



Royal Model United Nations
2026

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Royal Model United Nations 2026

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dearest participants of ROYMUN'26,

It is the greatest honor to welcome you to the first edition of Royal Model United Nations 2026 and our CCPCJ committee.

While shaping the ideas from the very beginning, our main goal was to ensure an extensive experience with both academic and organisational perfection.

In this prestigious committee, you will be raising impeccable ideas, debating about the current and the upcoming process, building new structures and turning the non-integrated actions and solutions to a masterpiece. Your board members will be guiding you to reach perfection in any situation.

While preparing, you will be discovering every single step about your topic and you may even find yourself in the middle of this sequence of events. It will be clear that you embrace your role in the committee.

Keep in mind that every speech you deliver, every motion you give, every question that you ask will gain a new perspective for everyone. The key point is to remain active and work confidentially while shaping the decision-making process with your colleagues.

As the Secretary-General, I am impatiently waiting to see your intelligent work and looking forward to sharing this royal experience with you.

Sincerely,
Imge Belgin
Secretary-General of ROYMUN'26



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRBOARD

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to ROYMUN, powered by The Bosphorus Collective, and welcome to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ).

It is our pleasure to have you join us in discussing one of the most pressing criminal justice and humanitarian challenges of our time. Human trafficking continues to affect millions of people worldwide, and its impact becomes even more severe in conflict-affected regions where instability, displacement, and weakened institutions leave vulnerable populations exposed to exploitation.

Under the agenda item *“Prevention of Human Trafficking in Conflict Zones and Ensuring Victim Protection,”* delegates will have the opportunity to examine the complex relationship between armed conflict, organized crime, migration, and human rights. Throughout the committee, you will be expected to evaluate existing international frameworks, identify gaps in current responses, and develop practical and innovative solutions aimed at preventing trafficking and protecting victims.

As members of CCPCJ, we encourage you to approach this topic with both critical thinking and a spirit of cooperation. Meaningful debate, strong diplomacy, and well-developed resolutions will be essential in addressing the multidimensional nature of this issue.

We look forward to witnessing engaging discussions, thoughtful negotiations, and creative solutions throughout the conference.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretariat and Executive Team of ROYMUN for their dedication, commitment, and countless efforts in making this conference possible.

Best Regards,
The Board of CCPCJ



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3. Introduction

3.1. Introduction to the Committee

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1992. The commission was created to strengthen international cooperation against evolving criminal threats and to support the development of effective and fair justice systems worldwide. As the principal policymaking body of the United Nations of crime prevention and criminal justice, the CCPCJ plays a central role in shaping global strategies to combat transnational organized crime, corruption, cybercrime and human trafficking.

The commission offers member states a forum to exchange experience, information and discuss emerging challenges in criminal justice in order to develop national and international strategies, and to identify priorities for combating crime. The CCPCJ also works with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and contributes to the implementation of international legal frameworks aimed at strengthening the rule of law and protecting vulnerable populations.

Towards the end of each year, the CCPCJ meets at a reconvened session to consider budgetary and administrative matters as the governing body of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice program. Till today the commission still remains to address and recognize global security challenges. By promoting international cooperation and effective criminal justice policies, the CCPCJ contributes to the creation of a safer society.

3.2. Introduction to the Agenda Item: Prevention of Human Trafficking in Conflict Zones and Ensuring Victim Protection

Human trafficking in conflict zones has emerged as a growing challenge at the intersection of human rights, international security and criminal justice and preventing this issue has become an increasingly urgent challenge worldwide. Armed conflicts disrupt social structures, weaken institutions and force millions to leave their homes which creates conditions which exploitation can thrive. As humanitarian crises continue to grow, traffickers are increasingly able to target vulnerable populations who have lack of access to security, legal protection, economic opportunities and human rights.



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According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 123 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing the public order. For many displaced individuals, the journey towards safety carries significant risks including forced labor, recruitment by armed groups, sexual abuse and human trafficking. Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced individuals often face barriers to accessing employment, healthcare, education and this makes them particularly vulnerable to criminal networks that exploit humanity.

The consequences of human trafficking in conflict zones extend far beyond individual victims. It contributes to the growth of international organized crime, exploits humanity and weakens the rule of law. Recent conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, Libya and Afghanistan have shown how displacement and insecurity can create opportunities for human traffickers to operate across borders with unlimited accountability. Despite the existence of international legal frameworks such as The Palermo Protocol, significant protection gaps still remain. As conflicts continue to affect millions worldwide, preventing human trafficking and ensuring effective victim protection remains a key point of both humanitarian efforts and international security.

In addition, combating human trafficking in conflict zones requires more than prosecuting traffickers. It requires coordinated efforts to reduce vulnerability, strengthening protection mechanisms for displaced populations, increasing international cooperation and ensuring that survivors receive needed support to rebuild their lives.



