



# Addressing the issue of modern-day slavery

Committee: IMO

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**Forum:** Human Rights Committee (HRC)

**Issue:** Addressing the issue of modern-day slavery

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## Introduction

Slavery and its modern-day application are recognized by the United Nations as a crime against humanity. This phenomenon has gotten bigger and bigger, involving more people each year and ruins lives by denying people their dignity, freedom(s), and fundamental rights. This crime is carried out in great numbers, more often than not by groups of organized crime.

The United Nations needs to consider and address the serious problem of modern slavery. We must, now more than ever, pay attention to the problem, as the protection and assurance of the safety of the world's population are causes we must urgently consider. The Human Rights Committee (HRC) is an effective force in the struggle for this cause since it is the principal international organization working for the global respect and application of human rights.

The United Nations' Human Rights Committee states the following: *"Human rights, democracy and the rule of law create an environment in which countries can promote development, protect individuals from discrimination and ensure equal access to justice for all. The Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law is an important forum for exchange, dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation on the interrelationship between human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The purpose of the Forum is "to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to the relationship between these areas" and to "identify and analyze best practices, challenges and opportunities for States in their efforts to secure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law."*

Humans all around the world are still suffering from the oppression of their slavers and we ought to acknowledge that, even though what we commonly think of as slavery is over (i.e. time of the slave trade), it is an urgent need to understand to urgency of this issue being solved.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Slavery**

The term 'slavery' describes the condition of being, as a human, legally owned by someone else and forced to work for and/or obey them. This also means that slave masters (i.e. slave owners) profit from and earn most of, if not all of the revenue produced by their slave's work.

### **Modern Day Slavery**

Deriving from 'slavery', modern slavery includes a much bigger plurality of forms of liberty deprivations such as forced marriage, forced labor, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, or domestic servitude.

### **Liberty Deprivation**

Deprivation of liberty is understood as the taking away one's liberty, without their consent. In most cases, the person having taken away their liberty is in control of them. This oftentimes also includes the taking away of our most fundamental freedoms (religion, speech, opinion, association, etc.)

### **Crime Against Humanity**

Crimes against humanity define acts of violence committed in large number by an authority going against human rights, most often related to a state's government.

This term has emerged in 1945 with the Nuremberg trials of 1945 and 1946, condemning WW2 war criminals and for the first time in history, perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

Crimes against humanity, unlike the concept of genocide, do not necessarily target a specific group of people. Any civilian population, regardless of gender, beliefs and identity, can be a victim of such crimes. Crimes against humanity might not always hold a precise purpose. Acts of persecution represent the main exception to the rule as they always aim at the oppression and victimization of a specific group of individuals.

Offenders must also have knowledge of their assault against the population and understand that their behaviour is a component of that attack before acting.

## General Overview

While the issue of slavery is more serious than ever, it is no longer regarded as a morally acceptable practice. Ever since the foundation of societies and up until recently, owning slaves was not necessarily something to be ashamed of. Even though the fight against slavery is still ongoing, boosting awareness and expanding the understanding of the current situation can do a lot of good. If the rest of society strives to bring about change, the prevalence of slavery may be able to be decreased.

The cost of slaves has decreased since the time of the triangular trade, making them more disposable today. Back in 1850, a slave would cost the equivalent of \$40,000 (in today's dollars). These slaves were a long-term investment and a symbol of wealth to be shown, they were a symbol of greed for their owners. Today, a slave can be purchased for \$90. Due to their low cost, slaves have evolved into temporary, disposable 'commodities' that consumers would rather not recognize or acknowledge in public. A slave who becomes ill or wounded is simply "dumped" or put to death.

Slavery sets foot in human history alongside the forming of the first civilizations. Primitive farmers and Hunter-gatherers, because of their self-sufficient lifestyle, had no use for slaves. As they would only grow and harvest food in small quantities, for their own consumption. There was no economic advantage for them in owning another human being, this would have only meant more people to feed. However, once individuals started gathering in towns and cities, forming populations, the need to feed in much larger quantities had to be fulfilled. On a large farm or, later on, in an industry, there is a real benefit to be made using cheap, if even paid, labor .



Figure 1, farmers working (2006, image.org)

In the past five years, a considerable increase in forced labor and forced marriage has been noted. 50 million people all around the world were estimated to be in modern slavery in 2021, that number is 10 million higher than the estimated number in 2016. Out of all kinds of individuals, women and children remain the most at risk when it comes to human trafficking of any sort. 2020 saw the identification of 534 distinct trafficking flows with victims in over 120 countries from more than 140 different nations.

