

POLICY BRIEF

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD



CGR



PAKISTAN

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As an independent think tank, CGR sets its own agenda, publishing and disseminating its findings regularly for national and global audience. Using an interdisciplinary approach, CGR brings together rule of law, justice and governance experts, researchers and internationally renowned professionals to animate its debate and research activities.

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- Counterterrorism and Counter Extremism (CT and CE)

Meanwhile, the National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) continues as a flagship project from the platform of the Centre for Governance Research (CGR).

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NIOC Policy Brief

Trafficking in Persons: Challenges and Way forward

Introduction

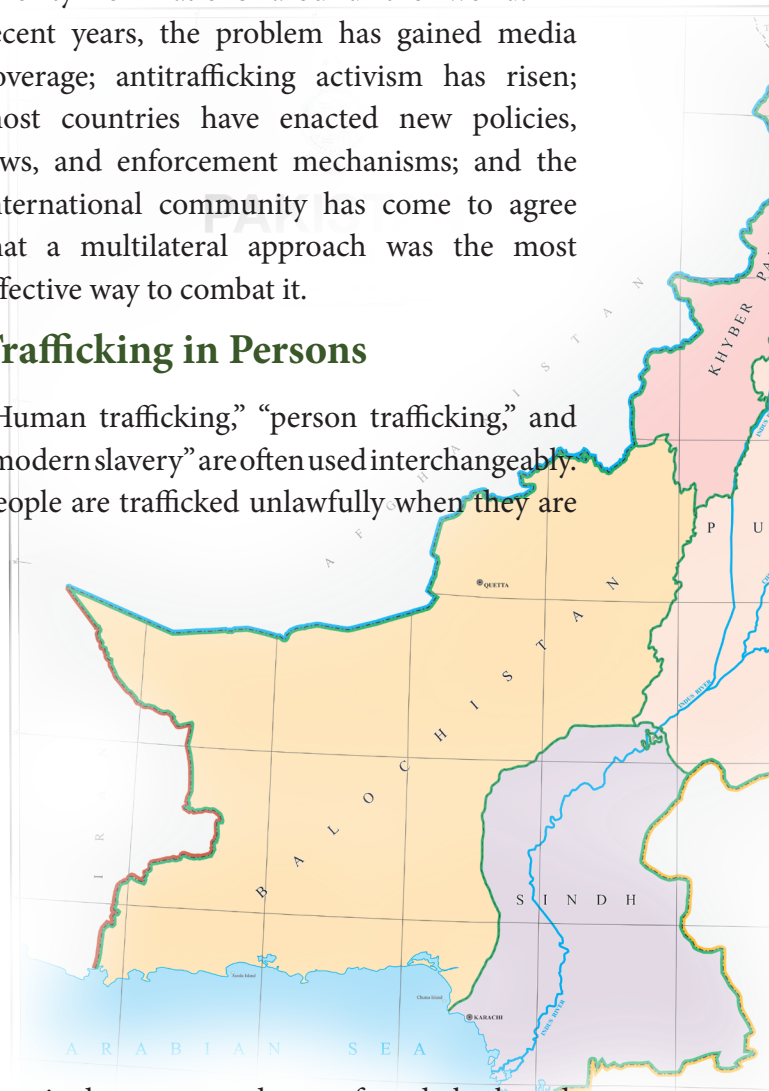
Coerced migration is as old as supply and demand, contrary to the common misconception that human trafficking is a modern phenomenon. It is encouraging though that human trafficking is becoming an increasingly important political priority for nations around the world. In recent years, the problem has gained media coverage; anti-trafficking activism has risen; most countries have enacted new policies, laws, and enforcement mechanisms; and the international community has come to agree that a multilateral approach was the most effective way to combat it.

Trafficking in Persons

“Human trafficking,” “person trafficking,” and “modern slavery” are often used interchangeably. People are trafficked unlawfully when they are

recruited, transported, transferred, harbored, or received to benefit from their work or

UNTOC



service. This often happens as forced labor, sexual exploitation, slavery, organ harvesting, or child soldiers.

