difficulties or musculoskeletal abnormalities.

The School Health Survey was conducted by the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Education (MoE), Central Organisation of Statistical and Information Technology (COSIT), and Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in Kurdistan region in close collaboration with WHO.

[Full Article](#) – CRIN

Iraq – Student's Health Status and Environmental Assessment at Primary Schools – a Survey by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization

11 May 2009 – The Ministry of Health implemented a field survey for primary school students in cooperation with MoE, MoPDC/COSIT, MoHK, MoEK and WHO/Iraq office for detection of visual, hearing problems and musculo- skeletal abnormalities within Health Promoting Schools Project.

The survey covered 150 primary schools in 8 governorates (Baghdad, Karch and Rusafa, Muthana, Najaf, Basra, Missan, Wassit, Thi-Qar and Suliemaniah) to provide information on student's health status and schools environment at governorate and Urban/Rural levels.

[Full Survey](#) – ReliefWeb

Iraq – Government aid for marshland children

06 May 2009 – According to a senior aide to the minister of state for the marshlands. the Iraqi government has earmarked US\$30 million for water and education projects designed to help children in impoverished parts of Iraq's southern marshland area, The funding will allow the construction of 70 water purification plants and 48 schools, said Abbas al-Saidi, an adviser to Iraq's minister of state for marshlands. Though small in scale, the aid would be a step in the right direction for the marshland peoples who had been neglected "for decades", he said.

[Full Article](#) – IRIN Middle East



Iraq – LIFE for Relief and Development deliver first aid kits for Iraqi families and beds to hospitals

07 May 2009 - LIFE for Relief and Development recently completed two projects across Iraq to improve the quality of healthcare in rural areas of the country. The organization distributed 1,000 first aid kits to rural families across 11 provinces of the country. The kits include a range of items that will allow parents to treat their children for common injuries and illnesses that are potentially dangerous if unattended. The project was relatively low in cost, but very high in its effectiveness as children and adults who incur minor injuries, infections, or illnesses like diarrhea often do not have access to urgent care facilities.

[Full Article](#) - ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt - Palestinian and Israeli Human Rights' Shadow Report to UN Committee Against Torture includes information on children.

04 May 2009 - On 5 and 6 May 2009, the UN Committee against Torture (the Committee) reviewed Israel's compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). At this session, the Government of Israel responded to a "List of Issues" posed by the Committee in December 2008. It last appeared before the Committee in 2001.

On 4 May 2009, Adalah, Al-Haq, Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS), Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHR – Israel) and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), briefed the Committee session on Israel's systematic and institutionalised practices of torture and ill-treatment and other violations of CAT committed during Israel's military operation "Cast Lead", which took place in Gaza from 27 December 2008 – 18 January 2009. The NGOs base their briefing on three reports and 154 pages of evidence submitted to the Committee by member and partner organisations of the United Against Torture Coalition.

[Full Press Release](#) – Al Haq

Israel/oPt – UN Committee Against Torture deeply concerned at Israel's treatment of Detained children

18 May 2009 - The Committee, which is made up of 10 independent experts, received written and oral submissions from government officials and non-governmental organisations before and during its review of Israel's Fourth Periodic Report on 5 and 6 May 2009.

In its Concluding Observations and recommendations to Israel's Fourth Periodic Report, the Committee expressed concern regarding the torture and ill-treatment of children.
Summary Record (Partial) – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel/oPt – International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) welcomes Investigation into alleged war crimes in Gaza in 2002

7 May 2009 - FIDH welcome the decision taken on 4 May 2009 by Judge Andreu of the Audiencia Nacional (Spanish National Court) to continue investigating serious international crimes allegedly committed in Gaza in 2002, on the basis of the universal jurisdiction of the Spanish Courts. The investigation is specifically aimed at looking into the 'al- Daraj' bombing of July 2002, which caused the deaths of 16 Palestinians, including 9 children and five other civilians.



[Full article](#) – FIDH

Israel/oPt - The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reaches out to persons with disabilities in the Jericho and NW/E Jerusalem districts

13 May 2009 - Building on an experience in outreach projects of more than six years in different areas of Palestine, PRCS will launch two mobile teams in North/West and East Jerusalem as well as the Jordan Valley and the Jericho district.

The project aims at developing the abilities of the children and youth with developmental problems, persons with disabilities, elders, patients and their families towards a better integration in their local communities and in the civil society in general.

