

Forum:	UN4MUN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)
Issue:	The question of human trafficking in the maritime industry
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Introduction

The maritime industry is undoubtedly a key sector of the current day economy. This industry is deeply related to the fishing, aquaculture, and transportation industries, which takes up a large portion of international commerce, communication, and interaction. However, a prevalent and harmful problem that often goes under the radar is human trafficking in the maritime industry. As a result of a significant lack of regulation on international waters, several migrant workers, refugees, and laborers without proper knowledge or protection are often subjected to human trafficking. Victims of human trafficking are usually vulnerable individuals that deal with psychological or emotional disabilities, economic hardships, or political insecurity in their country of residence, hence making them favorable targets of human traffickers. Traffickers in the maritime industry usually deceive victims with false promises of wages and a steady income source or other fake opportunities. Victims are usually physically and mentally abused by traffickers on land and at sea. Due to an absence of international coverage of human trafficking in the maritime industry and the dire circumstances victims are forced to endure, it is evident that this problem has to be addressed immediately.

Victim laborers of human trafficking in the maritime industry face unbearable and inhumane working conditions. Men, women, and even children subjected to human trafficking in the maritime industry are enslaved in seafood processing and canning factories and facilities. Laborers often work 18-20 hours per day, 7 days a week, in horrendous and unsafe conditions. Furthermore, trafficked laborers in the maritime industry often experience physical abuse and neglect of injuries, causing illness and death rates to be high for these victims of human trafficking. Beatings, torture, and death threats are routinely employed to ensure compliance in the trafficked laborers. Disobeying orders, asking for a rest or more food, arguing with traffickers, or trying to escape the fisheries facilities of traffickers could result in the death of trafficked laborers. These awful laboring conditions still apply when trafficked workers are at sea, which usually comes with dangerous situations due to unexpected changes on

hazardous waters, making their working conditions more grave. Trafficked workers at sea are excessively exposed to sunlight and seawater, which makes them nauseous, malnourished, and sick. Furthermore, trafficked workers can also be held and stuck at sea for long periods of time, usually for months and even years, due to a lack of regulation on international waters. This makes it difficult for trafficked laborers to reach out for help or contact governments or non-governmental organizations to escape from their traffickers. Along with a significant lack of regulation on international waters, as previously stated, trafficked workers almost never get the opportunity to call out for aid and are often trapped in the hands of their enslavers until death.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that trafficked workers are underpaid, overworked, and overlooked. A data report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed that 20 percent of workers on board fishing vessels have reported that they were forced to work under inhumane conditions. Furthermore, a recent International Labor Organization (ILO) report demonstrated that children as young as the age of 13 have been forcefully placed on Thai and Southeast Asian fishing boats and shrimp hatcheries to perform heavy and dangerous tasks that were intended for adults. Some traffickers and vessel launch owners hire children with wages of USD \$17-\$21 per month, while most traffickers coerce children and teenagers into working for them without any pay or compensation through threats and physical abuse. Southeast Asian traffickers and recruiters usually resort to force when recruiting laborers, while traffickers from other parts of the world use deception to easily trick vulnerable individuals into working for them. Overall, around 25 million people are still subjected to human trafficking and modern slavery in the maritime industry according to the Walk Free Foundation.

Human trafficking in the maritime industry is also a direct violation of many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 8.7, to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, SDG 16.2, to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence, and SDG 16.3, the direct access of justice for all people. These violations are also all clear violations of human rights. Trafficked workers, as aforementioned in previous paragraphs, are treated inhumanely until they either die of suffering or seek asylum.

Recently, with the plight of the COVID-19 pandemic, the maritime industry has taken a huge toll in its production due to lockdown policies from different countries. However, it is evident that human trafficking in the maritime and fisheries industry still exists and is still widespread among different sections of the world. With countries and their ports opening back up, it is important to bring this problem back into the attention of the public eye once more. The current situation of human trafficking in the maritime industry will only worsen due to the pandemic, as several individuals suffer from poverty and political instability in these dangerous times. Human trafficking in the maritime industry is still an existing and everincreasing problem in today's world, and it is important to understand that we have to work together to solve this issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the illegal transportation of laborers or civilians in order to obtain a certain type of labor or commercial sex act. Human traffickers utilize violence, coercion, and fraud to lure and/or force victims into tricky trafficking situations.

