

1. The right to decent work

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December 1948.

Article 23: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment [...].

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Chinese police have revealed a case of slavery in a factory in Shanxi, a province located in the centre of the country: 31 workers, rural immigrants, were found surviving inside the factory, with working days of 20 hours and subsisting on bread and water. There had been 32 people, but one person died.

The workers had been recruited at railway stations and other transport centres, and once they entered the factory, they were forbidden from leaving. They were barefoot and with their clothing in tatters, they slept on the floor, did not have heat in winter and were forced to work rapidly. Five people and six dogs watched over them to make sure they did not escape.

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Activities

- 1** Read the extract from Article 23 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Then answer the following questions:
 - a) What individual rights are recognised?

 - b) What is the relationship between these rights and the world of employment?

- 2** Read the the article about the Chinese factory from the newspaper *El País*. Then answer the following questions:
 - a) How many hours did they work each day and what was their diet?

 - b) Describe the situation in which the Chinese workers lived. How were they prevented from escaping from the factory?

 - c) According to the text, were the fundamental rights of the workers in the Chinese factory recognised?

 - d) Look in the daily press, or on the Internet, for articles about exploitation in the workplace anywhere in the world, and write a report, including your own conclusions.

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Answers

- 1** *a)* The following rights are recognised: the right to work, to the free choice of work under satisfactory and equal conditions for all, and to protection against unemployment.
- b)* There is a close relationship, as the fundamental rights of workers are recognised. It legislates against the exploitation of workers.
- 2** *a)* The working days were 20 hours long. They ate bread and water.
- b)* The workers went barefoot and their clothes were in tatters. They slept on the floor and did not have heat in winter. They were forced to work rapidly. The workers couldn't escape because five people and six dogs watched over them at all times.
- c)* Their rights were not recognised because their working conditions were subhuman.
- d)* **STUDENTS' OWN ANSWER.**