

Forum: Human Rights Commission 1

Issue: Measures to eradicate slave trading and slave markets

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Introduction

When mentioning slavery, there is a common belief that it was an issue of the past, only severe and rampant in the 18th century. Instead, we are in the time period where slavery is affecting more civilians than ever before, with around 45 million people being directly affected. In fact, slavery seems to be on the rise, being increasingly financially profitable and accounting for around 44 billion dollars in profit just in 2005. Unfortunately, the general public and many administrations are unaware of its ongoing development, leaving the many victims hopeless for change.

Slavery today is usually referred to as 21st century slavery or modern-day slavery. This distinction is made due to the apparent differences between its manifestations historically compared to now. Presently, slavery is far more common to come in forms of bonded or forced labour and is far less common to be descent or race based. Furthermore, the victim demographics have changed from historic victims of slavery. Currently nearly 60% of victims are female, as well as approximately 25% of all victims being children. Demographics are not the only factor that has changed with time, as their causes and reasoning for its occurrence have also changed drastically.

Being outlawed by every country in the world, modern-day slavery mostly happens illegally away from the surveillance of the respective authorities. This has not stopped its flourish though, as human trafficking is still the world's third largest illegal industry. Instead, slavery can be seen most prevalent in war zones or unstable countries, where the civilians are the most vulnerable. Today many international organizations are still fighting for a world free from slavery, while ensuring an equal future for everyone.

Definition of Key Terms

Modern-day Slavery

Modern day slavery, also called 21st century slavery, refers to a modern adaptation of slavery which is happening nowadays. Slavery itself entails one's freedom being taken away by another person, while being exploited either sexually or manually for their benefit. Modern-day slavery slightly differs, as it often includes forms of slavery that were historically not prevalent or recognised, such as forced marriage and human trafficking.

Slave Markets

A slave market is essentially, a general area or place where people are showcased and sold as slaves. Historically, slave markets have been public events, instead presently, slave markets can occur at any time in the most unlikely of places to not attract attention. Often, slaves will be sold in crowded markets, in the midst of confusion, or in isolated warehouses.

Slave Trading

Slave trading is the process of selling or trading slaves for goods of monetary value. Slave trading usually occurs at slave markets or auctions, where slaves are showcased and consequently sold. Slave trading is heavily linked with human trafficking, as slaves are often trafficked before being sold.

Human Trafficking

Slave trading, widely known as human trafficking is the illegal transportation of Humans against their will, often through transnational borders. The purpose of this process is to bring slaves to the slave markets, where they can be sold. Often, human trafficking is carried out in extremely poor safety and hygienic conditions, exposing the slaves to risk their life.

Exploitation

In general terms, exploitation is referring to purposely taking advantage of someone for your own personal benefit, but in this context it has a more direct meaning. In terms of slavery, exploitation is forcefully taking advantage of a person, by forcing them in intensive labour for your own benefit. This can be divided in forced manual labour, such as brick-building or farming, and sexual exploitation, such as prostitution or rape.

Background Information

Understanding where and why slave-trading still occurs

Modern-slavery happens in almost every corner of the world, but it is more prevalent in some areas. Often, some circumstances present in the state as a whole are the underlying factor that determines whether the slave-trade will flourish in that country, as it is still an illegal activity. These circumstances can range from the government response to the presence of a conflict. For these reasons, it is crucial to understand the causes that may favour slave-trade, so that effective solutions can be found.

Government response and law enforcement

Up to date, the biggest factor that directly relates to the prevalence of slavery-related crimes is government awareness and response. Firstly, member states that take slave-owning and slave-trading as a serious crime, are more likely to prosecute and appropriately punish offenders.

Secondly, modern-day slavery thrives only when member states are oblivious to it; in fact, the states with lower-levels of slavery have strong governmental forces that are trained to identify and monitor such criminal activities. Instead, the states more affected by 21st century slavery have poor regulations regarding slavery and are, in some cases, the perpetrators themselves. An example of this is North Korea or Eritrea, which both experience exploitation of the populous as part of government policy, which does not protect their citizens in any way. This is very problematic, as it means member states are not following international regulation and UN agencies struggle to cooperate with a disagreeing administration.

