



34th Annual

**BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE**

Sponsored by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies  
Friday, October 27, 2023 – Provo, Utah

Esteemed Delegates,

---

SECRETARIAT

Olivia Allred  
*Human Rights Council*

Ben Marr  
*United Nations High  
Commissioner for Refugees*

Mauricio Morales  
*Organization of American  
States*

Christina Parry  
*Economic and Social Council*

Estelle Robbins  
*General Assembly First  
Committee*

Emily Whitcomb  
*United Nations International  
Children's Emergency Fund*

---

Kelly Russell  
*Executive Director*

---

DAVID M. KENNEDY  
CENTER FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
STUDIES

Cory Leonard  
*Assistant Director*

Megan Alder  
*MUN Instructor*

---

Welcome to the 34th annual Brigham Young University Model United Nations Conference (BYUMUN). As delegates representing various Member States, you contribute to creating a more interconnected and harmonious world where different Member States and cultures can collaborate, empathize, and build meaningful relationships. In addition, attendance and participation in this conference allow you to foster an understanding of diverse perspectives, enhance research and public speaking skills, and cultivate diplomatic skills.

My name is Olivia Allred, and I am delighted to be the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) director. I am a Junior at BYU majoring in Middle Eastern Studies/Arabic. Alongside my studies in Arabic, I have ventured into learning the Turkish and Azerbaijani languages. Upon graduation, I plan to attend law school. In April 2023, I represented Kuwait on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at the New York City National Model United Nations (NMUN) conference. By engaging in simulated diplomatic negotiations and debates through Model United Nations, I have deepened my passion for global affairs and enhanced my ability to navigate complex international issues. As you conduct research, engage in productive dialogue with fellow delegates, and advocate policies, you will be inspired to broaden your horizons and engage in fostering a more interconnected global community centered on cross-cultural understanding, peace, and mutual respect.

This year, the topics before the Human Rights Council are as follows:

- I. Modern Slavery in a Globalized World
- II. Protecting the Rights of Children in Armed Conflicts

The Human Rights Council is the leading intergovernmental body whose mission is the promotion and protection of all human rights around the world. The resolutions passed by this committee play a crucial role in developing and promoting international norms and standards in human rights. They help define acceptable behavior, principles, and obligations for states and provide a foundation for shaping national laws and policies. This background guide will serve as a springboard for further research rather than a replacement for your work. As you research the committee's agenda items, ensure that your innovative solutions align with your country's policies, positions, and stances on global issues. The knowledge you gain through participation in this conference will aid you as a Model United Nations delegate and a citizen of the world. If any concerns or questions arise, please don't hesitate to contact me at the following email address.

Sincerely,

Olivia Allred  
Director, Human Rights Council  
oallred3@byu.edu

## Committee Background

*“Human rights are about the dignity and worth of the human person. They expand the horizons of hope, enlarge the boundaries of the possible, and unleash the best of ourselves and our world. Human rights are our ultimate tool to help societies grow in freedom. To ensure equality for women and girls. To advance sustainable development. To prevent conflict, reduce human suffering and build a just and equitable world.”*

- Secretary General Antonio Guterres to the UN Human Rights Council

### Introduction

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945 to maintain peace and security, promote international cooperation, and address global challenges. World leaders established the UN in the aftermath of World War II to prevent future conflicts and foster a framework for collaboration among Member States. While the UN has faced challenges and criticisms throughout its history, it remains a vital forum for multilateral cooperation, serving as a platform for diplomatic efforts, negotiations, and consensus-building among 193 nations.

The HRC is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly (GA). The Council is the highest level of the UN human rights machinery. It was established in 2006, replacing the previous UN Commission on Human Rights, to strengthen the UN’s efforts in human rights and address its shortcomings. The council holds regular sessions throughout the year, where Member States discuss and address human rights issues, review Member State reports, and adopt resolutions. In addition, it conducts thematic and country-specific examinations of human rights situations, including addressing civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights violations.

### Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The HRC receives its mandate from the GA to promote “universal respect for the promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all” and “address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and make recommendations thereon.”<sup>1</sup> It’s important to note that while the HRC has significant functions and powers, its resolutions and recommendations are non-binding. However, they carry moral and political weight and can influence national policies, international discussions, and advocacy efforts in the field of human rights.

The council monitors human rights situations and conducts investigations in countries where there are concerns about human rights abuses. It receives and reviews reports from states, specialized UN bodies, and other stakeholders to assess the human rights situation and make recommendations for improvement. Another essential function of the HRC is its Universal

---

<sup>1</sup> “UN Human Rights Council.” *International Justice Resource Center*, 14 Aug. 2012, <https://ijrcenter.org/un-human-rights-council/>.

Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, which allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the human rights performance of each country and facilitates constructive dialogue and cooperation. The HRC adopts resolutions and makes recommendations on specific human rights issues and country situations. These recommendations can address various topics, including civil and political rights, economic and social rights, women's rights, children's rights, and the rights of specific groups or populations. In addition, the HRC appoints special procedures, such as special rapporteurs, independent experts, and working groups, to examine and report on specific human rights themes or country situations.<sup>2</sup> These experts conduct fact-finding missions, issue reports, and make recommendations to address human rights violations and promote accountability. The council encourages the participation and engagement of various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It provides opportunities for these actors to contribute their expertise, share information, and raise concerns related to human rights. The HRC can recommend the GA for further action on human rights issues, including establishing international commissions of inquiry, referral of situations to international criminal courts, or other measures to address severe human rights violations.

### **Governance, Structure, and Membership**

The HRC comprises 47 Member States elected by the UN General Assembly, with each member serving a three-year term. The GA ensures equitable geographic distributions, with seats allocated as follows: 13 seats for African states, 13 for Asian states, 6 for Eastern European states, 8 for Latin American and Caribbean states, and 7 for Western European and other states.

The Council operates through regular sessions held in Geneva, Switzerland, where Member States engage in discussions, negotiations, and decision-making processes. It is headed by a President who is elected for a one-year term. The HRC has a Bureau composed of four Vice Presidents representing different regional groups, ensuring broad representation. It works closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and receives an annual report from the commissioner on ongoing situations and themes. The Council also benefits from the expertise of independent experts, known as Special Procedures, who are appointed to monitor and report on human rights situations in specific countries or on particular themes. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also participate in the HRC's work. NGOs with consultative status with the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can attend HRC sessions, make statements, and engage in advocacy activities related to human rights.

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hold immense importance as a comprehensive and ambitious global agenda for achieving sustainable development. Adopted by all Member States in 2015, the SDGs encompass 17 interconnected goals, addressing a wide array of pressing global challenges, including poverty, education, health, gender equality, climate change, and peace and justice. These goals recognize the urgent need to balance economic, social, and

---

<sup>2</sup> "Welcome to the Human Rights Council." *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/about-council>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

environmental dimensions to create a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable world for present and future generations. The SDGs and human rights are mutually reinforcing, and their integration enhances the Council's efforts to advance the global human rights agenda.

During the 52<sup>nd</sup> regular session of the Human Rights Council, the council adopted 114 resolutions, ranging in topics from the right to food to mental health and human rights. The council addressed specific human rights issues within South Sudan, Nicaragua, and Occupied Palestinian Territory. Resolution 52/26 addressed the sale, sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse of children by extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for an additional three years.<sup>3</sup> During the 51<sup>st</sup> regular session of the HRC, the Council passed resolution 51/15 on contemporary forms of slavery, encouraging Member States to cooperate on the eradication of slavery. Conflict zones and armed conflicts remain an ongoing priority with the Council. In March 2022, the HRC created the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine according to resolution 49/1 who aim is to investigate human rights abuses with regard to the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup> Addressing the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant priority within recent years. This included examining the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable populations, such as refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons, and ensuring that measures taken to combat the virus are in line with human rights standards.<sup>5</sup> The work of the HRC remains vital to ensuring a just and equitable world.

## Conclusion

The HRC plays a pivotal role in advancing human rights globally. Through its sessions, resolutions, and engagement with Member States and civil society, the HRC serves as a platform for dialogue, accountability, and action. Its efforts to address and prevent human rights violations, promote accountability, and protect vulnerable groups are essential for building a more just and equitable world. However, challenges and areas for improvement remain, such as ensuring equal treatment of all countries and effective implementation of recommendations. To strengthen its impact, the HRC should continue to foster dialogue, promote cooperation, and uphold its commitment to the principles of universality, impartiality, and non-selectivity. By doing so, the HRC can contribute to the realization of human rights for all and work towards a world where dignity, equality, and justice are upheld.

---

<sup>3</sup> "52<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session of the Human Rights Council: Resolutions, Decisions and President's Statements." *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session52/res-dec-stat>. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<sup>4</sup> "Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine." *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iicir-ukraine/index>. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<sup>5</sup> "OHCHR and COVID-19." *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/covid-19>. Accessed 16 July 2023.



## **Annotated Bibliography**

**“About UN Human Rights.” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website offers a wealth of resources related to human rights, including information on the work of the Human Rights Council. It provides access to reports, statements, publication, and background information on various thematic and country-specific issues.

