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Strengthening Coordination of Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking

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Introduction

Human Trafficking is the enrollment of, moving of, and/or the receiving of people somehow forced into being a slave. Thus it differs from illegal transporting, which typically only smuggles people across borders, contributing to undocumented or illegal migration. The victims of human trafficking—typically children and young women—are often kidnapped or manipulated into believing they are going someplace else, for example a job interview, or going abroad to work as domestic servants or restaurant staff. The victims of these crimes are abused and may be forced into the sex industry or forced to perform manual labor without compensation. The signs of human trafficking are often times hard to perceive, and when discovered many do not know how to help.

Figure 1. Raising awareness



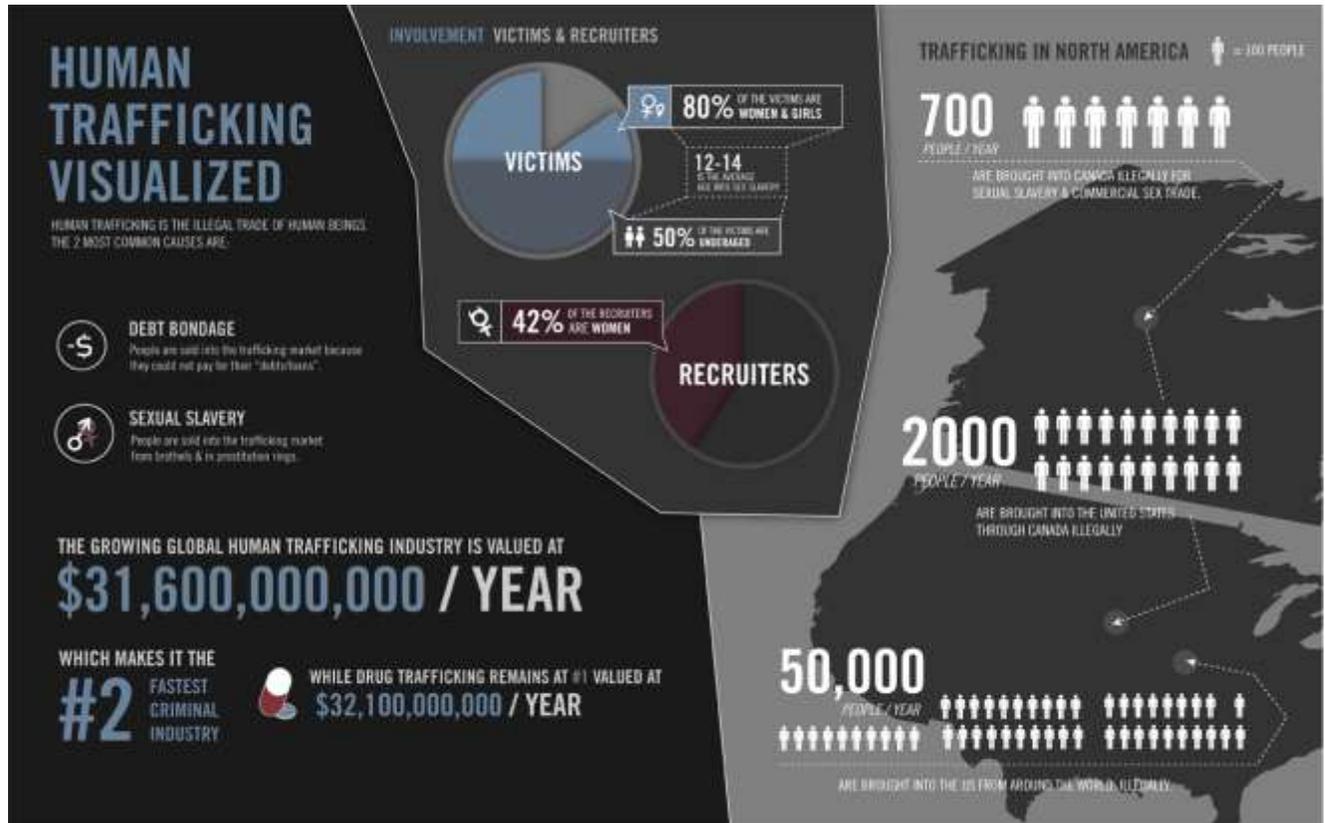
Male and female victims are often forced into sex work as prostitutes, or into demanding and unpaid manual work on farms or in mines. The problem appears to have gotten worse due to globalization, general declining enforceability of international borders, and the decreasing cost of moving people abroad. The subject of human trafficking is a sensitive, yet highly important one. It sometimes involves people being transferred around the world. The country the victim comes from may have much different laws than from the country that the traffickers are from, which can lead to multi-national legal disputes.

