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ETHIOPIA: CHILD LABOUR ON THE INCREASE

Those sources with access to credible statistics have asserted that since the 1991 takeover of power by the present regime child labour in Ethiopia has increased by more than 40% and the violation of the rights of children reached deplorable levels.

The regime, back in the days when it was a rebel group, used child soldiers and one fourth of its thousands of casualties have been children. Since its assumption of power, the increasing poverty has led to the spread of child labour all over the country, Youngsters as young as twelve years old have been forced to engage in prostitution and sex tourism has spread with, shamefully, elements of the Diaspora from North America being accused of engaging in the practice. In the factories and fields children are found working long hours for a meager pay. Children lured from Addis Abeba itself to work in the coffee fields of Wollega and other places have suffered immensely and many have died (in the forests, from hunger and malaria, etc. as they tried to escape. In Tigray, the fiefdom of the ruling clique, food for work and other gimmicks are used to exploit child labour.

The rights of the child is abused in many ways in present day Ethiopia. With child labour prominent in the rural areas, sexual abuse, beatings, sale into dubious adoption, etc have also been on the rise. Poor children are being sold to wealthy foreigners though they are not orphans as the law demands. With overall unemployment rate in Ethiopia being very high the use of child labour has increased year after year. Of the close to half a million homeless people in Addis Abeba itself close to 70 per cent are children and hundreds of non adult children are behind bars for political reasons.

INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS INJUSTICE EVERYWHERE

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