

IQBAL MASIH

My hero, is Iqbal Masih who fought against child slavery.

Iqbal Masih was born in Pakistan in 1983 and at the tender age of four years, was sold by his parents to carpet dealers for the modest sum of the equivalent of 12 dollars.

He was often obliged to work for more than 15 hours a day in disgraceful conditions, chained to his carpet loom. He was abused and beaten and forced to work even when he was sick. Due to the fact that he was almost always bent over, his spine became curved and this stopped his natural growth. He also suffered from breathing problems. Due to the abuse of another child worker in the factory, Iqbal decided that enough was enough. He managed to escape and finally saved by Ehsan Ulla Khan, the founder of the Bonded Labour Liberation front (BLLF). Iqbal started to attend the BLLF school and proved a very bright student. He recuperated 5 years of schooling in 3 years and became a prominent member and speaker of the BLLF, giving speeches against child labour and deploring the carpet dealers. However, it was on April 1995, that Iqbal was shot by 125 pellets. To this day, the truth is not known, but it is believed that the "Carpet Mafia" was responsible as Iqbal had received various threats on his life from them.

I consider Iqbal to be a hero as, even though he was only a child himself, he had the courage to speak up against a "POWER" which, to a certain extent, still exists today.