

GULF COUNTRIES:**BAHRAIN, OMAN, AND YEMEN**

	692 1992	698 1992	679 1992
	REV 1	REV 1	REV 0
BACKGROUND	OUT 2	OUT 2	OUT 0

Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen fall far short of meeting the worker rights criteria of the U.S. Trade and Tariff Act of 1974 and thus, should be eliminated from the list of GSP-eligible countries.

State Department Critique

The worker rights situation in the three countries is summarized in the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991. Since the Subcommittee has the report, the AFL-CIO presents only a few highlights about each country.

Bahrain

FOIA Right of Association: "Although the Constitution recognizes the right of workers to organize, there are no trade unions, primarily because the government actively discourages them. Strikes are not permitted." (p.1350)

Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively: "There are no collective bargaining units or contracts....[T]he workers have no independent, recognized voice for addressing...labor related issues." (p.1351)

Oman

FOIA Right of Association: "Labor unions are illegal in Oman. Oman's labor law specifies that 'it is absolutely forbidden to provoke a strike for any reason'." (p.1545)

Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively: "There are no provisions for collective bargaining for wages and working conditions in Oman. Wages are set by employers within the guidelines delineated by the Ministry of Labor." (p.1545)

Yemen

✓ As there is as yet no labor code for the Republic of Yemen, the existing labor laws of the former Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the former Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) remain in effect in their respective geographic areas.

FOA Right of Association: "In both the YAR and PDRY, labor unions were closely controlled, if not organized, by the Government." (p.1643)

FOA Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively: In the YAR "there are...no formal collective bargaining agreements now in force." In the PDRY "there was no collective bargaining, and there were no nongovernmental bodies that addressed labor grievances." (p. 1644)

Other Indictments

The State Department report, quoted only in part above, is enough to indict Bahrain, Oman and Yemen for systematic violations of worker rights. Supporting evidence comes from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, from Freedom House, and from the International Labor Organization.

The ICFTU's Annual Survey of Trade Union Rights 1991, in its analysis of Asian countries, cites Yemen as among the countries characterized by "union subservience to the regimes in power," cites Oman as among countries that "simply prohibit the existence of trade unions," and adds that unions are non-existent in Bahrain.

The annual Freedom House survey, Freedom in the World 1991-92, exposes labor conditions in the three countries as follows:

- FOA ○ In Bahrain "'Workers' committees,' composing over 10 percent of the work force, are sponsored by the government. Workers do not have the right to strike, and expatriate workers, half of the work force, are [explicitly] not allowed to form unions."
- FOA ○ In Oman "unions are prohibited, as are strikes."
- FOA ○ In Yemen "strikes and union activity are sharply restricted."

A systematic summary of International Labor Organization complaints against the three countries is contained in the 1991 Critique of Trade Union Rights in Countries Affiliated with the League of Arab States, prepared by the Jewish Labor Committee.

This document also contains material from the State Department report that we have not covered in our highlights above. Pertinent excerpts from that document are enclosed (Attachment IV). The AFL-CIO will send the Subcommittee the related excerpts from the 1992 survey as soon as it is available.

CONCLUSION

The worker rights violations of Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen are so serious that these countries do not qualify for GSP status. Consequently, the AFL-CIO petitions for their immediate removal from the list of GSP eligible countries.

