



General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 October 2022

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-first session

12 September–7 October 2022

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Joint written statement* submitted by International
Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial
Discrimination, Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and
Immigration, International-Lawyers.Org, Union of Arab
Jurists, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation,
non-governmental organizations in special consultative
status, International Educational Development, Inc., World
Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Sex Trafficking of Children and Women in Africa

Africa is faced with several economic crises including high levels of unemployment, poverty, hunger, corruption, political and economic instabilities. These problems have heightened tensions causing the displacement of many people. Seeking for ways to survive, for new opportunities and finding better living conditions has led to migrant flows between the different regions of Africa and beyond in movements described as, 'irregular channels of smuggling and trafficking'. The COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 also generated conditions that increased the number of people who experienced vulnerabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted existing and planned anti-trafficking interventions. Women and children were met with restrictions of travel, lock down measures were introduced, and people had to stay at home, schools were closed, and children did not have access to learning. Furthermore, survivors of trafficking faced an increased risk of becoming victims again. Governments all over the globe diverted funds and resources to contain the pandemic and as a result, there was decreased protection measures and service provision for victims of sexual trafficking.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its 2021 report, states that countries in West Africa detect more victims than any of the other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The report gives Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, Guinea, the Niger, and Senegal as countries of source, transit, and destination for the trafficking of women and children. Many of the young victims are trafficked to the Western countries to work in the sex industry. The Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) estimates that more than 50,000 girls of Nigerian Nationality currently work in the commercial sex business in Italy, many of them victims of trafficking. The number of children in West Africa trafficked is over a quarter of all trafficked victims in the world and of these, 64% were from sub-Saharan Africa. This has been attributed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic where millions of children in West and Central Africa are orphaned due to the pandemic.

In North Africa, human trafficking flourishes in Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. The latter are countries of source, transit, and destination for human trafficking. In this region, traffickers target undocumented migrants including unaccompanied minors from sub-Saharan Africa, from Mali, the Niger, Cameroon, the Sudan, South Sudan, and Nigeria. These victims fall prey to sexual trafficking and other forms of exploitation because of reasons including language barrier, which traffickers use to lure them into jobs that exploit them sexually. For many of the undocumented individuals, Europe is their destination but the journey through the Sahara Desert is long and treacherous. Many of them run out of money and must look to traffickers for survival who in turn exploit them for their labour and sex.

According to the United States of America Trafficking in Persons Report for 2021, lack of economic and educational opportunities causes family members, including parents, siblings, and husbands to push women into sex trafficking to supplement family income. There is also the practice of "temporary" or "summer marriages" in Egypt for the purpose of commercial sex by individuals that come from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

In East Africa, most of the sex trafficking takes place in Kenya mainly through human trafficking rings disguising themselves as employment agencies. These agencies work with recruitment brokers who ferry girls from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and to a lesser extent, the United Republic of Tanzania. The traffickers then send the women and girls to the Middle East where they are received by individuals posing as foreign agencies. Research by the Institute for Security Studies notes that policing the crimes of sexual trafficking has become more difficult due to a lack of proper intelligence on the criminal value chain, and inconsistent engagement between the two countries. More so, East African countries have failed to negotiate with Middle East countries on trafficking issues due to gaps in their domestic legislations and regional trafficking strategies. With these in place, authorities in the Middle East will oversee the protection and safety of workers and prevent them from being exploited by trafficking networks. The Philippines is an example of a country with a bilateral agreement with the Middle East, which provides protection to the workers.

In the Southern part of Africa, South Africa is the main destination for human trafficking from countries around the region. Women and girls are trafficked from Lesotho's border towns, Mozambique, and Malawi by individuals who are ethnically based. The United States of America Department of State Trafficking Person Report indicates that local criminal rings control child prostitution in the country by getting women and girls to provide sexual services to miners at West Rand while West African syndicates have control of commercial sex business in Johannesburg. The report further indicates that Russian and Bulgarian crime syndicates control prostitution business in and around Cape Town.

Recommendations to African States

- States need to find solutions to the root causes of sexual trafficking that are embedded in the socio-economic, political, and social aspects of their countries. To do this, there needs to be political will from African governments to eliminate the vice of sexual trafficking
- Strengthening the capacity of the national agencies for the prohibition of trafficking persons in States. Ensuring that they are well funded and facilitated to carry out their duties.
- Reinforcing bilateral and multilateral cooperation between States of origin, transit, and destination in the areas of identification, protection, and the assistance of victims of trafficking.
- Sex trafficking should be identified and addressed as a public health issue through the continuous programs to educate vulnerable groups of women and children at risk. Online safety education, mentoring programs and as part of the school curriculums specialized human trafficking prevention lessons for all children.
- Government authorities should also provide support and promote health services to individuals for the physical and psychological consequences of exploitation.
- Increased efforts by states to strengthen their laws and policies and make perpetrators of sex trafficking accountable for the crimes committed
- At a regional level, African states should work together in the identifying, sharing and implementation of best practices in the prevention of trafficking persons on the continent.
- Reinforcement of cooperation with international partners, which will help in the reinforcement of State's capacities to fight sex trafficking of women and children.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Just Atonement Inc., Arab Lawyers Association-UK, Human Rights Defenders (HRD), Brussels Tribunal, Iraqi Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRD), General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), Organization for Justice & Democracy in Iraq (OJDI), Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1. United Nations, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, article 3(a), 2000, http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf.
2. United Nations, "Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime," article 3(a), 2000, http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_smug_eng.pdf.
3. National Health Act 61 of 2003

4. Bello, P., Olutola, A., The Conundrum of Human Trafficking in Africa, 2020. Available from: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/70938>, [Accessed 19 May 2022]
5. UNODC, Human trafficking in West Africa: three out of four victims are children says UNODC report, 2021. Available from: https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/human-trafficking-in-west-africa_-three-out-of-four-victims-are-children-says-unodc-report.html, [Accessed 19 May 2022]
6. Institute for Security Studies, 2020. Available from: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/east-african-human-trafficking-rings-expand-their-operations>, [Accessed 20 May 2022]