Conflict, migration and instability

Not to the surprise of many, conflict or economic instability can cause the ideal conditions for vulnerable citizens to fall into slavery. This is because many basic needs and services are weakened, forcing the population to seek assistance from illegal organizations. Infrastructure, health-services, social services and the respect for the rule of law are amongst the few factors that eventually force a person or family into this unfortunate system. This issue also links into the migration and slavery, and how they interconnect. As an example, Libya is a state that not only has been unstable for years, after the civil war that followed the fall of Colonel Al Gaddafi, but also has experienced an influx of asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa that are aiming to migrate to Europe. In this geo-political chaos, slave-trading has prevailed, with asylum seekers being sold for as little as 12 \$.

Forms of 21st century slavery

In contrast with earlier forms of enslavement, 21st Century slavery is comparatively far more complex and varied, entailing individuals from every corner of the world. Veritably, it is probable that any object or product one possesses is partially a result of slave work, especially in the raw material collection phase. Therefore, correctly identifying whether someone is a subject of modern-slavery is harder than before, when taking a count of all the variables that come into play. Thereby, to fully eradicate and eliminate 21st Century slavery as a whole, one must understand the different forms of slavery in all its complexity and depth.

Human Trafficking

One of the most widely known and discussed topics is human trafficking, that is a form of 21st century slavery. In basic terms, human trafficking can be defined as the forceful recruitment and transportation of individuals through means of intimidation, fear, threat or exploitation of ignorance and economic desperation. Victims of human trafficking are then forced to go through illegal practices, such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, the selling of organs and body parts, or any other inhumane activity. Unfortunately, this illegal process is still very widespread, affecting around 700 000 human beings each year, over 79 % of which are women and children. More surprisingly, nearly half of all trafficking occurs inside a sovereign country, meaning that there is no international border crossing. This relates to strong the correlation between weak corrupt governments and higher rates of trafficking, meaning that unstable states have the biggest problem with this form of 21st century slavery.

Debt bondage

Also called bondage labour, Debt bondage is system based on forced labour as reparation to a debt or loan that an individual had taken. In this situation, often poverty-stricken individuals get loans to survive dire situations, while they put themselves and their labour as collateral for the lender. This results in lenders inflating the interest and therefore, time that is needed to pay the loan. Unfortunately, the labour time can last so long that it gets passed down from generation, meaning that children can be born into bondage labour, an example of descent-based slavery. This results in Bondage labour being the most common form of slavery, affecting around 8 million of people worldwide, despite it being the least known form. More-over, the geographic area in the world most affected by debt bondage is the South Asia region, were both the agricultural and industrial sectors heavily rely on this form of modern-slavery.

Descent-based slavery

Descent-based slavery is most likely one of the oldest forms of slavery, with an important prevalence historically. Today, maternal-line based slavery is far less common, but can still be seen in many countries of Africa, especially in the Sahel region. As an example, Mauritania, a country deeply associated with descent-based slavery has around 2% of its population under slavery. In this enslavement system, if either of one's parents are slaves themselves, the individual automatically becomes property of the same family. The family is then allowed to exploit the individual both labour wise, but also sexually, meaning that females are often raped, sexually abused or are forced to carry their master's child. This brutal mistreatment also means

that escaping is nearly impossible for descent-based slaves, as they usually have no legal birth certification, do not attend school, and often face discrimination from society, because of their family past.

