

H

ENDING MODERN-DAY SLAVERY

Human trafficking (including child trafficking) for sexual exploitation, organ harvesting and forced labor/servitude is a crime against humanity causing severe physical and psychological harm and trauma in the millions of people subjected to it at any given moment. Ending human trafficking once and for all must be prioritized on every level.



Trafficking in human beings is the recruitment, transportation and placement of persons through deception, coercion and/or force for the purpose of exploitation. Forms of exploitation are systematic sexual abuse, forced labor/servitude and organ harvesting. Human trafficking and the corresponding forms of exploitation are classified as modern-day slavery by international organizations, including the United Nations.

According to the US Department of Homeland Security, **human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world.** With an estimated annual revenue of US\$150 billion (ILO 2014), it has become the second largest criminal enterprise in the world after drug trafficking and may soon surpass the latter.

Individuals that are particularly vulnerable – for example due to an abusive family environment, poverty or displacement during violent conflict and war – are primary targets of traffickers. Once in the hands of the traffickers, they are trapped in a system of pressure, coercion and violence. They are treated as property and sometimes marked and tattooed accordingly. Victims and survivors of these crimes can suffer from grave immediate and long-term physical and psychological harm.

The International Labour Organization (ILO 2022) estimates that there are nearly 50 million humans – which is about 1 in every 150 people in the world – in modern-day slavery on any given day, over 12 million of whom are children.

Two-thirds of the estimated US\$150 billion global revenue of the human trafficking industry comes from trafficking for **sexual exploitation** (ILO 2014). In 2021, “a total of 6.3 million people [were] in situations of forced commercial sexual exploitation on any given day. This number includes 1.7 million children in commercial sexual exploitation, about a quarter of the total” (ILO 2022: 45).

While drugs are bought and sold once, adults and children can be *traded* multiple times a day. Some survivors report having been forced to engage in sexual intercourse with up to fifty perpetrators in a single day (Kloer 2010). Children trafficked for sex tourism serve about 1,500 customers per year, more than half of those children are under the age of 12 (cf. Moreno-Walton 2018).

Survivors of sex trafficking have described being beaten, forcibly injected with drugs, and – in the case of adults – forced to watch the abuse of their own children (cf. IJM 2023).

An exponentially growing crime worldwide is the trafficking of children for online commercial sexual exploitation, involving the dissemination of videos and photos depicting the torture and rape of children – including toddlers – over the Internet.



In 2019, nearly 70 million child sexual abuse files (videos/pictures) were reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that works with federal law enforcement agencies (EPRS 2020, The New York Times 2020). About 78% of child abuse files analyzed by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection involved children under the age of 12; 63% showed children under 8 (Thorn 2023). At any given time, there are 750,000 to over 1 million predators online searching for these files (FBI 2011, EPRS 2020).



Over 20 million people caught in modern-day slavery are trafficked for **forced labor and servitude** worldwide (ILO 2022). Adults and children stuck in this form of slavery often work in hazardous conditions. They toil in mines, fields, factories, homes and on construction sites. They carry heavy loads, are exposed to pesticides and other toxic substances as well as severe weather conditions. Receiving the bare minimum sustenance, they are forced to work excessive hours. On top of this, they are subjected to denigrating treatment and are at constant risk of suffering violent abuse. Tens of thousands become ill and die.

States like Qatar (at one point, foreign workers died at a rate of almost one a day in Qatar, many of them young men) and major corporations, including Western companies such as but not limited to Mars, Nestlé and Hershey (which were indicted in a child slavery lawsuit), have been accused of involvement in, or profiting from, modern-day slavery (The Guardian 2013, 2021).

Another form of exploitation in human trafficking is **organ and blood harvesting** which involves the illegal removal of internal organs or blood of a person. Those targeted are sometimes killed or left for dead. While the exact global scale of trafficking in persons for organ and blood removal remains unknown, reports of it are increasing across the world.

India's Blood Farmers

By Scott Carney (2011)

A few days before the Indian celebration of Holi, an emaciated man with graying skin, drooping eyes, and rows of purple needle marks on both arms stumbled up to a group of farmers in the sweltering Indian border town of Gorakhpur. ... He was escaping from a makeshift prison where his captor siphoned off his blood for profit. ...