The project will provide rehabilitation services such as physiotherapy, speech therapy... as well as special education and assistive devices such as hearing aids and wheel chairs. Specific attention will be paid to awareness through the work with the families of the beneficiaries and activities in the schools.

[Full Article](#) – Palestine Red Crescent Society via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – War crimes against children: new report by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) on the 313 children killed during Gaza offensive

14 may 2009 -In response to the unprecedented number of children killed by Israeli forces in its latest operation, the Gaza based PCHR is publishing a report on alleged War Crimes Against Children. According to the report, a total of 313 children under the age of eighteen have been killed. Containing numerous eye witness testimonies, the report also brings to light Israel's widespread targeting of unarmed civilians, including children, throughout the offensive.

The report exposes the alleged abject failure of Israeli authorities to uphold international humanitarian law, which provides protection for children in armed conflict and the lack of adequate precautions taken to distinguish between civilians and military targets. The report also details indiscriminate shelling of homes and schools where internally displaced people were sheltering, the psychological impact of the offensive, and the alarming scale of physical injuries inflicted on young people

[Full Article](#) – Palestinian Centre for Human Rights via ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – First blind children's school opens in Gaza

12 May 2009 – According to Demotix, a citizen-journalism website and photo agency, Palestinian Children are attending gym, reading, typing, music and art classes in Al Nour special school for blind children in Gaza

Established by the United Nations in Gaza strip, it focused on children from 5 - 16 who are suffering from partial or total blindness, that disable them from living a normal life.

[Full Article](#) – Demotix



Israel/oPt – LIFE for Relief and Development delivers textbooks for West Bank schools and libraries

16 May 2009 - Last winter, LIFE for Relief and Development completed a year-long project that delivered brand new English-language textbooks to libraries, societies, universities, elementary schools, and high schools across the Palestinian West Bank.

The project was made possible by the Brother's Brother Foundation, which donated a container of 36,700 textbooks to LIFE, and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, which helped in their distribution. The goal of the project was to expand the educational resources available to students, teachers, and researchers

[Full Article](#) – ReliefWeb

Israel/oPt – Most Jerusalem Arab children live in poverty

20 May 2009 – According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), three in four of Jerusalem's Arab children live in poverty, a civic rights group said, partly blaming Israeli "discrimination" aimed at securing a Jewish majority in the city. A total of 74 per cent of Arab children in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, as compared with 47.7 per cent of Jewish children in the city,

In its "State of Human Rights in East Jerusalem" report, the group said "A large majority of East Jerusalem residents do not receive, and cannot afford to buy, the most basic services. The primary victims are the vulnerable populations, the aged, the disabled and children." Since Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, later annexing the city, it expropriated 2,430 hectares, or over one-third of the area, which was privately owned by Arabs, the group said.

[Full Article](#) – Jordan Times

Jordan – His Majesty King Abdullah emphasized that the country will proceed with a reform programme that ensures respect of all human rights in the Kingdom

04 May 2009 - His Majesty King Abdullah emphasised that the country will proceed with a reform programme that ensures respect of all human rights in the Kingdom in accordance with a transparent institutional framework based on the law. His Majesty gave instructions for drawing up institutional work mechanisms that effectively guarantee the protection of children's rights.

The King said that there is no institutional mechanism that supports and protects women and children, referring to statements he made in this regard last year.

At the meeting, King Abdullah said correctional and rehabilitation centres should be a priority, noting that he is working towards ensuring that the Public Security Department (PSD) are in line with international standards that protect human rights.

[Full Article](#) – The Jordan Times

Jordan – Thousands of minors still illegally employed

04 May 2009 - Although local laws prohibit the employment of children below the age of 16, there are over 32,676 working children in the Kingdom. Of those, 90 per cent are aged 12-17 years, mainly working in car repair, trade and agriculture.



A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) and the Ministry of Labour corresponds to a JD4 million US-funded programme, "Combating of Exploitive Child Labour through Education" (CECLE), which aims at addressing the worst forms of child labour that have severe moral, physical and mental repercussions on children and prevent them from obtaining a proper education. Under the memo, CHF will enhance the capacity building of 150 labour inspectors and provide them with knowledge and skills to understand the health and safety risks faced by working children, as well as to recognise hazards in the workplace through job task mapping and risk analysis. The training will also include strategic outreach to identify hidden populations of child labourers and how to effectively apply child-centred interview techniques.

