



STOP

**SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE EAST

What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

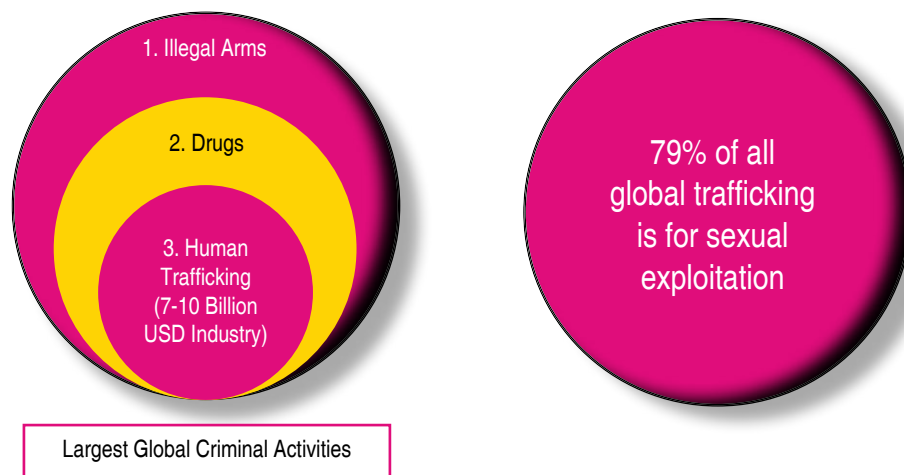
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

What's the problem?

GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.¹ Human trafficking, the third largest international crime, following illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine percent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.²



SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

For the purposes of this fact sheet, the Middle East refers to Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Palestinian Occupied Territories and Yemen .

In the Middle East, there are few official statistics on the trafficking of persons. Information concerning victims of trafficking in persons and related crimes is scarce, though victims of sexual exploitation have been reported throughout the region and child victims identified or assisted in a few countries.³

Domestic service is considered a key reason for the trafficking of persons in the Middle East, which hosts more than 13 million migrant workers, many of them unskilled and low-paid Asian workers vulnerable to abuse.⁴ For example, thousands of female workers, including young children, migrate to Jordan to work as maids, but can then find themselves trapped in restrictive and abusive conditions once they get there.⁵ There have been reports of sexual abuse of child domestic servants by their employers, who take advantage of their lack of legal and social protection and force them to provide sexual services.⁶

Trafficking – both internal and across borders - of girls in the Middle East for early marriage have been reported. Early marriage is considered a form of commercial sexual exploitation of children when it involves the marriage of underage girls in exchange for financial or in-kind compensation, usually to their families. Child marriage is common in the Middle East, with nearly half of all girls younger than 18 in Yemen and Palestine married (IPPF and UNFPA 2006).⁷

Disaster and emergency situations – including war – also puts children at increased risk of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking. In Syria alone, an estimated 50,000 Iraqi refugee girls and women, many of them widows, are forced into prostitution.⁸

Who gets trafficked?

While there are no official statistics on child victims, many countries in the region – Bahrain, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Iraq - are destination countries for trafficking victims from Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, North Africa and other African countries.⁹

In addition to being destination countries, some Middle Eastern countries are also transit countries, such as Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Syria,¹⁰ where trafficking victims move through en route to other countries in the Middle East or on to Western Europe and the UK.

Source countries in the Middle East are Yemen, from which children are trafficked to Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, from which victims are trafficked to Syria, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Iran.¹¹

Within the region, child sex trafficking routes and patterns differ country by country. Iranian children are mainly trafficked internally and Afghan children are trafficked to Iran for the purpose of forced marriages and commercial sexual exploitation. According to non-governmental sources, Iranian women and girls are also trafficked to Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom for commercial sexual exploitation. Yemeni children are trafficked across the northern border into Saudi Arabia or to the Yemen cities of Aden and Sana'a for forced work, primarily as beggars. Some of these children may be sexually exploited in transit or once they arrive in Saudi Arabia. According to officials and statistics, 900 children were smuggled from Yemen to Saudi Arabia during 2006.¹²

Lebanese children are trafficked within the country for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Syria is a destination and transit country for women and children trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. A significant number of women and children in the large and expanding Iraqi refugee community in Syria are reportedly forced into commercial sexual exploitation

