NEWSLETTER JULY 2025

La Strada International online is where we post updates on developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and related fields, such as migration and human rights organisations. We welcome your feedback and tips! Please contact us.

LSI NEWS

Forced Marriage Campaign

The La Strada International Secretariat, together with the Open Society Foundations, launched a campaign addressing Trafficking for the exploitation of forced marriage and child marriage. The campaign is co-funded by the Justice, Judicial Cooperation and Fundamental Rights (JCFR) Programme of the Union, with funds also from OSF. In 2025 it gets the publication of a four-pager with the protection guide, a video and a social media campaign. The campaign is implemented by the Netherlands, Moldova, the Czech Republic and Ukraine, and Greece. The campaign will run until 30 October 2026. See our campaigns page.

LSI Joins EU CSO Anti-Trafficking Platform

We are pleased to share that LSI is now a member of the newly launched Joint Initiative for the CSO Anti-Trafficking Platform, a collaborative group of over 14 CSOs, co-chaired by Terre des Hommes and the European Commission back in 2021, and serves as a forum for fostering information exchange among CSOs working in the field of prevention and combating trafficking.

CoE Recommendations to the Netherlands Discussed

On 3 July, the Council of Europe's Secretariat of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) discussed GRETA's 2nd round report and the related recommendations to the Netherlands with representatives of the Dutch Ministries of Justice and Security, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs and Employment, and of the Aruba government.

Launch: Project HOST

On 16 July, the Project HOST - Stakeholders Against Trafficking in the Hospitality Sector was launched in Amsterdam. The project is co-funded by the Internal Security Fund of the European Union and led by the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, in collaboration with Stichting Corlaer, Stichting Tegen Mensenhandel, and the Free Hospitality Society.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI Members

- **PLEDGE**'s recommendation "Various scenes of the Regional Action Groups" tender before the Dutch Parliament was adopted. The tender includes a pilot for a regional approach to prevention of human trafficking in the hospitality sector, as well as a pilot for a regional approach of sectors in other Immigration Regions which will create, for once more temporary, a budget for the Regional Action Groups to implement the Regional Action Plans.
- **FAIR AIM**: In recent months, several victims have been handed over to them from other parts of Europe, mainly women who fell victim to the exploitation and sexual violence of pimps, mostly coming from Nigeria. In 2025, FAIR AIM has already assisted 15 victims of human trafficking, 14 of them being women.
- **Anti-Slavery International** made a report for the 30th Universal Periodic Review of Mauritania to take place next November. Their report can be found here. PDF also available in French. Anti-Slavery International has also published a report exploring the relationship between modern slavery and climate change, and how the climate crisis is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, exacerbated by the broken legal protections.
- **Jesuits Ireland** and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Ireland have published a report on Human Trafficking in the Irish Asylum System and Direct Provision. The report was launched on 9 July. JRS also published a Human Trafficking Toolkit for Irish Parishes, which is available online.
- **Terre des Hommes Netherlands** (TdH) has published its annual report, which includes a section on its work against trafficking in human beings, including its work in the Netherlands, exploitation in the Dutch Caribbean, and its work in the Dutch Caribbean, exploitation in Suriname, exploitation in the Dutch Caribbean, and its work in the Dutch Caribbean.
- **CORM** has been supporting partners in organising an international conference on Sex Work, Campaigns Industry, Human Rights, Finding Underpinnings - Judicial Activism from Africa and Beyond, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 25 and 26 September. Participation is possible online, including for CSO groups, for 50 euros. The deadline for participation and the payment of fees is 15 August. The deadline for abstracts is 15 July. The deadline for the submission of full papers is 15 August. The deadline for the payment of the registration fee is 15 August. The deadline for the payment of the conference fee is 15 August. Further details are available on the Corlaer website.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

US TIP Office & TIP Report at Risk

The United States Congress has proposed a budget that would have a punitive crippling of the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, known among others for its annual TIP Report, which ranks countries on their efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

The upper-house draft of the office was designed by the GOP U.S. Senators Tim Scott (South Carolina) and Marco Rubio (Florida). The budget would be cut by 25 percent, from $18 million to $13.5 million. Rubio, the release of the TIP report, had their hope secured. The year's report, released by the State Department, ranked 23 countries, including Cuba, Iran, Russia, and Venezuela, as the worst offenders, for their lack of efforts to combat human trafficking, as well as a few other countries, such as China and Turkmenistan.