The solutions to human trafficking require cooperation from *origin* and *destination* countries, between law enforcement agencies and officials on both sides, and it cannot happen without carefully designed international oversight. Countries acting alone often become

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inadvertent parts of the problem. Many countries are hesitant to cooperation for fear their national sovereignty will be compromised. Only cooperative solutions have shown long-lasting benefit.

Figure 2. By the numbers



Background

The International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade was ratified in 1904 (“White Slave Trade” later changed to “trafficking in women and children”). It called for nations to end the kidnapping of women and children to be sexually exploited.

In 1949 the United Nations General Assembly held the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. It stated that the trafficking of women and children and the act of having “sex slaves” compromised basic human rights. Less than half of the UN member states ratified this convention.

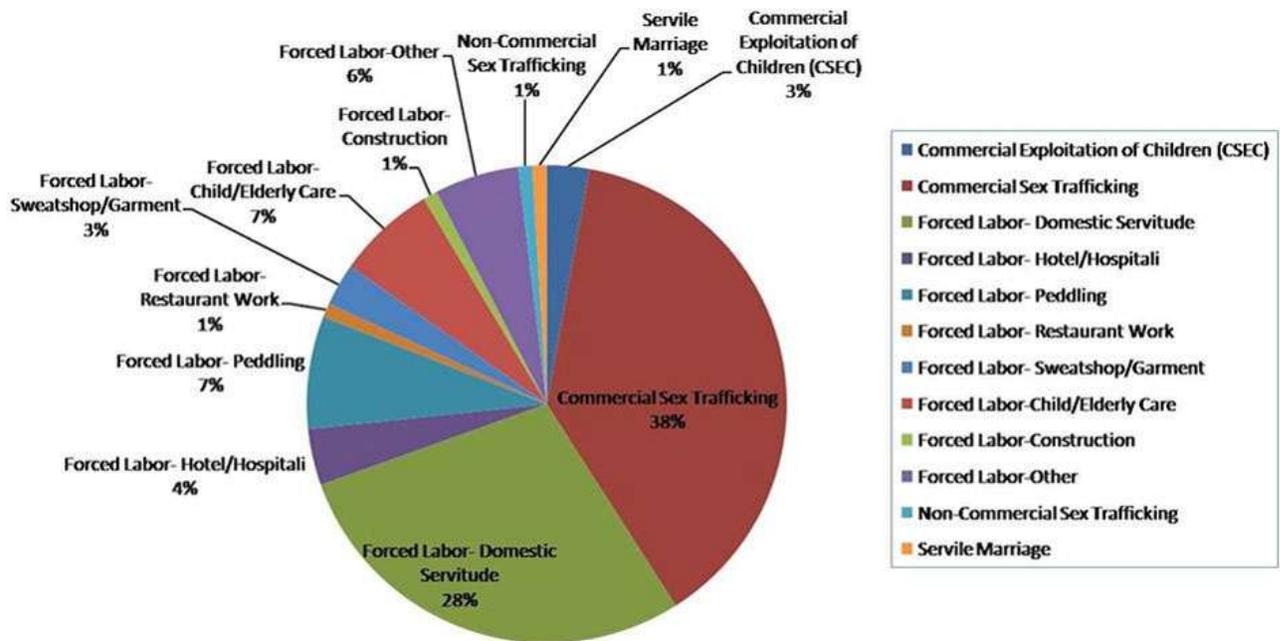
There is an annual report done by the United States’ Department of State that divides countries into three tiers:

- Tier 1 governments fully comply with minimal international standards.
- Tier 2 countries make efforts, but have not successfully complied with minimal standards.

