

## **Trafficking in Women and Girls on a Global Level under International Law**

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**Abstract:** Human trafficking as a term is often used in everyday life. As a manifestation of organized crime, it is a form of modern slavery and affects all states, both developing and developed, highlighting the seriousness of the problem for the entire international community. Human trafficking is a gross violation of human rights, such as the right to life, freedom of movement, etc. All people can become victims, regardless of gender, age, social status, skin color, but often victims are the most vulnerable groups of the population. In the framework of this study, we will analyze the international legal mechanisms that are designed to counter human trafficking. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to the challenge of human trafficking, and we will pay special attention to this category in our analysis of legal protection. Protection of human rights is certainly one of the most important aspects of the development of each country. The United Nations treaties on human rights are the foundation of the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights.

**Keywords:** human trafficking; international law; organized crime; international community; human rights violation; vulnerable groups; population; women; children; girls; United Nations; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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## I. Introduction

Trafficking of human beings is a criminal activity that affects all spheres of life and brings serious negative consequences for people, but also the entire society (Pajic, 2017). As a form of crime and victimization of people, it could be understood as an organized criminal activity to the detriment of others to obtain material benefits, which consists of several different and interrelated actions aimed at achieving the same goal. Human trafficking means selling and buying, arresting a person to exploit him, as well as all other activities that may be part of this process, such as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people. In such cases, there is always an issue of exploitation. It is maintained through force, fraud, threats, kidnapping, or otherwise.

*“Human trafficking has historically been linked with sexual exploitation of women and children” (Murray, 2020). “According to statistics, 35 million are victims of sex trafficking every day. Worldwide, almost 20 % of all victims are children. However, in some parts of Africa and the Mekong region, children are the majority (up to 100 %). The “industry” has never been larger — It has an estimated 99 billion \$ market value. To put it into perspective the sex trafficking industry is larger than the global cocaine market and almost as big*

*as the global PC market. Also, if you aggregated the yearly revenue of McDonald's, Netflix, Wall Disney, and Best Buy we have the same value."* (Jacob, 2022).

UN Office on Drugs and Crime adopted a Global report on trafficking in persons 2022 last year in January.. According to the official data, the number of victims of human trafficking in 2020 decreased by 11 %. The experts pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic was one of the obstacles for human traffickers to reach the victim, which certainly affected the percentage reduction. The report contains data related to 141 countries for the period from 2017 to 2021. If we pay attention to the statistics, it is indicated that 41 % of the victims managed to escape on their own and turn to professional bodies for help; competent authorities identified 28 % of victims, while 11 % of victims were saved by activities undertaken by civil organizations. During the pandemic, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation decreased, but the report underlined the negative effect of armed conflicts on this problem, primarily in African and Middle East countries. It was also mentioned that human traffickers expose women to physical violence twice as often as men and children twice as often as adults.<sup>1</sup>

Serbia ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2001. Article 388 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia (2005) covers all forms of trafficking of human beings, which are included in the Protocol. The report mentioned some progress and reduction in offenses of trafficking in persons by the year 2019 compared 2018, but the number is larger in 2020 compared to 2019. Besides, the data presented in the report show that the main goal of human traffickers in Serbia is sexual exploitation, then forced labor, and then other forms of exploitation. Women and girls are much more exposed to this problem and especially vulnerable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Global report on trafficking in persons 2022, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Global report on trafficking in persons 2022. Country profiles, Central and South-Eastern Europe, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023. Pp. 51–54.

## II. Sources and Methods

The work of the United Nations (further UN) is of great importance in the fight against human trafficking in the international community, as well as documents that have been adopted within the organization. These document include International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age (1933); Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949); Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000); the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) supplemented by three Protocols (the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (2001), the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2003, Palermo Protocol); the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2004)). It is important to note the contribution of other international organizations. For instance, the International Labor Organization (further ILO) contributes to the fight against human trafficking through Convention Concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour (1959); the regional organization Council of Europe which adopted such treaties as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005); Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007).

It should be noted that, since 2010, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has been actively developing judicial practice on cases related to human trafficking, despite the fact that the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950 unlike, for example, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000, does not contain a direct prohibition of human trafficking. Article 4 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and

Fundamental Freedoms only prohibits slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labor (Sakaeva, 2017). However, regional sources and practice will not be analyzed in detail within this scientific study, the emphasis will remain on the universal level.

The methodological bases of the study are general scientific and special legal methods. During the preparation of this scientific article, the following methods were used: systemic and functional general scientific research methods, and general logical techniques, such as analysis, synthesis, etc. To achieve the set goals, comparative legal, historical legal, classification and formal legal methods were used. For the interpretation of provisions of universal and regional international treaties, as well as documents of Human Rights Treaty Bodies, a formal legal method was used.