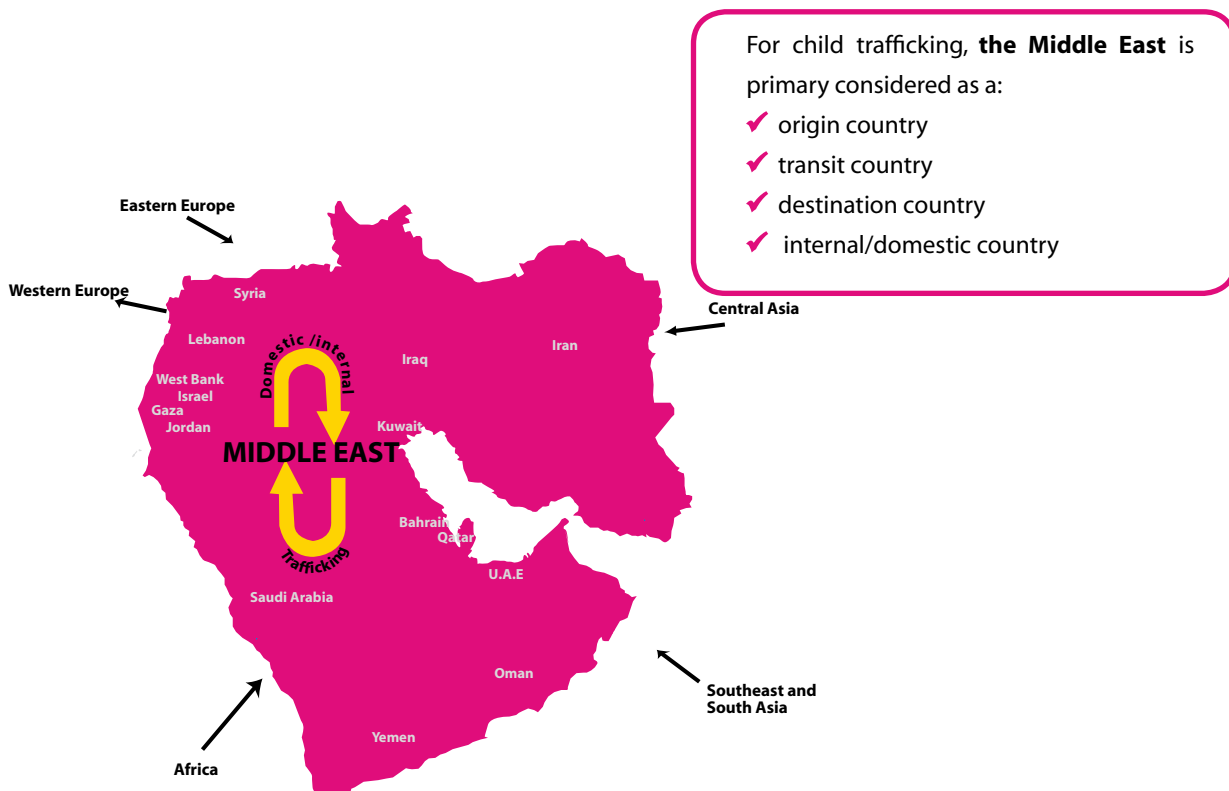
by Iraqi gangs or, in some cases, their families. Iraqi children are trafficked within the country and abroad for commercial sexual exploitation; criminal gangs may have targeted young boys, and staff of private orphanages may have trafficked young girls for forced prostitution.¹³

The demand for sex drives child sex trafficking globally, while poverty, domestic violence and abuse, discrimination and the desire for a better life makes children vulnerable. Children are especially vulnerable to being trafficked because they are often poorly educated, easy to overpower and easy to convince that they must do what an adult tells them to do. Children may also be in a position where they believe they must help to support their families and may be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and do not have someone to look out for them are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced, or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered:

- 'Sending' or 'origin' - from where children are sent;
- 'Transit' - where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination; and
- 'Receiving' or 'destination' - where the children finally end up.

Depending upon the reason for trafficking, some countries might be only a sending country, while others might be both a sending and transit country. Some countries can be all three. The Middle East region is all three, plus, children are trafficked nationally and within the region.