US Federal Court Allows Lawsuit to Proceed Over Qatar World Cup Labour Conditions

Fifteen years after Qatar's World Cup, migrant workers who were promised with forced labour conditions have won a landmark case against a US-based recruitment company that recruited 1,500 workers from Sri Lanka and Nepal to work in Qatar. The ruling, issued on July 7 by a federal judge in Pennsylvania, allows the workers to pursue their claims and marks the latest development concerning the 2022 World Cup human rights abuses.

Final Year to Transpose the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive

On 14 July, the final day of the transposing period of the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive (2011/36/EU), the European Commission published a reminder to Member States that the deadline was already lapsing, and that it would be assessing transposition and enforcing EU law where necessary. The Commission also published a factsheet on the Directive's main provisions.

Concern Over EU Omnibus Proposals

Following the EU Council's partial decision on the so-called Omnibus package - weakening key protections for migrant workers in the EU's Anti-Trafficking Directive, Employer Sanctions Directive, and the Long-Term Residents Regulation, they can be expected. The European Commission's proposal to weaken these protections was made in the name of "simplification" and "competitiveness", but civil rights groups warn that it risks undermining years of hard-fought protections and has already facilitated to gather input from stakeholders and the public to shape the upcoming proposal.

Earlier this month, the Commissioner Dan Jørgensen had underlined the intent of the Commission on preparation of the Omnibus Proposal, specifically European anti-trafficking laws to be "simplified". Jørgensen said that the Commission would be consulting with Member States and stakeholders ahead of the Commission's proposal to be tabled in the autumn.

EU Parliament Creates Official Body to Probe NGO Funding

Conservative and right-wing groups across Europe express growing concern that NGOs are using European funds to lobby for progressive organisations in areas such as climate change, human rights, and migration. The European Parliament has now created a special committee to run parliamentary investigations.

Europol Cross-Country Operation

Europol's Operation Pandora targeted human trafficking networks for counterfeit medicines in Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, and the United Kingdom. Authorities led by the Romanian Police arrested 16 suspects, including 3 in Moldova, and conducted 36 house searches. Victims were lured by promises of high wages.

EU Shifts Towards Restrictive Migration Policies

The European Commission has proposed to amend the Schengen Borders Code to allow Member States to implement more restrictive migration policies in the name of "national security and public order". The proposal would allow Member States to temporarily suspend asylum intake if they feel it is necessary to prevent serious cross-border crossings.

Meanwhile, following the Parliament's approval, the Council also gave its final nod for the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Pact includes controversial measures such as mandatory asylum intake and screening, detention, deportations, and the creation of "return hubs" in third countries, raising concerns about the treatment of vulnerable migrants and refugees.

UK-France Migration Deal Intensifies Pressure on EU Asylum Policy

The recent UK-France migration deal indicates a "one in, one out" trial. The UK will return some asylum seekers crossing the Channel in small boats in exchange for France accepting an equal number of migrants from the UK. France is also providing an unprecedented number of national small boats, staging anti-smuggling operations and other tactics and capacity. The deal - which is being criticised by human rights groups as "illegal" and "inhumane" - is being closely watched by other EU countries facing similar challenges, and is being seen as a test case for how bilateral agreements might reshape EU asylum policy and cross-border cooperation.