### **III. Results and Discussion**

#### **III.1. International Legal Basis**

In the field of international treaties adopted under the auspices of the UN, the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime<sup>3</sup> and The Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children,<sup>4</sup> are certainly of the greatest importance in the fight against child and women trafficking.

In the field of documents of UN and specialized agencies dealing exclusively with children, the most important are: the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>5</sup> the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography<sup>6</sup> and the International Labor Organization Convention 182 on Child Labor.<sup>7</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most important document in the field of protection of children's rights. The adoption

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>.

<sup>4</sup> OHCHR. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

<sup>5</sup> OHCHR. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>6</sup> OHCHR. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>7</sup> ILC87 – Convention 182 (ilo.org).

of this Convention was preceded by two declarations, one from 1924 and the other from 1959. However, given their non-binding factor, in the international community it was necessary to adopt a document that could be binding on member states, thus in 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. In particular, we could underline the Articles 19, 32, 34, 36, and 39 of the Convention, which protect children from all forms of exploitation, including sexual, as well as prostitution and pornography. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was adopted in 2000.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>8</sup> was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979, and entered into force on September 3, 1981. The central ideas of this Convention are the concepts of equality and non-discrimination, on which other international agreements are based. Its provisions define and defend women's rights, the principle of non-discrimination and equality of men and women in society, which indicates that it is a fundamental, most comprehensive, and most important universal international instrument that guarantees gender equality.

Both mentioned conventions have the same purpose: preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, with special attention to women and children; protection and assistance to victims of such trafficking, with full respect for their human rights; improving cooperation between the signatory states to achieve these goals, which is necessary because we are talking about the part that belongs to the domain of organized crime (Vorkapic, 2006).

### **III.2. Women and Girls as a Vulnerable Group**

**Children.** When considering the perspective of the protection of children victims of trafficking in human beings within the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings in general, we must keep in mind that until recently the international law has not recognized children

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<sup>8</sup> OHCHR. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

as a particularly sensitive and specific category for whose protection the usual mechanisms provided by human rights law are not sufficient. More precisely, childhood as a special phase in the development of human life is a social construct, a human creation of the 17th century in Europe. Until then, people did not view children as beings with special features or nature. In the 17th century, the child began to be treated as a particularly sensitive being, and it can be considered that there is an awakening of awareness of childhood as a concept. Thanks to developmental psychologists, the characteristics and existence of the autonomy of the child's personality and the necessity to respect, normatively shape, and guarantee or to create an environment in which the rights of the child are truly recognized and realized (Vorkapic, 2006).

Today, the rights of the child are a fact, a reality recognized by international law. There are constant changes, additions, and adoptions of new documents within various international and regional organizations, and to more completely and adequately protect the child from various possible abuses (Vorkapic, 2006).

**Women and girls.** Traffickers often find their potential victims in women and girls in countries where socio-economic conditions are difficult. On the one hand, unequal market conditions leave women with minimal choice. However, many of them suffer both physical and psychological torture through the violence they suffer in the family and marriage.

The most common way of recruiting women is by appearing in an advertisement that offers a well-paid job abroad (most often the job of a nurse, hairdresser, babysitter, waitress, model, dancer, etc.). Although it seems unlikely, in many cases the role of the trader (or mediator who brings the victim into contact with the trader) is presented to the victim by a familiar and close person — family member, friend, partner (Wijers and Lap-Chew, 1997). It is not uncommon for women who have previously been trafficked and sexually exploited to join their traffickers and recruit new victims with them (Babovic, 2001).

Various agencies can often play the role of seducers, such as modeling agencies, business escort agencies, and agencies for marriages abroad. Behind all these agencies is a well-organized criminal network that is very difficult to track down (Mihic, 2003).

According to reports available to the Council of Europe, most victims of trafficking in Europe are women and girls who are exploited for sexual purposes. In practice, certain forms of trafficking in human beings have been observed, when it comes to trafficking in women, namely: trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, trafficking in women for exploitation (domestic) work, and trafficking in women for forced marriage (Corovic, 2018).

### **III.3. Key Factors Contributing to the Increase in Human Trafficking in the 21st Century**

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (further CEDAW Committee) is the body of independent experts, established in 1982, that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>9</sup> Under Article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the CEDAW Committee “*may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the states parties.*”<sup>10</sup> In General recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, adopted by Committee CEDAW (further General recommendation No. 38) many factors increasing the risk of human trafficking, including trafficking in women and girls, are mentioned and through this scientific article some of them will be analyzed.

