

# General Assembly Third Committee

(SOCHUM)

Research Reports



**Forum:** General Assembly Third Committee (SOCHUM)

**Issue:** Combating Human Trafficking in the Digital Age

**Student Officers:** Aly Abo El Ella and Nadine El Banna

**Position:** Deputy Chair and Chair

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## **Introduction**

Human trafficking is a violation of rights that is acknowledged in international agreements and pacts. In today's age, the internet and other digital tools have become instruments for traffickers to lure, exploit, and manipulate their victims. The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) of the General Assembly has been tasked with addressing the issue of implementing measures to combat trafficking in this era as its responsibility is to handle issues dealing with fundamental human rights in the international community. The emergence of platforms has empowered traffickers to operate discreetly and expand their reach. This research aims to provide an examination of the issue, including previous efforts to address it, relevant treaties and events, explanations of key terms, possible solutions, a chronological timeline of events and a list of relevant countries or organizations involved.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### **Human Trafficking**

Organized criminal activity where people are treated as possessions to be controlled and exploited, which includes forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation, and the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain labor or commercial sex acts are all variations of human trafficking. Victims can be men or women, as well as children of all ages and backgrounds.

### **Digital Age**

The current era, also referred to as the "digital age," is defined by the transition from traditional industries to economy based on technology. It is also been defined by the growth

of social media, the internet, and digital devices. These things have completely transformed how people conduct business, communicate, and access information. This includes cybercrime and the exploitation of vulnerable people through online platforms.

### **Dark Web**

A part of the internet that needs certain software, setups, or authorisation to access and isn't covered by conventional search engines. It is frequently connected with illegal operations including the trafficking of human beings, the selling of firearms, and narcotics. The dark web poses a serious challenge to law enforcement because it gives traffickers the anonymity they need to operate undetected.

### **Cybersecurity**

The act of defending programs, networks, and systems from online threats. These assaults usually target sensitive data access, modification or destruction, as well as interference with regular corporate operations. Cybersecurity measures play a critical role in combating human trafficking by keeping an eye on online activity, detecting trafficking networks, and safeguarding potential victims. By preventing traffickers from using digital channels to further their activities, effective cybersecurity can help stop trafficking.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

The replication of human thought processes by machines, especially computer programs. Self-correction, reasoning, and learning are some of these processes. Artificial intelligence (AI) is being utilized more and more in a variety of fields, such as cybersecurity and law enforcement, to improve victim identification, anticipate possible trafficking activity, and analyze data trends. However, AI is a double-edged weapon in the battle against human trafficking since traffickers may also abuse technology for the benefit of their activities.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **The United States**

Victims of human trafficking travel to the United States from all over the world, and traffickers are increasingly recruiting and abusing victims online. In order to combat human trafficking, the government has put in place a number of legislation and programs. One such policy is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which strengthens law enforcement operations while offering help to victims. In order to exchange information and best practices in the fight against human trafficking in the digital era, the United States also works with foreign organizations and other nations.

### **Libya**

Libya is a popular destination of transit for refugees and migrants, many of whom are at risk of being trafficked. The issue has gotten worse due to the continuous war and ineffective government, which makes it easier for traffickers to take advantage of civilians. Traffickers frequently use social media and other online platforms to draw in victims, benefiting from the anonymity that the internet provides. In order to stop the use of technology in human trafficking, the Libyan government has been trying to improve the technical capabilities of law enforcement and the criminal justice system with assistance from UNODC.

### **Thailand**

Thailand is a place where human trafficking originates and ends, especially in the fishing and prostitution sectors. Online forums are a common tool used by traffickers to find victims and promote their services for sexual exploitation. Although the nation has come under fire for how it handles incidents of human trafficking, it has recently improved its legal system and enforcement tactics, especially in response to pressure from abroad. In order to improve victim protection and prevention tactics, they have implemented technology to locate and dismantle trafficking networks, and have also worked with foreign organizations.

### **Philippines**

Many victims of human trafficking originate in the Philippines, especially women and children. Traffickers frequently prey on weaker people, such as those who are impoverished,

and utilize internet platforms to entice them with false assurances of work or educational prospects overseas. Through cooperation with international organizations and non-governmental organizations, the government has taken an active approach to tackling the issue by improving victim protection and preventative efforts through law. Recognising the significance of fighting human trafficking in the internet era, the Philippines is enhancing public awareness efforts and law enforcement training.

## **Vietnam**

Vietnam serves as both a source and a transit nation for human trafficking, mostly involving the exploitation of workers and sexual minors. Traffickers frequently target rural regions, taking advantage of the lack of digital literacy and awareness in these communities, and utilize internet platforms to recruit victims. The Vietnamese government is attempting to improve legal structures and education for law enforcement to handle the problems provided by technology because it understands how important it is to combat human trafficking in the digital era. Additionally, the government has worked with foreign organizations to improve victim protection and prevention tactics, such as utilizing technology to locate and dismantle trafficking networks.