According to the United Nations: “Slavery has evolved and manifested itself in different ways throughout history. Today some traditional forms of slavery persist in their earlier forms, while others have been transformed into new ones. These forms of slavery are the result of long-standing discrimination against the most vulnerable groups in societies, such as those regarded as being of low caste, tribal minorities, and indigenous peoples.”

#### Statistics regarding the issue at hand

- **50 million** people are victims of modern-day slavery
- Children represent **1/4** of victims of modern slavery
- **22 million** people currently are in forced marriages, **2/5** of these people were children when they got married.
- **27.6 million** people are trapped in forced labor and exploitation; this number includes:
  - **17.3 million** exploited by private companies,
  - **6.3 million** used in sexual exploitation,
  - Close to **4 million** in forced labor imposed by state authorities

NB: Considering the lack of precise statistics due to the character of these crimes, it is reasonable to assume that this phenomenon is much more widespread.

*Information of Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labor and Forced Marriage, Sept. 2022*



Source: CTDC Global Dataset: Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative, 2020.

Note: The data in this chart are from the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC); the global data hub on human trafficking featuring the largest case level datasets on human trafficking from different organizations around the world. For more information, go to [www.ctdatacollaborative.org](http://www.ctdatacollaborative.org).

Figure 2, data chart human trafficking (2020, CTDC global dataset)

### Domestic Slavery

## DO YOU SEE HER?

Domestic Servitude is one of the most hidden types of modern slavery. Victims can be isolated, forced to complete the household chores and even act as a carer.

Find out more about Domestic Servitude in West Yorkshire by visiting the below website. Information is available in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali.  
[www.westyorkshire.police.uk/domestic-servitude](http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/domestic-servitude)

Domestic labor is frequently underpaid and subject to lax regulation. Domestic employees sometimes lack the same rights and protections as other workers, such as written contracts, minimum wages, vacations, health benefits, social security, and maternity benefits. Domestic employees are sometimes not regarded as "workers" at all, but rather as unofficial "help," and are thus exempt from national labor laws. Domestic workers are frequently not adequately protected by national labor laws in the countries where they are.

Due to their specific working environment that is within a private home, domestic workers are much more likely to be subject to exploitation and domestic slavery. Because of this privacy, it is



difficult to estimate the situation. Moreover, the issue of domestic slavery knows a general lack of legal protection.

Cooking, cleaning, laundering, looking over children and the elderly, or running errands are all just a few of the duties carried out by domestic employees in private households. Most enslaved domestic workers live in their employers' home and are oftentimes considered to be "on call" to work for their employers whenever they are needed. According to the 2022 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, domestic workers experienced growing demands and abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Workers are subjected to violence or threats
- Workers' identity documents are withheld to prevent them from escaping
- Domestic workers are forbidden to leave the house
- Pay is low, delayed or never happens
- Domestic workers might not be paid in a monetary form but are by being given a place to sleep
- Domestic workers are forbidden to leave the house
- Employers limit domestic workers' contact with their friends and relatives

## Child Slavery

Child slavery is when a child is used for another person's benefit and profit. Child marriage, child soldiers, child trafficking, and domestic child labor are some examples of child slavery. Childhood should be a safe time to develop, learn, play, and thrive. However, an estimated 12 million children worldwide do not have that opportunity. Instead of pursuing a normal life in a secure society, approximately 9 million children have been coerced into marriage and over 3 million are used as forced laborers .

## Forced Labor

Nearly everyone participates in slavery. Consumerism which led to fights for the lowest prices has turned the production into a human machine. Even though most individuals are not actively involved in the modern-day slave trade, truth is that products such as electronic devices are the result of forced labor; using materials such as lithium which are required to build batteries. For instance, ninety per cent of the shrimp exported to the United States is produced by businesses abroad that use forced labor. Common items like clothing, cocoa, tomatoes, sugar, or even soccer



balls are all produced or harvested using slave labor. Almost all daily-used items today are a result of forced work and exploitation.

