

Children Reduced To Slavery

(Taken from the May 2012 issue of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men J/P Alert)

The Spanish Confederation of Religious (Confer) has protested against child slavery, creating a map of places in the world where the phenomenon is most widespread -- *Vatican Insider* Staff

There are **400 million children living in conditions of slavery in the world today.**

International missionary organisations and NGOs have denounced this on the occasion of the World Day Against Child Labour which is celebrated on 16 April. Many of these children work manufacturing goods which are then sold to Europe and the West in general.

Vatican news agency [Fides](#) reported that the [Spanish Confederation of Religious](#) (Confer) has created a map of the various locations throughout the world where the phenomenon is most widespread and in its communiqué, highlighted that "this slavery becomes indirectly part of our daily lives as the bananas we eat and the coffee we drink could have been produced by the sweat and toil of Latin American and African children." "It could also be that the rugs we walk on may have been woven by little Pakistani slaves; curtains, tops, jewelry and so many other things could be the fruit of the illegal or forced work of Indian children," Confer went on to state. This is why the organization is urging people "to make every effort possible to encourage civil authorities to do their job, fight against this injustice and give children the legal protection they deserve."

The date for the Day's celebration was not chosen by chance. It marks the death of Iqbal Masih, a 12 year old Christian Pakistani child who was killed on 16 April 1995 by the textile mafia in his Country because he had reported the exploitation that was going on. Iqbal had worked as a slave in the textile industry since the age of 4. When he turned 10, he managed to escape, testify his experience and speak to MPs, universities in the U.S. and the European Union. Despite year-long efforts, the implementation of international legislation, the denunciations and the support programs set up to help children in precarious situations, slavery is continuing to spread.

Confer has criticised the fact that the phenomenon is so widespread, particularly in India and Afghanistan, where boys and girls work in the building industry. In Brazil, these little slaves produce the coal used to manufacture steel for cars and other mechanical parts. In Myanmar, children are used to gather sugarcane and other agricultural products. In China they prepare explosives and fireworks; in Sierra Leone they are exploited for the extraction of diamonds from mines. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, thousands of youngsters are forced into slavery for the extraction of cassiterite and coltan, minerals which are vital in the assembly of computers, mp3s, cell phones and many other instruments used in the First World. In Benin and Egypt it is estimated that about a million children are forced to work in the cotton industry because they cost less and are more obedient than adults, as well as having the right height to slip in among the plants. Finally, the clerics' report stated that in the Ivory Coast, approximately 12 thousand children gather cocoa seeds which are exported for chocolate production.