CASE STUDIES

Iraqi children sold into sexual slavery

In November 2005, a member of a trafficking ring offered “Mariam’s” father an advance payment of US \$6,000 for her, saying she would work for a family in Dubai. He was promised that his daughter would be returned to Iraq after finishing a one-year contract. Mariam, 16, was instead forced into the sex trade. “I was a virgin and didn’t understand what sex was. I was told that they [the traffickers] were going to get good money for my first night with an old local man who paid for my virginity. He was aggressive and hit me all the time,” said Mariam. Mariam was kept in a house with 20 young girls, all of them sex workers, she said. Before she left Iraq, she and her three sisters were being cared for by her father. Their mother was killed during the US-led invasion of the country in 2003. Mariam said her father couldn’t cope with looking after the children on his own and wanted her to go abroad, particularly given the increasing insecurity and daily violence in Iraq. Mariam said she faced daily threats in Dubai from the traffickers, warning her not to try to leave. However, she managed to escape and is now back in Baghdad being looked after by a local NGO, the Organisation for Women’s Freedom.¹⁴

Impoverished mothers selling their teenage daughters into the sex market

Victims as young as ages 11 and 12 are being sold into a sex market for as much as \$30,000. The trafficking routes are both local and international, and most often connect to Syria, Jordan and the gulf (primarily the United Arab Emirates). The victims are trafficked either illegally on forged passports or “legally” through forced marriages. A married female, even one as young as 14, raises few suspicions if she’s traveling with her “husband.” The girls are then divorced upon arrival and put to work.¹⁵

Teenage girls trafficked from Pakistan to the Middle East

Teenage girls selling flowers on Islamabad roads are being trafficked to some Middle East countries ostensibly for employment but instead are used for sex. The girls are trafficked on passports bearing fake names. Traffickers lured a young flower vendor to Muridke, a town near Lahore, where she was issued a passport on the basis of a fake name. She was sent abroad and was sold for prostitution in Dubai. The trafficking ring has reportedly smuggled about 40 young girls to the Middle East for prostitution. The police have made several arrests related to the case in 2007.¹⁶

Trafficked from Ethiopia to Bahrain

“Yeshiwork” was 16 when she left Ethiopia and went to Bahrain where she was subjected to brutal conditions. She was treated like a slave and denied money for 2 years while being prostituted twenty-four hours a day. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association contends that the widespread exploitation of Ethiopian women in Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE amounts to slavery.¹⁷

Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions.

There are reports of child sex tourism taking place in the Middle East, including in Syria, which has now become a popular destination for sex tourists from wealthier countries in the Middle East - many of whom are Saudi men. High prices are offered for virgins.¹⁸ There have also been reports of Saudi and other Gulf visitors acquiring youth brides in so-called 'temporary marriages' in Egypt.¹⁹ Domestic service that is abusive and early forced marriage are other practices that are creating demand for child sex trafficking in the Middle East.

Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organised criminal network that 'recruits' children and supplies them with fake identification. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

CASE STUDIES

14-year-olds forced to marry in Lebanon

Twelve underage Australian girls of Lebanese origin sought help from the Australian embassy in Beirut after being brought to Lebanon by their families to get married to older men. A 14-year-old girl reported that her father promised her a holiday in Lebanon. Instead she was forced to marry an older cousin there who imprisoned her in his home. She managed to escape and contacted Australian diplomats for help. She was eventually allowed to return to Australia after sensitive negotiations between officials and her family members. Government officials in Canberra believe that cases like this occur because some Muslim parents, immigrants from Lebanon and other countries want to 'protect' their teenage daughters from Western influences and promiscuity and decide to send them overseas.²⁰

Iranian girls trafficked in the Persian Gulf

According to a military Colonel, a network trafficking Iranian girls was discovered in the Persian Gulf countries. The traffickers identified young women and girls from families with financial difficulties, then under the pretext of offering them better lives, they offered money to the families. Within three weeks, with legal official passports, they transferred these girls to Dubai. After arrival in Dubai, they introduced these girls to Arab businessmen. Each girl was sold for \$5,000 to be given to their families and 10 times the amount for the traffickers. The Colonel stated that there are many rings lurking around looking for these young women and girls, and that they use these runaway girls for stealing, trafficking and for illicit drugs and sex; they also use these victims for organ trafficking.

