

CGR ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS: 31 JULY 2023



CGR
CENTRE for GOVERNANCE RESEARCH
PAKISTAN

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The Centre for Governance Research organized a virtual Roundtable Conference in recognition of World Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Day which is globally observed on July 30. It was moderated by the Director CGR Tariq Khosa and was attended by prominent high ranking police officers, practitioners, legal experts as well as representatives of the civil society. The main objective behind organizing this conference was to raise awareness and to foster collaborative efforts in addressing the issues concerning human trafficking. The conference aimed at discussing the hurdles in the pursuit of effective solutions to combat this national issue.

The introductory remarks were given by Dr Ehsan Sadiq, Director-General of the National Police Bureau and National Focal Person for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, (UNTOC) Review Process. He underlined the need of combating human trafficking and the urgency of collaboration among different stakeholders in handling this pressing issue in Pakistan.

The conference began with the message of Ghada Waly, Executive Director of UNODC. In the video message, she explained the changing dynamics in human trafficking and pointed out that the authorities are falling behind in dealing with this highly structured organized crime. Following it, Dr. Sadiq started the discussion by explaining the significant challenges faced by Pakistan regarding the implementation of strategies and action plans against human trafficking. He informed the panelists regarding the ongoing efforts in implementing a five-year comprehensive plan which was issued by the Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) with the assistance of UNODC. While referring to the efforts made by the CGR-NIOC team, Dr. Sadiq highlighted the increased activities within civil society organizations as well as the law enforcement agencies regarding Trafficking in Persons. In terms of solving legal and policy framework related problems, a draft regarding law amendments to the Trafficking in Persons Act has been forwarded to the Government. However, he emphasized the necessity of databases which are lacking in the National Police Bureau. He insisted that these databases should be handled by the police organizations at provincial level in coordination with NADRA, and there should be a designation of focal persons to facilitate better coordination among law enforcement agencies. He added that the National Police Bureau, in partnership with the FIA, is actively working to address and bridge these gaps. In the end, Dr Sadiq suggested the need of public awareness and international collaboration on the issues related to human trafficking in Pakistan.

Barrister Umar Khan, the head of the Center for Human Rights brought attention to the need for a border criminalization approach in which the criminals involved in human trafficking indirectly and are involved at the leadership level must be included in the legal proceedings. While discussing the relation between smuggling and human trafficking, the panelist emphasized that these two organized crimes have strong connection. Whilst having definitional difference, smuggling has potential in turning into human trafficking. The issue needs both law enforcement and legislative perspectives, he added. Mov-



ing to community engagement, as a reference to the Greece Boat sinking incident, he stressed on the importance of a counter-narrative to protect vulnerable communities. As a way forward, Barrister Umar suggested to initiate microfinance loan projects to empower the communities which are vulnerable to human trafficking, especially women and children.

The third panelist, Deputy Inspector General Police and former Director FIA dealing with human trafficking and people smuggling issues, Zaheer Ahmed was recently recognized by the US State Department for his efforts against the human trafficking networks. While discussing different challenges he encountered working in FIA regarding the Human Trafficking, he highlighted two key issues. The first challenge was related to sensitizing the top leadership of the police force that there was a need for Police to effectively implement the laws related to TIP and avoid any misuse of such laws. The second challenge highlighted was concerning the operational work and awareness efforts which are required to be implemented at the district and community levels. Zaheer concluded that a mechanism should be announced where the local and provincial anti human trafficking committees actively play their part in sensitizing the stakeholders such as the Labour Department, Social Welfare and Child Protection Bureaus. In addressing these challenges, he suggested that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and National Police Bureau (NBP) should collaborate on devising a second phase of the National Action Strategy on Human Trafficking, which would serve as the continuation of the ongoing first phase.

The fourth panelist, Director FIA Alam Shinwari who heads the Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking Wing discussed the primary legislative issues pertaining to TIP and stressed the need to amend these laws to strengthen penalties for the criminals involved in these cases. He underscored that fewer cases



Roundtable on TIP: Challenges and the Way Forward

On Monday 31 July 2023 at 12:00 PM

Panelists



Dr Ehsan Sadiq
DG
National Police Bureau



Tariq Parvez
President
NIOC



Umar Mahmood Khan
Executive Director
Centre for Human Rights



Sadar Zaheer Ahmed
DIG
AJK Police

Moderator



Tariq Khosa, Director
Centre for Governance Research

have been observed in which these criminals ended up sentenced to prison terms. Otherwise, these criminals only got released by paying some fines. Furthermore, the need of law enforcement capacity building along with different training modules and education regarding TIP laws was discussed by him. In dealing with the Human trafficking holistically, he stated that there is a need to take it as a social problem along with law enforcement issue. He suggested a national referral system to handle public complaints and for an effective tracking system. He mentioned the latest campaign initiated by the FIA with the help of UNODC which focuses in vulnerable districts for public awareness purposes.

In highlighting several key issues related to human trafficking, Dr. Kaleem Imam, IGP retired, mentioned the post-colonial dynamics in Pakistan behind the cases of Trafficking in Persons. A significant trend of migration has been observed in developing countries where people move to developed countries for economic reasons, he observed. Further adding more points, he highlighted that the many people trafficked to other countries end up in sexual exploitation. Labelling poverty as the key factor behind the choices made by these people, he emphasized on the need for law enforcement agencies to opt for international best practices. He laid more emphasis on the post incident review in order to draw lessons from different instances. In the end, he suggested ensuring the use of technology in curtailing serious issues regarding the dire rule of law situation.

Mr. Tariq Parvez, former National Coordinator NACTA and DG FIA, remarked about the low priority given to the issue of human trafficking by politicians, law enforcement agencies, judiciary and civil society in Pakistan. He pointed out the lack of effective implementation of the laws. One major issue, he stressed upon was the lack of proper central repository on official data on all aspects of Trafficking in Persons: bonded labour, sex exploitation, organized beggary and migrant smuggling. For raising public awareness, he suggested to highlight all the human misery caused by trafficking which is faced by thousands of families in Pakistan. He added that the Protection of Trafficking in Persons Act (PoTiPA)2018 should be used as a template for the law enforcement agencies as a starting point towards understanding the nature of this crime. Finally, he added that awareness should be raised not only in general public but also within the Judiciary, Media and other stakeholders to improve the quality of implementation.

In concluding remarks of the roundtable conference, DG NPB Dr Ehsan Sadiq stressed on the need for a collective effort by the government as well as the whole of society in curtailing the highly structured organized crime of human trafficking. After an hour-long deliberations, the conference ended with a vote of thanks by Tariq Khosa, Director CGR who hoped to continue engaging with the key stakeholders in combating the menace of trafficking in persons.



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