- Tier 3 countries are not making any efforts to comply with standards.

Some of the worst afflicted regions are Eastern Europe, where large populations of impoverished and educated white children and women are vulnerable to exploitation. Other regions with especially serious problems are Southeast Asia (especially Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) and South Asia (all countries). A smaller but no less serious problem affects Central and North America, where criminal gangs bring young women to the United States and Canada for exploitation.

Figure 3. Human trafficking by purpose



Current Situation

Sexual tourism is one of the bigger problems within the larger issue of human trafficking. Tourists will go to a country to pay for these services. One of the difficulties associated with prosecuting traffickers has been the legalization of the sex trade. Brothel owners and pimps could argue that the victim consented to working as a prostitute. The victim might come forward, but often will not because of the fear that the traffickers may harm them or their loved ones.

After victims are rescued, no matter which industry they were forced to work in, they may not know what to do next. This could lead to harmful and rash decisions. They might feel too ashamed to return to their families or not know how to go about returning home. This is especially dependent on the asylum laws of the country they have been transported to and what its relationship with their home country is. Often they are exploited for a long period of time.

New technology has allowed traffickers to bring their illegal activities to a new level.

With cellular phones having almost the same capabilities as a desktop computer, victims can be lured from nearly anywhere. Many developing countries do not have the resources to counteract advanced technologies utilized by criminals, but this issue is not unknown to even the most developed nations, including the United States and Great Britain. Authorities are being trained on these new developments, but these programs take time and money and must keep pace with the rapidly growing cyberworld.

Figure 4. By the numbers



Role of the United Nations

Countries acting alone often are powerless to act effectively. Sometimes they can identify victims, but without proper documentation (almost always missing in these cases) it is hard to prosecute the guilty or return the victims. Origin countries lack the police resources or finances to patrol their borders effectively. Even wealthy recipient countries no longer can control their borders alone. These problems create a niche for international action.

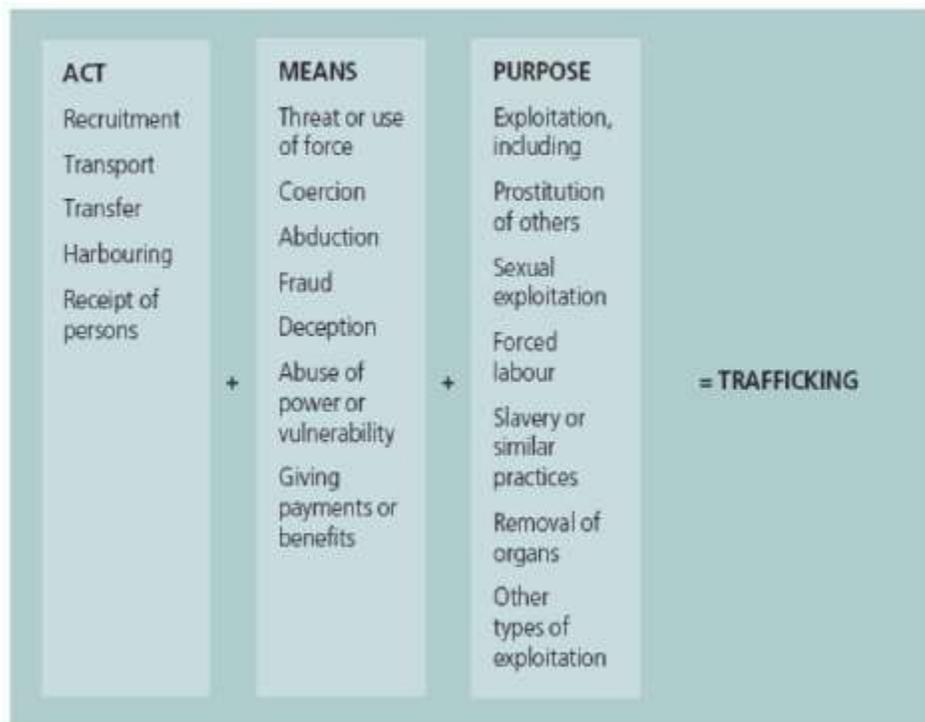
The United Nations has been crucial in the fight against human trafficking. Time and again United Nations representatives have made strong statements encouraging the international community and domestic governments alike to crack down on the traffickers and to provide humanitarian services to their victims. There are several bodies within the UN specializing in human rights, and committees have been created specifically on the issue at hand. The Council of Europe's Groups of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Persons, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, met in France in July 2013 to discuss actions within the international community to solve this issue. The United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO) has determined that there are approximately 21 million victims of human trafficking and/or forced labor. This statistic is frightening and shows

