

Death of fifteen-year-old Japanese child laborer
— Worst forms of child labour exists in Japan —

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Action against Child Exploitation (ACE)

C-Rights

Free The Children Japan

On December 14th, 2017, a fifteen-year-old girl was checking and cleaning solar panels on a factory rooftop in Ibaraki Prefecture, when she fell 43 feet to the concrete below, and died. This is an example of one of the worst forms of child labour, which is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as work which harms the health, safety or morals of children.

A similar incident occurred in August, 2012, when a fourteen-year-old junior high school boy was killed by collapsing walls while helping to dismantle the gymnasium of another junior high school. Teachers of his own school acknowledged that he was doing that part-time job during summer holiday.

According to the ILO's latest estimates published in 2017, almost one out of ten children in the world aged five to seventeen, or 152 million children, are engaged in child labour, and almost half of those are in the worst forms of child labour. Two million child labourers are identified in developed countries.

In Japan, children under fifteen full years of age shall not be employed as workers, and hazardous work is prohibited for children below eighteen. The incidence of the girl's death was a clear violation of both Japan's Labor Standards Act, Article 62 (Restriction on Dangerous and Harmful Jobs), and ILO Convention No. 182 (the Prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour), which Japan ratified.

The existence of child labour in Japan has been identified by Annual Labour Standards Inspection Reports. In 2015, 297 violations of articles for the protection of minors in the Labour Standards Act were reported. Child labour was also identified via arrests made due to violations of the Child Welfare Act, the Act on the Regulation and Punishment of Acts Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children, and Act on Control and Improvement of Amusement Businesses, etc.

As child poverty becomes more and more serious in Japan, it is suspected that children in relative poverty, who are not as easily identified as those in absolute poverty, might increasingly become engaged in child labour, as it is necessary for them to earn money

to contribute to family income, to pay for their education, extra-curricular activities, and outings with friends.

We ask the Japanese government to conduct a survey on child labour to grasp the whole picture of the issue in Japan, and to organise awareness-raising training for labour inspectors, local government officials, employers, and teachers. We also ask that the government formulate and implement an action plan on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, as ILO Convention No. 182 recommends.