The issues of forced labor and human trafficking are becoming more widely acknowledged, with trafficking being described as a contemporary kind of slavery. The phrases "forced" and "slave" labor conjure up pictures of chained employees bound to a boss while subjected to cruel working circumstances. Forced labor, although still completely violating a person's human rights, can now take far more subtle forms, with the worker's freedom of movement being restricted by the withholding of identity documents or wages rather than physical restraints like shackles. In order to guarantee that all employees get fair pay and working circumstances that respect their rights and dignity, these new forms of slavery must be eliminated.

All trade unions should make stopping forced labor and human trafficking a top concern. Not only can these actions horrendously violate the human rights of workers, but they can also have a detrimental impact on the negotiating position of unions. As a result of the availability of cheap labor from forced labor and human trafficking, unions may find it challenging to negotiate with employers on behalf of other, "free," unionized employees. Since forced labor and human trafficking are repugnant practices anywhere they occur, it is in the best interests of trade unions and their members to contribute to fostering the social atmosphere necessary for their long-term, sustainable abolition. Any worker, whether they work in the formal sector or the informal economy, can be impacted by the issues of forced labor and human trafficking. However, it is acknowledged that the majority of people impacted by forced labor are probably employed in the unofficial sector of the economy, making it difficult for trade unions to grow and function effectively. Trade unions should still take action, though, as it is their duty to protect the rights of all workers, regardless of their position or industry.

The following categories apply to union leaders, members, and other non-unionized workers:

- those who have the potential to be "change agents" at the workplace or in the community;
- those who, knowingly or unknowingly, employ victims of forced labor or trafficking, particularly domestic workers;
- those who have personally been victims of forced labor or trafficking; and
- those who could join a network of watchdogs to identify such cases and take appropriate action.

One or more of the aforementioned categories apply to workers. Since they are in a unique position to have access to workplaces and employees and to identify areas where workers' rights are being violated, all trade unionists have the capacity to act as "change agents" and as a member of a vigilance network against forced labor and trafficking.



## Forced labour generates annual profits of US\$ 150 billion

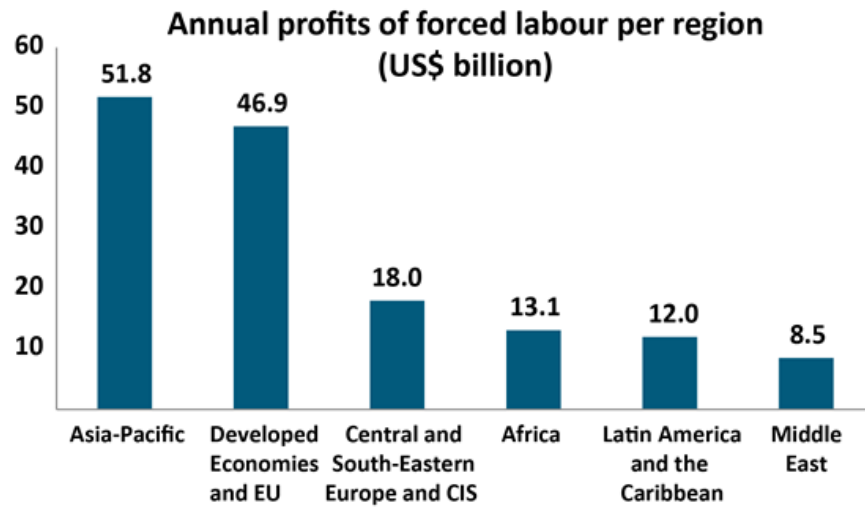


Figure 3, Forced labour annual profit (ilo.org)

### COVID-19 and its impacts

Groups of organized crime perpetuating modern day slavery know how to take advantage of social inequalities and social fragility. This main criterion being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of potential victims has notably increased. The pandemic impeded victims' access to justice, aid, and support, as well as the criminal justice system's ability to respond to crime. Additionally, traffickers adopted a new business strategy that involves recruiting victims online and exploiting them, making it more challenging for law enforcement and the judicial system to take action.

Human traffickers transferred more and more of their operations online during the Covid-19 epidemic. They recruit and exploit their victims online, arrange for their transportation and accommodation, advertise victims online and connect with possible clients, manage victims and exchange information amongst offenders. Technology has increased criminals' capacity to trade people in plural forms of exploitation, including forced marriages, organ harvesting, forced labor, illicit child adoption and sexual exploitation.