[Full Article](#) – The Jordan Times

Jordan – Queen calls for an emergency meeting to discuss child abuse cases

04 May 2009 - "There are no excuses to justify the death of a child," said her Majesty Queen Rania on Sunday during an emergency meeting following the tragic incidents which marked the death of Yazan and Qusai, two recent victims of child abuse.

Her Majesty voiced disappointment in the recent development, highlighting that years ago Jordan was the leader in shedding light on child abuse in the region. "Today we have failed where we were once pioneers," she pointed out. Calling for stricter measures to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse, Queen Rania urged for greater cooperation among stakeholders which included Ministries and Non- Governmental Organizations involved in the Family and Child Protection Unit.

In addition, the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) was appointed as the umbrella organization designated to monitor all organizations involved in the Family and Child Protection system.

[Full Article](#) – Rania Al Abdullah Queen of Jordan Official Website

Jordan – Noor Al-Hussein Foundation Launches Human Rights Awareness Project

13 May 2009 - The Institute for Family Health of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) launched a project for strengthening the capacity of local societies to better understand the human rights of vulnerable groups.

Funded by the European Commission (EC), the project seeks to communicate an understanding of the human rights of vulnerable groups such as children, women, refugees and people with disabilities to local communities.

[More Information Available](#) – Noor Al-Hussein Foundation

Jordan – Human Rights Watch and the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights (EMHRN) call for replacing Law on Associations

17 May 2009 - In a [letter](#) to Prime Minister Nader al-Dahabi. Human Rights Watch and the EMHRN called on Jordan to scrap its proposed amendments to a law regulating nongovernmental organizations and instead propose a new law that would guarantee freedom of association, said



The current law prohibits associations from pursuing any "political objectives" and activities that violate "public order." The law also discriminates against non-Muslim religious organizations, by restricting the activities they are allowed to engage in, and excludes non-Jordanians and children from establishing associations in Jordan, in violation of the country's international treaty obligations.

Although the 2009 proposed amendments would ease the process of establishing an association by describing more clearly the duties of the registrar of associations, the letter states that those amendments continue to grant the government ultimate political control to decide whether an association can incorporate.

[Full Article](#) – Human Rights Watch

Jordan – Missing five year old boy

26 May 2009 - The search under way for five-year-old Ward Rababaah, who went missing 30 days ago in his village of Jdeita in the northern Governorate of Irbid continued. Ward disappeared on April 26 after he went to a nearby bakery to buy bread for the family, Rababaah said, noting that his mother went to look for him half-an-hour later. "We only want to know his fate, whether he is still alive ... so we can move forward with our lives" the boy's father Abdul Majid Rababaah told The Jordan Times on Monday.

Irbid Governor Ali Fayez said helicopters and more than 2,000 police officers were deployed to search for the child, adding that around 5,000 volunteers from Irbid joined in the search.

[Full Article](#) – The Jordan Times

Lebanon – Children take part in marathon aimed at promoting peace

19 May 2009 - The children's NGO World Vision in association with the Social Affairs Ministry organized a marathon entitled "You and I are Number 1." More than 1,000 children from diverse religious backgrounds hailing from various Lebanese regions and the Palestinian refugee camps of Bourj al-Barajneh and Nahr al-Bared participated in the marathon which took place in Ain al-Rummaneh, one of Beirut's notorious green lines during the 1975-90 Civil War.

According to World Vision, its aim is to strengthen ties between Lebanese children regardless of religious background and gender, and to fulfill the Lebanese society's educational and health needs.

In April, World Vision, along with the Higher Council for Children, helped children from across Lebanese regions publish a book titled "From a Child's Point of View: Stories and Tales Written by Children and Young People."

[Full Article](#) – The Daily Star Lebanon



In North Africa:

Egypt – Fears rise over spate of missing children

15 May 2009 - A surge in reports of missing children has set off alarm across the Egyptian countryside. The fears are being fed both by reports and rumour. For example, the May 1 headline of independent daily Al-Dustour. Read that 'Provinces on fire with kidnapping rumours; every day more stories of missing children',

For months now, the independent press has been carrying reports of the disappearance of young children, mostly from Egypt's rural provinces. For instance, on 11 April 2009 two children from the Sharqiya province vanished without a trace; A few weeks later, four young children were reported missing in the northern city Mansoura. According to the Secretary-General of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights, a Cairo-based NGO, Hafez Abu Saeda, "there is a serious lack of reliable statistics on the phenomenon, but it has definitely become more prevalent in recent years." He also noted that kidnapped children usually end up being exploited for criminal activities.

