

WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Recognise the extent and seriousness of human trafficking



THE OVERTON WINDOW
ERESH OMAR JAMAL

EVERY year, thousands of men, women and children fall victim to traffickers in their own countries and abroad. Despite seldom making the headlines, trafficking in persons also remains one of the biggest challenges for national security and law enforcement agencies throughout world—as the United Nations explained, “every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims.”

The International Labour Organization estimates there are 21 million people globally who are victims of forced labour, and this includes victims of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. According to a recent United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, nearly one-third of all human trafficking victims are children while 71 percent are women and girls.

However, because the problem is so widespread and well-entrenched, involving many major global crime networks, it is difficult to accurately estimate the total number of people trafficked every year—although, the majority of organisations that deal with human trafficking agree that wars and increased migrant flows because of wars increase the number of trafficking victims by a considerable amount.

This has been as true in recent times as it was in the case of Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Wars. Thus, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and parts of Asia are now the primary origins for trafficking victims, as these are the places that have seen the greatest instability in the most recent past.

This raises even more concerns for the Bangladesh government, which ranks poorly as it is when it comes to addressing this



Many Rohingya women and girls who fled to Bangladesh since August have been subjected to sex trafficking in Bangladesh and India.

PHOTO: AFP

issue—as the Rohingya crisis next door could open the floodgates for traffickers to establish and perhaps even expand their base of operations nearby, if they haven't done so already to some extent. Indeed, according to the US State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report* (June 2018), “Many women and girls among the estimated 687,000 Rohingya who fled from conflict in Rakhine to neighbouring Bangladesh since August 2017 have been subjected to sex trafficking in Bangladesh and India.” And this has been further substantiated by other reports from around the world since the crisis began.

But even without the broader Rohingya problem, international organisations had already warned Bangladesh that it was not succeeding in preventing human trafficking, including within its own territories. This is particularly important to recognise because many cases of trafficking in persons, contrary to popular belief, do not involve the crossing

of international borders. In fact, according to the UNODC's 2016 report, some 42 percent of detected victims in the world are trafficked domestically. And a large percentage of them, here in Bangladesh, are believed to be children who, according to Unicef, “are vulnerable to being trafficked into bonded labour or brothels.” Additionally, trafficking of victims to India, Pakistan and the Middle East from Bangladesh is also “extensive”, it said.

While all these are worrying enough, what is even worse given the seriousness of the situation is the lack of “effort” by the government to suppress trafficking, as the US State Department explained in its decision to downgrade Bangladesh to its Tier 2 Watch List in its *Trafficking in Persons* report back in 2017. Moreover, the Bangladesh government, in its view, “did not make efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict allegedly complicit law enforcement, border,

and manpower officials,” despite “official complicity in trafficking crimes” being a “serious problem.”

And this, perhaps, goes to the very heart of why human trafficking has increased so much in the last few years, as suspected by international human rights organisations. That is, an overwhelming failure to sincerely acknowledge the fact that human trafficking is, in reality, a form of modern day slavery—and must be abolished. As, despite the rhetoric by politicians and international organisations, effective and concerted effort to curb trafficking—except via the signing of treaties—has remained largely remiss.

And while on the one hand it is important to recognise human trafficking as a grievous crime through legislation and international treaties, what is equally, if not more important, is to take meaningful action to prevent human trafficking, to actively rescue victims of trafficking, and to create a

mechanism which could provide them with the rehabilitation that is required. Unfortunately, none of them have been prioritised by our government and, indeed, by many other governments around the world.

Yet, we must still remain hopeful, especially given the more encouraging signs from some governments and international organisations. For example, arrests of human traffickers in the US increased exponentially in the last two years (from 1,952 in 2016 to 5,987 already in 2018). The biggest human trafficking website in the US was shut down only last year, and more and more world leaders are recognising the importance of fighting this menace—no matter who is involved in trafficking operations, as evidenced by the arrests of *Smallville* actress Allison Mack and philanthropist Clare Bronfman, daughter of billionaire former Seagram chairman, for their alleged involvement in the NXIVM cult and human trafficking.

From this, we can take a very important lesson. That is, it is not impossible to fight back against traffickers and perhaps even prevent human trafficking to some extent with enough effort and resources. So, although it is understandable that the Bangladesh government has some serious resource constraints, what is not acceptable is its lack of effort to stop trafficking and in rescuing victims of trafficking.

The same, however, can also be argued for most governments and international organisations, as we observe the UN's World Day Against Trafficking in Persons today. That is why it is now more important than ever for all of us to raise our voice against human trafficking, and through our sustained voice, put enough pressure on the global community as well as our respective governments, to address this terrible problem of serious human rights violations, once and for all.