The emaciated man brought [police] officers to his prison of the last three years: a hastily constructed shack sandwiched between Papu Yadhav's concrete home and a cowshed. A brass padlock hung from the iron door's solid latch. The officers could hear the muffled sounds of humanity through the quarter inch of metal. ...

They sprung the lock and revealed a medical ward fit for a horror movie. IV drips hung from makeshift poles and patients moaned as if they were recovering from a delirium. Five emaciated men lying on small woven cots could barely lift their heads to acknowledge the visitors. The sticky air inside was far from sterile. The sun beating down on the tin roof above their heads magnified the heat like a tandoor oven. One man stared at the ceiling with glassy eyes as his blood snaked through a tube and slowly drained into a plastic blood bag on the floor. He was too weak to protest.

Investigative journalist Scott Carney exposed and wrote a book on humans being held captive in India to harvest their blood for profit. The BBC and multiple organizations have reported on African children being trafficked into the UK for blood rituals.

The BBC (2011) writes: "Testimonies from many of these children have revealed that once they arrive in Britain, they are exposed to violent and degrading treatments, often involving the forced extraction of their blood to be used for clients demanding blood rituals. ... One boy explained how witch-doctors took his blood to be used in such rituals: 'The traffickers or witch-doctors take your hair and cut your arms, legs, heads and genitals and collect the blood. They say if you speak out I can kill you.'"

In 2017, it was further reported that the terrorist militia Daesh (ISIS) forcibly harvested and trafficked organs from oppressed minorities and prisoners or coerced vulnerable people. A report co-authored by the NCTC, DHS and FBI states that a “body of open-source reporting dating back to early 2014, indicates that ISIS is selling the organs of its captives and prisoners as a lucrative business”. And: “[R]eporting indicated that ISIS established a market in Turkey that sells human organs from mutilated bodies of kidnapped ISIS victims to the Turkish mafia and international trafficking gangs through middlemen.”



The UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR 2021) notes that human rights experts are likewise “extremely alarmed by reports of alleged ‘organ harvesting’ targeting minorities, including Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims and Christians, in detention in China.” And that “[f]orced organ harvesting in China appears to be targeting specific ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities held in

detention, often without being explained the reasons for arrest or given arrest warrants, at different locations”.

Organized crime networks (both business- and government-type) **dominate 75% of the field of human trafficking** globally per the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2020).



Source: UNODC

Human Trafficking in the U.S. and Europe

Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common type of trafficking in the **United States**. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022), 72% of detected survivors in North America were trafficked for sexual exploitation. There is a considerable link between the (partly legal) commercial sex industry, especially prostitution, and human trafficking, “with the market forces of prostitution driving demand for human trafficking of women and girls” (Shively et al. 2012: 11).

Shively et al. (2012: 13) write in their report for the National Institute of Justice: “Studies find that up to 80% of samples of women and girls serving as prostitutes had been coerced or forced to engage in prostitution by pimps or traffickers.” Per Farley et al. (2003), 68% of women in prostitution suffer from a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), comparable to conditions experienced by war veterans and victims of torture.

The United States further is the number one consumer of child sexual abuse material

(child pornography) in the world. It “accounts for nearly 50% of all IP addresses engaging in P2P file sharing of child pornography images” (Thorne 2014). An FBI (2017) investigation into only one of the child abuse websites found approximately 200,000 registered users and a 12-day visitor rate of over 100,000 individuals.

The New York Times (2019) reports: “ The images are horrific. Children, some just 3 or 4 years old, being sexually abused and in some cases tortured. [...T]he

explosion in detected content kept growing — exponentially. An investigation by The New York Times found **an insatiable criminal underworld that had exploited the flawed and insufficient efforts to contain it.** [...] Law enforcement agencies devoted to the problem were left understaffed and underfunded,

IN 1998, THERE WERE OVER 3,000 REPORTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IMAGERY.

JUST OVER A DECADE LATER, YEARLY REPORTS SOARED PAST 100,000.