Forced labour

Being a common characteristic of nearly all forms of 21st century slavery, forced labour is the most widely used form of exploitation. In this situation, an individual would work forcefully in inhumane conditions, while being threatened and coerced. Affecting around 25 million people, well over half of all slaves are exploited using some form of forced labour, which can be further divided into manual work and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, women and girls are very disadvantaged in this domain, as they make up 58% of total forced labour victims, and up to 99% of sexual exploitation victims. Furthermore, social minorities are far more likely to be affected by this issue, as they are often put in vulnerable positions. As an example, in India the social group most affected by this issue are the Dalits, often defined as the 'untouchables' of India, as they pertain to the bottom of the Indian caste system, a historically racist hierarchical system of social classification.

Child slavery and early marriages

Unfortunately, children are highly involved in many forms of 21st century slavery, as they make up around 20% of the 40 million slaves worldwide, and almost 100% in Western Africa. Different from child labour, child slavery is labour or exploitation for the gain of another individual. Children can be forced to take part in forced manual labour and street begging and petty crimes, as well as more serious offences such as forced participation in armed conflicts and forced marriage. Surprisingly, some of these offences are culturally accepted in many parts of the world, especially in regard to early forced marriages. In reality though, many children are forced into marriages without informed consent, have no realistic way of ending the marriage if they wish to, and can be exploited sexually by their older partner. This can not only hinder on their educational opportunities, but it is also widely known to negatively affect children's mental health permanently.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

International Labour organization

Founded in 1919, the international Labour organization, or ILO, is the UN agency responsible for ensuring decent work and protecting workers rights of labourers throughout the world. Participating with 187-member states, the ILOs unique system of working has successfully been able to resolve issues regarding social justice and working conditions, by cooperating with the employer, the worker and the

government. As of now, the ILO not only has started and sustains global initiatives for improving global labour; it has also been a key supplier of statistics and information to the public about labour related topics. It is the world leader in labour statistics, which are used by policy makers world-wide, as well as having a vast legal database with detailed information about recent and past policies.

In the area of modern-day slavery, ILO's work is majorly focused and directed to forced labour. A majority of ILO conventions and treaties have been ratified, meaning that the ILO can exercise a more authoritative and thorough approach to ensure member states are following the regulations. Secondly, the organization has also supplied the international community with a lot of valuable information regarding forced labour and human trafficking, especially in regard to the flow of people. Both of these important roles that the ILO plays in the fight against slave trading results in numerous programmes throughout the world. As part of the projects, they often collaborate with member states to help directly halt human trafficking and forced labour, as they are doing now in Sri Lanka and Latin America.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The United Nations office on drugs and crime, also called UNODC is a UN agency focused on combating transnational and international crime and drugs. Founded in 1997, it was created by merging the United Nations drug programme and centre for crime prevention, to fight international crime with a centralised system. As an agency, it does not have any power to directly enforce regulations on member states, but instead works as an advisory for countries struggling with organized crime and the drug trade. Therefore, to assist states, the UNODC carries out extensive research on varying topics of international crime, to then advise and coordinate with governments at both the national and local level to ensure that international laws are respected.

In the domain of slave trading and the slave markets, the UNODC does some work on research, but more importantly it helps enforce the law and aids national criminal systems to properly to prosecute traffickers. firstly one of the most significant international protocols in the domain of slave trading was pioneered by the UNODC, and alongside their 2009 report of human trafficking, has brought about drastic change. In fact, the executive director of the UNODC has reported that the protocol alone, has resulted in drastic increase of more than 100% in member states that have seriously implemented such protocols, meaning that governments worldwide are increasingly taking action on this issue.

Furthermore, being an impartial agency, the UNODC has guided countries and is forming legislation to practically make trafficking a crime, as well as holding training sessions for judges, members of the police/army and prosecutors on how to detect and deal with such situations. Lastly, it has coupled its expertise on the topic with technological advancements to develop effective computer-systems to help organize data on traffickers and their activities.

Anti-slavery International

Being mentioned in this report beforehand, Anti-slavery international is one of the main organizations involved in combating world slave trades and slavery as a whole. Being founded in 1839, they are the oldest international organization that advocates Human Rights and have played a major role in all the progress that has been made until now. Recently, they were able to pressure the UN in recognising forced marriages as a form of slavery, in order to help the millions affected by this problem. Unlike other organisation, Anti-slavery International has also taken the responsibility of caring for victims of slavery after they have escaped, through education and finances. This is important, as education is crucial for fighting every form of slavery, so that victims are aware of their rights a freedom.

