



## UN Report Proposes Action by Security Council, Private Sector on Human Trafficking in Conflict

### ***PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**NEW YORK, 8 SEPTEMBER 2016** – A report detailing ideas for action by the Security Council and the financial, technology and recruitment sectors to fight human trafficking in conflict was published today by the United Nations University (UNU), a United Nations think tank, and supported by the governments of the United Kingdom and Liechtenstein. The report, [\*Fighting Human Trafficking in Conflict: 10 Ideas for Security Council Action\*](#), also identifies steps by which UN personnel in conflict zones could increase protection for potential victims, especially those displaced by conflict.

*“With an estimated 45.8 million slaves alive today, modern slavery is one of the most significant human rights tragedies of our time. Conflict makes people especially vulnerable to exploitation and enslavement by groups like Da’esh/ISIL, and Boko Haram,”* says **Matthew Rycroft, CBE, UK Permanent Representative to the UN**. *“The United Kingdom is committed to working with international partners, including tech companies and other private sector actors, to address this scourge. We welcome the 10 concrete ideas for action proposed in this report and look forward to discussing them with our fellow members of the Security Council in the months ahead.”*

Security Council members first took up the issue of human trafficking in conflict in December 2015 at the prompting of the United States and after hearing the heart-wrenching testimony of Nadia Murad Basee Taha, a Yazidi survivor of sexual enslavement by ISIL. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will release a report on this topic, which is expected to be formally debated in the Security Council in December. The UN University report provides ideas for consideration by UN member states prior to that debate.

While non-state armed groups have long forced vulnerable people into sexual exploitation, military service, and forced labour, these groups, including ISIL and Boko Haram, are now encouraging — and organising — slavery on a scale not seen since World War II.

*“Disturbing evidence in this report suggests human trafficking in conflict is a growing problem,”* says **Dr James Cockayne, Head of the UN University Office in New York** and lead author of the report. *“Armed groups including ISIL and Boko Haram are openly reviving slavery and organising slave markets, using the more sophisticated and institutionalised techniques, including social media platforms to both groom victims and to auction them off. Institutionalised sexual slavery, forced child recruitment as suicide bombers, and trafficking in organs are horrifying new twists on human trafficking. Right now, the Security Council has significant leverage that it could use to reverse this perverse trend and help states to punish these terrible crimes.”*

Over 5,000 Yazidi women, children and men are thought to have been enslaved by ISIL. In the last year, ISIL fighters have used the encrypted communications app Telegram and applications such as WhatsApp, Twitter and Threema to auction enslaved Yazidi women and launder the resulting profits.

The report proposes 10 'Ideas for Action' by the Security Council, including: increased monitoring of armed groups' involvement in human trafficking, data-sharing, the use of sanctions, and international criminal cooperation. Importantly, the report considers ideas for strengthening international denunciation of slavery and human trafficking in conflict, which can constitute a crime against humanity.

*"We need a new framework for action to help states protect people from trafficking in conflict and punish those involved,"* comments **Christian Wenaweser, Ambassador of Liechtenstein to the United Nations**. *"This report contains several promising ideas for action such as a new position to drive efforts by the UN, implementing existing sanctions that already cover human trafficking but are not being used effectively – and strengthening the role of international criminal courts."*

The report also suggests steps the Security Council could take to strengthen monitoring of human trafficking connected to armed conflicts already on its agenda, including a monitoring taskforce and improved private sector data-sharing.

*"The Security Council can foster data-sharing between law enforcement agencies, financial regulators and relevant private sector actors,"* argues **Krishna Patel, Justice Initiative Director and General Counsel of Grace Farms Foundation and a former US Assistant Attorney**. *"It has made huge strides in disrupting the financing of terrorism using this tool, but has not addressed those same terrorist groups' involvement in human trafficking, even where trafficking is a major potential source of terrorist revenue."*

The UN University report suggests the Security Council could encourage the financial, technology, employment and recruitment sectors to develop due diligence standards to prevent their businesses' implication in facilitating human trafficking in conflict.

*"The private sector has an important role to play in monitoring and disrupting human trafficking in conflict,"* said **Warrick Beaver, Managing Director of Third Party Risk for Thomson Reuters**, one of the sponsors of the report. *"Business will always take its direction from regulators and official bodies. The Security Council could help states and the private sector work together to develop clearer expectations and safeguards, for example through developing due diligence standards, and through fostering training of risk and compliance officers to protect supply-chains from being tainted by human trafficking in conflict."*

Speaking to this point, Dr Cockayne notes: *"The Security Council has taken similar steps to develop standards designed to prevent industry from profiting from the trafficking of conflict minerals. Why not take this step in relation to trafficking in persons?"*

A record 65 million people uprooted by conflict and persecution around the world are at heightened risk of criminal exploitation and human trafficking. The report notes that irregular migrants face particular vulnerability at hotspots such as transit and holding points, unofficial places of employment, informal settlements, and within communities that host migrants. It underlines potential ways to strengthen international capabilities to identify, assist and protect civilians in these hotspots, including the development of rapid reaction capabilities, reporting taskforces and targeted information campaigns.

*"Trafficking and slavery extend to the world's most vulnerable. Criminal networks descend on these vulnerable people who are fragile, exhausted and desperate,"* **Kevin Hyland, the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**, points out. *"With innovative ideas for action, the evil of modern slavery could be drastically disrupted. Legislation must be adequately utilised to ensure perpetrators are punished and victims are protected, and this timely report highlights the urgency of seeing this materialise."*

The full report is available at <https://unu.edu/fighting-human-trafficking-in-conflict>

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**Available for download:**

- Report executive summary in English and French
- Full report in English
- The video: <https://www.youtube.com/user/UNUChannel>

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**Notes to the editor:**

The preparation of the UN University report was supported by the government of the United Kingdom, a permanent member of the Security Council, and by Liechtenstein, a long-time advocate for international accountability for human rights violations. Its preparation was also supported by Thomson Reuters, and Grace Farms Foundation, based in New Canaan, Connecticut.

The UN University report summarises discussions in June and July 2016 amongst more than 100 experts from missions to the United Nations, UN entities, national law enforcement agencies, national financial regulators, the technology sector, the financial sector, media and civil society. These discussions were held at Grace Farms, a new centre for nature, arts, justice, community, and faith in New Canaan, Connecticut.

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