

Labor: Freely Chosen Employment

Specific Types of Forced Labor

Bonded labor / debt bondage

This type of forced labor occurs when employers offer a loan or a monetary advance in return for labor. The repayment scheme is such that the worker is trapped into working for an extraordinary period of time to repay the debt due to high interest rates, low wages, or both. Sometimes the disparity between wages and interest is such that the worker can never feasibly repay the debt.

Indentured labor

Indentured labor occurs when an employer deducts expenses from the workers' paycheck such that the worker must keep working to repay expenses. Typically these expenses include housing, food, clothing, and transportation. As with bonded labor, wages offered under indentured labor are too low to reasonably pay for expenses, which are often over-priced.

Involuntary prison labor

Although international law does not consider all forms of prison labor to be illegal, it does provide specific examples of when it is considered forced labor. Forced prison labor is not considered illegal by ILO standards as long as:

- The worker was tried and convicted in a legal court of law
- The work is supervised and controlled by a public authority
- The worker is not working for a private entity

In other words, a legally convicted person can be forced to work involuntarily for the public sector while incarcerated. Prison labor can be used for private entities if and only if it is entered into voluntarily and if the prisoner receives comparable wages and worker protections as offered to those in a similar job in the free market.