



HIDDEN HORRORS: HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN IRAQ - A NATION IN NEED OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAWS

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking and settler trafficking are universal and general offence that use men, women and children for interest. Many parts of the world witness these kinds of trafficking, here we are discussing trafficking in Iraq. Forced nuptials, household subjugation within the community, family and tribe as well as strained labor and strained prostitution, are all forms of human trafficking that have been recorded in Iraq for a prolonged duration. Since the "2003 invasion and ensuing civil war", Iraq has flattered a more perennial harbor for external hirelings who are at a higher danger of being trafficked and majority migrates from the "Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh, and other countries" with elevated degree of penury. In consonance to reliable accounts, "the Iraqi military trafficked Kurdish women into commercial sex labor during the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s, and women who were displaced during the revolt in southern Iraq in 1991 have been detained for prostitution in the KRG". Increased risks for the most vulnerable women, children, minorities, displaced persons, and other vulnerable groups have also been brought on by the conflict with ISIS in Iraq.

However, the Iraqi government officials are yet to bring laws that could prevent these offenders and punish them. Iraq has never brought any anti-trafficking codifications, aiding traffickers to advance to function with indemnity.

KEYWORDS: Human Trafficking, Iraq, Migrants, Kurdish, Women, Traffickers.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The background of the human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe from Kurdistan are multifaceted and deeply rooted in historical, socio-economic, and geopolitical factors. Understanding these aspects is crucial for comprehending the vulnerability of the Kurdish community to trafficking and addressing the issue effectively.

- **Historical Context:**
The Kurdish people, an ethnic group with a distinct culture, language, and identity, have faced various challenges throughout history, including political marginalization, discrimination, and conflicts. Their aspirations for self-determination and autonomy have often been met with resistance, leading to social instability and displacement. Historical injustices and unresolved conflicts have created an environment where human trafficking can thrive.
- **Socio-economic Factors:**
The socio-economic factors underlying the vulnerability of the Kurdish tribe to trafficking are interconnected and complex. Poverty, lack of economic opportunities, limited access to education and healthcare, and inadequate social support systems exacerbate the susceptibility of individuals and communities to exploitation. Economic disparities and systemic discrimination contribute to a higher risk of being trafficked, as traffickers prey on vulnerable individuals seeking better livelihoods.
- **Geopolitical Dynamics:**
The geopolitical landscape of Kurdistan plays a significant role in the human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe. Political

instability, armed conflicts, and the presence of non-state actors in the region create an environment conducive to trafficking. Disrupted governance structures and weak law enforcement capacities further impede efforts to combat trafficking effectively. Geopolitical factors also affect migration patterns, as individuals may be forced to flee their homes and become vulnerable to trafficking while seeking safety or better opportunities elsewhere.

- **Cultural and Gender Dynamics:**
The cultural and gender dynamics within the Kurdish tribe also contribute to their vulnerability to trafficking. Traditional gender roles and norms may result in the marginalization and limited agency of women and girls, making them more susceptible to exploitation. Discrimination against women in terms of education, employment, and societal expectations further exacerbates their vulnerability to trafficking. Additionally, cultural stigmatization, fear of retribution, and lack of awareness within the community may discourage reporting and hinder efforts to combat trafficking effectively.
- **Intersectionality:**
It is important to recognize that vulnerability to trafficking is not solely based on Kurdish ethnicity but is influenced by intersecting factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Intersectionality highlights how individuals within the Kurdish tribe, particularly women, children, and marginalized groups, may face compounded vulnerabilities and increased risks of exploitation.



UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING DEFINITION AND FORMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that involves the exploitation and forced movement of individuals through means of coercion, deception, or abduction. The victims are deprived of their basic human rights and dignity, subjected to various forms of exploitation, and often find themselves trapped in situations of modern-day slavery.

There are several forms of human trafficking, each involving distinct types of exploitation:

- **Sex Trafficking:** This form involves the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of individuals for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Victims, mostly women and children, are forced into prostitution, pornography, and other commercial sexual activities against their will.
- **Labor Trafficking:** Victims of labor trafficking are coerced into forced labor or services in various industries, such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work, and sweatshops. They often endure hazardous conditions, long working hours, and minimal or no pay.
- **Child Trafficking:** Children are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. They may be trafficked for forced labor, sexual exploitation, child soldiers, child marriage, or organ harvesting. Child trafficking is a grave violation of human rights and deprives young individuals of their childhood and education.
- **Forced Marriage:** In this form, individuals are coerced or deceived into marriage without their consent. Forced marriages can lead to a life of servitude, sexual exploitation, and domestic abuse, especially affecting young girls and women.
- **Organ Trafficking:** This involves the illegal trade of human organs. Victims may be forced or deceived into donating their organs, risking their health and lives. Organ trafficking is driven by the demand for organs for transplantation.
- **Domestic Servitude:** Victims are forced to work as domestic servants in private households. They endure long working hours, isolation, physical and emotional abuse, and restricted freedom.