4. Terminology

Human Trafficking: The illegal recruitment or transfer of individuals through force, fraud and abuse for the purpose of exploitation. Such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, slavery.

Conflict Zone; An area affected by armed conflict, violence or political instability where security and governance systems are disrupted.

Victim Protection: The process of ensuring physical safety and human rights to individuals who have been harmed by a crime through access to healthcare, legal assistance, necessary support and equal treatment.

Organized Crime: Criminal activities, highly structured, centralized enterprises run by individuals or groups who coordinate illegal activities for profit, power, and illicit control. Such as human trafficking and drug trafficking.

Cybercrime: Any criminal activity that involves the use of digital networks and computers or the internet to target illegal acts.

Refugee: An individual who has been forced to flee their home country to escape war, conflict or violence and is unable or unwilling to return.

Asylum Seeker: An individual who has left their country and formally applied for international legal protection in another country because they fear violence, war or persecution, but whose application has not yet been legally determined.

State Sovereignty: The government's full control over its territory

Asset Recovery: The process of identifying, tracing, freezing and returning stolen assets obtained through criminal activities to their rightful owners or countries of origin.

The Rule of Law: A principle of governance in which all individuals, institutions and the state itself are accountable to laws that are publicly defined and equally applied.

Binding Legal Instruments: Formal international agreements or documents that create legal rights and obligations for the states or parties that accept them.

Non-Binding Normative Instruments: International agreements or documents that establish standards, principles or guidelines for state behavior without creating legally enforceable obligations under international law.

Reintegration: The process of helping survivors return to society and rebuild their lives.



5. International Legal and Institutional Frameworks

5.1 The Palermo Protocol

The Palermo Protocol or formally known as the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children “ is the first legally binding international document with a globally accepted definition of human trafficking. Adopted November 15th 2000 by the UN General Assembly, it would come into force December 25th 2003. It is a legal instrument which established the “3Ps” being Prevention, Protection and Prosecution. The Palermo Protocol breaks down human trafficking into three segments which must be fulfilled for a case to be legally defined as trafficking. Which consist of;

The Act: Recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving person

The Means: Threat or the usage of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of a higher power or taking advantage of a person in a state of vulnerability

The Purpose: Sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, servitude, forceful removal of organs, pressure to commit unlawful acts

The Protocol states that should any of the stated illegal “means” be used, such as force or deception, the victim's consent is labeled completely irrelevant. For persons below 18, it is legally considered as trafficking even if no force, deception or coercion was used.

On top of this, signing nations are legally required to pass domestic laws making international trafficking, attempting to traffick or being an accomplice as a criminal offense. Countries are also required to protect the identity, privacy and dignity of victims during legal proceedings as well as being urged to provide physical, psychological and social recovery assistance such as free medical care and government provided housing. When a victim is returned to their home country, the option is stated to be voluntary and must prioritize the safety of the victim.

States are also advised to strengthen border security and require commercial carriers such as airlines or international bus companies to check documentation and enforce sanctions upon companies which fail to do so. The “Saving Clause” ensures that none of these measures override a state's obligations under international humanitarian law.



5.2 UNODC Framework for Action

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime addresses human trafficking through its “International Framework for Action”, adopted as a way to turn the legal text of the Palermo Protocol into measurable policies on the ground. While the Palermo Protocol tells nations what to do, the International Framework for Action acts as a detailed manual on how to do it. It is built around a 5 pillar system, in coordination with the traditional “3Ps” framework. However, it is stated that no anti-trafficking measures are to adversely affect the dignity and human rights of a person, particularly to those who have been victims of trafficking. As well as requiring the methods written out in the Trafficking Protocol to be applied to persons non-discriminately and noting both the similarities and differences in both genders regarding their experiences while being trafficked shall be taken into account.

Prosecution: The Framework requires states to explicitly criminalize all forms of trafficking in a unified legal code, rather than loose separate labor and assault laws. It also advocates for further usage of wiretapping, undercover operations and financial footprinting as well as mandating the seizure of all assets belonging to a trafficker and be funneled directly into victim compensation funds. As well as ensuring that victims and witnesses are put into protection before, during and after the prosecution of the crime.

Protection: It is stated that many victims of trafficking remain unidentified, thus leaving them unprotected, advising that nations establish more efficient ways of identification. The framework uses a National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is a legal pathway that ensures that if an officer of the law comes across a suspected victim, they are to hand them over to social and medical services rather than detaining them, as well as requiring states to give immediate psychological, medical aid, translation services and legal counsel to victims. It is also advised that states provide temporary residence or permanent immigration status so that they are not summarily deported back to unsafe conditions.

Prevention: The prevention clause calls for the amendment of adoption of legislative measures and establishing comprehensive policies and programmes to prevent victims from being re-trafficked, which includes the promotion of legal migration of those in the working age. It pushes for nations to implement regulatory legislation which forces corporations to verify their global supply chains are free of forced labor as well as directing economic aid to marginal communities to eliminate the root causes of trafficking such as but not limited to extreme poverty.