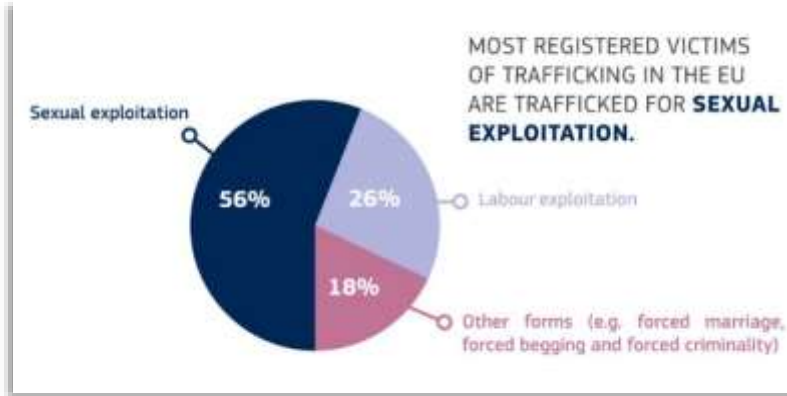
IN 2014, THAT NUMBER SURPASSED 1 MILLION FOR THE FIRST TIME.

IN 2019, THERE WERE 16.8 MILLION REPORTS WITH NEARLY 70 MILLION IMAGES AND VIDEOS FLAGGED AS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE.

Source: The New York Times (2019, 2020)

even as they were asked to handle far larger caseloads. The Justice Department, given a major role by Congress, neglected even to write mandatory monitoring reports, nor did it appoint a senior executive-level official to lead a crackdown. [...] A paper recently published in conjunction with [...] the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, described a system at 'a breaking point'".

A significant number of U.S. consumers of online child sexual material seeks out children to abuse them physically, uploading their own child rape videos (some websites require their users to share material depicting abuse to maintain a certain reputation) or travelling to different countries to exploit trafficked children, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Source: EU Home Affairs (2018)

As in the U.S., human trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common type of trafficking in **Europe**. Like in the U.S., human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Europe is embedded in prostitution. The majority of trafficking victims stem from Eastern Europe (Bulgaria,

Romania, Moldova, Ukraine) and Africa (Nigeria) and are brought to Central and Western Europe for exploitation. Germany, the Netherlands and the UK are known internationally as a hub for human trafficking in Europe.

In the **UK**, the "abhorrent crime" of human trafficking is "all too prevalent and all too profitable", according to Home Affairs Committee Chair, Diana Johnson MP (UK Parliament 2023: 1). Johnson further explains that "over half of [the] trafficked women [are] subject to sexual exploitation" (ibid.). In April 2023, UK and Bulgarian law enforcement agencies, for example, took coordinated actions against an organized crime network trafficking vulnerable Bulgarian women to London and surrounding areas for sexual exploitation in forced prostitution (cf. EUROJUST 2023).

The trafficking of foreign women for sexual exploitation was estimated to be a £130 million business in a report by the Home Office ten years ago (Telegraph 2013). Since then, human trafficking has risen significantly around the world.

In **Germany**, according to Terre de Femmes and German law enforcement experts, of the country's 250,000 to 400,000 prostitutes, 60% upwards are trapped in a form of trafficking and subjected to coercion, compulsion and/or force. What is called prostitution in Germany is in large parts a field of organized crime.

An especially notorious example for the interlocked relationship between prostitution and human trafficking is the luxury brothel 'Paradise' whose manager was an often invited guest in mainstream talks shows to advertise 'sex work'. Investigations by law enforcement agencies eventually found that young women in his brothels had been trafficked to Germany by organized crime networks, subjected to severe violence and in some cases been tattooed as property.

The rise and fall of Germany's 'brothel king'

By *The Guardian* (2019)

Until his dramatic fall from grace, Jürgen Rudloff was the self-proclaimed "brothel king" of Germany. Owner of a chain of clubs he boasted was the "the largest marketplace for sex in Europe", he was every inch the well-dressed entrepreneur, a regular face on reality TV and chat shows.

Rudloff is now serving a five-year sentence for aiding and abetting trafficking. His trial laid bare the misery and abuse of women working as prostitutes at his club ... His imprisonment has dismantled the idea of Germany's "clean prostitution" industry and raised troubling questions about what lies behind the legalised, booming sex trade. ...

