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## An extract from an Anti-Slavery Society Letter

**A**s you know, the expression "Persian rugs" does not necessarily mean that the rugs have been made in the Islamic Republic of Iran. They could have been made either in the Kingdom of Nepal, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan or the Republic of India, copying traditional tribal designs or traditional Persian court designs (such as those from the weaving workshops established under the Safavid dynasty to produce carpets for the court, or those from Tabriz, Kashan and Kirman). However, the fact that the advertisements state that they are "all guaranteed authentic" would mean that they are not all from the Islamic Republic of Iran: one style is from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, one from central Asia (Turkestan), one from the Republic of Turkey, one from the Republic of Afghanistan and the remainder are from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It is impossible to say whether the carpets from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan had been made by child labour without actually examining them. Even when one examines the carpets with one's hand, it is often difficult, even for an expert, to ascertain whether they are made by child labour.

This is because a lot of carpet retailers are now removing the labels from the carpets which have been imported from the Kingdom of Nepal, the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Eshan Ullah Khan, the Chairman of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front, Kailash Satyarthi, the Chairman of the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), Rama Kant Rai, the Regional Co-ordinator of SACCS for North India, and I on different occasions visited retail stores and we had difficulty in saying definitely that the rugs were made by child labour because of the removal of certain identifying labels from the carpets. I saw these identifying labels on carpets prior to the release of the Consumer Alert last September. Since then, they have been removed and Kailash Satyarthi could see the traces of the gum where they once were.

One of the advertisements states that those carpets from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are "tribal" and some of them are "old". In recent years, children in poor areas are known to have been involved in the manufacture of tribal carpets. However, although my reports show evidence of tribal children making carpets in other regions of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, I have no evidence of tribal children in that particular region making carpets.

Paul Bravender Coyle

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## CHILDREN AT WORK



In 1995, the **International Labour Organisation** (ILO) estimated that there are about 73 million working children world wide. While this figure has always been considered to be an underestimate, it has only recently become clear just how many more children are actually involved in economic activity, often at the expense of their health, education and childhood.

Studies conducted by the ILO in four countries - Indonesia, Ghana, India and Senegal - have indicated that there are at least 120 million children aged between five and fourteen years working full time in the developing world alone. That figure jumps to about 250 million if those children for whom work is a secondary activity are included. 61% of child labourers live in Asia, 32% in Africa and 7% in Latin America. Although Asia has the highest percentage of child labourers, Africa has the highest incidence, with about 40% of children aged between five and fourteen years working. The ILO has noted that while child labour is primarily a problem in developing countries, it also exists in industrialised countries and is emerging in Eastern Europe where countries are in transition to a market economy.

Sharon Bessell