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International Cooperation: Pushes to standardize cross border extradition policies and simplifying international mutual legal assistance so that evidence gathered in a destination country can be cleanly used to convict a recruiter or trafficker in the country of origin and allows Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) to bypass lengthy bureaucratic channels and procedures and share real time intelligence to law enforcement, conduct joint surveillance and execute simultaneous arrests across borders. As well as calling for the establishment of a multidisciplinary mechanism among relevant stakeholders, such as governmental institutions like law enforcement, judicial agencies, NGO's, victim service providers, the private sector and similar organizations.

International Coordination and Monitoring: Despite human trafficking being a crime that frequently takes place across borders, member states do not have the capacity to adjudicate, investigate and punish crimes because international cooperation is inadequate thus, it calls for the creation of a legal basis for the promotion of cooperation agreements and the strengthening of existing system to improve identification, return, risk assessment and reintegration of victims as well as increasing national capacity for extradition.



5.3. ICAT Coordination

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) was established in 2007 with the aim of improving coordination among international organizations involved in combating human trafficking. ICAT functions are providing a platform to exchange information, experiences and good practices related to anti-trafficking activities. It also supports the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations by promoting the effective implementation of all international instruments and standards of relevance aimed at preventing and combating trafficking in persons as well as protecting and assisting victims. The work of ICAT has become increasingly relevant in situations of armed conflict and humanitarian crises. Conflict-related displacement, weakened state institutions and limited access to protection mechanisms can create conditions in which trafficking becomes more widespread. ICAT encourages cooperation between humanitarian, migration, human rights and criminal justice actors in order to strengthen prevention efforts and improve protection for victims and survivors. ICAT also serves an important forum worldwide for discussing emerging challenges and trends related to trafficking in persons. Through collaboration among its member organizations, the group helps improve information sharing and promote coordinated international response. This is especially important in conflict and post-conflict areas where the risk of human trafficking can rapidly escalate and different humanitarian and law enforcement actors often operate simultaneously.

Therefore, ICAT helps ensure that anti-trafficking efforts are integrated into broader humanitarian aid and protection interventions, rather than being addressed in isolation. Another important point of ICAT's work is the development of policy documents and recommendations on challenges related to human trafficking. These publications provide guidance to governments, international organizations and other stakeholders on strengthening victim protection, enhancing international cooperation and prevention measures. By bringing together organizations with expertise in areas such as labor rights, migration, child protection and criminal justice, ICAT promotes a more comprehensive approach to combating human rights. In recent years, ICAT has increasingly focused on human trafficking in the context of armed conflicts, mass displacement and humanitarian crises. The organization had underscored the necessity of including anti-trafficking measures into emergency responses and humanitarian aid programs from the earliest stages of a crisis. This approach aims to reduce vulnerabilities before exploitation occurs and to strengthen protection mechanisms for risky populations. Through its coordinating role, ICAT contributes to better consistency in international anti-human trafficking efforts and supports the implementation of existing international legal frameworks. Its work demonstrates the importance of cooperation among international organizations in combating a crime that often exceeds borders and affects many segments of society.



6. Victim Protection and Rehabilitation

Victim protection still remains one of the most important aspects of combating human trafficking. While efforts are often focused on preventing trafficking and prosecuting offenders, ensuring the safety and well-being of victims is equally important. Victims of human trafficking frequently suffer physical abuse, psychological trauma, social exclusion and economic hardship which all of them could have long-term consequences for their lives. The Palermo Protocol specifically calls upon states to adopt measures that protect victims' privacy and identity and provide assistance for their recovery and victims should also be given access to information regarding legal proceedings and available support services.

Providing effective protection for victims can be challenging in conflict zones. Ongoing violence, weakened institutions, displacement and limited humanitarian access can make it difficult to identify victims and deliver assistance. Many of the trafficking survivors experience physical injuries, psychological trauma and economic hardship. These challenges make the identification and protection of trafficking victims significantly more difficult.

In addition, rehabilitation plays a crucial role in helping victims recover from the effects of trafficking. Survivors often require access to healthcare, legal assistance and safe housing. Educational opportunities and vocational training can also help victims regain their independence. However, access to such services remain limited in many conflict-affected regions due to lack of resources and damaged infrastructure. The successful reintegration of victims of human trafficking into society is another crucial aspect of victim support. Many victims face stigma, discrimination and difficulties finding employment after their experiences. Long-term support from governments, international organizations and local communities can help victims rebuild their lives and reduce their risk of re-exposure to human trafficking.

In essence, victim protection and rehabilitation should be viewed not only as humanitarian obligations but also as an important part of efforts to combat human trafficking. Providing victims with the support they need can help them recover from their experiences and reduce the risk of future exploitation.



