



# TUNISIA

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT

In 2023, Tunisia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government doubled a payment to approximately \$32 for over 500,000 participants in its back-to-school allowance program to keep children in school. It also convicted and sentenced 18 individuals for child labor crimes. However, the labor inspectorate's budget for staffing, fuel, and transportation is inadequate to carry out inspections, especially in remote areas of the country. In addition, the government lacks a centralized system for digitization of court records, resulting in limited data on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of child labor crimes. Moreover, more needs to be done to remove barriers to education access and mitigate child labor risks for rural and migrant children.



## PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

### Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent of Population
Working	5 to 14	3.0% (50,364)
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	Unavailable
Attending School	5 to 14	94.2%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	2.8%

Children in Tunisia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in forced domestic work, street begging, and drug trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work and domestic work.

### Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity



#### Agriculture

Farming, fishing, animal husbandry, forestry.



#### Industry

Manufacturing and industrial work. Construction.



#### Services

Domestic work<sup>†</sup> and street work. <sup>†</sup> Working in small businesses, including mechanics' shops.



#### Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor<sup>‡</sup>

Forced labor in domestic work and begging. Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Use in illicit activities, including organized crime and drug trafficking.

<sup>†</sup> Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

<sup>‡</sup> Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor per se under Article 3(a)-(c) of ILO C. 182.



## SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Tunisia's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

### Legal Framework

Increase the amount imposed for penalties for those who employ children in violation of child labor law protections to deter potential violations and reduce recidivism.

Criminalize and prescribe punishments for the use of all children in prostitution.

***Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)*****Enforcement**

Provide adequate staff and other resources, including fuel and transportation, to enable the labor inspectorate to conduct a greater number of inspections, particularly in remote areas and in the informal economy.

Provide labor inspectors with sufficient training to identify child labor.

Increase the number of labor inspectors from 215 to 284 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 4.2 million workers.

Collect and publish information related to the civil money penalties collected for child labor violations.

Collect and publish information on efforts to enforce criminal prohibitions on the worst forms of child labor, including on the number of criminal child labor investigations that were conducted, prosecutions initiated, and convictions secured.

Ensure that law enforcement and the judiciary are fully informed as to the existence and application of anti-human trafficking penalties and impose these penalties when appropriate.

Ensure that exploited children are not prosecuted for their involvement in trafficking activities and are instead referred to social and psychological services.

**Coordination**

Ensure the active participation and continued engagement of all relevant stakeholders involved in the prevention and elimination of child labor by establishing a new coordinating mechanism to replace the Leadership Committee to Combat Child Labor.

**Government Policies**

Implement the Child Labor National Action Plan and publish results from activities on an annual basis.

**Social Programs**

Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor, as well as the risk of being involved in child labor, to inform policies and programs.

Enhance efforts to eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including rural and migrant children, by improving access to transportation, water, and non-Arabic learning resources.

Expand existing programs to fully address the scope of the child labor problem, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.

Ensure that services for survivors of human trafficking are accessible to those with disabilities and that interpretation services for all relevant languages, including sign language, are available to assist survivors in receiving services.

Establish long-term support and relocation options for survivors of child labor, including child trafficking.

**CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK**

Children living on the street are likely to be exploited through forced begging. Young girls from Tunisia's northwest and other interior regions are particularly vulnerable to domestic servitude. Refugees and migrants who lack legal documentation, including child migrants from sub-Saharan African countries and those fleeing unrest in neighboring countries, are vulnerable to labor exploitation because refugees and migrants do not have the status to legally work in Tunisia. A series of xenophobic violent attacks against black migrants occurred during the reporting period, placing children from these communities at further risk of child labor as their parents struggle to provide for their families.



## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Tunisian schools lack a sufficient number of teachers, and some schools have failing infrastructure or lack access to water. In rural areas, some families cannot afford transportation costs associated with schooling. Migrant students may also face language barriers, as Arabic is the language of instruction and resources are insufficient to provide instruction in other languages. In addition, some migrant students may be informally excluded from schools because of racism.



## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Tunisia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor. In addition, Tunisia's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards. However, financial penalties are too low to serve as an adequate deterrent.

Child Labor Laws and Regulations	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work, <b>16 Years</b>		Article 53 of the Labor Code
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work, <b>18 Years</b>		Article 58 of the Labor Code
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		Ministry of Social Affairs Order of April 1, 2020
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		Articles 2, 3, 5 and 8 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		Articles 2, 3, 5, 8, and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		Articles 226 bis, 232-234 of the Penal Code; Articles 20 and 25 of the Child Protection Code; Article 2, 3, 5, 8 and 23 of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		Articles 5 and 11 of Law No. 92.52 on Narcotics
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment, <b>18 Years</b>		Article 2 of the National Service Law
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		Article 2 of the National Service Law
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		Article 2(5) of the Law on the Prevention and the Fight Against the Trafficking of Persons; Articles 3 and 18 of the Child Protection Code
Compulsory Education Age, <b>16 Years</b>		Section 1 of the Law on Education
Free Public Education		Articles 38 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the Law on Education

Civil fines range from approximately \$7 to \$21 per infraction (20 to 60 Tunisian *dinars*) and are doubled for repeat offenders, though the total amount levied cannot exceed \$1,667 (5,000 Tunisian *dinars*). As a result, civil fines remain insufficient to deter potential violators. Additionally, International standards against Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children are not met because there are no criminal penalties for the use of a child in prostitution.



## ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2023, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Tunisia took actions to address child labor. However, the lack of digital law enforcement records makes it challenging to monitor trends, and labor inspectors only monitor the informal sector in certain parts of the country.

### Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

**Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA):** Conducts labor inspections and assesses fines and penalties for infractions. Employs social workers and medical inspectors to assist in addressing child labor. Monitors the implementation of labor legislation and initiates prosecutions through the General Directorate of Labor Inspection. Implements social programs to assist minors and those affected by child labor through the General Administration for Social Development. Fines assessed for infractions are reported to be insufficient to deter violations.

**Ministry of the Interior (MOI):** Investigates reports of the worst forms of child labor, including complaints that fall outside of the labor inspectorate's mandate and those pertaining to the informal sector. Through its Child Protection Service in the National Police, addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of children and coordinates with MSA and the Ministry of Family, Women, Children and the Elderly regarding violations. Through its Judicial Police, coordinates with MSA to refer cases of at-risk youth to social services. The lack of digitized court records makes it difficult to compile data and evaluate trends in convictions and penalties for worst forms of child labor violations.

### Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts

Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes	Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes	Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes	Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Yes

Between January and November 2023, **215** labor inspectors conducted **884** worksite inspections, finding **17** child labor violations. The government also conducted **168** investigations into suspected worst forms of child labor crimes and convicted **18** individuals of worst forms of child labor crimes, although the number of prosecutions initiated is **unknown**. In addition, the Tunisian government has prohibited anyone from negotiating with unions without the formal and prior authorization of the head of government and arrested trade unionists. These actions may have hindered workers' ability to organize, advocate for their rights, and report labor abuses, including child labor.



## COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

<p><b>Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor</b></p> <p>Tunisia established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, the government's disbanding of the Leadership Committee to Combat Child Labor in August 2023 may hinder future efforts.</p>	<p><b>Leadership Committee to Combat Child Labor:</b> Also known as the Together Against Child Labor in Tunisia (PROTECTE) steering committee. Required by the Child Labor National Action Plan, it was led by MSA and included 11 other ministries and 3 unions, with support from ILO. The Leadership Committee to Combat Child Labor disbanded after the conclusion of the Bureau of International Labor Affairs funded and ILO-supported PROTECTE project in August 2023. Since then, MSA has maintained a role in coordinating government agencies on matters related to child labor, but no new coordinating body has been established. There have been no reported activities since August 2023.</p>
<p><b>Key Policies Related to Child Labor</b></p> <p>Tunisia established policies related to child labor. However, the government undertook no efforts to implement the Child Labor National Action Plan in 2023.</p>	<p><b>Child Labor National Action Plan:</b> Plan was formally in effect between 2015 and 2020 while activities extended into 2022. Raised awareness, built the capacity of stakeholders, encouraged action from NGOs and the public, and promoted the implementation of existing laws and policies. The government did not undertake activities to implement this plan in 2023.</p> <p><b>National Strategy for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons (2018–2023):</b> Aimed to establish a global evidence-based approach to address trafficking in persons by coordinating national and international actors. In 2023, raised awareness among job seekers to prevent human trafficking and began drafting a new national strategy.</p>
<p><b>Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor</b></p> <p>Tunisia funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs do not cover all worst forms of child labor in the country, including in agriculture, fishing, commerce, manufacturing, domestic work, and construction.</p> <p><i>† Program is funded by the Government of Tunisia.</i>  <i>‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms.</i></p>	<p><b>Support Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking (2014–2024):</b> U.S. Department of State-funded project implemented by the International Organization for Migration to carry out anti-human trafficking activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, MOI, MSA, and the Ministry of Family, Women, Children and the Elderly. Includes three objectives: (1) building the capacity of relevant institutions and agencies to identify and assist survivors of human trafficking based on their individual needs, (2) strengthening cross-sector cooperation and the sharing of information through the implementation of a national referral mechanism, and (3) conducting an awareness-raising campaign to keep children in school and discourage irregular migration that could lead to human trafficking. Activities undertaken by this program in 2023 are unknown.</p> <p><b>Centers to Provide Aid to Victims of Child Labor:</b><sup>†</sup> Serve up to 6,000 children engaged in child labor or vulnerable to child labor through the maintenance of 79 youth centers. Many of these centers are located in Tunis and provide education and health care to children who would otherwise be on the street. The centers were active during the reporting period.</p> <p><b>Shelters and Services for Victims of Human Trafficking:</b><sup>†</sup> Serve survivors of human trafficking, predominantly children, through shelters operated by the Government of Tunisia. Provide lodging, food, clothing, and legal aid through a network of pro bono lawyers, and free medical care in collaboration with Ministry of Health. Two shelters, specifically for minor victims of human trafficking, operate in Tunis and Sidi Bouzid. These shelters and services were active in 2023. While authorities report that shelters are accessible to those with disabilities, there is a lack of staff who can communicate in sign language. One shelter would not accept sub-Saharan migrant trafficking victims because xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes within the country led to a fear of retaliation.</p>

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit [dol.gov/ILABprojects](https://dol.gov/ILABprojects)  
 For references, please visit [dol.gov/ChildLaborReports](https://dol.gov/ChildLaborReports)