[Full Article](#) – International Press Service News Agency (IPS)

Egypt – Egyptian boy contracts bird flu

15 May 2009 – According to the state run news agency MENA, a three-year-old Egyptian boy has contracted the highly pathogenic H5N1 bird flu virus, the 71st case in the populous Arab country. A spokesman for the Health Ministry said the boy showed symptoms including a high temperature after coming into contact with domestic poultry, Since 2003 the avian influenza virus has infected more than 400 people in 15 countries and killed 256 of them. It has killed or forced the culling of more than 300 million birds across Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Egypt has been hit harder by bird flu than any other country outside of Asia.

[Full Article](#) – Reuters AlertNet

Egypt – Egyptian girl, 4, dies of bird flu virus

18 May 2009 - A 4-year-old Egyptian girl has died after contracting the highly pathogenic H5N1 bird flu virus, bringing to 27 the death toll from the virus in the most populous Arab country, state news agency MENA stated.

The girl, from the Nile Delta province of Daqahlia, fell ill on 9 May 2009 and died after being admitted to hospital suffering from a lung infection. She brings the total number of human cases of avian influenza in Egypt to 72

[Full Article](#) - Reuters

Morocco - Moroccan women's rights organisations call for action to be taken against child marriage.

05 May 2009 - According to figures from the justice ministry, over 31,000 under-age girls were married in 2008, compared with 29,847 in 2007. Moroccan associations and human rights organisations want the practice of child marriage to stop. Campaigners from various associations recently criticised the way the Moudawana (Family Code), which was intended to limit child marriages, has been applied.



Although the legal minimum age for marriage in Morocco is 18 years, family judges are empowered to allow exceptions. This loophole has enabled thousands of families to marry off their daughters prematurely.

Fouzia Assouli, chair of the Democratic League of Women's Rights, stressed that reform of the family code must take place now to restrict and clearly define the judges' powers regarding child marriage.

[Full Article](#) – Zawya

Morocco – Group report ‘staggering’ rise in child sex abuse

20 May 2009 - In its annual report issued Tuesday, the Touche pas a mon enfant (Don't touch my child) campaigning group reported a "staggering" rise in the number of sexual assaults on children in Morocco. The Touche pas a mon enfant group said it had recorded 306 such cases in 2008, six times more than the number recorded by another rights group for the first half of 2007.

Morocco's Family Affairs Minister Nouzha Skalli suggested that the rise in figures indicated not so much an increase in abuse but a greater willingness to speak out. But Najat Anwar, the founder and president of "Don't touch my child" said the rise in the 2008 figures was due to an increase in sexual tourism, fuelled by the development of the Internet.

[Full Article](#) – Agence France Presse via CRIN

Morocco - La question de l'enfance au centre des préoccupations du gouvernement marocain

26 May 2009 - Le Premier ministre marocain, Abbas El Fassi, a souligné, lundi à Kénitra, que le gouvernement place la question de l'enfance au centre de ses préoccupations à travers la valorisation de l'élément humain et la promotion des conditions des catégories sociales précaires et démunies.

[Full Article \(French\)](#) – Le Matin

In the Gulf:

Bahrain – Al Wefaq Opposes Minimum Marriage Age

05 May 2009 - Lawmakers from the largest opposition bloc in the Bahraini Parliament Al-Wefaq bloc are opposing setting the minimum marriage age for girls at 15, saying this is against Islamic principles.

According to member of parliament Haider Al-Sitri “this decision is unconstitutional and clearly interferes with the judiciary. It is against Islamic principles,” said.

[Full Article](#) – Gulf in the Media

Bahrain – ‘Rescue’ award for young Bahraini

26 May 2009 - A young Bahraini who 'rescues' abused and often suicidal youngsters has recently won an international award. Sadiq Al Baharna, 24, is one of three winners out of 20 nominees from 14 countries, for Bahrain Be Free Centre's new awards for individuals and organisations working to protect children from abuse.



'The International Award for the Best Practice in the Prevention of Child Abuse', supported by Zen-Do Bahrain, is the first of its kind to be launched in the region. The four award categories were: organisations that work directly or indirectly with children such as schools and hospitals; non-governmental organisations; individuals; and children and teenagers under 18.