7. Methods and Patterns of Human Trafficking in Conflict Zones

Human trafficking often increases during armed conflicts because conflict zones create conditions that make individuals more vulnerable to human trafficking. Armed conflicts often lead to displacement, family separation and the breakdown of law enforcement institutions. Many individuals are forced to leave their homes, lose their sources of income and become separated from their families. At the same time, governments and law enforcement agencies may find it difficult to operate effectively due to ongoing violence. These conditions allow human traffickers to take advantage of people who are seeking safety, shelter, employment or basic needs.

One of the most common methods used by the traffickers in conflict zones is deception. Many victims are promised employment, accommodation, financial assistance or transportation to safer areas. However, these promises are often false and are used to lure individuals into exploitative situations. Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are particularly vulnerable, as they often have limited resources and few opportunities to support themselves. Forced displacement, separation of families and the rule of erosion of the rule of law further increase the risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Another important method used in conflict zones is the exploitation of displacement routes and refugee environments. People fleeing violence often pass through overcrowded camps or unstable border regions where protection systems are weak. Human traffickers exploit this situation by approaching individuals during transit or in camps, offering assistance such as transportation, shelter or documentation. After victims accept this assistance, they are often relegated to forced labor, sexual exploitation, or debt bondage where threats or lack of legal status limit their chances of escape.

In addition to these methods, trafficking patterns in conflict zones often become more organized over time. Criminal networks exploit instability and weak state control to transport victims across regions and borders with a low risk of detection. In some cases, armed groups are also directly involved in exploitation, including forced recruitment, forced labor and sexual violence. Children are particularly vulnerable in these environments and are often targeted due to a lack of protection and separation from their family structures. Overall, these patterns demonstrate that human trafficking in conflict zones is closely linked to instability, displacement and poor governance.

Overall, these patterns demonstrate that human trafficking in conflict zones is linked to displacement, instability and poor governance. However, the forms of exploitation to which victims are subjected can vary significantly depending on the nature of the conflict and the vulnerabilities of the affected populations. Most of the victims are forced into labor in agriculture, construction or domestic work while others are exploited through sexual exploitation, forced marriage and forced criminal activities. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation while children are targeted by armed groups for forced labor or recruitment.



8. Role of Armed Groups and Organized Criminal Networks

Armed groups and organized criminal networks play a major role in the spread of human trafficking in conflict zones. In situations of armed conflict, weakened state authority and instability create an environment in which these actors can operate more freely. Human trafficking becomes both a source of income and a method of control of the population living in conflict-affected areas. These groups are often directly involved in human trafficking activities. Civilians may be forced into labor, subjected to sexual abuse or other forms of mistreatment. In many conflicts, armed groups have employed methods of forced recruitment, including using children as soldiers, messengers or support personnel. Sexual violence is also used as a tool of intimidation and control over communities. These practices are particularly prevalent in areas where armed groups control territory and state agencies are unable to intervene.

Organized criminal networks contribute to human trafficking by operating cross-border recruitment, transportation and exploitation systems. They exploit weak border controls, corruption and instability to move victims between regions and countries. These networks often rely on fake documents and smuggling routes to evade detection. Human trafficking is also frequently linked to other criminal activities such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling and money laundering which increases the financial power and reach of these groups. In many conflict zones, collaboration exists between armed groups and criminal networks. While armed groups provide protection or territorial access, criminal networks make human trafficking operations more organized and difficult to dismantle. By exploiting instability, targeting vulnerable populations and weakening already fragile governance systems, armed groups and organized crime networks.



9. Prevention Mechanisms in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings

Prevention of human trafficking in conflict and post-conflict settings requires addressing the conditions that increase vulnerability, such as displacement and the breakdown of governance structures. Armed conflicts weaken state institutions, disrupt public services and create displacement of populations which makes individuals more exposed to exploitation. Because of this, prevention must focus not only on criminal justice responses but also on protection, assistance and long-term stabilization efforts.

One of the most important prevention mechanisms is early identification and risk reduction among vulnerable populations. This includes monitoring displacement flows, identifying high-risk groups such as refugees, internally displaced persons, children, women and marginalized communities, and ensuring their access to protection services. In conflict situations, especially during abrupt displacements, the risk of human trafficking often emerges early. Humanitarian organizations and local authorities also play a key role in detecting patterns of exploitation before they become widespread. Another important prevention strategy is to ensure equal access to safe and regulated migration or movement routes. In many conflict zones, people are forced to rely on smugglers or informal networks due to lack of safe routes, which increases human trafficking. Providing legal identification documents and asylum procedures reduces reliance on criminals. At the same time, improving conditions in refugee camps and transit zones helps reduce the risk of recruitment by human traffickers operating in these areas. Strengthening law enforcement capacity and border management is also essential in both conflict and post-conflict environments. When police structures are weakened or destroyed, human traffickers can transport victims across borders without the risk of detection. Therefore, post-conflict reconstruction efforts often involve rebuilding justice systems, training law enforcement and improving international cooperation. Informing vulnerable populations, particularly those living in displaced persons camps and border regions about these methods can reduce the possibility of abuse.

