

Arab League

MetMUNC XLIX

Topic: Human trafficking in the Middle East

Chairs: *Christopher Tzimopoulos and Aidan Atkin*



Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.¹ This affects millions of people, and it is a significant problem in the Middle East. Exploitation is often driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters, and lack of political will to end it.² Beyond its domestic influence, increased human trafficking in the Middle East is a result of the refugee crisis, where thousands try to arrive in Europe. This committee will focus on the Middle East's experience with human trafficking, and how the Arab League may work together to solve the problem based on their domestic experience.

When discussing the impacts of human trafficking, the Middle East is one of the few places that does not come to mind. This is because many countries in this area of the world do not recognize Human trafficking as trafficking, but rather, illegal immigration. Therefore, finding information that is from the Arab League countries themselves is very difficult to obtain. Therefore, in order to achieve a successful debate and attainable solutions, delegates must be

1

<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking#:~:text=Human%20trafficking%20involves%20the%20use.labor%20or%20commercial%20sex%20act.&text=Traffickers%20use%20force%2C%20fraud%2C%20or.labor%20or%20commercial%20sexual%20exploitation.>

² https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Factsheet_Middle_East.pdf

willing to use outside/ third party information, while maintaining their countries probable views on the issues at hand.

Despite the lack of information at hand, human trafficking in the Middle East is very real problem. Today, Human

Trafficking can be classified as modern day slavery, due to its roots in the Middle East, and due to the fact that those who are trafficked have

nowhere to go. Beyond the exploitation of poorer inhabitants,

migrants are the most affected by human trafficking. Many migrants, most hailing from Asian states, are tricked into entering the Middle East and then find themselves in a forced labor situation or working for very low wages.³ Events like this occur in the oil rich countries of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. As a whole the Middle East hosts a total of 13 million migrants, leading to many opportunities of exploitation and trafficking. Remember that, even though there is a large population of migrant workers in the Middle East, certainly, not all of them are victims of human trafficking and exploitation practices. It is important, however, that Arab League countries acknowledge the problem at hand that is plaguing them domestically.

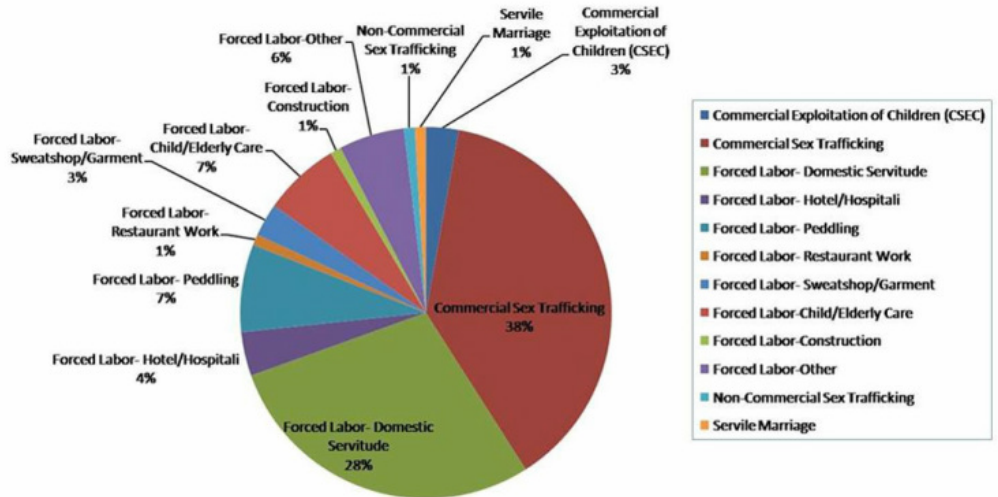


Figure 1
Human Trafficking in Central Asia and the Middle East

³ <https://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/researchdigest/trafficking/MiddleEast.pdf>

Beyond the exploitation and trafficking of migrant workers, the trafficking of children is also a major problem in the Middle East. Some are used as “Camel Jockeys” for their low weight, while others are used for labor or other forms of exploitation. Fortunately, child Camel Jockeys are now being replaced with robots⁴, but it still persists throughout the region.

As mentioned before, there is a lack of information regarding human trafficking (specifically sexual exploitation) in the Middle East. This is because it is legal in some cases, through practices known as “temporary marriages”. These associations



Figure 2
A camel race with child jockeys

are known as Misyar marriages, quite literally meaning “travelling marriages”. Here is the given definition according to the Journal of International Women’s Studies. “Within Islam, a temporary marriage generally implies a short-term marriage between a man and a woman that does not come with a long-term commitment and may or may not have an explicit, pre-established timeline or endpoint. The partial religious legitimization of temporary marriage via Islamic fatwas has recently revived the institution. Some suggest that the rising popularity is an attempt by individuals to fulfill sexual desires within the confines of a religiously legitimized institution; while others argue that it can lead to exploitation and perhaps slavery of women and girls.”⁵ It can be seen that this “temporary marriage” under Sunni Law can be encouraging human

⁴ <https://youtu.be/6ll4-OiLn4E>

⁵ <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2106&context=jiws>

trafficking and sexual exploitation, while keeping it sustained through loopholes in Sunni Islamic law.

Human trafficking is a major problem, affecting over 600,000 people in Middle East countries alone⁶. It has been largely ignored by the international community, and therefore it is up to the Arab League to come up with a solution for its common domestic problems. Together, delegates can achieve a long lasting solution that can be set as a backdrop for future endeavour pursued by the Arab League and her constituent nations.

⁶ <http://praemon.org/human-trafficking-in-the-middle-east/>

Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent is your country affected by human trafficking?
2. To what extent does your country enforce anti human trafficking laws?
3. To what extent has your country raised awareness about human trafficking?
4. To what extent has your country worked with neighbors to disrupt human trafficking?
5. Why is human trafficking so prevalent in your country? What motivates the illicit activities?

Helpful Links:

- https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Country_profiles/Middle_East_North_Africa.pdf (A UN document on Human Trafficking on some Middle Eastern and North African countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates).
- https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/GLOTIP14_Country_profiles_North_Africa_Middle_East.pdf (A lengthy UNODC report describing human trafficking offenses and laws that have been enacted to prosecute offenders and to protect victims (includes countries such as: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen).
- https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Factsheet_Middle_East.pdf (The document describing general information about trafficking in the Middle East).
- <https://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/researchdigest/trafficking/MiddleEast.pdf> (Used as a footnote throughout the background guide, this document has several pieces of older

annotated sources, that provide more general geographical information about human trafficking).