

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: The Question of Combatting Human Trafficking in the Mediterranean

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Introduction

Human trafficking over the Mediterranean Sea, is a process where a person is paying a trafficker to provide him/her with means to illegally cross the Mediterranean Sea. This process is often dangerous and, due to the poor condition and overcrowding of the boats, many people have died, including women and children. In April 2015, 800 migrants died trying to reach Europe. This is the largest refugee shipwreck in history and made the crisis and the dangers of human trafficking more visible to the international community.¹ The smuggling and trafficking of people, can not be documented accurately due to the lack of police and government authority in the areas where trafficking is conducted, therefore it is hard to accurately estimate the amount of people trafficked. According to one source, there are 21 million people suffering from forced labour around the world, however it is unknown how many of these people are also victims of human trafficking.²

Human trafficking over the Mediterranean is not exclusive to people of African origin. Many people from Southeast Asia make the long trip to Morocco where they hope to be smuggled into Europe. The promise of work and a better life is how traffickers lure people into being trafficked. Most of the people however do not make it and are either deported back to their country of origin or end up being imprisoned, in the often appalling conditions. The small minority who do get into Europe, are often used by the traffickers for their own advantage. Sexual exploitation is the most common form of taking advantage of the trafficked people.³ Since the smuggled people can not work legally, they are often abused and forced to work in inhumane conditions for little to no pay at all.⁴

There are 2 major routes that humans are trafficked through, when crossing the Mediterranean. One being from Libya to Italy and the second is crossing from Turkey to Greece. Other routes include crossing the border between Morocco into Spanish Ceuta or Melilla. This method is not conducted by the smugglers, but rather by groups of migrants, who organise large clusters of people in hopes of outmanaging the Spanish police and climbing over the fences, which separate the cities from Morocco

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Most of the humans illegally entering the EU by using the services provided by traffickers, are fleeing war, persecution, poor living conditions or other sort of crisis'. Among the trafficked people 8% are unaccompanied children, who are very vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, such as forced labour.⁷

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/5592bd059.html>

² <http://www.forbes.com/sites/skollworldforum/2013/11/15/how-to-end-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking/>

³ https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/faqs.html#Which_countries_are_affected_by_human_trafficking

⁴ <http://www.humantrafficking.org/updates/751>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmQOlxNQABl>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWrGSndkf6U>

⁷ <http://www.unhcr.org/5592bd059.html>

Definition of Key Terms

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the acquisition or capturing of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them.⁸

Exploitation

The use or manipulation of another person for one's own advantage.⁹

UNTOC

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. The main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime.¹⁰

UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. UN office which deals with crime related to human trafficking.

Horn African

A person who originates from: Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti or Eritrea.

What is human trafficking and how it is conducted

When talking about combatting the human trafficking over the Mediterranean, it is vital to first understand how the human trafficking is conducted and where it begins. There are many ways how human traffickers obtain their victims or in some cases customers. The most prominent ways are the following: Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim. Victims and their families are often threatened by the smugglers, if they refuse to comply with their demands. Victims are also often lied to about the work and the life that they will have once they are in the country of destination. The vulnerability of for example children or uneducated people is often taken advantage of by the traffickers in luring the victims.

Smugglers and traffickers have started taking advantage of the fact, that the people seeking passage to Europe often can not return home and are desperate to find a new life. This allows them to extort large sums of money from the asylum seekers in exchange for a transportation to Europe that will not necessarily be successful.¹¹ Some of the asylum seekers who have not had the money to pay the traffickers, have resorted to paying by having organs extracted from their bodies and trading them in exchange for the traffickers services.¹²

⁸ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html?ref=menuaside>

⁹ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/exploitation>

¹⁰ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/treaties/CTOC/>

¹¹ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>

¹² <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2790949/migrants-forced-sell-organs-pay-trafficked-africa-europe.html>

Combatting human trafficking

The frontline in the battle against human trafficking is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25. To specifically combat human trafficking, the resolution included the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.¹³

Many of the humans trafficked over the Mediterranean come from Iraq. The Iraqi Government has made notable progress in its fight against human trafficking through the accession to the UNTOC. However many Iraqis are still being exploited by traffickers. In order to further support national efforts to investigate and prosecute human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases, UNODC and the European Union Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq. With the Rule of Law Mission, 24 investigators, prosecutors and judges received training on combating human trafficking, through efficient implementation of international cooperation instruments, tools and practices. A similar mission would be beneficial in countries such as Libya or Turkey. In Libya's case however, such a mission would be hard to put into action, as they currently lack a stable government.¹⁴

Most of the Horn Africans trying to reach north Africa and then Europe, use Sudan as the transit country. Because of the the irregular nature (caused by mixed migration flow) of these migrants, they often lack protection and are easily taken advantage of or even kidnapped for the purpose of human trafficking. In response, the Sudanese Government created a new law to combat human trafficking on 3 March 2014, and on 2 December 2014 signed the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the UNTOC. In addition Sudan has created a National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking. As in Iraq, the UNODC created a training programme for the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking.¹⁵

The Blue Heart Campaign is a campaign created by the UNODC to fight human trafficking by raising awareness about its impact on society. 10 countries all around the world have joined in on the campaign, to battle human trafficking.¹⁶