Dutch Migration Policies: From Criminalising Solidarity to Wasting Labour Potential

Some Member States are using the current migration crisis as a pretext to pass reforms proposed years ago, but which were blocked by the Parliament. One example is the recent Dutch reform proposal to criminalise "illegal residence" and "illegal stay" - which, if passed, would make it a crime for a person to be in the Netherlands without a valid residence permit. Critics argue that such measures will only push people into more precarious situations, particularly through criminalisation. Social organisations have warned that the proposal will also hinder the work of frontline workers, such as healthcare providers, who are now obliged to report undocumented people they encounter.

Meanwhile, the Dutch Migration Advisory Council released a report titled "Utilizing Talents, Fulfilling Commitments, Preserving Prosperity". Drawing on research from the Netherlands and other EU countries, the report argues that restrictive migration policies not only violate human rights but also waste labour potential. It highlights how many migrants are overqualified for their jobs, underscoring the broader economic cost of exclusionary policies.

CNCO Statement on the Suspension of the Right to Asylum in Greece

Following Greece's decision to suspend the possibility to lodge an asylum application for migrants arriving by sea, the Greek National Commission for Coordination of Combating Human Trafficking (CNCO) issued a statement calling on Greece to immediately withdraw the legislative provision, which is unlikely to deter people from seeking asylum but will instead force them into the hands of smugglers and traffickers. The statement also underscores that no circumstances can be considered to justify a violation of the right to asylum and refoulement.

UNODC Survivors Forum

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in partnership with Women of Color Network, has opened a call for survivors of trafficking for consulting survivors' perspectives and lived experiences to inform the development of UNODC's new global anti-trafficking prevention framework, strengthening legal accountability and victim protection, and fostering cross-sector collaboration. The survivors' input will be crucial in ensuring the framework is grounded in lived experience, strengthening accountability, and driving systemic change across justice, protection, and prevention efforts.

UNODC is also seeking to support the meaningful inclusion of victims in anti-trafficking efforts, including through the development of a survivor-led forum. The forum will provide a safe space for survivors to share their experiences, contribute to policy discussions, and support peer learning and advocacy. The forum will also help ensure that UNODC's tools and initiatives are shaped by those most affected by trafficking and exploitation.

HRC Adopts Resolution on Impact Corruption

At its 59th session, following a draft from the UNCAC Coalition, with amendments by Cuba, the member states of the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution on the impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights. The resolution calls on States to implement Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Conventions guidelines for implementing States' procedural and substantive obligations, including ensuring independent judiciaries, protecting whistleblowers, and promoting transparency in public procurement. The resolution also calls on States to ratify the UNCAC if they have not done so yet.

The resolution also requests revision of a NGO Manual, also developed, a structured database that maps existing UNCAC initiatives, frameworks, and tools to support implementation.

Call for New UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Anti-slavery groups have called for contemporary forms of slavery to extend into year. A call for nominations has been launched. Deadline: 28 August 2025. More details on the vacancy notice.

ITUC Urges Global Plan to Rescue SDGs

As preparations begin for the 2025 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has called for a "Global Plan" to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ahead of the forum, ITUC issued a report on the selected SDGs, highlighting persistent inequalities, unmet commitments, and backsliding in key sectors, including education, climate action, and gender equality, and stakeholders, and the exclusion of democratic rights.

WHAT IS NEW?

The International Dimension of Human Trafficking

The Council of Europe's Secretariat of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (EU ATC) have published a report on the international dimension of human trafficking. While it recognises that most trafficking occurs within borders, it underscores the growing role of international factors, such as conflicts and emergencies, particularly in fragile and post-conflict settings. The report also highlights the role of digital tools in facilitating trafficking.