Eresh Omar Jamal is a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*. His Twitter handle is: @EreshOmarJamal

Ensuring labour rights can tackle human trafficking

Trafficking is a systemic problem, with roots in the violation of labour rights



TOMOKO NISHIMOTO

LESS than twenty years ago, human trafficking was defined by an international treaty, known as the

Palermo Protocol (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime), whereby the international community committed to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons. Since then, global attention has been focused on fighting—and eradicating—the crime of human trafficking.

and trainings to raise awareness among those who might possibly experience or encounter human trafficking. From the latest global data on the prevalence of human trafficking to reports from grass-roots organisations, all signs show that we have failed to reduce the number or severity of abuses.

There has been an increased focus on the role of businesses in perpetuating human trafficking. Against the backdrop of a worldwide pursuit of ever-cheaper labour and reduced regulation, responsible business was anticipated to be a force for change.

Drawing upon the sensationalism of “modern slavery”, calls for expanded auditing of supply chains and for corporate disclosures on sourcing have proliferated. However,

Primarily, human trafficking is grounded in unfair labour, gender and class relations. Yet, anti-trafficking measures have failed to address the causes of vulnerability, particularly for women and girls in the informal sector.

Justice demands criminal prosecution of those who profit from trafficking, but this response has proved insufficient to reduce the problem. Change must occur at a more fundamental level.

A greater focus on protection of labour rights and ensuring decent working conditions is needed to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking. This means bringing those employed precariously in domestic work, agriculture, fishing, entertainment, and other informal work under the full protection of labour laws.

- It means
- 1 tackling discriminatory treatment, particularly for women and migrant workers;
 - 1 Extending social protection schemes so that all workers can benefit;
 - 1 Broadening the mandate and resources of labour inspectorates to enforce labour laws;
 - 1 Facilitating access to complaint mechanisms through outreach and legal assistance;
 - 1 Guaranteeing freedom of association for workers to organise and bargain collectively.

In 2014, all ILO member States adopted a new international labour standard against forced labour. It emphasises the link between forced labour and trafficking in persons and establishes the obligations on three main levels: protection, prevention and compensation.

The tools are here to combat human trafficking effectively and uphold our commitment—the question is whether we have the courage to make use of them.

Tomoko Nishimoto, the regional director for the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Asia and the Pacific. The ILO is the UN agency that brings together governments, employers and workers from 187 member States to promote jobs and protect people. The ILO currently has nine programmes against forced labour and human trafficking worldwide, four of them in Asia and the Pacific.



While commitment to fighting exploitation and abuse of individuals for profit has been high, it has not resulted in cohesive action to prevent trafficking.

The persistence of human trafficking fundamentally challenges the basic values of humanity, including our inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.

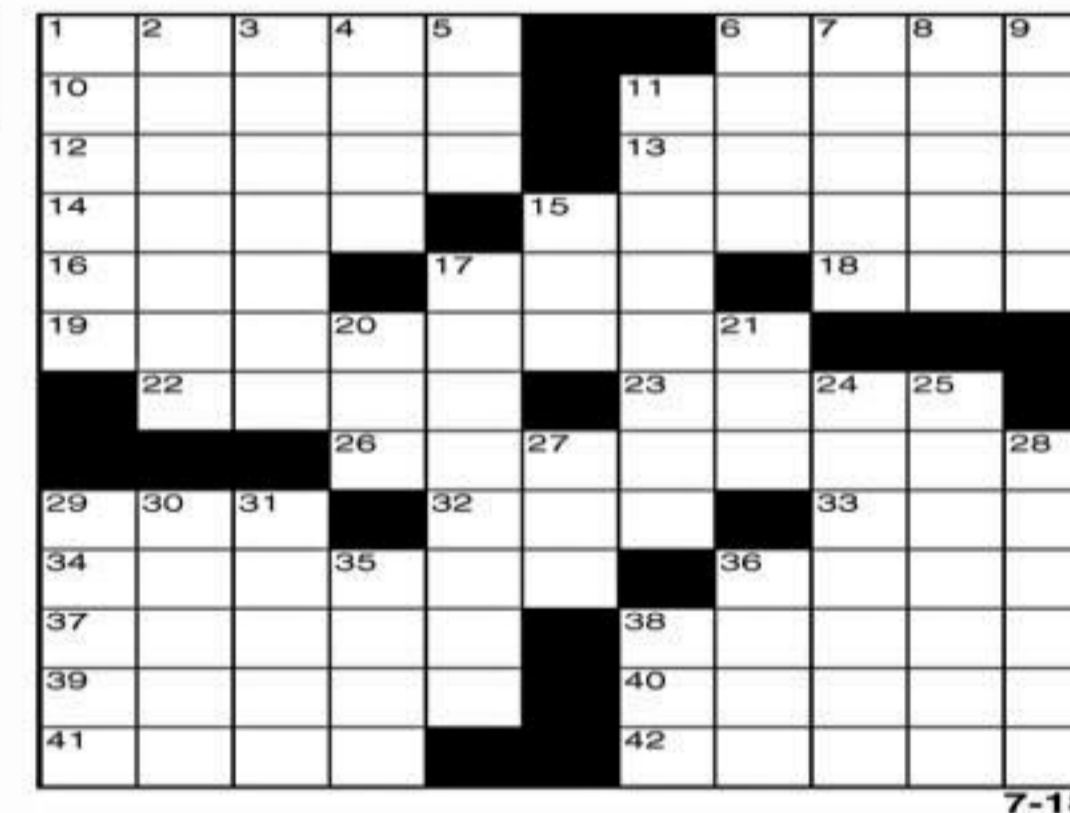
Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent every year on counter trafficking efforts, mostly on investigation and criminal prosecution, raids to “rescue” irregular migrants and sex workers who are thought to be potential victims

