

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

What Is Labor Trafficking?

Labor trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which individuals perform labor or services against their will through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.¹ Labor trafficking includes situations of debt bondage, forced labor, and involuntary child labor.² In 2016 it was estimated that there were 25 million victims of forced labor worldwide.³

What Does Labor Trafficking Look Like?

Forced labor can be found in many forms. Some victims are born into slavery, which still exists in some parts of the world. Some are forced into labor through human trafficking. Some get trapped in endless debt through fraudulent job recruitment schemes or unreasonable pay deductions. Some are confined to workplaces through various forms of physical and psychological coercion.

Common types of labor trafficking include people forced to work in homes as domestic servants, farmworkers coerced through violence as they harvest crops, or factory workers held in inhumane conditions with little to no pay.⁴ Victims may be intimidated by more than violence, often they are threatened by their undocumented status or their participation in illegal activities.⁵

Victims are often kept isolated and unable to ask for help. Their activities are often watched and restricted, they are escorted by their traffickers when in public.⁶ Because victims may often come from unstable and economically devastated countries, countries with high rates of illiteracy and few economic opportunities, they may not realize their rights or see a way to ask for help.⁷

What Rights Are Workers Afforded?

While there is no single definition or list of workers' rights, the International Labor Organization has identified fundamental principles and rights at work, which are:

- freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

¹ <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/labor-trafficking>

² Id.

³ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_574717/lang-en/index.htm

⁴ <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/labor-trafficking>

⁵ <http://www.markwynn.com/trafficking/labor-trafficking-fact-sheet.pdf>

⁶ Id.

⁷ Id.



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- eliminating all forms of forced or compulsory labor;
- effective abolition of child labor; and
- elimination of discrimination in respect to employment and occupation.⁸

The United States has additional rights and protections afforded to workers. These rights extend not only to current employees but past employees and job applicants. Workers' rights in the US include:

- freedom from discrimination;
- freedom from being wrongfully terminated;
- federal and state minimum wages;
- overtime restrictions; and
- workplace safety requirements.⁹

How Can You Help?

By recognizing the signs of human trafficking, you can offer help to victims seeking support. When identified as victims of human trafficking, they can receive federally funded support and benefits to the same extent as a refugees from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.¹⁰

Resources

To learn more about labor trafficking statistics, check out:

The Trafficking Hotline - Labor Trafficking

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/labor-trafficking>

The Polaris Project - The Facts

<https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/facts>

International Labour Organization - Modern Slavery and Child Labour

https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_574717/lang-en/index.htm

⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang-en/index.htm>

⁹ <https://www.usa.gov/labor-laws>

¹⁰ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/victim-assistance>



HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

Resources (continued)

National Human Trafficking Resource Center- Labor Trafficking Fact Sheet

<http://www.markwynn.com/trafficking/labor-trafficking-fact-sheet.pdf>

To learn more about workers' rights in the US, check out:

USA.gov- Labor Laws and Issues

<https://www.usa.gov/labor-laws>

U.S. Department of Labor- Summary of the Major Laws of the Department of Labor

<https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/majorlaws>

To learn more about labor trafficking victim's rights and resources, visit:

Office on Trafficking in Persons - Victim Assistance

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/victim-assistance>