#### **III.3.1. Socio-Economic Injustice. Migration as a Key Factor Contributing to the Increase in Human Trafficking**

*“Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women sets out the legal obligation of States parties to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of trafficking in women and exploitation of*

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<sup>9</sup> OHCHR. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>10</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations General Assembly, 1979, Art. 21.



*the prostitution of women.*”<sup>11</sup> Most authors point to poverty and unemployment as the main predictors of human trafficking. While some authors consider poverty to be the key and even the only cause of human trafficking, others criticize such simplified explanations, emphasizing that economic factors play a very important role in shaping human vulnerability to human trafficking, but that they are necessarily and inextricably linked to other factors, especially social and political (Pajic, 2017).

*“Violations of all rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women may be found at the root of trafficking in women and girls and must be addressed as part of a transformative approach that empowers women and girls by promoting gender equality and their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in line with Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 4–5, 8, 10–11, 13 and 16.”*<sup>12</sup>

One of the key reasons that can lead to trafficking in children, including trafficking in girls, is their physical impotence but also mental immaturity. As it is mentioned in General recommendation No. 38, the victims are often people from lower social classes, women and girls from the countryside or areas far from the cities, those who do not have access to work or education, but also to state institutions to which they could turn for help.<sup>13</sup>

Migrant women are in a particularly difficult position. *“Women can face particular vulnerabilities during the migratory process such as significant levels of gender-based violence including attacks, robbery, and rape by scouts who collect bribes to get them across the border”* (Murray, 2020). Trafficking of women and girls violates specific provisions of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020), pp. 7–8.

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cmw.aspx> [Accessed 12.12.2022].

and must therefore be recognized as a legitimate basis for international protection in law and practice.<sup>15</sup> Poverty is inextricably linked to the problem of unemployment and displacement as a consequence of the inability to find work in the immediate area (Pajic, 2017). Although migration opens up new social and economic opportunities for women and girls, it often increases their vulnerability, especially if they have to move illegally, when it comes to violations of basic human rights, human trafficking, sexual or labor exploitation, violence, and the like.<sup>16</sup>

The situation of migrant women is further aggravated by various stereotypes, discrimination laws, discrimination in employment, as well as the fact that migrant women are more likely to work in seasonal or temporary jobs. Limited access to information about their rights and freedoms, as well as to education, is one of the key factors that put them at risk to be victims of violations of fundamental human rights.<sup>17</sup>

Culture and customs further reinforce deep-rooted gender and social stereotypes, which make certain categories of people very vulnerable. In many societies, girls are considered less valuable than boys, so it often happens that the family decides on their destinies, both in terms of education and marriage. Women and girls are treated as goods, burdens, without the right to choose or freedom of action. In many communities, it is customary for very young girls to marry (or rather to be sold) older men, thus reducing the family's economic problems (Pajic, 2017).

### **III.3.2. Medicine and Organ Transplant**

The demand for human organs intended for transplantation has been constantly increasing since the first successful kidney transplant performed in Boston in 1954 between identical twins (Banovic, 2017). On the one hand, advances in medicine and organ transplants give severely ill people a chance to recover and to survive. However, the serious shortage of human organs and the failure to address the legal

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<sup>15</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020), pp. 6, 25.

<sup>16</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020), pp. 6–7.

<sup>17</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020), pp. 6–7.

responsibility of those in supply and demand chains contribute to the unregulated and often forced removal of organs.<sup>18</sup>

Having been promised to be paid a large amount, poor people thus are tricked into selling their organs. At the same time, the promised amounts are rarely paid in full. Many of the victims are not given information about the consequences of transplant surgery. Debt slavery and extortion are used as forms of coercion. Victims suffer physical and psychological harm and social exclusion because they were not provided with adequate post-operative care (Kozlova, 2019).

Considering that the trade in human organs is prohibited by the relevant international regulations and the largest number of national legislations, we can only talk about the “black market” of human organs. That market functions, like legal ones, according to generally known economic principles, except that, instead of state authorities and international organizations, that is, regulations and good business practices, it is regulated and directed by other actors, as a rule from the criminal milieu, and according to many opinions, criminal organizations (Banovic, 2017).