the seriousness of the situation. One of the goals of the meeting in France is to coordinate regional bodies to combat trafficking.

Mary Robinson, the former High Commissioner on the Council of Human Rights, has given many recommendations to the international community on how human trafficking should be handled. According to Ms. Robinson, states should address the basic causes of human trafficking, including poverty and demand for cheap labor and sex workers. She has further recommended that these victims should not be prosecuted for crimes that they committed as a direct result of their enslavement and that they be protected from the backlash that can ensue from prosecuted johns and/or captors.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also works towards the abolition of human trafficking, primarily through criminalization. The UNODC works through the means of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol to establish consistent and comprehensive standards of criminalization of human trafficking. This protocol requires that action be taken against traffickers and their accomplices. It also strongly recommends that domestic governments establish that victims of trafficking can be of all genders and ages and that trafficking can occur with or without organized crime groups. The UNODC has been supported in this by many UN member states and regional organizations, such as the Arab League.

Figure 5. Pathways from origin to destination



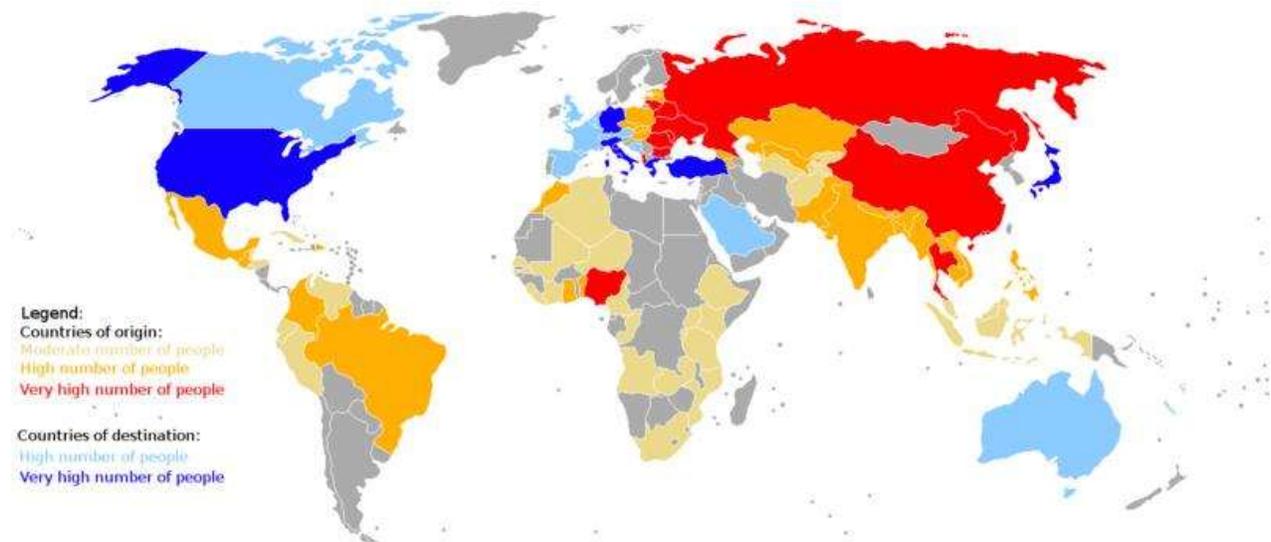
Landmark Resolutions

One of the most fundamental, yet monumental, international resolutions is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration sets many standards that can be applied to the issue of human trafficking. All members of the world have the right to security and liberty, including the freedom from being enslaved, which is prohibited by this document. No person or government can rightfully impose degrading treatment on another human being. Additionally, everyone has the right to freely choose his or her field of work, and shall be guaranteed dignity in the workspace. Victims of human trafficking have all of these universally declared rights violated, among others.

Some other resolutions include:

- GA 317, which approved the *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*. All resolutions promote awareness and justice. In the Convention, states party agree to punish those promoting prostitution and to take preventative action, including increasing security at public transportation stations to search for trafficked peoples.
- GA 67/190 and GA 67/145 promote the protection of witnesses cooperating with justice systems in such cases, the domestic encouragement of responsible usage of media (especially in order to protect and respect victims), the collection of accurate and thorough data, and requests that the Secretary-General ensures that United Nations justice bodies have sufficient resources to punish human traffickers and their accomplices.

Figure 6. Origins and destinations



Country Positions

The European Union (EU) is the leader in international activity on human trafficking, both because it is a common destination region but also because of widespread public revulsion and conviction about their responsibility of all governments to act. All European states are strongly against human trafficking, however, some Eastern and South Eastern European