Maritime Industry

An industry regarding commerce and the production of fisheries via or in the ocean. Anything related to the ocean, sea, ships, and navigation is relevant to this industry. Different products, including food and other goods, are often shipped around the world via the maritime industry.

Modern Slavery

A synonym of human trafficking. Along with human trafficking, modern slavery is illegal everywhere around the world. According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has a right to life, liberty, and freedom from torture. Modern slavery directly opposes these rights. Modern slavery appears in many forms, including coerced labor, sexual labor, domestic servitude, coerced military service, and more. Victims in modern slavery are often strangled within human trafficking industries and may have to pay a debt to their traffickers or owners to escape their situation before death.

Forced Labor/Labor Trafficking

A specific form of human trafficking, where victims are transported to working facilities and are held by force and coercion for the sole purpose of laboring services. In the case of human trafficking in the maritime industry, trafficked laborers are forced to process and/or can fish in fisheries facilities or are trapped aboard fishing ships as forced laborers that have to fish and clean ship quarters for their traffickers.

Sex Trafficking

Another form of human trafficking where victims are transported and used solely for sexual purposes of either the traffickers or the companions of the traffickers. Sex trafficking involves the sexual exploitation of victims for commercial or financial gain. This is usually done through physical abuse, pornography, prostitution, and smuggling. In the maritime industry, women are usually trafficked on board, where traffickers and fishermen abuse them for sexual purposes.

Trafficking Victim

A trafficking victim is a person that is being trafficked by human traffickers. A victim either suffers from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from his or her traffickers and/or has to endure harsh and inhumane demands from his or her trafficker. Furthermore, a trafficking victim is not someone that has escaped their current trafficking situation; a trafficking victim is still under their trafficker's full control and is still subject to their trafficker's demands. In short, trafficking victims need help from the outside world to escape their traffickers.

Trafficking Survivor

A trafficking survivor is a previous trafficking victim that has survived and escaped from their traffickers. Trafficking survivors have either paid off their debts to their traffickers or received help from outside organizations to escape the abuse that they have to face from their traffickers. This term is often confused with a trafficking victim; it is important to know that trafficking survivors are people that have left their trafficking situation.

Trafficking Situation

A trafficking situation is a situation where traffickers traffic victims for the victims to work for them or do something for them under their will. Victims have to obey their traffickers at all times. Disobeying their traffickers might result in overworking, starvation, abuse, and other forms of punishment.

The Act

The act is a term defined by the UNODC, which signifies the initial stage of the human trafficking process. The act is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of trafficked victims.

The Means

The means, as defined by the UNODC, is a term used to describe how the trafficking is or was done. The means usually includes force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, and abuse of power/vulnerability. The traffickers use their means to control trafficked victims.

The Purpose

The purpose, as defined by the UNODC, is a term that defines why traffickers traffic victims. This usually includes sexual exploitation, forced labor, and slavery.

Background Information

Victim vulnerability

It is important to understand that human traffickers target specific individuals or groups of people to become their victims. The victims that traffickers target are often underprivileged and undereducated individuals that are easily deceived or threatened into working for the traffickers. This is especially evident in the maritime industry, where workers are given false promises or stable oversea opportunities and/or lucrative contracts that guarantee a steady income. Furthermore, victims can come from politically unstable countries or Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) where citizens' most basic needs struggle to be met. These circumstances make it easy for traffickers to lure their victims into the maritime industry, as victims often are very hopeful of improving their lives and current conditions. In short, there are too many vulnerable individuals around the world that human traffickers target to bring into the maritime industry to work for them or their agencies/partners.

Lack of knowledge

Victims of human trafficking often do not receive enough education for them to understand the trickery of their traffickers. Trafficked victims often come from third world countries, where they receive little to no education. Traffickers take advantage of their victims' lack of knowledge to trick victims into working for them. Fraud and deception is a major cause for human trafficking, and it is mainly caused by a significant lack of knowledge of trickery in trafficked individuals.

Lack of economic prosperity/need of immediate financial assistance

Other than a lack of knowledge, victims of human trafficking may be in need of immediate financial assistance. As previously mentioned, these human trafficking victims often come from third world countries. They do not live stable lives and often require financial aid. Hence, they are easily deceived by traffickers that give them false promises in terms of stable jobs with guaranteed salaries, financial security in oversea countries, and more. As most victims can barely survive in their current situation, they decide to side with the traffickers in order to earn more money to support their family, which ultimately leads to them becoming victims of human trafficking in the maritime industry.