In conclusion, long-term prevention depends on addressing structural causes such as inequality, lack of education and poor governance during post-conflict recovery phases. Sustainable development, reintegration programs for displaced populations and economic opportunities reduce the conditions that allow human trafficking networks to re-emerge. If these causes are not addressed, the risk of human trafficking often persists even after active conflict ends.



10. Root Causes and Long-Term Consequences of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is often the result of various factors that make individuals vulnerable to exploitation. In conflict zones, these factors are aggravated by violence, instability and the collapse of social and economic structures. As conflicts persist, more people face the risk of falling into the hands of human traffickers with limited means of protection.

One of the main causes of human trafficking is poverty. People who struggle to meet their basic needs are most likely to accept risky job offers of financial support. The destruction of homes, businesses and infrastructure during conflicts can deprive entire communities of a stable source of income which allows the traffickers to exploit people who are desperate for work or safety. Displacement is also another factor, every year millions of people are forced to leave their homes due to armed conflict, violence or persecution. Many refugees and internally displaced persons lose access to education, healthcare, employment and legal documents. Separation of families is also common during displacement, depriving many individuals of support networks. Weak governance and the breakdown of the rule of law also contribute to the problem. In conflict-affected areas, police forces and courts may not function effectively. This facilitates the activities of human traffickers and makes it difficult for victims to seek help.

The consequences of human trafficking often continue long after the exploitation ends. Victims may suffer physical injuries, health problems and psychological trauma as a result of their experiences. Many victims face difficulties returning to education, finding employment or rebuilding relationships with their families and communities. Feelings of fear, anxiety and social isolation can persist for years. Human trafficking also affects communities and countries as a whole, it puts additional pressure on already fragile institutions, contributes to insecurity and allows criminal networks to expand their operations. In post-conflict societies, human trafficking can slow recovery efforts and make achieving long-term stability and development more difficult. The effects of human trafficking are also felt by families and local communities. Family members often have no information about their missing relatives which leads to emotional and financial hardship. In cases where children are abducted, they may be deprived of education for extended periods, limiting their future opportunities and making them more vulnerable to exploitation.

Human trafficking can also have significant economic consequences. The loss of productive members of society reduces economic activity and places additional pressure on health and law enforcement systems. Governments in conflict-affected countries often have limited resources and they may struggle to provide sufficient support to victims while working on other conflicts and challenges.

Furthermore, human trafficking networks can continue their activities even after a conflict ends and this can undermine post-conflict recovery efforts, weaken public trust in state institutions and create additional obstacles to peace and stability.



11. Core Case Studies of Human Trafficking in Conflict Zones

11.1. The Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian Refugee crisis is one of the largest outflows of persons from a state in modern times. Unlike those in Ukraine, which received immediate protection by the EU, Syrian refugees found themselves in highly restrictive environments when they fled to neighboring states. However, as many neighboring nations are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention to its full scope, many Syrians were rejected or not granted the full legal status as a refugee, being viewed as guests or displaced persons. This severely limited their ability to find work, due to them being barred from entering the formal and legal labor market, many families were forced into the unregulated and informal economy to pay for food, shelter and essential necessities in underfunded camps or urban slums. These refugees had to rely on exploitative employers who used the threat of reporting them to immigration authorities for deportation as a tool for absolute coercion.

Most forms of trafficking recorded in the case of the Syrian Refugee Crisis were not done by the traditional large and armed mafias or criminal organizations, but rather less organized networks consisting of acquaintances, neighbors and even family members. Driven by severe economic exhaustion, a documented surge occurred in forced early marriages of minor girls. Families frequently consented to marry off their daughters to wealthy individuals in hosting countries. Framed as culturally as a protective mechanism or marriage, these transactions often functioned no different than acts of trafficking for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Adding to this, due to the collapse of the formal government, non-state armed forces had free reign as they pleased, those such as ISIL targeted ethnic and religious minorities, particularly Yazidi women and girls captured in Iraq and transported to Syria. This was a highly organised system and network of sexual slavery that even featured physical slave markets and written bills of sale.



11.2. Russia-Ukraine War

The Russia-Ukraine war serves as a critical and highly documented modern case study for analyzing how large-scale, state on state conflict reshapes the dynamics of human trafficking. When the conflict escalated on a grand scale in 2022, it grew into one of the largest documented cases of mass displacement since World War 2 and according to the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the displacement was uniquely gendered. Because the Ukrainian government restricted men between the ages of 18-60 from leaving the nation to aid with national defense, approximately 90% of those fleeing across borders were women and children. In the opening and chaotic months of invasion millions of women and children arrived at border checkpoints with rapidly depleting savings, lack of language skills and trauma, in this hour of disparity traffickers posed as benevolent landlords or employers to offer fraudulent housing, free transportation or employment, effectively trapping victims before humanitarian aid could officially be administered.