In a trial lasting almost a year, testimony from the jailed pimps revealed that trafficking was crucial to the success of Rudloff's business.

Among the witnesses at his trial was Ibrahim "I", a former member of the Hell's Angels and a close friend of Rudloff's. Ibrahim admitted forcing women into prostitution at Paradise, setting them a daily target of €500 a day and beating them if they didn't bring enough money home. He would hit them on the head, rather than the body, he explained, so that no one would see the bruises. He also tattooed his name on to women's bodies and ordered women to undergo breast enlargement surgery.

One woman who worked at Paradise told the court she had seen young women weeping after their first night working there. Another said that she had seen gang members treat women "like animals".

The favorable environment for human trafficking in some European countries has served as a pull factor for and led to an influx of organized crime networks from all over the world.

The EU has further become the largest host of child sexual abuse material globally (EPRS 2020). Within the EU, the **Netherlands** accounts for most of the hosting (ibid.). During the COVID pandemic, the number of child sexual abuse images being removed worldwide has fallen by 89 % (ibid.).

The EU also has a vast number of consumers of child sexual abuse material. Over half of the consumers violate children physically offline (ibid.).

Human Trafficking is a Health and Public Health Issue

The crime of human trafficking is generally regarded as a law enforcement and justice system issue. However, in addition to that, it is also a significant health and public health issue (cf. Chisolm-Straker and Stoklosa, 2017; Todres, 2011, 2013). Trafficked children, women and men experience excessive violence. Some forms of trafficking end in death.

Children, women and men that are being **trafficked for sexual exploitation** can sustain severe physical injuries and psychological trauma.

The bodies of children subjected to sexual abuse sometimes cannot cope with the inflicted acute injuries – especially when they are very young. They end up with life-threatening organ damage, internal bleeding and broken bones. Some die. Children trafficked for sexual exploitation are also often infected with sexually transmitted diseases, suffer from chronic pain, are impregnated, then subjected to forced abortions and can become severely traumatized. Moreno-Walton (2018: 41), Professor of Emer-

gency Medicine, cites the following statistics as examples to show the dimension of the harms: “Ninety percent of the children rescued from Southeast Asian brothels are infected with HIV. Two-thirds of the victims of child sex trafficking undergo forced abortions”.

Women that are trafficked for sexual exploitation often find themselves in forced prostitution; studies have shown that the vast majority of women in prostitution have a trafficking background (cf. Shively et al. 2012). One U.S. study found the mortality rate among prostituted women to be almost 200 times greater than among other women of a comparable demographic background – leading causes of death being homicide, suicide and infectious diseases (cf. Potterat et al. 2004; Shively et al. 2012). Women subjected to sexual exploitation also suffer from higher rates of tuberculosis, HIV, other STDs, anemia, and hepatitis as compared to the general population (cf. Shively et al. 2012). They experience acute injuries, musculoskeletal injuries, chronic pain, and malnutrition. According to Farley et al. (2003), 73% of women in prostitution further suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, similar to what is experienced by war veterans and victims of torture. Other commonly reported health problems include depression, anxiety, drug addiction, adaptive or compulsory disorders, self-harm, suicide ideation and memory loss (Ottisova et al. 2016; Oram et al. 2015).

A majority of women that are trafficked for sexual exploitation in forced prostitution have experienced sexual abuse in their childhood (cf. Farley et al. 2003; McIntyre 1999). The abuse later in life can capture them in a circle of exploitation and serve as a constant re-traumatization.

Children, women and men **trafficked for forced labor**, meanwhile, oftentimes work in conditions that are hazardous to their health. They are subjected to harmful dusts and a constant danger of being buried alive in unsafe mines. They are exposed to toxic pesticides and severe weather conditions on fields. Without any protection, they are forced into contact with dangerous chemicals and fumes in factories. They have to labor on construction sites under extreme conditions without adequate nutrition. They are physically and mentally abused. Tens of thousands become physically ill from the

working conditions and die. Some sustain psychological trauma from the experienced denigration and abuse.