[Full Article](#) – Gulf Daily News

Bahrain – Student confirmed as first case of swine flu in Bahrain

26 May 2009 - A Bahraini student has tested positive for swine flu. The 21-year old, who had recently returned from New York in the US, was confirmed as Bahrain's first case of the deadly H1N1 virus, a day after he had been cleared by Health Ministry specialists. Ministry public relations director Adel Ali Abdulla said the student was retested with new equipment and testing kits which arrived in Bahrain in the last 24 hours. "He is now in isolation at Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC) and is being treated with Tamiflu," he said. "He is responding positively and his body composition is strong. We are sure he will recover fully," said Mr Abdulla.

[Full Article](#) – Gulf Daily News

Bahrain – Bahraini teenager kidnapped from his home

28 May 2009 - Police are investigating claims that a Bahraini teenager was kidnapped from his home, beaten and dumped on a nearby wasteland. Sayed Adnan Sayed Jaffar was attacked when he stepped outside after watching TV at home, said his father. "Two men wearing civilian clothes and masks to cover their faces attacked him," said Mr Jaffar. "They covered his head and face using a cloth and though he tried to resist, he could not escape." They then forced him into a car, in which there were two other men. "He was taken to a remote area, almost 15 minutes away, where he was beaten first on his back and then with shoes, for almost half an hour."

Mr Jaffar claimed the attackers kept demanding why Sayed Adnan prayed at the Al Saddiq mosque, in Salmaniya, where prayers are led by Hasan Mushaima, of the Haq Movement.

[Full Article](#) – Gulf Daily News

Bahrain – Bahrain Human Rights Monitor monthly newsletter includes information about children

May 2009 - The publication of the Newsletter comes within the context of dissemination of information regarding the human rights situation in Bahrain and highlights the activities and events organized by the human rights and civil society organizations in Bahrain. The Newsletter is a contribution from the Bahrain Human Rights Monitor to serve the issues of human rights in Bahrain, and contributes to raise awareness and publicize the current situation in Bahrain.

This month's issue includes an article on human trafficking. The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain reiterated before the United Nations General Assembly the importance of synergy in all intergovernmental efforts against human trafficking including child trafficking.

[Full Newsletter](#) – Bahrain Human Rights Monitor



Oman – Situation of children’s rights in Oman to be reviewed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child

22 May 2009 - The Committee on the Rights of the Child will meet in Geneva from 25 May to 12 June 2009 to review the promotion and protection of children's rights under the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Oman. The Committee will also review with regard to their implementation of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The delegation from Oman will be presenting its initial reports under the Convention’s two Optional Protocols.

[Full Background Release](#) – Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR)

Saudi Arabia – Marriage of girl, 8, annulled

01 May 2009 - An eight-year old Saudi Arabian girl who was married off by her father to a man in his 50s has had the union annulled, it was reported. The case, which had generated local and international outrage, ended with an out-of-court settlement. The child, who has not been named, had been told by a court last December that she would not be allowed to divorce her husband until she reached puberty.

The settlement, brokered by a new judge in Unaizah, Qassim province, was reached only after lengthy negotiations between the girl's lawyer and the husband. The settlement was reached with the help of the governor of Qassim, Prince Faisal bin Bandar, who convinced the husband to back down, said the newspaper al-Hayat. The husband agreed to forgo his original demand for repayment of the \$8,000 dowry he gave for the girl.

[Full Article](#) – The Guardian via CRIN

Saudi Arabia – Child marriages in Saudi Arabia may change

02 May 2009 - Though the Saudi government previously said they would not change their traditional beliefs, it seems as though their perspective is beginning to shift. Saudi Arabia may ban marriages for girls under 18-years-old, a decision seemingly cued by last month’s legal debacle. “Among the options that are available and excluding the issue of puberty, is to ban marriage for (people) under 18,” Justice Minister Mohammed al-Eissa told Asharq al-Awsat newspaper. Such a restriction is “among the options that are available,” the Saudi justice minister said. “A girl below 18 is often not fit to take the family responsibility especially if she quickly gives birth.”

Human rights groups and the United Nations have put pressure on the Saudi government, calling such child marriages a form of human trafficking and abuse.

[Full Article](#) – Live Citizen

Saudi Arabia – Amnesty International: Juveniles among 5 men beheaded by Saudi Arabian authorities

12 May 2009 - Two men who were juveniles at the time of their alleged crimes were among five men beheaded in Saudi Arabia, Amnesty International has revealed. The two men were executed, along with three other men, after being convicted of a number of offences committed when they were 17 years old, including the abduction and rape of children, theft, and consumption of alcohol and drugs.



Two other men in the same case who were just 15 and 13 at the time of their alleged offences – were sentenced to “severe flogging” on the same charges, in addition to 15 years of imprisonment.