An important measure in the field of combating illegal trafficking in human organs was the inclusion of the terms “servitude or the removal of organs” in the definition of exploitation contained in the Palermo Protocol. In accordance with Article 5 of the Palermo Protocol, human trafficking, including for removal of organs, is a criminal offense (Kozlova, 2019). The Palermo Protocol is the first document at the universal, international legal level that criminalized the removal of human organs, but as one of the forms of exploitation, within the broad criminalization of human trafficking. On a global level, we also should mention the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, along with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires signatory states to criminalize the offering, delivery or acceptance, by any means, of a child in the context of the sale of children for the purpose of transferring a child’s organs for profit, regardless of

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<sup>18</sup> General recommendation No. 38 (2020), pp. 8, 32.

whether such acts are carried out domestically or transnationally, i.e., on an individual or organized basis (Art. 3(1)(a) and (b)).

Considering the example of Serbia, about it is important to discuss the case of *Zorica Jovanovic v. Serbia* before the European Court of Human Rights. This case concerns a statement made by Ms. Zorica Jovanovic, a citizen of Serbia, which is based on Article 34 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been ratified by the Republic of Serbia. On 28 October 1983 the applicant gave birth to a healthy baby boy at the Medical Center in Chupriya (Serbia), which is a public institution. As a mother, she saw her son regularly between 28 and 30 October 1983. The mother was with her son until 11 pm on October 30, 1983, and the doctors told her that she and her son would be discharged from the hospital the next day. On 31 October 1983 at about 6.30 am the doctor on duty informed the applicant that her child had died. The management of that hospital did not allow the applicant to see her child, so she went home from the Medical Centre. She and her family received assurances from the Media Center that the child's autopsy would be performed in Belgrade. Allegedly, for this reason, it was not possible to bury the body of the baby. The body of the applicant's son was never handed over to her or her family. After exhausting all domestic remedies, she turned to the European Court of Human Rights. The court found that the defendant state violated the provisions of Articles 8 and 13 of the Convention (Cmiljanic, 2015). Bearing in mind that this is not a unique situation and that the issue of "missing babies" in Serbia is open to this day, we rightly wonder if all of this is connected to the topic we are dealing with in this scientific work.

### **III.3.3. Conflicts and Humanitarian Emergencies**

Armed conflicts further increase the risk of human trafficking, bearing in mind that they also increase forced migration, which puts both women and children at a disadvantage and puts them at additional risk of violating their fundamental rights. The connection between human trafficking and armed conflicts can be direct or indirect. A direct link arises from violence or hostilities by armed forces and includes human trafficking in conflict-affected areas. An indirect connection is

manifested in the wider region and outside the area affected by the armed conflict when migrants or other persons fall under the influence of traffickers. These are most often refugees and persons in formal or informal camps, on migration routes, when moving or returning home, detained persons, or those escaping from detention or captivity (Djukic, 2020).

Human trafficking in armed conflicts is influenced by a large number of factors — those that operate in peacetime conditions and those that are characteristic of armed conflicts. The factors that act in peace are numerous because each case of human trafficking is special. They are usually classified into two basic groups: push factors and pull factors. Push factors refer to challenges faced by the population in a certain area, such as lack of employment opportunities, poverty, the economic imbalance between regions, corruption, gender and ethical discrimination, political instability and transitions, internal conflicts, social and cultural factors, and natural disasters. The pull factors encourage the demand and exploitation of individuals, and among the most important are the increased demand for labor and higher wages in industrialized countries and the possibility of a higher standard of living. Pushing and pulling factors, as a combination of economic, social, and political factors, interpenetrate and complement each other so that human trafficking is the result of their mutual connection. Factors that act on human trafficking in peace, in conditions of conflict, become more complicated and increase the risk of human trafficking, and additional factors create additional vulnerability of the population. The most significant factors affecting the development of human trafficking in armed conflicts are a) the decline of the state and its institutions, the collapse of the rule of law and the impunity of perpetrators of criminal acts; b) forced displacement of the population; c) poverty and shortage of basic resources, lack of humanitarian aid and emergence of socially and economically stressful situations and d) social fragmentation and collapse of families. Regions with corrupt governments and a power vacuum favor the development of organized crime that uses human trafficking as a means of control and profit (Djukic, 2020).

Various armed groups, by coercion or deception, induce civilians to move from the territory where they live, when they become very

sensitive and vulnerable to human trafficking. Particularly vulnerable population groups such as unaccompanied women and children and forcibly displaced persons are emerging. As a significant supporting factor, the phenomenon of prostitution appears in the zones where armed formations are located, which encourages the bringing of prostitutes and the spread of trafficking in women and girls from the region or its surroundings. Armed conflicts influence the strengthening of existing tendencies to remove undesirable ethnic or religious population groups from a certain area. The marginalization of these groups contributes to their victimization for a long period even after the end of the conflict, which can cause the strengthening of the mutual connection of its members and strengthen the internal structure of the community. Individuals, families, and communities are forced to change their usual way of life and create new survival strategies, which often lead to criminal activities and human trafficking, usually expressed through forced marriages, the sale of sexual services, or child labor.