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countries like Albania, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine are on the Tier 2 Watch list for unresolved country of origin problems. Belarus and Ukraine, also are active within the international community on this issue, wishing to update pre-existing anti-trafficking guidelines. Belarus spearheaded the establishment of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking in the United Nations.

Other states on this watch list as origins or destination countries include India, Iran, Israel, Russia, Thailand, and Turkey. Tier 3 countries include Burma, Cuba, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. Also there are China and Russia—two of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The latest report by the United States has sparked negative feelings from the two states. Both were previously in the Tier Two category, along with Uzbekistan, which has also been demoted. The United States may use this as a justification for sanctioning these countries. This is done for the purpose of combatting human trafficking. Neither Russia nor China wishes to actively promote human trafficking, but both tend to focus on other issues within the international community. China, for instance, is both a source and a destination for human trafficking. Most of those trafficked to China are from nearby countries such as Myanmar, Russia and Vietnam.

Afghanistan is also both a source and destination country. Having been controlled by the Taliban for decades before the NATO invasion, Afghanistan still maintains certain Islamic laws, making it increasingly difficult to help victims of human trafficking. In more recent years, Afghanistan has passed domestic legislation giving more rights to women and establishing criminality of human trafficking, but reports from the UNHRC High Commissioner's Office criticize the implementation of such legislation.

In addition to the actions taken by the United Nations and domestic governments, there are many non-government organizations (NGOs) with campaigns for the abolition of human trafficking, including NOT FOR SALE. Australian NGOs Project Respect and the Anti-Slavery Project work to abolish human trafficking as well, which is vital because although Australia is a "Tier 1" country, it is a significant destination for victims from Asia and Eastern Europe. A few other NGOs with different humanitarian-based goals have also campaigned for the abolition of trafficking.

Conclusion

The majority of the international community is strongly against human trafficking, although there can be much debate on how to go about solving the issue. Many states are slow to act either because they believe the issue is not a high priority, they wish to allocate resources elsewhere, or they resent international intrusion that would reduce national sovereignty.

An ideal resolution would provide tools for domestic governments and/or non-governmental organizations to use in order to increase the success of the victims of human trafficking. It would also clarify in which court (non-governmental or otherwise) traffickers would be tried and whether or not johns would be tried as well. The international community should keep in mind that in order to prevent human trafficking, there must be both economic and societal changes—particularly within poorer communities with fewer opportunities and less education.

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