As the war progressed from an acute crisis to a full prolonged war of attrition data gathered by the UNODC revealed the evolution in the types of exploitation occurring during the advancing years of the conflict. The UNODC, having tracked 277 cases of human trafficking revealed that labor exploitation stood at 49% of all cases of trafficking, having surpassed sexual exploitation at 29%, as well as a sudden surge in victims forced into criminal activities standing at 21% of all cases such as drug courier networks. Despite this, while traditional models assume that conflict completely destroys anti-trafficking measures, this conflict has been a stark contrast to this assumption, because Ukraine spent years building a centralized and robust anti-trafficking network, the government and NGOs were able to rapidly adapt and launch anti-trafficking measures even during active blackouts and shelling. However, in Russian occupied regions traditional international protection mechanisms broke down completely, left unmonitored and unenforced people were left completely unprotected from acts of exploitation and human trafficking.



11.3. Libyan Civil War

Following the collapse of the 2011 Gaddafi regime and the subsequent division of the country into rival militia groups and competing governments, Libya was transformed into the focal points of the Central Mediterranean migration route. Unlike Ukraine where the population resisted and Syria where the population fled outward, the Libyan crisis is defined by transnational migrants fleeing other wars and conflicts becoming trapped and left to fend for themselves within a conflict zone. The core driver of trafficking vulnerability in Libya, is due to the intersection between national law, militias and border containment policies. Under Libyan law, irregular entry, exit and stay in the country are entirely criminalized mandating indefinite detention without trial or legal recourse. Due to the fact that there is no central authority, the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) relies completely on local militias to manage detention centers, this creates a lucrative and state sanctioned extortion loop. Militias who often operate with dual identities as state recognized coast guards and informal human smuggling networks, intercept migrants at sea or kidnap them at checkpoints and funnel them into detention camps. Human trafficking in Libya relies on a heavily specialized form of digital extortion, traffickers systematically torture detained migrants while forced to call their families via mobile phone applications. Their families are forced to send large sums of money through the Hawala financial networks to save their family members, once this ransom is paid, the victim is usually sold to other militias rather than freed.

Due to the fact that the difference between coast guard, state backed agencies and trafficking syndicates remain blurred in Libya, international maritime interception of ships carrying migrants has served as a feeder for these syndicates. In 2018, the UNSC took a step of placing direct sanctions on specific Libyan Coast Guard commanders for their direct complicity in human trafficking and migrant smuggling.



11.4. Afghanistan Conflict

The conflict in Afghanistan is one that has raged on for decades, following the withdrawal of international forces in August 2021 and the subsequent takeover of the Taliban, Afghanistan was turned from a fragile democracy into a state ruled by unrecognized authority whose systemic domestic policies actively pave the way to trafficking vulnerability. Prior to the takeover, Afghanistan had enacted the “Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants” law in 2018 and established a High Commission for Combating Trafficking and managed specialized shelters for women and children. However following the state's collapse in 2021 the law was officially deemed null and void. On top of the state collapse, NGOs and other organizations, fearing retribution, were forced to close nearly all safe houses and shelters for vulnerable women and children. Under the current state authority, those fleeing human trafficking are frequently treated as criminals violating moral codes leading to summary detention.

The collected effects of an international banking freeze, a halt in foreign development aid, catastrophic draughts and the erasure of women's rights reshaped trafficking dynamics in Afghanistan. With over 90% of the population falling into severe poverty and as families face acute starvation an unprecedented surge in forceful child marriages in return for debt relief or some economic relief took over the country. Generally, young girls were sold into marriage, effectively functioning as trafficking and sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. However, the usage of children for forced marriage was not only limited to young girls. “Bacha Bazi” or the systematic kidnapping, purchasing and sexual exploitation of young boys by socio-economic or military figures has been a lasting trafficking issue in Afghanistan for many years. While officially made illegal, the collapse of the state and lack of enforcement has left many unprotected. Alongside servitude, a new economy labeled the “One Kidney Economy” had become frequent. Structural poverty in regions like Herat has forced many families to sell their kidneys or organs to black markets for monetary gain or debt relief.

Families wishing to flee the oppressive and unsafe state have attempted to illegally cross into nations like Pakistan and Iran, however because formal and legal migration channels remained closed, millions of Afghans are forced to rely on unofficial and unregulated networks. While many interactions begin as voluntary migrant smuggling, they quickly escalate into trafficking. As migrants are arrested or kidnapped and subjected to severe debt bondage, they are forced to work off their debt in heavy labor camps and regional construction.