¹³ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html>

¹⁴

<https://www.unodc.org/middleeastandnorthafrica/en/web-stories/workshop-on-international-cooperation-to-combat-human-trafficking.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.unodc.org/middleeastandnorthafrica/en/web-stories/unodc-supports-sudanese-efforts-to-curb-human-trafficking-tobias.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.unodc.org/blueheart/en/about-us.html>



Key Member States and NGOs Involved

Europol

Europol continuously fights against human trafficking over the Mediterranean. In the early November 2015, a Europol coordinated hit on migrant smugglers and human traffickers was conducted, resulting in the arrest of 29 suspected smugglers and traffickers. The traffickers and smugglers were part of a Pakistani criminal organisation, which used the Libya-Italy and Turkey-Greece routes to traffic people to Europe. The people who survived the journey, were subjected to exploitation by being forced to work under abusive conditions for no salary, holidays or social security benefits.¹⁷

Nigeria

Nigeria is where most of the people trafficked to Europe originate from. Most of the trafficked people are young girls and women. Together with Europol, Nigeria has increased its effort in tackling human trafficking from Nigeria. As many other countries battling human trafficking, Nigeria has adopted the key provisions of the UNTOC.¹⁸

Libya

Libya is the main country of transit from Africa to Europe. In fact Libya is such a popular country for human traffickers, that even people from Southeast Asia are trafficked through the Libya-Italy route. In February 2015, it was reported, that a Russian based trafficking network brought hundreds of Bangladeshi nationals via Libya to Italy, where they were forced to work in hard labor in a manner very similar to slavery. Since the removal of Muammar Gaddafi from power, the relatively new Libyan government has had problems dealing with various rebel groups and more recently DAESH. This has led to the neglecting of the human trafficking crimes in Libya and this has allowed a huge network of human traffickers to emerge. Also because of the very lacking police presence, there is little statistics on exactly how large the human trafficking operations are.¹⁹

Turkey

Alongside Libya, Turkey is the other popular transit country which is used to gain entrance to Europe. The Government of Turkey does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, however, it is making significant efforts to do so.

¹⁷ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/hit-migrant-smuggling-and-human-trafficking-ring-operating-mediterranean>

¹⁸ <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/human-trafficking-and-smuggling-of-migrants.html>

¹⁹ <http://libya.usembassy.gov/tip-2014.html>

Italy

Italy is a destination and transit country for women, children, and men trafficked internationally for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. The countries and regions from which humans are trafficked to Italy include: Nigeria, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Albania, Ukraine, Russia, North and East Africa, Middle East, Central and East Asia.²⁰

Greece

Greece is also a destination and transit country. The trafficking of humans is done for the same purposes as in Italy. However the countries of origin are slightly different. Greece sees more people being trafficked from Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. Greece has special anti-trafficking police, which are very effective at finding and arresting human traffickers. There are however concerns over the inadequate punishments, that traffickers are often convicted with.²¹

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1995	Fourth world conference to address the trafficking of women ²²
2000	Adoption of the UNTOC ²³
2011	January declared the human trafficking awareness month by the United States President Barack Obama ²⁴
	15% of all registered victims of human trafficking were under the age of 18 ²⁵
2010-2012	Over 30 000 registered victims of human trafficking in the EU (actual number unknown) ²⁶

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is the department which deals with human trafficking all over the world. The UNODC provides assistance to states which are struggling with human trafficking. The UNODC helps states enact comprehensive anti-trafficking laws

²⁰ <http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Italy-2.htm>

²¹ <http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Greece-2.htm>

²² <http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~yongpatr/425/final/timeline.htm>

²³ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/treaties/CTOC/>

²⁴ <http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~yongpatr/425/final/timeline.htm>

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/trafficking_in_human_beings_-_eurostat_-_2014_editi_on.pdf

²⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/trafficking_in_human_beings_-_eurostat_-_2014_editi_on.pdf

as well as provides anti-trafficking strategies. In addition the UNODC also provides resources (such as tools to encourage cross-border cooperation) to assist with the fight against human trafficking.²⁷

Relevant resolutions

- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, November 15 2000 (A/RES/55/25)
- Trafficking in women and girls ,30 January 2009 (A/RES/63/156)
- Trafficking in persons, especially women and children 17 June 2009 (A/RES/11/3)
- Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, 18 June 2008 (A/RES/8/12)

Possible Solution(s)

While there is no one easy solution to the problem of human trafficking over the mediterranean, one of the possible solutions, could be the deployment of special UN personnel who are specifically trained in actively uncovering human trafficking operations in countries afflicted by this problem (E.g. Libya and Italy). This could severely decrease the amount of people trafficked in the mediterranean region if conducted properly, and could save countless people from exploitation and abuse. If this task force proves effective, it is very possible that information about human trafficking organisations will be uncovered and this will further help eliminating the problem from its root.

Since most of the victims of human trafficking come from poor conditions or conflict zones, they are often desperate to find a source of income. In order for people to not have to resort to questionable promises of good work, securing a legitimate and a stable source of income for all people, has to be the number one priority for governments, when fighting human trafficking. This process will take time however, and without other measures to combat human trafficking, people will continue to fall victim to human traffickers.

Countries which are popular destinations for trafficked people, could implement new ways of investigating and stopping the forced labour or sexual exploitation, which the trafficked people are subjected to. One of these ways could be the allowing of brief, but thorough investigation of suspected victims of human trafficking. The victims may try to protect the traffickers out of fear, however the traffickers could be found through their victims, as they may still or at least were, in contact with the traffickers. .

²⁷ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html?ref=menuaside>

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