these voluntary initiatives have not brought substantive improvement, avoiding the changes to business models that could make a real difference—such as paying workers a living wage or expanding social protection.

Addressing trafficking more effectively requires a clearer understanding of the underlying issues. Human trafficking is not the result of a few criminals who have managed to avoid prosecution. It is a systemic problem, with roots in the violation of labour rights: unsafe workplaces, excessive working hours, lack of overtime pay, wage theft, lack of freedom of association ...

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Country division
 - 6 Drink too much
 - 10 Namely
 - 11 Latin land
 - 12 Gladiator's place
 - 13 Nun's wear
 - 14 Take a break
 - 15 Next to
 - 16 Overly
 - 17 Lively spirit
 - 18 Decimal system base
 - 19 Ended a presentation
 - 22 Freshman, usually
 - 23 Castle cirler
 - 26 Spoiled, in slang
 - 29 Gift topper
 - 32 Utter
- DOWN**
- 1 Onsets
 - 2 Removed, as a coupon
 - 3 Terrific
 - 4 Coloration
 - 5 LAX guess
 - 6 Brewed drinks
 - 7 Planet's path
 - 8 Lion group
 - 9 Devoured
 - 11 1932 Boris Karloff film
 - 15 Auction action
 - 17 From the second planet
 - 20 Sister of Amy, Beth and Jo
 - 21 "The Bells" writer
 - 24 Totaled
 - 25 Consults
 - 27 Upper limit
 - 28 Annoy
 - 29 Preacher's book
 - 30 Shaq of the NBA
 - 31 City areas
 - 35 On the house
 - 36 Print unit
 - 38 Dallas player, for short



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

P	A	B	L	O		S	W	A	B	S
O	G	L	E	R		C	A	D	E	T
S	N	O	W	B	O	A	R	D	E	R
S	E	A	I	N	N	E	L	I		
E	S	T	A	T	E	S	D	I	P	
		P	A	S		D	U	N	E	
C	E	C	I	L		G	A	P	E	D
U	P	O	N		N	O	R			
B	I	T		N	E	U	T	R	A	L
I	C	E		O	Y	L	A	M	Y	
S	U	R	F	B	O	A	R	D	E	R
T	R	I	A	L		S	H	I	N	E
S	E	E	D	Y		H	O	O	D	S

Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to dsopinion@gmail.com.



NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

Center of Excellence in Higher Education

M.A. in English

TESOL
Linguistics
Literature

Admission Fall 2018

Eligibility:

- M.A. or M.S. in liberal arts and social science subjects
- Four-year B.A. in English with a CGPA of at least 2.75 on a 4-point scale
- Three-year second-class B.A. in English
- At least a second-class B.A. (pass) degree from a recognized institution

You will look forward to:

- The first TESOL program in Bangladesh
- Highly qualified faculty members from globally recognized universities
- Intellectually stimulating environment
- Professionally rewarding investment
- Scholarship opportunities
- Evening classes designed to suit professionals
- State-of-the-art campus

Admission Test
10 August 2018
Friday, 10:00 am
Application Deadline
8 August 2018

APPLY ONLINE
<http://apply.northsouth.edu>



North South University
Bashundhara, Dhaka 1229
Tel: +880 2 55668200, Ext: 2020, 2021
Admission Helpline: 01614271717
Email: mahboob.rasheed@northsouth.edu
graduate.admissions@northsouth.edu
Web: www.northsouth.edu

DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH AND MODERN
LANGUAGES