## Human trafficking numbers

- 50% of victims were forced into sexual exploitation
- 38% of victims were forced into forced labor
- 67% of people trafficked for sexual exploitation are women
- 67% of people investigated or arrested for human trafficking are men
- 46% of victims are adult women, 34% are children, and 20% are adult men

Information by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020

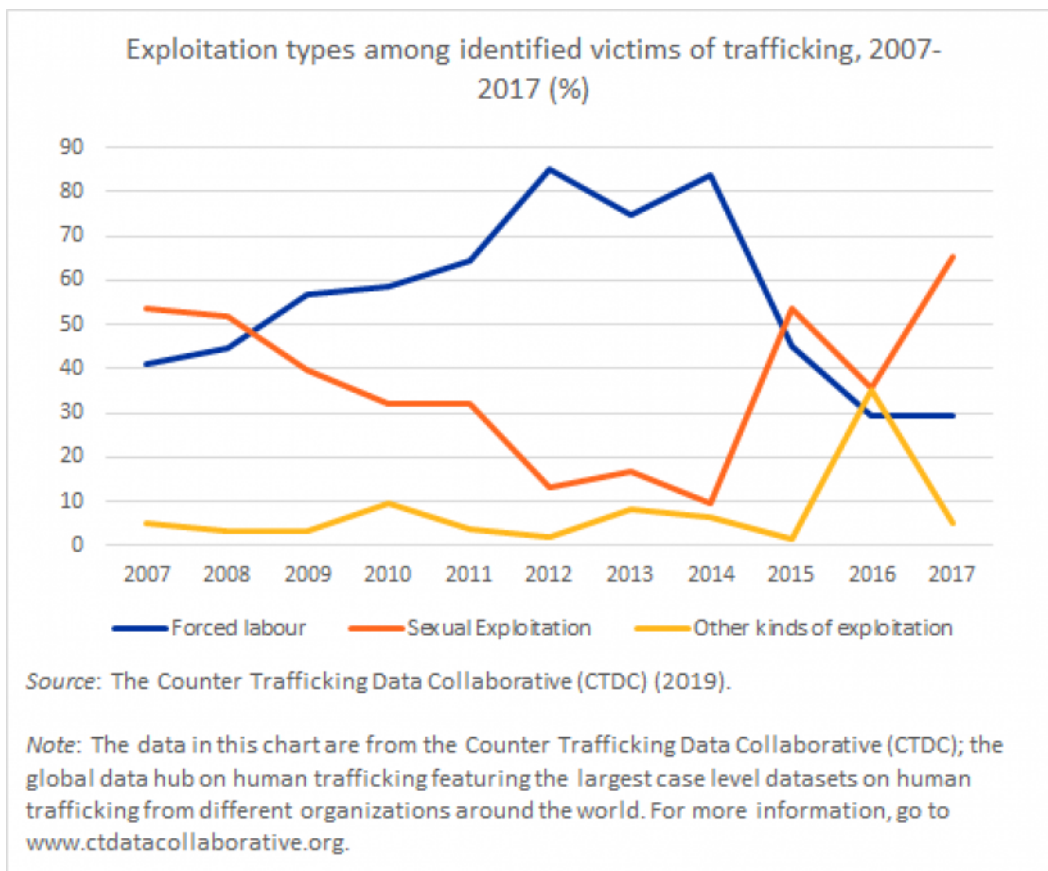


Figure 4, Exploitation types among victims of human trafficking (2019, CTDC)



## Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
10 December 1948	The United Nations' General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of which Article 4 states: <i>"No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."</i>
2 September (since 1949)	This day marks the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, legislating worldwide laws in order to protect victims of exploitation.
1956	Adoption by the United Nations of the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices similar to Slavery.
1957	Convention on the abolition of forced labor by the International Labor Organization.
November 1989	Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations with 196 signatories and 195 ratifiers
1996	First European Union communication on human trafficking.
2 September 2008	<i>"The slave trade was abolished formally 200 years ago, but this flagrant human rights violation persists, fueled by a continuing lack of respect for the dignity of human beings, a denial of their humanity and desperate poverty"</i> – Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General from 2007 to 2016.
2012	The <i>International Labor Organization</i> or ILO estimates the number of slaves worldwide to be 20.9 million.
2014	The <i>Global Slavery index</i> estimates the number to have risen to 35.8 million.
2021	Modern slavery concerns over 50 million people according to the <i>Global Estimates of Modern Slavery</i>



## Major Parties Involved

### India

Despite the fact that India has long outlawed forced labor and exploitation, there are still frequent allegations of people and children being held in debt bonds to dishonest employers. Although it was made illegal in 1976 by Articles 21 and 23 of the Indian Constitution, forced labor is still widely spread today. Millions of people are still being abused in ways that bring to mind slavery, including women, children, and men.