In relation to present action to solve ongoing issues, they not only take substantial action to resolve problems, but they also have a loud presence at the UN. They heavily campaign both In the UK and abroad, as well as bringing the world's attention to issues that were previously overlooked. In the UK, they also work with the anti-trafficking monitoring group, to Aid governments in identifying traffickers of British nationals.

Libya

In recent years, the country that has most struggled with the issues of modern-day slavery and slave trading is Libya. Numerous reports and videos have entailed the conditions that many sub-saharan africans have dealt with in Libyan detention camps, such as rape, abuse and murder, alongside the selling of slaves into the forced labour market. The situation has gotten so dire that the international organization for migration stated that slaves have “become commodities to bought, sold and discarded when they have no value”. As a cause for this horrific situation, many have pointed to the european migrant crisis as a possible explanation, and they may not be wrong.

Recently, the Libyan coast guard and authorities have been heavily supported by european states, like Italy, to halt refugee boats travelling to the continent. This though, has resulted in an overcrowding of detention centers on the Libyan coast, a perfect environment for the growth of illegal activities such as slave trading. In fact, fortune reports that between 400 000 to 1 million refugees are currently trapped in Libya, putting their safety and freedom at great risk. As of right now, the fragile Libyan state is in cooperation with other numerous states to try and resolve the problematic, but due to a weak presence there has been limited progress.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event |
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| 25 September 1926 | League of Nations - Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery. One of the first treaties that specifically discussed human rights, and more specifically slavery. |
| 28 June 1930 | League of Nations - Forced Labour convention. |
| 10 December 1948 | Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 4 addresses the issue of slavery and forced labour, establishing slavery as a violation of human rights. |
| 7 September 1956 | United Nations- Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery. |
| 15 November 2000 | Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons |
| 26 March 2015 | United Kingdom - Modern slavery act approved into british law |
| 25 September 2015 | Sustainable development goals adopted. Goal 8.7 addresses the issue of forced labour, child exploitation and modern slavery, to finally eradicate its existence. |

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Convention to suppress the slave trade and slavery, 25th September 1926
- Supplementary convention on the abolition of slavery, 7th September 1956
- ILO forced labour convention, 28th June 1930
- United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, 17 December 1991, [\(A/RES/46/122.\)](#)
- ILO worst forms of child labour convention, 17th June 1999
- ILO convention on domestic work, 16th June 2011
- Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, 26th of September 2016, [\(A/HRC/33/L.2\)](#)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Corporate responsibility and awareness

Especially in the developed world, slavery has often disguised itself in international supply chains of products we use on a daily basis. To combat this, the UK government has recently launched a new tactic to tackle 21st century slavery, and it is focused on corporate responsibility. As of now, any business that operates in the UK has to report to the government about the presence of slavery in their supply chains, as well as stating a plan that they will take to resolve the problem inside their own company. As a solution, this solution has received mixed opinions and views. Many point to its effectiveness at indirectly raising awareness, and making company employees more aware of the issue. On the other hand, some point to the fact that only 30% of companies have actually complied with the regulation, raising serious concerns regarding the government's recognition of slavery as a serious issue, as they haven't appeared to be completely invested as of now.

Criminalization of slave-related acts

One of the most successful tactics used by countries in the past has been to treat slavery as a severe crime, and therefore prosecute any offender of the crime. This may come as a surprise, but many countries treat slavery more as being related to poverty, which diminishes the horrific crimes perpetrated by slave owners and traffickers. Instead, the UK has recently extended the maximum time of jail sentence for traffickers to 14 years and has started a programme where traffickers pay compensations to their victims for an extended period of time. Moreover, Brazil has stated that they plan to collect and record data of any company that is involved with slavery in any of the process of production with one of their products. Globally, especially by organization such as the ILO, these actions have been met positively and sometimes praised as respectable attempts to eradicate this problematic. Justifyingly though, many have pointed to the fact that this new legislation and law will only work if appropriately adopted by each respective government, which have not had a track-record of being deeply involved in slavery-related topics.

