



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

On the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, GWI urges states and communities to work together to end modern day slavery

Geneva, Switzerland, 30 July 2016 - On this World Day against Trafficking in Persons, Graduate Women International (GWI) urges states parties and communities to take all possible preventative measures to protect vulnerable persons against this growing and often 'hidden' crime.

Human trafficking is a human rights violation that exploits women, children and men for a range of purposes including forced labour, marriage, prostitution, organ or tissue removal and surrogacy, and, according to global research, begging, pornographic exploitation (including internet pornography), baby selling, illegal adoption, armed combat, and for ritual victimisations.¹ It is estimated that while 21 million people are victims of forced labour globally, women count for 60% of all trafficked victims, and girls and women make up three-quarters of all victims.² Sexual exploitation is the predominant form of human trafficking suffered by women and girls, and commonly related to national or transnational organised crime.³

Human trafficking is a fast-growing activity among transnational criminal organisations, aided in part by increased migration as a result of crises, conflict and political instability. A vast majority of states parties have signed and ratified legislation against trafficking; notably the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons](#), supplementing the [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime](#), but translating protection, detection, prosecution, redress, and prevention into reality remains a problem. Very few criminals are convicted and most trafficked persons will never be identified or assisted. GWI emphasises the need for action on three strategic levels; human rights education, training and awareness-raising,⁴ promotion of legislation, strengthening of partnerships and co-operation amongst civil society and communities.

The damage for trafficked victims is physical and psychological. Women and girls trafficked routinely suffer harm - confinement, severe sexualised and reproductive injuries, powerlessness, humiliation, forced dissociation, exhaustion, drugging, for example as well as sexually transmitted diseases and other serious injuries. Women and girls who have been trafficked have been subjected to multiple forms of violence including torture perpetrated by traffickers and other non-state actors over an extensive period of time. Some of these injuries can cause lasting mental and physical health problems and may require long-term treatment.

¹ UN Office on Drugs and Crime. (2014). [Global report on trafficking in persons](#) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.V.10). Vienna.

² International Labour Organisation <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm>

³ UN Office on Drugs and Crime. (2014). [Global report on trafficking in persons](#) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.V.10). Vienna.

⁴ UN General Assembly. (2012). United Nations declaration on human rights education and training (A/RES/66/137).



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Indeed, the Committee against Torture identifies that acts of torture inflicted by non-state actors come under the [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT); it identifies human trafficking as a form of gender-based violence that needs addressing under CAT.⁵ GWI has a policy statement on [gender-based non-State actor torture](#), which emphasises that effective enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation can only take place with informed communities and trained authorities.

GWI President Catherine Bell GWI states: “The importance of education and awareness-raising to prevent exploitation cannot be underestimated in tackling this horrific crime. Education is also the route to ensuring children, women and men understand their human rights, achieve their economic potential and are thus better equipped to avoid this modern day slavery”.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international nongovernmental organisation (NGO) based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 80 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls’ and women’s global organisation advocating for women’s rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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⁵ UN Committee against Torture. (2008). General comment no. 2 Implementation of article 2 by states parties (CAT/C/GC/2).