International law considers trafficking in persons a human rights abuse and a crime. A protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is included in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) as per article 3(a)-2000. Every region of the world is affected by human trafficking. Trafficking and coercion can vary

based on local customs and an individual's circumstances.

People trafficked suffer severe mental health consequences, including anxiety disorders, Stockholm syndrome, and substance abuse, in addition to losing their childhood and disrupting their families. Death threats, extortion, and severe mental health consequences are also common.¹

Global Data Analysis

Unemployment caused by COVID-19 and the global economic crisis may lead to an increase in human trafficking, especially in countries that have seen the greatest job loss and inflation. Worldwide, 90,354 victims of human trafficking were identified in 2021, according to statista.com. Among all victims of human

trafficking, 20% are males (mainly trafficked for forced labor), 46% are females (for sexual exploitation), 15% are boys (for forced labor) and 19% are girls.

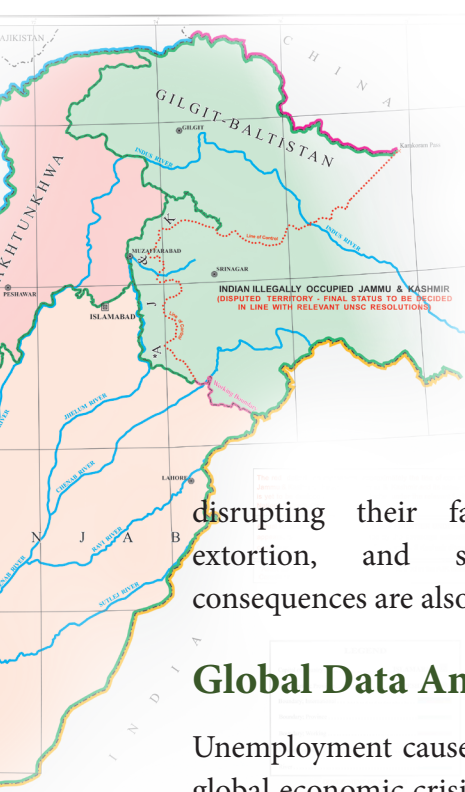
The most common forms of exploitation among detected trafficking victims are sexual exploitation (50%) and forced labor (38%). International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates from 2017 suggest that there were 24.9 million victims of human trafficking in 2016 of which victims of labor trafficking was 20.1 million, while the number of victims of sex trafficking was 4.8 million.

Situation in Pakistan

Approximately 300,000 people are trafficked from Pakistan every year, according to a World Bank report published in 2018. Most of them are laborers seeking employment in the Middle East and Europe. Lack of reliable data makes it difficult to determine the scale of the crime.

In Pakistan provincial police reported identifying 21,253 trafficking victims in 2021, as opposed to 32,022 trafficking victims in 2020, according to the US Trafficking in Person Report of 2021. 16,950 women, 2,918 men, 1,310 boys, and 50 girls were arrested for victimizing sex trafficking, forced labor, and unspecified exploitation.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan study titled Modern slavery: Trafficking in women and girls in Pakistan paints a grim picture of women trafficking in the country. Human trafficking in Pakistan is identified as a source, transit, and destination in the report³.



- 1 <https://journals.healio.com/doi/full/10.3928/00485713-20210707-01>
- 2 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/337308-2022-TIP-REPORT-inaccessible.pdf>
- 3 <https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/modern-slavery-hrcp-report-on-trafficking-in-women-and-girls/>

Reasons for trafficking in Persons:

On both a societal and personal level, the following factors contribute to people's vulnerability to trafficking in Pakistan:

1. Youth and children living in poverty in rural and urban areas
2. Seeking a better future abroad due to a lack of local employment
3. A desire to emulate acquaintances who have prospered abroad.
4. The fleeing of women and children from domestic violence situations, irrespective of their social class
5. Youth absconding because of domestic violence, lack of self-esteem, or lack of guidance or love from their families and unavailable opportunities.
6. Minority related crimes (Hazaras of Baluchistan, Hindus in Sindh).
7. Trafficking of youth for the purpose of mowing organs.

