

OIC-IPHRC, on the occasion of ‘World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2025’ condemns the rising scourge of *Trafficking in Persons* in all its forms and manifestations and calls for adopting human rights-based universal mechanisms to eliminating its root causes, devising normative standards to hold criminals accountable and promoting international cooperation.

Jeddah 30th July 2025: The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) joins the international community in commemorating the ‘*World Day Against Trafficking in Persons*’ and condemns the rise of crime of trafficking in persons worldwide, particularly in the context of conflicts, those living under occupation in particular Palestinians under Israeli occupation, forced displacement, migration, and systematic human rights violations. This year’s global theme, ‘*Human Trafficking is Organized Crime: End the Exploitation*’ calls on all stakeholders to eliminate the root causes of the crime, ensure accountability of sophisticated criminal networks operating with impunity and protect persons in vulnerable circumstances including forced migrants, refugees, women and children.

The Commission highlights that trafficking in persons, which is widely recognized as a modern form of slavery, manifests in various exploitative forms, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced begging, organ trafficking, and child soldiering. The victims, who are often deceived, coerced, or abducted, suffer from various forms of exploitation and are subjected to degrading treatment. The root causes of human trafficking are complex and interconnected, including poverty, armed conflict, intra/inter regional inequalities, lack of social and economic development, weak law enforcement, and corruption. Forced displacement due to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, climate change-induced displacement and cyber scamming have also emerged as enablers of trafficking.

The Commission draws urgent attention to the systematic and unlawful actions of the Israeli occupation authorities against Palestinian civilians, especially in the Gaza Strip, which may tantamount to human trafficking under international law. These include abduction, forced transfer, and incommunicado detention of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, among them doctors, humanitarian workers, journalists, and children. Credible reports have documented the kidnapping of medical professionals directly from hospitals, targeting of aid convoys and journalists, and forced removal of civilians across borders into detention facilities inside Israeli controlled territories, where they are often held without charge, denied legal representation, and subjected to physical abuse, humiliation, and torture.

The Commission notes with deep concern the escalation in crimes of human trafficking worldwide as reported in the *UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024*¹ which indicates that women and children bear the disproportionate brunt of this crime. Forced labour (42%) is now the dominant form of exploitation followed by sexual exploitation (36%), and cyber-trafficking practices are on the rise. Sub-Saharan Africa (31%) accounted for the largest share of detected

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes Report 2024: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2024/GLOTIP2024_BOOK.pdf

cross-border flows. 58% of trafficking victims were exploited within national borders, while 42% involved cross-border movement. The most affected destinations were Western and Southern Europe and the Middle East. Despite rising trends, regrettably, accountability of the criminal networks remain limited, especially for labour trafficking.

The Commission categorically states that trafficking in persons contradicts the Islamic principles that uphold the sanctity of human dignity, justice and protection from exploitation. Islam unequivocally forbids all forms of enslavement and coercion and promotes social justice, compassion and protection of those in vulnerable circumstances. These principles align with international human rights obligations under instruments such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* and *Convention on the Rights of the Child* which guarantee rights violated by trafficking in persons, including freedom from slavery, forced labor, and inhumane treatment. Further, OIC's normative frameworks reflected in the *Preamble of the OIC Charter*, *Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights (Article 1)* and *OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women*, unequivocally prohibits slavery, servitude, forced labor, and trafficking in all forms and under any circumstances.

The Commission, while upholding that trafficking in persons as gross violation of human rights and a form of organized crime, is firmly committed to combat the crime in cooperation with Member States, OIC and UN entities. In alignment with these commitments, the Commission is planning to organize an international seminar that will bring together experts, policymakers, and civil society to propose actionable strategies and collaborative mechanisms for preventing and responding to trafficking in persons within Member States and beyond.

The Commission recommends: (a) Member States to adopt and enforce human rights based comprehensive anti-trafficking national legislations and national action plans and strengthen border and law enforcement cooperation to dismantle trafficking criminal networks; (b) OIC General Secretariat to devise a unified strategy to combat trafficking in persons within the OIC region and include it in the priorities for the OIC Program of Action 2025-2035 ensuring victim-centered responses with focus on women and children survivors; (c) International cooperation for adopting universal normative framework for combatting human trafficking and realization of the right to development to bridge regional development disparities to address the root causes of human trafficking in its various forms and manifestations; and (d) recognition of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories as cause of serious forms of human trafficking requiring accountability of the occupation regime and urgent protection for Palestinians with specific attention to women, children, and displaced persons.

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