Characteristic types of exploitation in armed conflicts are sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, forced labor, organ harvesting, and recruitment to engage in combat, in which children are often used who arm themselves and engage in various tasks related to combat operations and even directly participate in them. Although some forms of exploitation are specific only to certain regions, such as the involvement of children in armed conflicts or trafficking to harvest organs for the treatment of wounded combatants, in most other regions human trafficking has the same or similar characteristics. The main actors of human trafficking are armed and criminal groups, but “benevolent” individuals, friends, or family members also appear as actors. Through human trafficking, armed groups make profits for their own financing, strengthen military capacities through forced recruitment, and create fear among the population in order to control the occupied area.

The category of vulnerable persons in armed conflicts includes children, who are subjected to various forms of exploitation and serious crimes. According to the Paris Principles, the term child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person under the age of eighteen who is or has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys

and girls, who are used as fighters, cooks, porters, couriers, spies or for sexual purposes. Trafficking in children mainly occurs as a result of economic difficulties experienced by their families. Children are usually exploited in areas of work that do not require special expertise, such as agricultural work, street sales, and the like, but they are also used in armed conflicts as suicide bombers or human shields (Djukic, 2020). Girls are also recruited and used in armed forces and groups. Their increased vulnerability is conditioned by their gender and general place in society, and they suffer specific consequences, including rape and sexual violence, complications related to pregnancy, morality, and rejection from family and community.

The use of children as armed combatants has been thoroughly documented in sub-Saharan and central Africa, the Middle East, and other regions of Asia, with known cases of exploitation to finance armed groups. Trafficking and exploitation of children are linked to serious crimes that include killing, maiming, recruitment, rape and abduction of children, and attacks on schools. In the context of serious crimes, both labor exploitation and other employment of children, sexual abuse, or abduction for exploitative purposes constitute human trafficking. In addition to various types of violence and the general suffering of the population, usually deprived of basic resources, human trafficking in armed conflicts has a particularly negative impact on human rights violations.

For example, trafficking in human beings appeared in the Western Balkans in the late 1980s and has been present throughout the 1990s, although efforts have been made to combat the problem and to build a national referral system in Serbia ten years ago. In that period, Serbia was mostly a destination country for victims of human trafficking. However, the situation changed significantly in the early 1990s. The country's disintegration, economic collapse, armed conflicts, and the arrival of foreign troops led to an increase in the number of victims of human trafficking, with Serbia being a transit country for victims from Bulgaria, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine to Bosnia and Herzegovina from where they were transferred to Italy, Spain, France or Macedonia, from where they were transferred to Greece and further to the countries of the Middle East (Mihailovic and Dacic, 2011).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Trafficking of human beings is a global phenomenon that is present in all countries, in almost every region of the world, in countries that are enrolled in political and economical transition, as well as the economically developed countries. It has an absolutely negative impact on the entire corpus of human rights, and there is even a negation of basic human rights. Women and girls certainly belong to the group of the most vulnerable parts of the society in this social phenomenon appeared as the most extreme form of human rights violations.

Human trafficking is a multifaceted social phenomenon, and its causes are numerous, such as economic differences both within and between countries, gender inequality, lack of equal opportunities, corruption and ineffective judicial and police systems, civil unrest and the inability of states to protect their citizens and provide them with a good life. To this contribute the demand for cheap labor and cheap production as well as commercial sexual services. The special vulnerability of girls and women in post-conflict countries requires special attention of the international community and bearing in mind this vulnerability they need more sensitive protection against human trafficking.

Most countries have defined human trafficking as a separate crime within their legislation and have adopted procedures and strategies to combat it. As it can be underlined from this scientific article, there has also been reaction at the international level. Very important international documents have been adopted and they are being implemented. There are several conventions at the universal and regional levels that should synergistically increase the effectiveness of combating trafficking in women and girls. The first complete definition of the phenomenon of human trafficking was given by the United Nations Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime. After its adoption, there was intense activity by the states to regulate this phenomenon with their national legislation.



Today, millions of people around the world are trapped in “modern slavery,” which is called human trafficking. Human trafficking is a form of violence against people, primarily against women and girls. Over time, this trade crossed the national borders of countries and areas of wider regions and thus became an international problem. Intensifying international cooperation in order to combat human trafficking is imperative, bearing in mind necessity of being well organized and ready to confront one of the most serious forms of organized crime and protect those who really need our help.

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