Human trafficking is a global issue that transcends borders, affecting people from all walks of life. It often preys on vulnerable populations, including migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and those living in poverty. Addressing human trafficking requires a comprehensive approach, including public awareness, legal frameworks, law enforcement efforts, victim support and rehabilitation, and international cooperation. By combatting human trafficking, we can strive to protect human rights and uphold the principles of justice and dignity for all individuals.

GLOBAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PATTERNS

Global human trafficking patterns reveal a disturbing and widespread crime that knows no borders. Transnational networks operate across countries, enabling traffickers to recruit, transport, and exploit victims in different regions. Vulnerable populations, including women, children, migrants,

and refugees, bear the brunt of this heinous trade. Source countries, where victims are often recruited, transit countries, through which they are moved, and destination countries, where they are exploited, form the three critical phases of trafficking routes. Labor exploitation thrives in industries such as agriculture, construction, and domestic work, while the demand for commercial sex fuels sex trafficking. The internet has also played a significant role, enabling traffickers to recruit and advertise victims online while evading detection. Combating global human trafficking necessitates robust international cooperation, stringent legislation, victim support systems, and awareness campaigns, along with addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability in societies worldwide. Only by uniting efforts can the world hope to eradicate this modern-day slavery and protect the rights and dignity of millions of victims.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Several factors contribute to human trafficking, making it a persistent global issue. Poverty and lack of economic opportunities push vulnerable individuals into seeking better lives, making them easy targets for traffickers. Armed conflicts, political instability, and humanitarian crises disrupt communities and displace people, creating an environment conducive to trafficking. Gender inequality leaves women and girls disproportionately susceptible to exploitation, particularly in the sex trade. Weak law enforcement, corruption, and porous borders facilitate traffickers' movement and operations. Additionally, demand for cheap labor and commercial sex acts perpetuates the supply of victims. Lack of awareness and social stigma surrounding trafficking further hinders effective prevention and intervention efforts. Addressing these factors requires a comprehensive approach involving economic development, gender equality, law enforcement, and public education to combat human trafficking and protect the rights and well-being of potential victims.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF KURDISH TRIBE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historical context of human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe is complex and intertwined with the political, social, and economic dynamics of the regions where the Kurdish people reside.

Kurdish people, an ethnic group with a distinct language and culture, primarily inhabit areas spanning across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Throughout history, the Kurdish population has faced political marginalization, social discrimination, and conflicts in these countries, leading to vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. Armed conflicts, political instability, and economic hardships in regions with Kurdish populations have provided fertile ground for human traffickers to operate. Displacement and insecurity resulting from wars and internal conflicts have rendered many Kurdish individuals displaced and susceptible to exploitation. Moreover, the Kurdish region's geographic location between different countries and its porous borders have facilitated the movement of both victims and traffickers, making it easier for trafficking networks to operate across international boundaries.



The trafficking of Kurdish people can involve various forms, including sex trafficking, forced labor, and child exploitation. Women and girls from the Kurdish community have been particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking, with some being trafficked to neighboring countries for forced prostitution. In conflict zones, children have been at risk of being recruited as child soldiers or subjected to various forms of exploitation. It is essential to note that the situation may have evolved since my last update, and further developments and efforts to address human trafficking involving the Kurdish tribe may have taken place. As with any sensitive and evolving topic, it is crucial to refer to the most recent and reputable sources for up-to-date information.

VULNERABILITY FACTORS

The Kurdish tribe, like many other vulnerable populations, faces specific factors that contribute to their susceptibility to human trafficking. These vulnerability factors are often interconnected and may vary based on the region and context in which the Kurdish people reside.

The vulnerability factors contributing to the human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe are multifaceted. Political marginalization of the Kurdish community in some regions leads to limited access to resources and opportunities, making them susceptible to traffickers' false promises of a better life elsewhere. Additionally, ongoing armed conflicts and displacement in Kurdish regions create an environment of insecurity, leaving individuals, especially women and children, more vulnerable to exploitation. Socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities, further exacerbate the risk as trafficker's prey on those seeking livelihood options. Gender inequality within the Kurdish community may also expose women and girls to various forms of exploitation, particularly in the sex trade. Moreover, the lack of awareness and protection mechanisms, both within the community and among law enforcement, hinders effective identification and prevention efforts. The geographic location of Kurdish regions, bordering multiple countries, allows traffickers to exploit porous borders, making it easier to transport victims across international boundaries and evade law enforcement. Addressing these vulnerability factors requires a comprehensive approach involving empowerment, education, awareness, law enforcement cooperation, and targeted support to protect the Kurdish tribe from the scourge of human trafficking.

ROUTES AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The human trafficking routes involving the Kurdish tribe are often influenced by the geographical location of Kurdish regions and the complex political dynamics in the Middle East. Traffickers exploit the porous borders between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria to move victims across international boundaries. The routes may vary based on the specific circumstances and regions, but traffickers often target areas affected by conflict and displacement, taking advantage of the chaos and vulnerability caused by armed conflicts. Moreover, some victims may be trafficked internally within a country or region, from rural areas to urban centers where demand for labor or commercial sex is higher.