ECRE Calls for Gender-Sensitive Protection of Trafficked Asylum-Seeking Women and Girls

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has published a report on gender-sensitive protection of trafficked asylum-seeking women and girls. The report underscores that women and girls are disproportionately affected by trafficking and that those who are also seeking asylum experience heightened trafficking risk. It also analyses the recent EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and its implications for asylum systems, highlighting gaps in gender-sensitive protection and identification. Key recommendations for EU Member states include ensuring gender-sensitive asylum procedures, strengthening identification and referral mechanisms, and addressing barriers to accessing justice. The report also calls for better coordination between asylum and anti-trafficking systems to ensure and protection from under-inclusive under the Dublin Regulation, and strengthening support for victims of trafficking who are also seeking asylum.

EUAA Factsheet on Human Trafficking

The European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) has published a factsheet on human trafficking in asylum and reception. The factsheet provides an overview of how trafficking intersects with the asylum system, including at the EU level, recommendations from international organisations such as GRETA, key national practices, and EUAA's own tools and guidance. The factsheet also highlights EUAA's support to Member States, including through its Operational Plan in Greece, and tools such as the Asylum Quality Tool, developed by the Agency's Quality of Asylum Unit.

Civil Space Brief by OHCHR

OHCHR has published a brief on improving civil space and constructing complicity by enabling environments for human rights defenders, including those working on human trafficking issues. The brief also includes good practices in civil society engagement in relevant UN fora.

ECNL's new Learning Package on EU Law for Civil Society

ECNL has launched a free learning package on how EU law can help protect civic space. The package includes 5 modules, 15 videos, and 5 interactive quizzes, and is available in English, including Ukrainian, Russian, Georgian, Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi.

Report Warns of Religious Extremism Undermining Democracy in Europe

The Net Monitor: Fear Religious Extremism is Rampant in Europe, covering 2019-2022, reveals how religious extremism is undermining democracy across Europe, with Muslim communities facing the brunt of hostility and discrimination. The report documents a rise in anti-Muslim rhetoric in mainstream politics and in public life through media, NGOs, political parties, and public institutions, at both the scale of incidents and the depth of institutional and ideological entrenchment. The report also highlights how Islamophobia is manifest in various and interconnected ways.

CoE's Recommendations Strengthen Child Protections

The Council of Europe's Marina Comittee on the Rights of the Child published two new recommendations aimed at strengthening the protection of children in vulnerable situations. The first recommendation calls on Member states to implement a comprehensive approach to protecting children affected by their parents' imprisonment, ensuring their rights are upheld and their needs are met. They also address the systemic disadvantages impacting children in poverty, vulnerable families, and children with disabilities, and promote inclusive and supportive environments.

New VAW Prevention Programming Guide

The Global Women's Institute (GWI) has published a new guide to ending violence against women and girls, including trafficking in human beings, through prevention programming. The guide provides practical guidance on how to design, implement, and evaluate prevention programmes, strengthen capacity, and promote lasting change, underscoring the importance of long-term, evidence-informed approaches.

ICAT 30 July Statement on Organised Crime Behind Human Trafficking

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) issued a statement on the occasion of the World Day Against Human Trafficking, 30July2025, stating that organised crime is the driving force behind human trafficking, underscoring the urgent need for a coordinated, rights-based response. The statement highlights the transnational nature of trafficking networks, the exploitation of vulnerabilities, and the critical role of prevention, protection, and cross-sector collaboration. It also underscores the importance of victim-centred approaches, access to justice, and the need for sustained investment in prevention and support, and the effective implementation and enforcement of anti-trafficking laws.

Global Day Against Human Trafficking

On 30 July, the United Nations Against Human Trafficking, UNICEF, launched its 2025 campaign, "Human Rights, Human Dignity: End the Exploitation". The campaign highlights the urgent need for a coordinated, rights-based response to combating trafficking, including efforts to strengthen the rights, safety and dignity of those affected, and expand and coordinate. You can find the campaign here. The campaign includes a toolkit, including a social media toolkit, a video, and a photo gallery. Please share your trafficking stories, and tag the campaign on social media using the hashtags #EndTrafficking and #EndExploitation.