8. Absence of proper guidance centers to timely guide adds to agony.
9. Government lackluster response towards criminal mafia doing business.
10. Lack of coordination among International/ National agencies to curb this menace

Government Response:

The Government of Pakistan criminalized sex and labor trafficking under several laws. As of 2018, Pakistan has implemented the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA). According to this Act, a male adult victim can be imprisoned for up to seven years, fined up to 1 million Pakistani rupees (PKR), or both; and women or children can be imprisoned for up to ten years and fined up to 1 million PKR for those involved.

Pakistan's status was upgraded by the US State Department in its Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report of 2022 by being removed from the "watchlist" and given Tier 2 status after numerous proactive actions and modernizations in its working⁴.

4 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2366859/pakistans-human-trafficking-rating-improves-as-us-takes->

Challenges:

1. In the Sindh and Punjab provinces, bonded labor is the biggest problem, concentrated in agriculture and brickmaking, and to a lesser degree in mining and carpet-making. It is predominantly a result of ineffective enforcement of law and powerful local officials who perpetrated bonded labor despite the Bonded Labor (abolition) Act 1992.
2. There are concerns that perpetrators of sex trafficking and forced labor in Pakistan are not rigorously punished. Often, victims are distrustful of law enforcement and don't cooperate with investigations'
3. The lack of human and financial resources is another challenge. A meager combined sum of 1.1 billion PKR (\$6.2 million) was allocated to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and provincial law enforcement agencies to investigate human trafficking.
4. Human trafficking and migrant smuggling investigations in Pakistan are conducted by only 781 FIA personnel.
5. Due to a lack of understanding of trafficking laws and of the crime, the number of cases registered under the PTPA remained low.
6. Politicization of Law enforcement agencies erodes its efficiency.
7. The lack of tenure security, operational autonomy and professionalism impedes due diligence.

Way Forward:

1. Public awareness programs should be conducted.
2. It is necessary for the government to supervise and streamline the activities of travel agents.
3. International covenants should be adhered to in immigration and migration policies.
4. Human trafficking should be curbed by increased cooperation between law enforcement agencies and international organizations.
5. Law enforcing agencies should understand new trends and should adopt International best practices.
6. Regular capacity building programs are necessary to enhance professionalism.
7. It is imperative to take an apolitical approach to all complaints.
8. It is necessary to provide adequate resources.
9. To learn from omissions, post-action reviews of important cases are urgently needed.
10. The use of technology and adoption of international best practices are essential.

Conclusion

We shouldn't allow life to be traded away for anyone's interests. Let's stop human trafficking by doing everything in our power. It is only possible if we synergize our actions with scientific approaches.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam holds a PhD in Politics and International Relations, an LLM degree in Human Rights Law from SOAS, UK, and an LLB and master's degree in Philosophy. He shares his understanding and research regularly at various training institutes and public forums, as well as in print and electronic media. He is the author of several publications both nationally and internationally. A 33-year career of exemplary service characterized his career. A former police officer and Federal Secretary of the Narcotics Control Ministry, he is a civil servant with extensive experience in the field. His national experience includes serving as SSP in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Sibi and Nasirabad; Additional Director Immigration, Chief Security Officer to the Prime Minister, Deputy Director General, Intelligence Bureau, Director of National Public Safety Commission; Inspector General Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, and National Highways and Motorways twice. During his time with the United Nations, he served as Chief of Operations in Mozambique, Planning Coordinator in Liberia, and UN Police Commissioner in Darfur, Sudan. He has been decorated with three UN peace medals, the Quaid Azam Police Medal, the President's Police Medal, and the Tamagha-i-Imti-az for national distinguished service. He is well-known as an academic, a security analyst, a strategist, and a policy practitioner.



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