

Human Rights Abuses in the Modern World

Directions: Read the based-on-fact case studies that follow. What human rights abuses can you identify in each case study? Explain why you consider them human rights abuses.

- Ashique is an 11 year-old boy and has been working in a brick kiln in Lahore, Pakistan for the past six years with his father and three brothers. His father borrowed 20,000 rupees (about \$600) to pay for his sister's marriage and they work to pay off this debt. Ashique and his family work every day except Sunday. They work from 2 AM in the morning, before it is light, until 6 or 7 PM in the evening. Ashique and his brothers have no time off to play or to attend school. The group is paid 30 rupee (90 cents) for every 1,000 bricks they make. Together, the five of them make between 2,500 and 3,000 bricks in a day which earns them about \$2.50. However, 50 percent of their earnings is subtracted to pay for the interest on their loan.
- Issaka is a 13 year-old boy living in Niger in west Africa. He is the 12th child of a subsistence farmer. The land is deteriorating in quality and the available fields are miles from the family's village. Issaka has never been educated. The nearest school is too far away for him to walk there every day and the family does not have enough money to send him to live in the town where the school is located. Issaka and his father have decided that he should take a job at a cement factory in a nearby city. He will work seven days a week for 10 hours a day. If he misses one day of work he will be fired. Although he will make only \$1.25 per day, the pay will allow him an above average standard of living for his country. This will enable him to send money home to help support his family.
- José is a small farmer who tried to grow onions as an off-season cash crop. He borrowed money to buy onion seeds and equipment from a large factory farm at the start of the planting season. An insect invasion followed by a flood wiped out the entire crop. José made no money and was unable to repay the loan. The owner of the factory farm demanded that José leave his small farm to work for him for a year until the debt was repaid. The owner threatened to take over José's small plot of land if he did not agree.

Slavery in the Modern World

Directions: Read the section that follows and write a letter to your local newspaper expressing your views on the problem of slavery in the modern world. To learn more about the topic, visit www.trocaire.org or www.saltdal.vgs.no/prosjekt/slavrute/slavtoday.htm.

For most people, slavery brings about images of African people shackled in overcrowded cargo ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean. We think of it as something that happened in the past. However, the grim reality is that slavery in different forms still thrives in our changing global economy. There are approximately 27 million enslaved people in the world today who generate an estimated 11.5 billion dollars in profit for slaveholders. Today's slaves are not bought and sold at a public auction and their "owners" do not hold legal title to them. Yet they are just as surely trapped, controlled and brutalized as the enslaved people we read about in history books.

Examples of slavery in the world today:

Women are brought to Europe from Africa to serve as house servants, receive little or no pay and cannot return home. To avoid starvation, poor families are forced to sell their children to be prostitutes in Thailand and the Philippines. Islamic tribesmen from northern Sudan imprison Christian tribesmen from the south. Children work in factories, on farms and in mines to pay off inherited family debts across southern Asia. Undocumented immigrants work without pay in restaurants and sweatshops in the United States in order to pay back the cost of smuggling them into the country.