Saudi Arabia is also a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which expressly prohibits the execution of juveniles. Saudi Arabian officials have maintained that they comply with this obligation because they do not execute children. In fact, the Convention prohibits executions for crimes committed while a person is under 18, regardless of when the sentence is carried out.

[Full Article](#) – Amnesty International

Saudi Arabia - UNICEF Regional Director discusses children’s rights with King Abdullah

11 May 2009 - The situation of children in Saudi Arabia was at the center of discussions between Ms. Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF Regional Director for the MENA region and with the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and other senior Saudi officials.

“We are encouraged by the progress that Saudi Arabia has made in protecting children’s rights and are confident that more will be done to ensure that all children are safe from harm, abuse and exploitation,” Kaag said at the end of a two-day visit to the Saudi Kingdom. However he also noted that more needs to be done, to address issues including the protection of children from trafficking, violence and harmful practices like early marriage. “We welcome the resolve of Saudi authorities in addressing the issue of child marriage,” said Kaag.

[Full Article](#) - UNICEF

Yemen – New amendments aiming to improve human rights conditions in Yemen

10 May 2009 - A ministerial committee was formed in 2008 to follow up on the recommendations of the International Criminal Justice Conference. The Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights announced that it is discussing the updates on the human rights situation in Yemen for a report to be presented in front of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

Recent changes in the human rights situation in the country to be noted, includes an amendment to the nationality law gives children with unknown fathers born to a Yemeni mother the right to Yemeni nationality. It also gives children of Yemeni mothers married to foreigners the right to Yemeni nationality as well.

The Yemeni government pledged to reduce the gender gap in education and illiteracy and to provide shelter and rehabilitation for former female prisoners and street children. Of the best practices in 2008, a children’s parliament was established as well as three state satellite channels on youth, education and unifying religious intellect.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Times



Yemen – Course on child education methodologies by the Ministry of Education concluded

11 May 2009 - A training course for teachers on children-related education methodologies was concluded in Hodeidah governorate. The course is organized by the Training Management in the office of the Education Ministry and financed by Alternatives to Combat Child Labor through Education and Sustainable Services (ACCESS).

According to the director of training management Abdul-Malik al-Athwari, about 30 participants from three districts have received over two weeks lectures on the education morals, the educational goals, the cooperative education and alternatives of students punishment.

[Full Article](#) – Saba Net Yemen News Agency

Yemen – Changemakers offer solutions to youth problems

17 May 2009 - Yemeni change makers are taking positive steps to address their issues through research, advocacy and creating awareness.

At a session held at the British Council, Professors Ayid Sharyian from Sana'a University and Yahya Saleh Dahami from the Al-Mustaqbal University made led sessions on personality building. They addressed the obstacles that youth are currently facing such as poverty, early marriage and unemployment. Twenty three Yemeni Changemakers identified steps to be strong and productive in society during discussions. "Members who deal with and treat youth problems must be selected carefully," said Prof. Dahami.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Times

Yemen – Yemeni children traffickers' gang arrested

25 May 2009 - Security units in Sa'adah province have seized a gang involved in the trafficking of children in Shada district. The 4-member gang, aged 26-30 years old was involved in smuggling minors into neighboring states. They were caught while trying to smuggling 5 minors into Saudi Arabia across the mountainous borders, said a security source in Razeh district.

The security agencies were pursuing them after receiving clues on the gang's activities. The five children, aged 16-17 years old, were taken into temporary custody to be returned back to their families, while the arrested culprits were transferred to concerned authorities.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Observer

Yemen – Over 40 Yemeni children attend workshop on children's rights

27 May 2009 - The workshop was held at part of preparing for the Yemen's National Coalition for Child's Rights report on the state of Yemeni children. Over 40 children from across the country attended and their demands were included in a draft report on the state of the country's children to be issued next September. The report, issued every three years, will be then presented to the United Nations by Yemen's National Coalition for Child's Rights.

The workshop, held in cooperation with the United Nations' Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Yemen News Agency, presented review on the preparation of the draft report to present the state of Yemeni children in light of international treaties on child rights. The report



BUREAU
INTERNATIONAL
DES DROITS DES ENFANTS

INTERNATIONAL
BUREAU
FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

OFICINA
INTERNACIONAL DE
LOS DERECHOS DEL NIÑO

accused the governments' concerned bodies of failure in presenting reports on children to the United Nations in due time.

[Full Article](#) – Yemen Times