Visual Storytelling for Rights and Migration

- **A Pathway to Compassion** is a new comic by Asian women-led diaspora-led organisation Rights Lab, which uses storytelling to bridge cultural gaps and foster compassion for those at the people of Southeast Asia to share stories. Since the foundation in Cambodia, Rights Lab has worked with over 1,000 survivors of trafficking and exploitation, including Cambodia Scholarship Winner.
- **Stories from Commodities: Symbolic and Survival in Europe** has gathered over 100 artists, activists, and cultural workers to explore how commodities and survival shape human relations and sex work, its abolition and poverty.

Publications

- **Solutions** aimed responsibility for seafood slavery, illegal fishing and lower-wage workers in the seafood supply chain, and the lack of transparency and accountability in their seafood supply chains and advising solutions of human rights abuses. The report also highlights the lack of transparency and accountability in the seafood supply chain and provides practical steps to the sector.
- **We can't keep ignoring human trafficking in war**. Opinion/analysis piece by Julia Bunmathi, Independent Consultant, on how the UN Security Council should take action against those who are complicit in wartime sex exploitation. Bunmathi is a contributor to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
- **Do human rights laws protect workers in supply chains?** New article by Professor Jean-Pierre Gauci, Professor of Law at the University of Malta, on how human rights laws in supply chains can protect vulnerabilities of workers.
- **Policing in the Online World**. A new compact paper by Europol explores how the online world is transforming policing in the EU.
- **Safe and Free**. Civil society's view on Europe withdrawal in Prospects and Risks for communicative fighting violence against women.
- **Human Trafficking and Exploitation**. Research paper published on Cambridge with the aim of providing a comprehensive in-depth account of United States of human trafficking and its Europe.

Support Needed for Andy Hall's Legal Defence in Qatar

Andy Hall, a prominent British human rights expert from the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, faces a defamation lawsuit in Qatar for his research on human rights abuses in Qatar's World Cup stadiums. Hall's lawsuit is based on a statement he made in a 2021 interview with the Guardian, stating that the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup was "stained in blood". Hall is represented by Jones Day.

Calls for Input

- **EU**: The EU Commission launched a public consultation for the new Gender Equality Strategy. Deadline: 8 September. Open to all stakeholders.
- **EU Parliament**: A the Equality Committee has launched consultation on the upcoming report on the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Directive. Deadline: 15 September. Civil society organisations fighting gender inequality and gender stereotypes, such as organisations working on ending violence against women and girls, are invited to share their experiences and recommendations. Deadline: 5 September 2025.
- **EU**: The European Commission has launched a public consultation aimed at the preparation of the upcoming Strategic Foresight Report. Deadline: 8 September. Open to all stakeholders, but is intended to be a tool for "citizens and stakeholders to express their views on the future of the EU".
- **UNODC**: To evaluate the progress of the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, UNODC is seeking input from Member States, international organisations, and civil society on the global response to human trafficking over the past 15 years. Deadline: 28 August 2025. More here.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **9–10 September**: Conference on Forced Marriage and Human Trafficking organised by CA and Open Gate, in Skopje, North Macedonia.
- **11 September**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **12 September**: La Strada International's 30th anniversary.
- **15–16 September**: UN-Civil Platform, in Warsaw, Poland.
- **16 September**: Conference on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **23–25 September**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **25 September**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **25–26 September**: OSCE Conference on Human Trafficking, in Vienna, Austria.
- **26 September**: Human Trafficking, Crime and Video production, from 10:00-12:00 CEST, organised by UNODC, online. Register here.
- **29 September**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **30 September**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **7–8 October**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **9–10 October**: Conference on Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Migration, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- **30 September**: Human Trafficking, Crime and Video production, from 10:00-12:00 CEST, organised by UNODC, online. Register here.
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We are fully dependent on donations and on our members. Our contributions to the implementation of European anti-trafficking policies and the quality of our work depend on our members. Our contributions to the implementation of European anti-trafficking policies and the quality of our work depend on our members. Please consider becoming a member or donating to La Strada International!

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