

A photograph of a busy street in a Middle Eastern city. The street is lined with multi-story buildings. On the left, a building has a vertical sign that says 'HOTEL'. Below it, a restaurant sign for 'Hashem Sons Restaurant' features a Pepsi logo and lists 'Fool - Hummos - Falafel - Salad'. To the right, another building has a sign for 'Bukhara Restaurant' with the text 'Bukhari Rice - Baryani Rice - Turkish Chicken - Grilled'. The street is filled with people, some sitting at outdoor tables, and there are colorful flags hanging from the buildings. The sky is clear and blue.

RESEARCH GUIDE MIDDLE EAST

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JORDAN • LEBANON • SYRIA • IRAQ IRAN • QATAR • YEMEN UNITED ARAB EMIRATES SAUDI ARABIA • KUWAIT BAHRAIN • OMAN • EGYPT • ISRAEL PALESTINE

MAJOR FORMS OF TRAFFICKING:

- Migrant trafficking/ forced labor of migrant workers
- Forced labor/ labor exploitation
- Sex trafficking
- Forced marriage/ child marriage
- Child labor/ child labor trafficking
- Child soldiers
- Organ trafficking

SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

Kafala/ Sponsorship System: Under this system, a local citizen or local company (the kafeel) must sponsor foreign workers in order for their work visas and residency to be valid. This means that an individual's right to work and legal presence is dependent on his or her employer. With tight restrictions on changing employers, this dependency renders workers vulnerable to exploitation.

Sinai Trafficking: This type of trafficking occurs when refugees from the Horn of Africa, most often Eritreans, are kidnapped and trafficked into the Sinai Desert, where they are tortured and killed for ransom from their families.

Summer Marriage: A temporary marriage practice where men from the Gulf come to Egypt to marry women for short periods of time, often over the summer months. These marriages are not legally binding. Critics of the practice say that this type of marriage contract sexually exploits women, who are often young and do not have a choice in the marriage brokerage process.

FIFA World Cup 2022: The 2022 FIFA World Cup will take place in Qatar. Construction of the stadium in Qatar has drawn concerns over migrant labor exploitation and working conditions of the construction process. Many of these migrant laborers were employed under the kafala system in Qatar. After pressure from human rights groups following reports of heat-related deaths, the Qatari government removed the kafala system and replaced it with a contractual system.



MIDDLE EAST

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Arab Trade Union Confederation Global Welfare Association
- League of Arab States
- Gulf Cooperation Council

RESOURCES

Due to the diversity of human trafficking related activity in this region, it is difficult to always assess the full scope of the issue in the Middle East. However, several resources do this well. Standard worldwide publications include the Global Slavery Index's section on the Middle East and North Africa and the US Department of State's 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report. Other regional reports include the International Labor Organization's Report, "Tricked and Trapped: Human Trafficking in the Middle East" and ECPAT's Regional Report on commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Middle East and North Africa.

TRAFFICKING ROUTES:

- Syria → Lebanon/Jordan
- Southeast Asia → the Gulf/ Lebanon/ Jordan
- Horn of Africa → the Gulf/ Lebanon/ Jordan
- Horn of Africa → Israel/ Palestine

More specific country or region reports include but are certainly not limited to:

- ECPAT'S country reports on Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt
- The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative reports on Syria, Iraq and Egypt
- The International Centre for Migration Policy Development report on Syrian Refugees
- Freedom Fund's Struggling to Survive: Slavery and Exploitation of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
- Combating Trafficking in Persons in Accordance with the Principles of Islamic Law
- Enabling Access to Justice: A CSO Perspective on the Challenges of Realizing the Rights of South Asian Migrants in the Middle East
- Sinai Trafficking resources, which include I Wanted to Lay Down and Die, Egypt-Egypt/Sudan: Refugees Face Kidnapping for Ransom, Brutal Treatment and Human Trafficking, and Human Trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees Between Life and Death

ANTI-TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION:

Most countries in the Middle East have defined anti-trafficking legislation specifically dedicated to clearly outlawing most forms of slavery and providing appropriate punishment. Yemen and Iran are the only countries in the Middle East that have not signed or ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹⁶ To see all of the anti-trafficking legislation put forth by countries in the Middle East, go to the Protection Project's International Anti-Trafficking Law Library to obtain PDF versions of anti-trafficking laws (warning: not all of them have English translations)



MIDDLE EAST

ANTI TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

There are several very important and helpful organizations that aid victims of human trafficking within the Middle East region, especially migrant workers experiencing exploitation or forced labor.

The International Organization for Migration works in every country in the Middle East save for Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates.

MigrantRights.Org is another great resource for migrant workers seeking help, and offers an interactive map that gives insight into what resources migrant workers have in countries all over the Middle East.

Other notable organizations include:

- **ECPAT** (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking)
- **ASSAF** (Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel)
- **Tamkeen** (Jordanian NGO focusing on migrant workers and trafficking victims)
- **Dubai Foundation for Women and Children**
- **Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking**
- **KAFA** (enough) Exploitation and Trafficking (a Lebanese NGO focused on fighting sex trafficking)

Bahrain has also recently instituted a **National Referral System for Victims of Trafficking in Persons**. The **Egyptian Center for Women's Rights** is another great organization that focuses on helping women attain legal justice.

TIP REPORT:

The Trafficking in Persons Report, or TIP Report, is an annual report issued by the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It ranks governments based on their perceived efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking.

Most of the countries in the Middle East were classified as Tier 2 or Tier 3 Watch List states in the most recent TIP Report. Bahrain was the only country in the Middle East that was listed at Tier 1. Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Cyprus, Turkey, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Egypt, and Israel appeared on the report as Tier 2. Iran and Syria both ranked as Tier 3 countries. Yemen was reported as a special case for the sixth consecutive year due to the ongoing civil conflict and humanitarian crisis. Palestine was not listed as a separate country as the government of the United States does not officially recognize the State of Palestine; discussion of Palestinian trafficking victims was incorporated into the reporting on Israel.

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