However, the *Global Slavery Index 2018* found that there were about 8 million contemporary slaves in India. Included in this are forced commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children, forced marriage, and bonded labor, also known as debt bondage, in which a person is loaned money and then required to work until they pay back the debt. Forced labor refers to people who are forced to work against their will under the threat of punishment or penalty.

On November 25 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's history "*was not just about slavery but also about its warriors*" while speaking at the 400th birthday festivities of renowned Indian battle leader Lachit Barphukan. "*Slavery is not the only aspect of Indian history. The history of India is one of triumph, of the bravery of numerous greats, and of defying oppression with unheard-of bravery and daring*" he remarked.

In the Sheikhpura area of Bihar, 43 bonded workers who were all members of the Scheduled Castes were released from the control of landowners in November 2022. Many of them had been working in appalling conditions for more than 20 years, were only given 4 to 5 kg of rice instead of the daily minimum wage, which is presently fixed at 335 Rupees, were not permitted to walk around freely, and were threatened with dire repercussions if they quit. After receiving a complaint from a civil society organization, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) wrote to Sheikhpura district magistrate Sawan Kumar about the matter, leading to their release on October 22.



## People's Republic of China

A vivid illustration of the market economy's revolutionary potential is China's rapid economic growth during the past 50 years. China today has the second-largest economy in the world,<sup>2</sup> and it also imports the most goods. The domestic economy's focus on producing labor-intensive, inexpensive items for export has contributed significantly to the country's fast economic growth.<sup>4</sup> In the industrial and construction industries as well as in more unorganized businesses like brick kilns, forced labor is mostly used to produce these commodities. Forced labor is still not widely covered in the local media, despite signs of a bigger issue.

Paying employees in arrears is a frequent practice in China's construction industry, and payments are occasionally withheld for up to a year. Other allegedly exploitative behaviors involving construction employees include withholding of salaries and nonpayment, excessive and unlawful overtime, and a pervasive absence of employment contracts, all of which are signs of forced labor. Nearly three million Chinese employees reported not receiving their paychecks on time in 2015 amid a recent slowdown in economic development in China following decades of rapid expansion, with construction workers being especially at risk of underpayment.

Although the Chinese government said in December 2014 that it will stop using convicts' organs for transplantation and only accept freely donated organs from civilians, reports indicate that state-sanctioned organ harvesting is still going on all throughout China. Forcible organ transplantation poses a special risk to Falun Gong practitioners, a traditional Chinese spiritual practice that is being persecuted by the Chinese government. Members of other groups who are incarcerated as political prisoners, like as Tibetans, Uyghur Muslims, and house church Christians, may be at risk of having their organs harvested.

Despite the fact that modern slavery exists within China's borders, it is unavoidable that China, like many other nations worldwide, will be confronted with the danger of modern slavery through the items it imports.

## Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to eradicate all kinds of slavery. It is the oldest human rights organization in the world and was established in 1839 by British abolitionists. It is a nonprofit organization and lobbying group that is a member of the International Labor Organization's Special List of NGOs and has consultative status with the UN



Economic and Social Council. Anti-Slavery International exchanges with several countries, international organizations, and local groups through spreading awareness and launching campaigns. This NGO works both locally and globally to better address both bigger systemic needs based on global movements and more focused local needs.

### **The Polaris Project**

Polaris is a nonprofit non-governmental organization; they work to fight against and prevent sex and labor trafficking. Polaris focused on three main areas of work in light of this: increasing the power of migrant workers who are at risk of being trafficked in North American agricultural areas and other industries; utilizing the reach and expertise of financial systems to disrupt trafficking; establishing accountability for those who commit violence against those involved in the sex trade; and enhancing services and supports for those in need in order to prevent trafficking before it occurs. The foundation of the organization's 10-year approach is the knowledge that human trafficking is not an isolated incident but rather the foreseeable outcome of several other enduring injustices and imbalances in our society and economy.

