



Children trafficked to the Gulf states in the Middle East are forced to race camels for the entertainment of spectators.

THE FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN TRAFFICKED FOR USE AS CAMEL JOCKEYS

The Problem

Each year, children as young as 2 are trafficked from countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sudan for use as jockeys in Persian Gulf states' camel racing industry. Child camel jockeys are often sexually and physically abused; most are physically and mentally stunted, as they are deliberately starved to prevent weight gain.

Child jockeys face substantial risks. Each year, many are seriously injured and several are stampeded to death by camels. Almost all child jockeys live in camps encircled with barbed wire near the racetracks. Because the children are isolated from their families and find themselves in an unfamiliar culture, they are dependent upon their captors for survival.

The U.S. Government estimates there are thousands of trafficking victims being exploited for use as camel jockeys throughout the region. Trafficking in persons is a form of modern day slavery, involving victims who are forced, defrauded or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation.

Most of the children trafficked for servitude as camel jockeys are extremely young. Many are unable to identify their parents or home communities in South Asia or Sudan, particularly after prolonged servitude in the Middle East. Unlike other forms of trafficking that usually involve adults or older children, child camel jockey trafficking presents enormous challenges to source country governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to return rescued children to their parents and original communities.

What's being done to stop it?

The *Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000* provides tools for the U.S. to combat trafficking in persons. The trafficking of children for sport, such as for use as camel jockeys, is prohibited by the *United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery* and International Labor

Organization (ILO) Convention 182. Many of the states where child camel jockey trafficking is prevalent are parties to ILO Conventions 29 and 138, the *Protocol to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime on Trafficking in Persons* and to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which also prohibit the practice.

The United States works with the Gulf States to stop the trafficking and exploitation of minors as camel jockeys and encourages those countries to return the sports activity to its original roots as a traditional pastime. The U.S. also works with source countries to stop the flow of children trafficked into the Gulf region.

In December 2004, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) established a shelter to care for former child camel jockey victims. Many boys served by the shelter have been trampled, suffer from broken limbs and have never seen a doctor. As many as 400 children were reportedly rescued and repatriated through efforts of source country representatives and NGOs in 2004. To aid in prevention, the U.A.E. has introduced stricter screening procedures (including iris identification methods) at airports and conducts DNA and bone density testing to establish positive identification and claimed child/parent relations, but much more is needed to ensure the rescue of children trapped in a life of degradation.

What needs to be done?

When dealing with an issue of this importance and urgency, there is much to be done. The U.S. is asking governments to prevent the crime and increase rescues and protection of victims. Traffickers must be prosecuted, and laws must be enhanced and enforced.

For more information, please log on to the Web site of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at www.state.gov/g/tip.