



# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 48<sup>th</sup> SESSION

## Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences (17 September 2021)

Mr. Tomoya Obokata - Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery:

- *Thematic report “Nexus between displacement and contemporary forms of slavery”:*  
[A/HRC/48/52](#)

At the end of 2020, there was **83.4 million of displaced persons**. The number continued to increase in the context of mass displacement caused by **conflict, humanitarian crises** and **climate change**. These displaced persons have been forced to flee and find safety either abroad or within their own countries.

The wide range of **human rights violations suffered by displaced persons** are well known, but it is also important to underline to which extent they are touched by **slavery**. Refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people are especially vulnerable to contemporary forms of slavery because they often face **poverty, discrimination, unemployment, job insecurity** and limited access to **basic services** in their new communities. These factors are often exacerbated by external situations such as **armed conflict, disasters** and more recently, the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

Forced labour affects displaced persons in **agriculture, construction, catering, hospitality, cleaning** and in the general **service industry**. These sectors are characterized by **informality** which makes it easier for employers to **exploit vulnerable persons**. The Special Rapporteur received reports of displaced persons in slavery in **all regions of the world**.

Particularly vulnerable are those in **irregular situations** as they lack **basic social labour protection**.

The **gendered nature of some contemporary forms of slavery** is also important to underline. Forced or **early marriage** and **domestic servitude** severely affect displaced women and girls. They also face additional **risk of sexual violence** which may amount to **sexual slavery**.

2021 marks the International year for the elimination of child labour. The report presented assesses the worst forms of **child labour** affecting displaced children. Most of them are having no or limited access to **education**, which makes them more vulnerable to **exploitation**. It is concerning to see that displaced children are often forced to **hazardous work, child marriage** and **service into armed groups**. The situation has worsened during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

The report also identifies some **good practices**, particularly regarding displaced persons' access to **employment** which can prevent them from being victimized in contemporary forms of slavery. Refugees and stateless persons in many countries are able to **work legally**. Those with medical qualifications have been at the **forefront of the fight against COVID** in the Americas and Europe. Displaced persons in a number of camps in Africa are given **access to employment, and labour and social protection** are provided equally to displaced persons in various countries.

It is important to recognize the **vital role humanitarian agencies, civil society organizations** and other **non-state actors** have been playing in protecting displaced persons from contemporary forms of slavery in addition to states.

Displaced persons must have **freedom of movement** and **access to decent work** so they can secure their livelihoods and decrease dependence on humanitarian assistance and vulnerability to exploitation. Their **inclusion and integration** in host communities is also a key for establishing durable solutions.



## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

### Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (38 statements)

Country statements: European Union, China *on behalf of a group of countries*, Liechtenstein, Sovereign Order of Malta, France, Indonesia, Ecuador, Australia, Israel, Japan, Egypt, Iraq, South Africa, Thailand, Venezuela, Cuba, United States, Russian Federation, Belarus, Malaysia, Brazil, Namibia, China, Libya, Mauritania, Pakistan, Ukraine, Algeria, Philippines, United Kingdom, Lebanon, Mali, Malawi, Panama, Iran.

UN Agencies: UNICEF, UN Women, UNHCR

All delegations that took the floor **thanked the Special Rapporteur** for his report. They commended the Special Rapporteur for having established the **nexus between displacement and slavery** and agreed with the conclusions of the report.

Most of the States who took the floor exposed their **national plans to combat all forms of slavery** and to facilitate the **integration of displaced persons** in their territories. Good practices such as establishment of **new institutions**, allocation of **funds**, **social protection** for displaced persons, access to **education** and access to **health**, were addressed by the different States taking the floor.

In line with some of the findings of the report, States also emphasized **that women and girls in displacement** were particularly **vulnerable to forms of exploitation and slavery**. Women and girls in displacement are more prone to practices such as **early and forced marriage** and **sexual exploitation**.

Delegations were also concerned by the **situation of children in displacement**, who are more likely to be subjected to diverse forms of exploitation and slavery such as **forced labour**, **sexual exploitation** and **recruitment into armed groups**.

### 10 NGOs took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue:

Anti-Slavery International, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Association pour l'Intégration et le Développement Durable au Burundi, International-Lawyers.Org, Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health, Beijing NGO Association for International Exchanges, China Society for Human Rights Studies

*Anti-Slavery International* urged States to recognise and prioritise the **connection between climate-induced migration and slavery**. *Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative* also emphasized the **link between natural disasters, displacement and vulnerability**. *International Lawyers.Org* stated that the **climate crisis** was likely to increase displacement and that those displaced would be subjected to the vulnerabilities, including slavery.

The *International Organization for Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations* pointed out the **protection gaps for displaced persons in developed countries**. They stated that, according to The Global Slavery Index, **63.6% of countries** either do not have **domestic laws** or **systems** that protect asylum seekers or refugees, or systematically detain, arrest, deport or discriminate against them.

The *Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health* denounced the modern slavery in Dubai and in the UAE, the *Beijing NGO Association for International Exchange* mentioned the situation of persons with disabilities in displacement and *China Society for Human Rights Studies* denounced the slavery affecting refugees in Europe and in the United States.

Watch the full Interactive Dialogue on contemporary forms of slavery on [UN WebTV](#)