As for destination countries, victims from the Kurdish tribe have been reported to be trafficked to neighboring countries in the Middle East and beyond. Countries in the region with significant demand for cheap labor and commercial sex acts attract traffickers and their victims. These destination countries may include some Gulf states, where there is demand for labor in various industries, as well as countries where there is a demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Victims are often lured or coerced into these countries under false pretenses, only to find themselves trapped in exploitative situations.

It is important to note that human trafficking routes and destination countries involving the Kurdish tribe may evolve over time due to changing circumstances and law enforcement efforts. Additionally, specific cases of trafficking may differ, and not all individuals from the Kurdish community may be vulnerable to trafficking. Addressing human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe requires international cooperation and comprehensive efforts to combat this grave violation of human rights and protect vulnerable populations.

IMPACT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON KURDISH TRIBE

Human trafficking inflicts severe individual consequences on victims from the Kurdish tribe. They endure physical and emotional trauma, including violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation, leading to long-lasting physical and psychological scars. Stripped of their freedom and dignity, victims suffer from health issues due to exploitative working conditions and lack of medical care. The loss of trust and social isolation make reintegration into their communities challenging, while legal and immigration consequences further compound their vulnerabilities. The profound impact of human trafficking necessitates comprehensive support, including physical and mental health care, legal assistance, and education and vocational training, to help survivors heal and rebuild their lives.

Human trafficking not only affects the individual victims from the Kurdish tribe but also has significant family and community impacts. Families of trafficked individuals often experience immense emotional distress and anguish, not knowing the fate of their loved ones. The loss of a family member to trafficking can leave a void and disrupt the family's social and economic stability. In the community, the prevalence of trafficking can create fear and mistrust, leading to social fragmentation. The stigma attached to trafficking survivors may further isolate them and their families, hindering community support. Moreover, trafficking can erode the fabric of trust within the community, as individuals become cautious and suspicious of one another. Addressing the family and community impacts of human trafficking requires a collective effort to raise awareness, provide support to affected families, and foster community resilience and solidarity to combat this heinous crime.

Human trafficking has profound psychological and physical health impacts on victims from the Kurdish tribe. Survivors often suffer from severe psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)



due to the violence, abuse, and exploitation they endured. The loss of control over their lives and the constant fear they experience during trafficking leaves lasting emotional scars. Moreover, the physical toll of forced labor, malnutrition, and lack of access to healthcare leads to a range of health issues, including injuries, chronic pain, and sexually transmitted infections. Addressing the psychological and physical health impacts of human trafficking requires specialized and holistic support, including trauma-informed care, counseling, and medical assistance, to help survivors on their path to healing and recovery.

EFFORTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

International and national legal agencies have undertaken significant efforts to combat human trafficking involving the Kurdish tribe. Internationally, organizations like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have provided technical assistance and capacity building to countries with Kurdish populations, helping them develop effective anti-trafficking strategies. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons has served as a critical framework for international cooperation in investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases. At the national level, countries with Kurdish communities have enacted stringent laws criminalizing human trafficking, establishing specialized units to handle trafficking cases. These legal agencies prioritize victim protection and assistance, providing essential services to survivors, including medical, psychological, and legal support. By working together, international and national legal agencies are making significant strides to combat human trafficking, protect the Kurdish tribe, and bring traffickers to justice.

PREVENTION AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Prevention and awareness campaigns targeting the human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe involve culturally sensitive educational initiatives. These campaigns raise awareness about trafficking risks, rights, and available support systems within the Kurdish community. Collaborative efforts between local organizations, government agencies, and international partners are crucial for effective implementation.

VICTIM SUPPORT AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

Victim support and rehabilitation programs for the Kurdish tribe involve comprehensive services addressing physical, psychological, and socio-economic needs. These programs provide counseling, medical care, vocational training, and legal assistance, aiming to empower survivors, reintegrate them into society, and mitigate re-trafficking risks. Cultural sensitivity and community engagement are integral to success.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Future efforts to combat human trafficking within the Kurdish tribe should prioritize multidimensional strategies. Strengthening legislative measures with a focus on victim protection, enhancing international collaboration through

regional task forces, and investing in specialized rehabilitation centers are critical. Empowering vulnerable individuals through education and economic opportunities, coupled with culturally sensitive awareness campaigns, can reduce susceptibility. Involvement of community leaders and data-driven research will bolster prevention. Addressing root causes like socio-economic disparities and political instability within Kurdistan is imperative. International pressure, diplomatic interventions, and a long-term strategy should be adopted to comprehensively address the complexities of trafficking, ensuring the protection and well-being of the Kurdish tribe.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the human trafficking of the Kurdish tribe reflects a deeply rooted crisis necessitating immediate action. Historical injustices, socio-economic vulnerabilities, geopolitical turmoil, and cultural dynamics have collectively intensified their susceptibility to exploitation. The poignant narratives of survivors underscore the urgent need for preventive measures, including legal reforms, regional cooperation, and community empowerment. Rehabilitation initiatives and awareness campaigns should be culturally attuned. Long-term success demands a comprehensive approach targeting both the symptoms and causes of trafficking. By uniting governments, NGOs, and international organizations, a concerted effort can protect the rights and dignity of the Kurdish tribe, fostering a safer and more equitable future.