## **Timeline of Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
15 November 2000	The United Nations endorsed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), which supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
30 July 2010	The UN General Assembly created the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons to encourage coordination and cooperation among countries and to enhance the use of international instruments in combatting this issue.
25 September 2015	The United States enacts laws FOSTA-SESTA to hold websites accountable for facilitating sex trafficking. These acronyms stand for Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) and the Stop Enabling

11 April 2018	Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA).  Organized by INTERPOL, the Global Conference on Human Trafficking addresses the challenges of combating human trafficking in the digital age and promotes international cooperation.
16 October 2019	The European Commission endorses a new strategy focusing on preventing trafficking, bringing traffickers to justice, and protecting and empowering victims, this strategy will be implemented from 2021-2025.
24 June 2020	The First Global Summit on Human Trafficking in the Digital Age, hosted by the United Nations, gathered policymakers, tech industry leaders, NGOs, and law enforcement to discuss comprehensive strategies for addressing human trafficking facilitated by digital tech

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

1. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000): This treaty establishes a framework for global collaboration in the fight against human trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime. It highlights how important it is for nations to implement strong anti-trafficking policies, especially in light of globalization and technological development.
2. Procedure to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking, Especially Women and Children (2000): This pact, also referred to as the Palermo Protocol, is an addition to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It recognises the ways in which traffickers use technology for recruitment and exploitation, addressing the need to combat trafficking in the digital era.
3. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): This agreement mandates that women and girls be shielded against exploitation and human trafficking. The CEDAW Committee highlighted in November 2020 the necessity of addressing the growing use of digital technology in human

trafficking, stressing the role that social media played in enlisting victims during the COVID-19 epidemic.

4. UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018): The necessity of tackling human trafficking in the context of migration is acknowledged by this approach. It pushes member governments to enact policies that address immigrant vulnerabilities, especially in the digital space where human traffickers operate.
5. UN Global Digital Compact: This compact, which tries to address the issues presented by technology, particularly its use in human trafficking, is put out as a framework for creating agreed values for an open, free, and safe digital future. In order to safeguard human rights in the digital sphere, it highlights the necessity of international collaboration.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of the United States: The legislation was first passed in 2000 and then continuously extended with the intention of preventing human trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting those who engage in it. It has been modified to address the use of technology in human trafficking.

Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Union: This directive was created to outlaw the use of services provided by human trafficking victims and to put policies in place to discourage and reduce the demand for such services.

Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Council of Europe (2005): With regard to technology usage, this agreement set up a comprehensive framework for the fight against human trafficking in Europe.

Europol's European Cybercrime Center (EC3): a division of Europol that assists member nations in their investigations and prosecutions of crimes involving online human trafficking. It arranges collaborations and provides operational assistance and expertise.

Operation Strikeback: A coordinated effort by Europol, Eurojust, and law enforcement organizations from many nations to stop the internet exploitation of minors for prostitution. This project was proven to be very effective, as it resulted in 46 identified victims and 12 individuals being taken into custody.

Project Arachnid: The Canadian Centre for Child Protection has launched , an effort to identify and eliminate online content that promotes child sexual assault, a known form of human trafficking. Specifically, It scans websites using automated techniques to find photos, which are afterwards submitted to internet service providers and law enforcement for removal.

## Possible Solutions

1. Development of Advanced AI Tools: AI algorithms can analyze large amounts of data from social media, online advertisements, and chat interactions to identify patterns indicative of trafficking. For example, AI can flag suspicious job postings or communications that contain certain keywords associated with trafficking. Moreover, it can be proven to be an effective solution when combatting this issue.
2. Public Awareness and Education Campaigns: Campaigns can be effective as they can educate the public on how to recognize potential trafficking situations and encourage more people to report this important issue. Overall campaigns expand worlds knowledge on the severity of the issue and how it should be strongly prioritized to solve.
3. Collaboration with Tech Companies: Multiple tech companies collaborating together can contribute in multiple ways, such as by creating reporting mechanisms for users to flag suspicious content and by sharing data with law enforcement. These joined forces can also lead to the development of applications that provide resources and support potential victims by helping them escape their exploitative situations.
4. Training for Law Enforcement and First Responders: These training programs could specifically focus on the unique challenges posed by digital trafficking,] including how to engage with victims who may be reluctant to come forward. Multiple workshops



and simulations are great ways to prepare responders to identify signs of trafficking in online environments and understand the psychological manipulations that are commonly used by traffickers.

5. Victim Support and Rehabilitation Programs: Providing comprehensive support services for survivors of human trafficking is essential for their recovery and reintegration into society. This could possibly include counseling, legal assistance, job training, and safe housing. These specific rehab programs can also focus on helping survivors navigate the digital landscape as well as ensuring they are equipped with the skills to protect themselves online and avoid future re-trafficking.

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