Living in an unstable nation

Oftentimes, as aforementioned, trafficking victims live in unstable third world nations that are devastated by warfare, poverty, natural disasters, and more. These misfortunes might motivate individuals living in those areas to take traffickers' offers to go on oversea voyages to live in nations that are safer. This makes people living in these nations easy targets for traffickers.

Threatened by traffickers

Another case of victim vulnerability can be seen when traffickers threaten victims. Some victims owe certain debts to human traffickers, which motivates the traffickers to exploit the victims by threatening to hurt them or their families if they do not comply. This is often the primary reason behind human trafficking, as victims have to work for traffickers no matter what due to the severe consequences that they have to face if they refuse to do so.

Treatment of victims

Another major problem of human trafficking in the maritime industry is the treatment of victims. As aforementioned in the introduction, victims are treated harshly and are put in harsh working conditions. Labor and sexual exploitation are also common acts performed by the human traffickers. Disobeying traffickers' orders can also result in injuries or death on the victims.

Sexual exploitation

Female victims are brought aboard ships by human traffickers and are sold or lent to sailors or maritime crews for the sole purpose of sexual exploitation. These victims are often treated harshly by sailors and are often raped and suffer inhumane treatment as well as various injuries.

Harsh working conditions

Workers, both aboard ships and in fisheries facilities, such as canning or processing facilities, often work 18-20 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year with little or no rest and food. Victims also suffer from seasickness, starvation, malnutrition, and frequent beatings. These inhumane and horrendous working conditions continue until either the victim successfully seeks asylum or the victim is overworked and dies of injuries or sickness.

Harsh punishments

Traffickers punish victims harshly if they sense disobedience in the victims. If the victims disobey their orders or try to escape or seek help, they could be punished by torture or death. These punishments are often gory and inhumane.

Lack of regulation in international waters

Although human trafficking in the maritime industry is a prevalent and dire problem that needs to be addressed immediately, the lack of regulation in international waters has prevented the issue from being presented to the public. Border control on international waters is often weak, as traffickers could easily smuggle victims or bribe certain guards and officials. Furthermore, not enough emergency

services are presented to trafficked victims. As a result, this makes it hard for them to reach out to the public when they finally get a chance to access the internet or use a phone.

Lack of border control

Traffickers can easily sneak through oceanic borders with their victims by hiding their victims under their boats. The lack of border control is a significant reason why human trafficking in the maritime industry is difficult to track and detect. Hence, more victims have to suffer from the harsh conditions aboard their traffickers' ships and facilities.

Lack of emergency services

Another reason why it may be hard for victims to escape their trafficking situation is because there are not enough immediate emergency services provided to them. These emergency services include anonymous hotlines, national sea patrols and guards, and others. More often than not, victims die because they do not get proper aid from and access to emergency services.



Caption #1: The United Nations Logo

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is a United Nations (UN) organization that is frequently involved in the tracking of human trafficking procedures. The UNODC drafts possible solutions, laws and resolutions to counter human trafficking and also creates anti-trafficking strategies. The UNODC focuses on three main aspects in its anti trafficking program, which are the prevention of trafficking in persons, protection of victims of human trafficking, and the prosecution of trafficking offenders. The UNODC has also delved into the maritime industry over the past decade to find any signs or human trafficking or capture any offenders and traffickers.

Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons is a policy forum mandated and supervised by the UN and the UN General Assembly. This agency was created by the UN to improve and strengthen the coordination between different UN bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) that participate in combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of trafficking in the maritime industry. The ICAT also directly works with the UN General Assembly by providing it with human trafficking statistics. Members of the ICAT also lead UN investigations in suspected human trafficking areas and facilities of the maritime industry.

United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT)

The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, also known as UN.GIFT, is a global initiative that provides global access to knowledge, statistics, and partnerships for the sole purpose of combating human trafficking around the world. This organization was launched by the UNODC in 2007 and works upon its command. The UN.GIFT encourages and facilitates actions performed by stakeholders within the initiative, and also coordinates efforts to counter human trafficking that are already under way. The UN.GIFT also works with other organizations such as the ICAT and the ILO to discuss strategies to purge the effects of human trafficking from the world.