Possible Solutions

Socio-economic support

As discussed previously, it is the vulnerable that are the victims of this crime, especially in economic terms. Often, families are forced into the system because of economic turmoil or lack of social-services by their respective state. Therefore, a solution that needs to be put in place is financial assistance for both susceptible individuals, as well as ex-slaves that have recently been freed. This assistance can range from education to micro financing opportunities, in order to ensure a certain level of stability. If adopted globally, this assistance would also benefit the global economy as well as decrease poverty levels, which is one of the ideal conditions for exploitation. One of the major limits of this solution, is it's attainability to many developing nations, that do not have the resources or tools to make this type

of support available. For this to solution to succeed, global organizations, member states and financial institutions would have to come together and cooperate to find agreeable compromises.

Training and informing local populations

Already applied in some regions of Thailand, training sessions for local security forces and public workshop on detecting modern-day slaves can be extremely effective. As 21st century slave trading is often hard to detect, especially by government forces, it is crucial for the local security forces and populations to be aware of slavery as an issue, as well as being able to identify a slave when encountering one. To achieve this, a well-established UN agency or UN-affiliated organization needs to directly work with the authorities of any chosen country by holding both integrating into the local community and being trust by the population. This community work is crucial for this system to be effective at abolishing modern-day slavery, as locals will not reports incidents if they don't feel supported and protected themselves. Furthermore, there needs to be clear communication and coordination between different regions of the world to ensure this solution to succeed, as human-trafficking also occurs between international borders.

Criminalizing slave acts

As a surprise to most, contemporary forms of slavery are not outlawed or even culturally discouraged in some parts of the world. As an example, forced/child marriage is not frowned upon in many rural regions in the world, despite it being classified as a form of slavery. Instead, some countries themselves practice slavery as a form of punishment or take advantage of their populations for the government's benefit, such as what is happening in north Korea and Eritrea. This can be a result of no major UN document or treaty that is legally binding and addresses slavery to its full extent. Therefore, all member states need to hold accountable for their response to slavery, especially in terms of its position in the legal system, as slavery is often categorized as a form of poverty and therefore offenders face minor penalties for their acts.

Centralised system of work

A problem that many newspaper and organizations have raised, is the fragmented system of work for slavery, which is spread throughout many entities. This is a major issue, as modern-day slavery is very interconnected and intertwined, meaning that having multiple organization doing different work only adds to the confusion. Therefore, a popular suggestion is to add a UN specialised agency to work on all aspects of slavery, and coordinate action worldwide. This would not only focus the course of action and therefore speed up progress but would also act as a recognisable organization for the millions of slaves living in the world currently. For this to succeed, it is crucial that every member states can clearly

inform and showcase their perspective on contemporary-slavery, in order to have a truly global representation of this issue at the UN,

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Appendix

1. <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/> (Anti-Slavery, Slavery Today in all its forms)

A great source for delegates of any member states, as it summarize and showcases the key forms of slavery and the causes worldwide. I would further recommend this for delegates that are struggling to find a specific country policy, as this website mentions some geographic areas where each form of slavery is most present.

2. <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/global-findings/> (Global Slavery index, Findings)

An accredited source, suitable for any delegate that wants to note any statistics or quantifiable data regarding slavery worldwide. The index also has sections dedicated to each individual country by stating the situation and government response, useful for writing policy statements or building a strong foreign policy.

3. <https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/lang--en/index.htm> (ILO, statistics and database)

Another great resource for finding reliable and certified data regarding the topic in a more general scope, with insightful explanations of its causes and reasoning. This source can be used extensively for the writing of the resolution, as it entails useful concepts to keep in mind when trying to resolve this issue,

