



Trafficking in human beings

Human trafficking and forced labour

Trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a multi-billion-dollar business which involves citizens of most countries and helps sustain organized crime. Trafficking for forced labour or servitude is gaining prominence. Interpol has noted a gradual increase in this type of trafficking in many countries; debt bondage being one of the major modus operandi used.

Until social, geopolitical and economic conditions in the countries of origin improve, it is expected that this crime will continue to increase. The harmonisation of legislation, development of regional action plans and criminalisation of certain types of conduct will also contribute to a spike in statistics reported in this crime area for the near future. It is important to note that trafficking differs from smuggling in that the intention is to exploit the person after he or she has entered a country illegally, whereas a smuggler's relationship with a victim usually ends once the illegal entry has been accomplished.

More cases being reported

It is clear that trafficking in human beings is on the rise based on the increased sharing of intelligence by law enforcement. This is due to many factors:

- enhanced international, regional and national co-operation with countries of origin, transit and destination, along with intergovernmental organizations
- increased public and law enforcement awareness globally
- implementation and strengthening of legislation to tackle this crime in many countries
- establishment of multi-agency and governmental committees to ensure victim support
- establishment of multi-agency working groups internationally to devise specialised training programmes and awareness campaigns
- an increase in international investigations and development of specialised officers
- more cases being reported and successfully prosecuted.

Interpol's support

The trans-national networks involved in the procurement, movement and exploitation of human beings are difficult to uncover, and there is intense fear among victims of individual reprisals or harm to families back home. There are significant obstacles to locating witnesses and convincing them to testify, which make investigating and prosecuting this type of crime extremely difficult. Despite these impediments, Interpol works to encourage law enforcement officials to investigate these crimes and prosecute the perpetrators.

In 2006, Interpol created the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Message, which provides a standardised format for the easy exchange of information and is accessible to all authorised users in Interpol's member countries via the organization's global communications system known as I-24/7.



The Interpol international specialised working group on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation has compiled a manual of best practice for law enforcement investigators, which is used as the key instruction manual for training police in trafficking matters. It has been distributed to all member countries and has been adapted by many to meet the requirements of their national policing procedures and policies. As of 2006, this manual was updated to include information on how to investigate trafficking for sexual exploitation, trafficking for forced labour or servitude and organ trafficking.

Other main Interpol initiatives in this area include:

- preparation of strategic analytical studies to gather factual information to support law enforcement in international investigations. These studies are regionally focused and are becoming increasingly operational in nature.
- provision of a clearinghouse for intelligence on traffickers worldwide. The Interpol database is a vital tool for identifying international links in investigations.
- crime intelligence officers who proactively raise awareness and establish international networks of contacts in conjunction with Interpol National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and Sub-Regional Bureaus (SRBs).
- resources which can facilitate investigations and help catch traffickers such as Interpol's international notices, databases of counterfeit or stolen identity documents, DNA profiles and fingerprints, and expertise in money laundering.

International co-ordination

National authorities handle the primary investigation of trafficking activity, but the crime's inherent cross-border nature makes international co-ordination essential. Interpol member countries are encouraged to use the tools available and are acknowledged for the work which has been achieved in this area. Everyone, at all levels of society, including national governments, judicial authorities, non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations, has a role to play in detecting and preventing human trafficking.



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For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the Interpol National Central Bureau in your country.