



Trafficking in human beings

According to the United Nations: “Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force (...), for the purpose of exploitation”. (Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Palermo 2000.)

Trafficking in human beings is a multi-billion-dollar form of international organized crime, constituting modern-day slavery. Victims are recruited and trafficked between countries and regions using deception or coercion. They are stripped of their autonomy, freedom of movement and choice, and face various forms of physical and mental abuse. Trafficking in human beings is a crime under international law and many national and regional legal systems. Apart from the grave breach of fundamental human rights, trafficking may also violate immigration and labour legislation as well as a variety of criminal regulations.

Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation – This prevalent form of trafficking affects every region in the world, either as a source, transit or destination country. Women and children from developing countries, and from vulnerable parts of society in developed countries, are lured by promises of decent employment into leaving their homes and travelling away. Victims are often provided with false travel documents and an organized network is used to transport them to the destination country, where they find themselves forced into sexual slavery and held in inhumane conditions and constant fear.

Trafficking for forced labour – Victims of this equally widespread form of trafficking come primarily from developing countries. They are recruited and trafficked using deception and coercion and find themselves held in conditions of slavery in a variety of jobs. Men, women and children are engaged in agricultural and construction work, domestic servitude and other labour-intensive jobs.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourism – This crime has been apparent in Asia for several years and is now emerging in Africa as well as Central and South America. The phenomenon is promoted by the growth of inexpensive air travel and the relatively low risk of being caught and prosecuted in these destinations for engaging in sexual relations with minors.

Trafficking in organs – Trafficking in humans for the purpose of using their organs, in particular kidneys, is a rapidly growing field of criminal activity. In many countries waiting lists for transplants are very long, and criminals have seized this opportunity to exploit the desperation of patients and potential donors. Victims are often misinformed about the medical aspects of the organ removal and deceived about the sums they will receive. Their health, even life, is at risk as operations may be carried out in clandestine conditions with no medical follow-up. Doctors and other medical staff are often part of the criminal networks involved in this crime.

INTERPOL



INTERPOL's resources

Trafficking in human beings is a sophisticated crime that requires international law enforcement co-operation. INTERPOL organizes regional and international meetings, offers technical assistance and training, facilitates the exchange of intelligence, and provides other services for investigating and prosecuting criminals involved in such activity.

The INTERPOL Expert Working Group on Trafficking in Human Beings meets annually to raise awareness of emerging issues, promote prevention programmes and initiate specialised training. Its manual of best practice for law enforcement investigators includes information on how to investigate trafficking for sexual exploitation, trafficking for forced labour, trafficking for domestic servitude and trafficking for organ removal.

A recent INTERPOL initiative, Project Childhood, addresses the issue of sex tourism, aiming to develop partnerships with police authorities and other stakeholders in order to promote the prosecution of abusers and the rescue of victims.

INTERPOL also operates a Notices and Diffusions system allowing global co-operation between its member countries in tracking criminals and suspects, as well as locating missing persons or collecting information. Especially relevant for the fight against child sexual exploitation is the Green Notice – through which countries can warn other member states if a known child-sex offender is travelling to their territory or region.

INTERPOL has developed additional tools which can facilitate the exchange of information among law enforcement agencies in member countries. The Human Smuggling and Trafficking message (HST) provides a standardised format for reporting cases of trafficking between member countries and to INTERPOL's database. MIND/FIND technical solutions enable frontline law enforcement agencies dealing with people smuggling, such as border police or immigration authorities, to receive instant responses for queries on stolen or lost travel documents, stolen motor vehicles and wanted criminals. These databases are accessible to authorised users of INTERPOL's I-24/7 global police communications system and are useful in detecting cases of trafficking in human beings at the early stage of entry into a country.

International co-ordination

INTERPOL works closely with other key bodies involved in the fight against human trafficking, including Eurojust, Europol, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as NGOs active in this field.



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For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the Interpol National Central Bureau in your country.