In 2004, 10 men and 5 women involved in a trafficking ring that entrapped girls and took them to Dubai were arrested. The ring had two houses in a residential area in the north and centre of the city. The deceived girls were taken to these houses before departing Iran. This criminal ring identified women in Tehran and after arranging all the details, transported 50 young girls to

the United Arab Emirates on a monthly basis. Most of the entrapment was done by a young man who was a taxi driver. He drove around town and identified run-a-way girls and took them to these houses. Then other people in the ring took the girls and arranged for their visa and passport to go to the UAE. The travel details took no more than a month and were arranged under the pretext of tourism. While waiting for passports and visas, these girls were promised a better and prosperous life and marriage to Arab Sheikhs. However, after entering UAE, the ring members handed these girls over to brothels and prostitution networks.²¹

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- While most countries in the Middle East have acceded to the main international conventions related to the trafficking of children, they must properly report on and comply with the recommendations of the governing bodies as agreed upon as a signatory to the relevant conventions. Saudi Arabia and the UAE must accede to the *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*. Iran, Jordan, Qatar and Yemen must accede to the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*.
- While Bahrain, Israel, Oman and the United Arab Emirates have included a specific offence of trafficking in persons in their criminal codes and criminalised sexual exploitation, none have specifically criminalised child trafficking (only Iraqi legislation has criminalised trafficking in women and children). Child trafficking must be specifically criminalised in all Middle East countries.²²
- Reports of the commercial sexual exploitation of children must be classified as such by the relevant authorities and government departments in the region instead of being categorised simply as 'sexual abuse' cases, so that precise data and statistics can begin to be collected to inform adequate counteraction.
- Victim identification procedures to systematically identify and protect child victims of trafficking is urgently needed, particularly among groups of young women arrested for prostitution.
- The situation of illegal child immigrants and refugees from Iraq, as well as Palestinian child refugees, should be investigated to determine whether they are being victimised in commercial sex.
- Significantly increase law enforcement against child traffickers. This includes ensuring that sentences reflect the gravity of the crime. For example, in Israel, more than a third of criminals convicted of trafficking in women and related crimes in 2006 were repeat offenders, indicating that the initial punishments were not harsh enough to serve as a deterrent.²³
- Legislation should be introduced stipulating the minimum age of marriage to protect girls from unwanted early marriages (as a number of countries in the region have no minimum age defined) – as this can sometimes constitute a form of commercial sexual exploitation and place children in situations vulnerable to trafficking. Public sensitisation campaigns on the negative consequences of traditional practices that can lead to early or forced marriage must also be conducted.

Country	Date Acceded/Ratified the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</i> ; Date report(s) submitted	Date Acceded/Ratified the <i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i> ; Date report(s) submitted	Date Acceded/Ratified the <i>Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children</i>	Date Acceded/Ratified <i>ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour</i>
1. Bahrain	1992; Initial Report – 2000; Second Report - 2009	2004	June	2001
2. Iraq	1994; Initial Report submitted 1996	2008	2009	2001
3. Iran	1994; Initial Report -1997 Second Report – 2002	2007	Not a signatory country	2002
4. Israel	1991; Initial Report - 2001	2008	2008	2005
5. Jordan	1991; Initial Report -1993 Second Report – 1998 Third Report -2005	2006	Not a signatory country	2000
6. Kuwait	1991; Initial Report -1996	2004; Initial Report – 2007	2006	2000
7. Lebanon	1991; Initial Report – 1994 Second Report -1998 Third Report -2004	2004	2005	2001

Country	Date Acceded/Ratified the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</i> ; Date report(s) submitted	Date Acceded/Ratified the <i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i> ; Date report(s) submitted	Date Acceded/Ratified the <i>Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children</i>	Date Acceded/Ratified <i>ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour</i>
8. Oman	1996; Initial Report - 1999 Second Report – 2005	2004; Initial Report - 2007	2005	2001
9. Qatar	1995; Initial Report - 1999 Second report - 2008	2001; Initial Report 2005	Not a signatory country	2000
10. Saudi Arabia	1996; Initial Report -1998 Second Report- 2003	Not a signatory country	2007	2001
11. Syria	1993; Initial Report – 1996; Second Report - 2002	2003; Initial Report – 2006	2000	2003
12. UAE	1997; Initial Report – 2002	Not a signatory country	2009	2001
13. Yemen	1991; Initial Report – 1996; Second Report – 1999; Third report - 2004	2004; Initial Report yet to be scheduled	Not a signatory country	2000

PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- Children working in the domestic service sector must be given protective legal cover. Awareness raising campaigns on the rights of domestic workers should also continue, emphasising the linkages between domestic work and sexual exploitation of children, and publicising reporting and assistance channels such as the Family Protection Department and the child helpline.
- Greater protection and services must be made available to child victims of trafficking, including ensuring child-friendly legal procedures, the appointment of a legal guardian, provision of basic necessities and specialised care for healing and rehabilitation. Educational support and re-admittance to schools must be provided for reintegrated children, or for older children, educational support may be in the form of technical/vocational course training or alternative skills development training with a provision of a stipend.
- Programmes and services providing alternative sources of livelihoods to families in areas affected by political unrest are needed to prevent child trafficking.
- Wider access by children to confidential reporting facilities, such as hotlines, that offer follow up services must be promoted.

CASE STUDY

Arab schools urged to teach ills of human trafficking

In March 2008, Qatar proposed that Arab countries introduce material on the fight against human trafficking into their school curriculums in order to raise awareness of the scourge. The coordinator of the programme to combat human trafficking in the Gulf State commented that the campaign to educate the youth had been made more pressing by “the big economic and social changes experienced by Gulf societies,” in particular, population growth and the increasing need for expatriate and migrant labour.²⁴

TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

Bahrain:

‘BeFree’ child helpline is a program that was launched in Bahrain by Sheikha Hala bent Daij Al Khalifa in 2002. This is a non-profit organisation, providing services to the community to help prevent child abuse and neglect. They can be reached online at <http://www.be-free.info/index.asp> (English), <http://www.be-free.info/indexAr.htm> (Arabic).

Israel:

Child Abuse Hotline: 04-855-6611

The Hotline for Migrant Workers (HMW) is a non-governmental organisation established in 1998, that works to promote the rights of undocumented migrant workers and refugees and eliminate trafficking of persons in Israel. Contact information: Tel. 972.3.560-2530, Fax. 972.3.560-5175, Email info@hotline.org.il

Jordan:

The Jordan River Foundation, the ECPAT group in the country, works to protect the rights and needs of children. With the vision and support of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, JRF has successfully established itself as a pioneer in building an Arab Child Safety Model. JRF launched a child helpline in December 2006 and signed an agreement with 12 national government agencies and NGOs to cooperate on the referral system of the helpline. You can call the helpline on 110 or the JRF offices at Tel. 00 962 6 593 3211, Email. info@jrf.org.jo

Lebanon:

Dar Al Amal (House of Hope), the ECPAT group in the country, is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that protects and supports young girls and women in need. It offers a safe environment, health support, education, literacy classes, school support, sheltered workshops, medical and psychological care, vocational training, social and recreational activities, as well as opportunities for personal and communal development., Tel. +961 1 483 508, 241 164, Email daralamal@lynx.net.lb

Qatar:

The Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking was established in 2002 from a private foundation called the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. The foundation has a hotline which allows agencies to communicate with women and children who are victims of human trafficking and human rights abuses in general. The concerned authorities and the media have been briefed about the service, and each foundation has produced leaflets for dissemination among vulnerable categories. The hotlines are also available in Arabic and English. (See <http://www.scfa.gov.qa/english.asp>) Email: info@scfa.gov.qa Tel: +974 4628444

Saudi Arabia:

Human Rights First Society of Saudi Arabia (HRFS) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and defending human rights in Saudi Arabia in accordance with Islamic teachings. The organisation works with children between the age of 0 and 18. The organisation's main areas are children in conflict with the law, gender and girls, individual cases of violations, reporting to and monitoring the CRC, rights based programming and the sexual exploitation of children. (see www.hrfssaudiarabia.org) Tel: +966 505820658

United Arab Emirates:

UAE General Women's Union, Tel 971 2 4475333, Email malshamsi@uaeu.ac.ae, womenunion@wu.gov.ae, website www.wu.gov.ae

MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : www.thebodyshop.com/stop

Endnotes

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