International Labor Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization (ILO) works with the UN, different bodies within the UN, and other organizations to ensure the promotion of social justice and to make sure that human rights are justified and upheld around the world. The ILO also promotes and sets general requirements, standards, and fundamental principles for working conditions around the world. The ILO frequently runs anonymous and untimed check-ups on facilities to ensure that they are not violating labor protocols. The ILO also works with trafficking survivors to help them find jobs with decent employment and income to ensure that they do not go back into the human trafficking industry due to a lack of monetary needs.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The United Arab Emirates is a country where human trafficking is very prevalent, as it is a top three country for human trafficking in the maritime industry in terms of statistics. Although all forms of human trafficking are prohibited by the country's Federal Law 51, traffickers still find loopholes to traffick people in and out of the United Arab Emirates. Men and women from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Pakistan, and the Philippines are put into trafficking situations in the UAE to work as laborers in fishing facilities or aboard ships. They often face harsh working conditions and also suffer from lack of legal documentation and physical or sexual abuse.

China

China is another country where human trafficking in the maritime industry is very prevalent. Chinese traffickers utilize their geographical connections to the Pacific Ocean and other Southeast Asian countries to transport victims for labor and sexual exploitation and to collect profit for what essentially is modern slavery. Sexual exploitation is the most common case of human trafficking in the maritime industry for China, as Chinese women and women from nearby states or all over the world are transferred around South East and East Asia. Labor trafficking is also common aboard fishing vessels from China, as workers are often tortured and overworked on fishing trips.

Thailand

Thailand is a country where human trafficking in the maritime industry is a prevalent issue. A key destination for human trafficking in the Mekong region, Thailand receives millions of trafficking victims each year that are forced, coerced, or deceived into labor or sexual exploitation in the maritime industry. With its maritime connections on its borders that are surrounded by the sea, Thailand traffickers force their trafficked victims to labor for inhumane and long hours aboard their ships, while others employ female victims for sexual exploitation. Although the issue is very common in Thailand, there are concerns about the nation's ability to support trafficking victims and survivors.

Taiwan (Republic of China)

It is also evident that Taiwan's maritime industry has been somewhat involved in human trafficking. Foreign fishermen in Taiwan come from 16 countries, mostly in the Southern Pacific but also including laborers from Southern Africa, India, and Japan. Most of these fishermen were trafficked into the maritime industry for wages as low as USD \$110 per month, which is far below the typical standard minimum pay in Taiwan. Trafficking agents that recruit laborers to Taiwan ask laborers for deposits and promise to return more to them after their work is completed, thus allowing them to ensure that laborers would not run away in the midst of work. However, some of these traffickers and agents often do not pay laborers and overwork them on board fishing vessels.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
October 14th, 2015	UNODC and ISISC Trans-regional Training Workshop on Preventing and Combating the Smuggling of Migrants by Sea affecting the Mediterranean Region
January 2nd, 2019	UNODC Expert Group Meeting on National Responses to Trafficking in Persons
January 30th, 2020	UNODC hosts Expert Group meeting on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration

December 21th, 2020 UNODC releases new tools for UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol Implementation

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2388, 21 November 2017 (**S/RES/2388**)
- Trafficking in women and girls, 19 December 2016 (**A/RES/71/167**)
- United Nations General Assembly Report, 1 August 2014 (**A/69/224**)

Possible Solutions

A possible solution is to establish a global emergency security hotline that victims can call. This number can be distributed to nations and can also be taught to citizens through the media or educational institutions. Even though victims might not be able to contact actual government officials or non-governmental organizations while at sea, they could call this specific hotline whenever they gain access to a phone with satellite connections. A global emergency hotline would be extremely useful in this case, as it would be easy to memorize for victims of all nationalities, and all phone or card types would have access to this global hotline.

Another possible solution is to increase border patrol and strengthen border security for both oceanic and on land borders. Border security should be increased with skilled and experienced inspectors and more frequent inspections so that it is easier to find trafficked victims, as traffickers often hide their victims among the cargo or fish in their ships. Most trafficking situations in the maritime industry often go under the radar due to a lack of surveillance and security on oceanic borders around the world. A full cargo examination for all ships at sea, for example, should become a requirement for all ships crossing oceanic borders. With the increase in border security, victims will be able to be saved before they are deported to fishing facilities or when they are working as trafficked laborers on board fishing vessels.

A possible solution could also be to increase the amount of anonymous investigations on fisheries facilities around the world. This includes having regular but untimed check-ups on canning facilities, seafood processing factories, and shipping ports all over the world. Several of these facilities are illegal and do not receive enough check-ups per year, which ultimately gives traffickers many opportunities to traffick workers in and out of these facilities. Illegal facilities around the world should also be reported and closed by individual sovereign governments.

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