### **The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking or (CAST)**

The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) is an anti-human trafficking group established in Los Angeles. CAST promotes the reintegration of victims of human trafficking into society, promotes awareness on the issue, and has a notable impact on law and public policy. It does so through the providing of legal, social, and lobbying services. Human trafficking is described by CAST as "a contemporary type of slavery" in which victims are coerced into doing forced labor or being sexually exploited.

CAST states their mission is to "*assist persons trafficked for the purpose of forced labor and slavery-like practices and work toward ending all instances of such human rights violations*". The group promotes a strategy based on helping survivors of modern-day slavery and human trafficking, it also offers three core services to fulfill its mission: Advocacy and coalition building, client service programs, and outreach.



## The International Labor Organization

The International Labor Organization (ILO) is a United Nations organization which works to improve social and economic fairness regarding the working world. It is the earliest and oldest specialized agency of the UN, having been established in October 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I. By establishing global labor standards, the ILO is “devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights, pursuing its founding mission that labor peace is essential to prosperity”. As the United Nations claim: “Today, the ILO helps advance the creation of decent work and the economic and working conditions that give working people and business people a stake in lasting peace, prosperity and progress”.

## Possible Solutions

Anytime a person is made to work against their will for the profit of another without a convenient way of escaping, that person is said to be a slave. Abolition exists anytime someone stands up against slavery. Solutions to fight against modern day slavery are there, individuals, groups and governments can take action by:

- **Raising awareness** by educating others on the matter, explaining that slavery, in fact, still exists in many countries in the world, no one would ever join the battle against contemporary slavery if they were unaware that it even existed. Unfortunately, the idea that slavery has been abolished is widely held by individuals all across the world. Debunking this misconception and, as a result, creating a sizable movement of people who can start to bring about meaningful change need knowledge development. Organizations all throughout the world require a lot of individuals to staff them. On the other hand, where would organizations get the human resources required to fight human trafficking globally if they didn't comprehend the necessity for such activity? And to support operations, these organizations require enormous financial resources. If the public is unaware of the need for such services, how might these groups acquire funding? We need to make significant adjustments to both our governmental policy and consumer behavior .
- **Writing policies** to legislate and write, for public and private contexts, texts supporting the abolition of all the different forms modern slavery can take. Once people are aware of the problem of contemporary slavery, the next step in abolition is to use that awareness to change



public policies that support the abolition of slavery. Securing justice for those who have been the victims of modern-day slavery and human trafficking depends on the development of morally sound policies. Policies also make the resources and tools accessible for the men, women, and children who are subsequently freed from slavery. Several players are involved in the creation of policies. Government policy is significantly influenced by legislators. Legislators frequently seek the advice of people and organizations to give knowledgeable policy analysis and perspectives. Activists also take the initiative to teach and educate lawmakers so that, via raising awareness, these influential figures can start to understand the need for legislative reform and enforcement.

- **Giving out a hand** to the victims who were successful in their fight to escape their situation as enslaved person. Because of the horrific events persons coming out of slavery have gone through, attention must be given to them. In addition to meeting practical necessities like shelter, food, and clothes, aftercare programs often include security, counseling, and medical attention. Based on the requirements of each individual survivor, serving survivors of slavery in this era of abolition looks different. As diverse therapies and services are needed for women, men, and children, and as abuse extends beyond the physical, different patients require different types of psychological therapy. A lot of societies do not accept former slaves. Despite having been the victims of a terrible crime, many survivors, particularly those of sex slavery, are unable to go back to their communities because of cultural rituals and conventions.
- **Prosecuting** organizations and organized groups who perpetuate these kinds of crimes by enforcing civil and criminal laws. Prosecution is also about justice. Former slaves have a chance to get justice when the criminals are brought to justice since justice is a concept of ethical or moral rightness. During this procedure, former slaves may occasionally meet their former masters and see laws being upheld and penalties being meted out. Prosecution for offenses involving forced labor or human trafficking might offer a moment of solace for survivors in addition to increasing the danger to the institution. Other times, former slaves are unable to testify in court because they are afraid of reprisals from their family. More prosecutions are required to change this so that freed slaves know it matters and that their former oppressors would face serious penalties. Other types of abolition are directly related to prosecution. Numerous groups engaged in criminal prosecution activities also support rescue missions. Naturally, persons working on prosecution efforts in diverse areas also participate in policy creation. Since they are involved in law enforcement, they frequently want new laws to be passed so that they may prosecute offenders more successfully.



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