12. Previous UN Actions and Solutions

The United Nations has addressed trafficking in persons through a combination of legal frameworks, policy coordination, victim protection mechanisms, and conflict-sensitive prevention strategies. The foundation of the international response is the Palermo Protocol, officially known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This protocol established a common international definition of trafficking in persons and encouraged states to criminalize trafficking, protect victims, and strengthen cross-border cooperation.

A major step was the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010. The Global Plan of Action created a broader international framework based on prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnership. It also led to the creation of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which supports organizations providing direct assistance to survivors. The General Assembly periodically appraises the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, allowing Member States to review progress, identify gaps, and renew political commitment.

UNODC has played a central role in supporting Member States against trafficking in conflict and post-conflict situations. Its work includes legislative assistance, criminal justice training, data collection, research, and capacity-building for law enforcement and judicial authorities. In conflict settings, UNODC has emphasized that trafficking is not only an organized crime issue but also a humanitarian, security, and human rights concern. Armed groups and criminal networks often exploit displacement, poverty, family separation, weak border control, and the collapse of state institutions to recruit or coerce victims into sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, child soldiering, and other forms of abuse.

The Security Council has also recognized the link between trafficking in persons, armed conflict, terrorism, and sexual violence. Resolutions such as Security Council Resolution 2331 and Resolution 2388 highlighted that trafficking can be used by armed groups as a tactic of war, a source of financing, and a method of control over vulnerable populations. These resolutions encouraged Member States and UN bodies to improve victim identification, strengthen accountability, disrupt financial flows connected to trafficking, and integrate anti-trafficking measures into peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and conflict prevention strategies. Another important mechanism is the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, known as ICAT. ICAT brings together UN agencies and international organizations to improve coordination, avoid duplication, share expertise, and develop joint policy guidance. This is especially important in conflict-related trafficking, where no single institution can address the issue alone. Effective responses require cooperation between criminal justice actors, humanitarian agencies, migration authorities, child protection specialists, peacebuilding institutions, and civil society organizations.



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The Women, Peace and Security agenda has also become increasingly relevant to anti-trafficking efforts. Trafficking in persons, particularly of women and children, is closely linked to conflict-related sexual violence, displacement, gender inequality, and economic insecurity. Recent policy discussions have stressed that survivors and affected communities should not only be treated as victims but should also participate in the design of peacebuilding, recovery, and reintegration programs. This approach connects anti-trafficking policy with long-term peacebuilding, social inclusion, and survivor-centered justice.

Public awareness and prevention campaigns have also formed part of the UN response. UNODC's Blue Heart Campaign raises global awareness of trafficking in persons and supports victim assistance through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund. While awareness campaigns alone cannot eliminate trafficking, they help increase public recognition of trafficking indicators, encourage reporting, and strengthen solidarity with survivors.

Despite these efforts, several gaps remain. Many conflict-affected states lack the institutional capacity to investigate and prosecute traffickers. Victims are often misidentified as irregular migrants, criminals, or security threats rather than as persons in need of protection. Data collection remains weak in active conflict zones, and cooperation between humanitarian, peacekeeping, migration, and criminal justice actors is often inconsistent. In addition, survivor reintegration programs are frequently underfunded and do not always address long-term needs such as housing, education, legal status, psychosocial support, and employment.

Therefore, future solutions should focus on strengthening early identification of victims in refugee camps, border areas, detention centers, and post-conflict communities. Member States should improve cross-border intelligence sharing, financial investigations, and prosecution of trafficking networks while ensuring that victims are not punished for crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked. UN peace operations and humanitarian missions should receive specialized training on trafficking indicators and referral pathways. Anti-trafficking measures should also be integrated into peace agreements, disarmament and reintegration programs, refugee protection systems, and post-conflict reconstruction plans.

A comprehensive solution requires a victim-centered, trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, and conflict-sensitive approach. The international community must move beyond short-term rescue models and invest in sustainable protection, accountability, and prevention systems. Only by combining criminal justice responses with humanitarian protection, development assistance, and peacebuilding can the United Nations and Member States effectively address trafficking in persons in conflict zones.



13. Accountability and Prosecution of Human Traffickers

One of the greatest challenges in combating human trafficking, particularly in conflict-affected regions, is ensuring accountability for perpetrators. While international legal frameworks against trafficking have expanded significantly over the past two decades, prosecution rates remain disproportionately low compared to the scale of the crime. Criminal networks, armed groups, corrupt officials, and private actors often exploit weak institutions, ongoing insecurity, and jurisdictional gaps to avoid punishment. As a result, trafficking in persons remains one of the most profitable and least prosecuted transnational crimes in the world.

The Palermo Protocol obliges States Parties to criminalize trafficking in persons and establish effective mechanisms for investigation, prosecution, and international cooperation. However, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings where judicial systems may be weakened or non-functional. In many cases, victims are unable or unwilling to testify due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in authorities, or concerns regarding their legal status. These challenges contribute to a culture of impunity that allows trafficking networks to continue operating with limited consequences.

