



Human Trafficking: A Brief Examination of a Complex Crime



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Definition of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a global concern that affects a large number of victims. The legal definition of human trafficking can vary depending on what country's laws are being considered. However, the United Nations defines human trafficking as: "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, or coercion) for an improper purpose including forced labor or sexual exploitation." ("Human Trafficking", 2017). Trafficking can be done for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced marriages, and organ harvesting. Victims can be found in almost every country in the world, with laws surrounding the prosecution of the offenders varying greatly.

For an index of human trafficking laws by country, please visit:

[The United Nations List of Trafficking in Persons Legislation](#)

Faces of Human Trafficking

There are stories from victims around the globe talking about their experiences as human trafficking victims. Compiled below are just a few examples.

In India, a report written by Parry (2014) found that young girls are kept in small rooms and forced to have sex with up to 15-20 men a night. The money from their exploitation is taken by brothel owners. Many of these children are sold by their parents who cannot afford the basic necessities to keep them. Some are even sold when they are in the hospital after being born.

Brothels are sometimes warned ahead of time of police raids by corrupt officers, giving them time to move the children to a secure location to prevent being caught (Parry, 2014). Archana was one of those victims and told Kelly and Hodal (2018) she was sold into a child sex ring when she was 14. She escaped and spent years fighting for justice. Her traffickers went so far as to kidnap her during the trial to prevent her from testifying. She eventually won her case and all 20 of her traffickers were convicted (Kelly & Hodal, 2017).

Czar was trafficked from the Philippines to Australia to work as a forced labourer according to Kelly and Hodal (2017). He was told that he could make good money boxing, which he had been doing since he was 15. However, when he arrived in Australia, his passport was taken away and he was forced to work in a garage for no pay and no way to send money home for his family, including his 2 year-old son (Kelly & Hodal, 2017).

Kwama and Joe, 14 and 12 years old, were sold by their mother to a fisherman in Ghana, as reported by Kelly and Hodal (2018). They were forced to spend their days on a fishing boat, often with only one pull of food per day. They were beaten with paddles by their “master” and only managed to escape when their trafficker heard people were being arrested for having children working on the fishing boats (Kelly & Hodal, 2017).

A 19 year-old woman in Honduras was forced into sex trafficking by a gang and told her story to Kelly and Hodal (2018). She said that they sold cocaine by day and were forced to sell sex at night. Once she and the other girls being trafficked thought they were saved when a police

officer showed up. However, he said “It's good you got some new girls, let me try them first.”

She was aided in her escape by a client and is seeking refugee status in Mexico (Kelly & Hodal, 2017).

For more examples of human trafficking victims and their stories, please visit:

[The Guardian: Faces of Modern Slavery in Pictures](#)

[The Mirror: Beaten, Raped and Locked in Cage](#)

Statistics and Prevalence:

The following information is a summary of a report conducted by the United Nations. For more in-depth information, please visit:

[The United Nations: Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#)

Who are the victims?:

Human trafficking is a crime that can be experienced by women, men, and children. According to the United Nations Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2014), of detected victims of trafficking 49% of victims are women, with another 21% of victims being young girls. 18% of victims are men and 12% are boys. In Africa and the Middle East, most of the victims of human trafficking are children. The Americas, South Asia, East Asia, the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia show a trend of mostly adult victims. These victims are recruited through a variety of methods. Feigned romantic relationships, promises of better providing jobs and being sold by

family are some of the common ways these victims are pulled into the trafficking world (UNODC, 2014).

Who are the offenders?:

Traffickers vary by their global location, gender, and citizenship. According to the United Nations (2014), most offenders are citizens of the countries they traffic in (64%). 44% of traffickers are from countries in the same region if they are not nationals. This enables the traffickers to exhibit more control over their victims by having more local contacts and familiarity with an area. It seems that in the case of international human trafficking, local groups in the origin country will work with local groups in the destination country to transport victims over borders. Often it is between countries that share a border, however there is evidence of victims being trafficked intercontinentally (UNODC, 2014).

The United Nations (2014) study also found that traffickers are usually male, however female traffickers are more common in certain locations. 72% of persons convicted of human trafficking are male, with 28% of convicted traffickers being female. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the prevalence of female traffickers is slightly higher than male traffickers. Western and Central Europe, South Asia, East Asia, the Pacific, Americas, Africa and the Middle East all have a higher prevalence of male traffickers (UNODC, 2014).

Prevalence of Exploitation:

According to the United Nations (2014) 53% of victims are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. 40% of victims are exploited through forced labour, 7% are trafficked for other types of exploitation, and 0.3% are trafficked for the purpose of organ removal. Forced labour is varied and can include such activities as; cleaning, construction, domestic servitude, catering, manufacturing and textile production. Traffickers exploit their victims to gain financially as much as possible (UNODC, 2014).

Typologies of Organized Trafficking:**Small Local Operations:**

According to the report done by the United Nations (2014), small local operations of trafficking include domestic or short-distance trafficking flows, one or few traffickers moving a small number of victims, intimate partner exploitation, and limited investment and profits. This type of trafficking does not require travel documents for border crossings as it is being conducted in small, local areas. It also does not require much organization as there is less potential for detection and no need to organize complex transportation methods (UNODC, 2014).

Medium Subregional Operations:

The United Nations (2014) characterizes this type of trafficking by the flow of victims within the subregion or neighboring subregions. It usually involves a small group of traffickers with more than one victim. There can be investments made depending on the number of victims

and an increase in profits from the larger number of victims as well. Border crossings usually occur in medium subregional operations, with crossings happening both with and without travel documents. The crossing of borders requires some organization depending on the border and number of victims (UNODC, 2014).

Large Transregional Operations:

Large transregional operations are the most complex forms of human trafficking according to the report by the United Nations (2014). They involve moving a large number of victims over long distances between different regions. There are high investments and high profits in this type of trafficking. Sophisticated organization is required as many victims are being moved and border crossings require documentation. Large transregional operations also tend to take the longest and require offenders to commit to endure the entire process in order to profit. Many offenders that commit this type of human trafficking are involved in organized crime (UNODC, 2014).

Convictions:

While the laws have become more punitive over the years, there are still relatively few convictions for human trafficking. About 15 of the 128 countries that participated in a United Nations report (2014) stated that there had been 0 convictions during the reporting period. Between 2010 and 2012, one fourth of the countries reported between 1 to 10 convictions (UNODC, 2014).

Conclusion:

Human trafficking is of global concern. The legislation varies depending on the country, however there are agreed upon standards within the United Nations. Victims and offenders vary greatly based on age, gender, region, and citizenship. There is evidence of organized crime connecting offenders across continents, with victims being moved undetected between cities, countries, and across the world. Without legislation, education, and detection, human trafficking will remain a global epidemic that is hidden behind closed doors.

References:

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