Trafficking for organ harvesting, by nature, includes removing organs or blood from the targeted child, woman or man. The removed body parts can be organs that are not necessary for the survival of the trafficked person (such as a kidney) or they can be vital (such as a heart), thereby always ending in the death of the the individual. People that do survive can be left with long-lasting injuries, health issues resulting from the removed organ and infections.

Being subjected to malevolence can lead to severe physical wounds and mental trauma. Any person can be on the receiving end. There is no individual that is exempt from the potential of suffering such an experience and respective consequences. Those that, due to circumstance, have to or had to live through it are not a group of people that are meant to be in that role. Those that survive distinguish themselves through extraordinary strength.

A CALL FOR TARGETED ACTION

Due to the ethical, social and legal imperative to protect victims and survivors of modern-day slavery that are being subjected to unspeakable suffering and exploitation as well as due to the security implications of human trafficking (the strengthening of organized crime networks, their attempts at corruption and infiltration of democratic processes), we call for decisive, targeted measures to end human trafficking. These include but are not limited to the following:

Public Awareness

1. interviewing anti-trafficking organizations, as well as survivors, on media platforms with a high reach to make human trafficking a political and public priority;
2. promoting the use of fact-based abolitionist storytelling through film, music and other art forms as well as facilitating distribution;

3. instituting a public awareness campaign at the community level to enable neighborhoods to identify and combat the exploitation of humans locally;

Legislation

4. systematic targeting of the demand side of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (which is the driving force behind it) and stronger criminalization of the purchase of sexual services via legislation, alongside public awareness campaigns to promote societal ostracism of the demand side;
5. simultaneous decriminalization of prostituted people (providing systematic support and trauma-sensitive care instead of imprisonment, taking into account the high level of trauma and the abusive background environment experienced by most since childhood);
6. holding tech companies directly accountable for child sexual abuse material hosted on their sites as well as for failure to systematically police and remove it;
7. passing strong legislation against the sexualization of children and prohibiting so-called sex education in preschools and schools before the age of 13;
8. systematic legislative targeting of companies and supply chains that profit from forced labor or child labor (no self-control by companies);
9. promoting and facilitating Fair Trade and a change in consumer culture as well as addressing poverty and exploitation of poverty in a comprehensive manner;

Law Enforcement

10. establishment of a sufficient number of specialized operation units (systematic analysis of investigative and court documents shows that there is higher rate of investigative success and convictions where there exist specialized anti-trafficking units);
11. creation of a sufficient number of specialized digital trafficking units (due to the significant increase of human trafficking for exploitation in the digital space which requires specialized operatives to counter);
12. involvement of financial investigation units (for cutting of financial flows and confiscation of property from organized crime groups involved in trafficking);

13. increasing collaboration with tested, reliable and highly motivated NGOs and private investigators for undercover and rescue missions, the provision of after-care and to overcome personnel as well as technological shortages;
14. establishing close international partnerships between respective specialized law enforcement units and specialized NGOs (global response to a global industry);
15. training civil society actors such as health providers (physicians, nurses etc.), customs, truckers, hotel and business owners, landlords and border control in the identification of possible trafficking victims;

Survivors

16. creating recognizable safe harbors (at customs, churches, etc.) along trafficking routes and hotspots with trustworthy and well-trained translators, trauma-sensitive caregivers and security on hand;
17. significantly increasing rescue missions by law enforcement and specialized organizations partnered with law enforcement (going to all places in the world);
18. increasing the use of technological means (such as video) to replace survivor testimony (to overcome the dependence on traumatized survivors with a lack of trust in law enforcement agencies coming forward and testifying);
19. establishment of a sufficient number of well-run, trauma-sensitive aftercare centers, safe spaces and programs for survivors to help them on their journey into a new life.

Culture

20. restoring family values and strengthening healthy families as well as friendships that can identify abuse coming from in- and outside of the family unit;
21. raising awareness about the harms of regular pornography, the proven gateway drug for a majority of perpetrators;
22. promoting healthy sexual relationships (making love instead of objectifying others), postponing the sexual debut and discouraging casual sex;
23. enshrining Fair Trade as a cultural norm instead of an exception.

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