Conflict situations create additional barriers to accountability. Human trafficking frequently overlaps with war crimes, crimes against humanity, conflict-related sexual violence, forced recruitment of children, forced labour, and slavery-like practices. Yet many national legal systems continue to investigate these crimes separately, limiting opportunities for comprehensive prosecution. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons has repeatedly emphasized that trafficking occurring during armed conflict should be addressed not only through criminal law but also through international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law. Such an approach broadens accountability mechanisms and increases opportunities for prosecution.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has highlighted the importance of strengthening criminal justice institutions capable of identifying, investigating, and prosecuting traffickers. Effective prosecution requires specialized investigators, trained prosecutors, victim-sensitive interviewing techniques, financial investigations, and cross-border intelligence sharing. Trafficking networks often operate across multiple jurisdictions, making international cooperation essential for successful prosecutions. Mutual legal assistance agreements, extradition arrangements, and joint investigative teams have therefore become increasingly important tools in combating transnational trafficking organizations.



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Accountability should not be limited to direct perpetrators. Increasing attention has been given to individuals and entities that knowingly facilitate or benefit from trafficking. This includes armed group leaders, corrupt public officials, recruiters, transport facilitators, and companies that profit from forced labour within supply chains. As emphasized by numerous experts, meaningful progress against trafficking requires shifting focus from victim identification alone toward dismantling the structures and actors that enable exploitation. Governments possess unique prosecutorial authority and therefore bear primary responsibility for ensuring that perpetrators face legal consequences.

International accountability mechanisms may also play a role when national authorities are unwilling or unable to prosecute. Depending on the circumstances, trafficking-related conduct may fall under the jurisdiction of international tribunals or the International Criminal Court when linked to war crimes, crimes against humanity, enslavement, sexual slavery, or other serious violations of international law. Furthermore, principles such as universal jurisdiction allow certain states to prosecute grave international crimes regardless of where they were committed. These mechanisms serve as important safeguards against impunity, particularly in situations where domestic judicial systems have collapsed or remain heavily politicized. Victim-centered justice remains a fundamental component of accountability. Successful prosecution should not come at the expense of victims' rights, dignity, or safety. International standards emphasize that trafficked persons should not be punished for unlawful acts committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked. They should have access to legal assistance, witness protection measures, compensation mechanisms, psychosocial support, and opportunities for long-term reintegration. Without adequate protection, victims may be unwilling to cooperate with investigations, significantly undermining prosecutorial efforts. Despite growing international attention, accountability gaps remain widespread. The United Nations has repeatedly expressed concern regarding the limited number of convictions for trafficking-related crimes in conflict situations. Weak evidence collection, insecurity, corruption, lack of institutional capacity, and insufficient coordination between humanitarian and law enforcement actors continue to impede investigations. As a result, many perpetrators remain beyond the reach of justice while survivors struggle to obtain meaningful remedies. Future efforts should focus on strengthening domestic judicial systems, expanding international cooperation, improving evidence-gathering mechanisms in conflict zones, and integrating trafficking investigations into broader accountability frameworks addressing war crimes and human rights violations. Member States should invest in specialized anti-trafficking units, strengthen financial investigations targeting trafficking profits, and ensure that survivor-centered approaches remain at the core of prosecution strategies. Only through effective accountability can the international community disrupt trafficking networks, deter future offenders, and deliver justice to victims.



14. Questions To Be Addressed

- 1- How can Member States strengthen anti-trafficking mechanisms in conflict zones while respecting state sovereignty and humanitarian principles?
- 2- What measures can be implemented to improve the identification and protection of trafficking victims among refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons?
- 3- How can the international community enhance cooperation between humanitarian organizations, law enforcement agencies, and judicial institutions to combat trafficking in conflict-affected regions?
- 4- To what extent should anti-trafficking measures be integrated into peacekeeping operations, humanitarian missions, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts?
- 5- What policies can be adopted to prevent armed groups and organized criminal networks from using human trafficking as a source of financing and control?
- 6- How can Member States strengthen accountability mechanisms and improve the prosecution of traffickers operating across multiple jurisdictions?
- 7- What role should international courts, sanctions regimes, and universal jurisdiction play in addressing trafficking-related crimes linked to armed conflict?
- 8- How can survivor-centered approaches be incorporated into national and international anti-trafficking strategies while ensuring long-term rehabilitation and reintegration?
- 9- What steps can be taken to address the root causes of trafficking in conflict settings, including poverty, displacement, weak governance, and lack of economic opportunities?
- 10- How can the United Nations and its agencies improve early-warning systems, data collection, and monitoring mechanisms to prevent trafficking during emerging humanitarian crises and armed conflicts?



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