

POSITION PAPER

Committee: United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Topic: Protecting victims of Human Trafficking in Conflict and Post-conflict situations

Country: People's Republic of Bangladesh

Delegate: Shardul Pundir (Delhi World Public School)

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. It is, therefore, not only a problem for Bangladesh but rather it is a global problem. Bangladesh, along with regional and international partners, is making continuous efforts to eliminate this vice. Human trafficking is a 'social evil' that seems to be growing at an alarming rate throughout the world. Each year, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders, and the trade is growing. Bangladesh supports the U.N. and all the other nations of the world in this fight against human trafficking and is willing to use any means necessary in order to win this battle.

Trafficking in conflict and post conflict situations:

In conflict areas, trafficking in persons for sexual slavery, recruitment of children into armed groups, forced labour and abduction of women forced marriages are the most commonly reported forms of trafficking. Armed groups use trafficking as part of their strategy to increase their military power and economic resources, but also to project a violent image of themselves and instil fear in local populations..

For instance, the Islamic State conflict grew out of the aftermath of the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, and has further spread to Syria as well. This conflict has destabilized an already unstable region, and has increased the vulnerability of groups like the Yazidi and the Kurds. This is only one example of the countless atrocities faced by these people on a daily basis and all the nations along with the U.N. must take crucial steps to fight this evil and completely eradicate it from this world.

Country Policy:

Bangladesh strongly condemns these barbaric activities and has made the necessary provisions for prohibiting the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation or involuntary servitude under the Repression of Women and Children Act of 2000 (amended in 2003), and prohibits the selling and buying of children under the age of 18 for prostitution under Articles 372 and 373 of its penal code. Prescribed penalties under these acts range from 10 years' imprisonment to the death penalty. The most common sentence imposed on convicted sex traffickers is life imprisonment. These penalties are very stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious

crimes, such as rape. Article 374 of Penal code of Bangladesh prohibits forced labour.

Many NGOs and various other agencies are also battling this issue at their own levels. For example, under a UNODC led project in Bangladesh, TMSS(a local NGO) offers survivors of human trafficking shelter home services, medical treatment, psycho-social counselling and life skill development. Under this initiative, UNODC is supporting three NGOs in Bangladesh, including TMSS to provide outreach services to survivors of human trafficking.

Possible Solutions:

Time is of the essence and so Bangladesh has already begun the battle against human trafficking. Some steps that could help us combat this problem in a better way in the near future are:

- Existing principles of criminal law, such as common intention, conspiracy, etc., must be used in cases of trafficking.
- Cooperation mechanisms must be set up with mutual contacts at different levels to make rapid action possible. This must be also done at the regional level through SAARC or some other mechanism.
- Employ the seven anti-trafficking tribunals to manage the cases filed under the 2012 anti-trafficking law, and swiftly bring traffickers to justice as detailed in the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.
- Corruption among police and border officials must be investigated in order to ensure that cases of trafficking don't figure as illegal migration.
- There is a need for overall systematic and focused trainings of all the wings of the criminal justice system; namely, the police, the public prosecutors and the judicial officers.
- States must accept back their nationals who have been trafficked. States must commit finances for more and better schemes to rehabilitate victims.
- Call on the government to take immediate measures to carefully investigate reports of sex trafficking in licensed brothels, identify and protect victims.

All of this is genuinely hard work, and in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, the fight has only become more urgent. Traffickers are capitalizing on the chaos of the pandemic and must be held to account for their crimes. Bangladesh is committed to deal with the critically important task of abolishing human trafficking and is willing to put in any and all amount of time, effort and money to remove it completely.