**“About Us.” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us>. Accessed 21 June 2023.**

This page gives a brief overview of the United Nations. It states the purpose of the international organization and information about membership. Furthermore, it contains additional links to information about the main bodies, Secretariat, and UN system.

**Freedman, Rosa. “New Mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council.” *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, vol. 29, no. 3, Sept. 2011, pp. 289–323. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1177/016934411102900303>.**

This journal article analyzes the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council in its ability to address human rights issues. The article specifically focuses on the Universal Periodic Review and Special Sessions of the HRC.

**“HRC Home.” OHCHR, 21 June 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/home>.**

This is the page for the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) and contains important information on the inner workings of the Council. The page also contains links to information about HRC sessions, bodies, and mandated sessions.

**Human Rights Council (HRC).: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=225&menu=3170#:~:text=The%20Human%20Rights%20Council%20reaffirmed,human%20rights%20and%20fundamental%20freedoms>. Accessed 21 June 2023.**

This article describes the current state of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in relation to human rights. The document provides information on the current gaps that exist in achieving the SDGs and the Human Rights Council’s progress in closing these gaps.

**“Human Rights Council Subsidiary Bodies.” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/other-sub-bodies>. Accessed 21 June 2023.**

The page is the inside link from the main page of the HRC that details the main subsidiary bodies, intergovernmental working groups, forums, and subsidiary expert mechanisms of the HRC. It provides greater understanding of the mechanisms of the HRC.

**Nations, United. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>. Accessed 19 June 2023.**

This page contains the full document of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an international document that enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings. This declaration sets an international standard for human right protection and is the foundation for other UN documents.

**Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global blueprint adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015. This page provides a word for word copy of this agenda. Understanding the 2030 Agenda is crucial as it outlines a comprehensive framework for addressing pressing global challenges, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation, and provides a roadmap for creating a more sustainable and prosperous future for all. Be sure to use this document as a foundation for your research as you develop innovative ideas.

**UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX - Human Rights Recommendations. <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

This online database, maintained by the OHCHR, offers a comprehensive collection of UN human rights documents, including resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council. It allows users to search and access documents based on specific themes, countries, or sessions.

**“UPR Info.” UPR Info, <https://www.upr-info.org/en/homepage>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

UPR Info is an independent non-governmental organization that focuses on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, which is a key mechanism of the Human Rights Council. Their website provides information on the UPR process, including country reviews, recommendations, and related resources.

## I. Modern Slavery in a Globalized World

*“Slavery is not a horror safely confined to the past; it continues to exist throughout the world, even in developed countries. Across the world slaves work and sweat and build and suffer.”*  
- Kevin Bales, *Professor of Contemporary Slavery at the University of Nottingham*

### Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude: slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”<sup>6</sup> Although international law does not define modern slavery, modern slavery constitutes practices such as debt bondage, forced labor, human trafficking, and forced marriage. Essentially, modern slavery alludes to “situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.”<sup>7</sup>

There are more enslaved people today than there were at the height of the slave trade. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 50 million, or nearly one for every 150 people, are victims of modern slavery. That number increased by 10 million since 2016.<sup>8</sup> Of the 50 million, 28 million were in forced labor and 22 million were in forced marriages. Modern slavery persists in every country, regardless of wealth. More than half (52 percent) of all forced labor and about a quarter of forced marriages occur in upper-middle income and high-income countries with 86 percent of cases of forced labor occurring in the private sector.<sup>9</sup> Women, children, and migrants remain the most vulnerable populations. Children compose 12 million victims of modern slavery, while women and girls constitute over half (54 percent). Migrant workers, especially those in irregular and undocumented situations are three times more likely to be in forced labor than non-migrants. Limited legal protections and precarious living conditions increase their vulnerability. Despite significant progress made in abolishing traditional forms of slavery, new and evolving manifestations continue to exploit vulnerable individuals.

Ending slavery is explicitly incorporated into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a comprehensive agenda adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address various global challenges. Target 8.7 of SDG 8 specifically focus on taking “immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor.”<sup>10</sup> This target emphasizes the importance of

---

<sup>6</sup> Nations, United. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>. Accessed 19 June 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Nations, United. “International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/slavery-abolition-day>. Accessed 19 June 2023.

<sup>8</sup> *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*. Report, 12 Sept. 2022. [www.ilo.org, http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS\\_854733/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_854733/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Nations, United. “International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/slavery-abolition-day>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2023.

<sup>10</sup> *SDG 8.7: End Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Child Labour | ICCROM | Our Collections Matter*. <https://ocm.iccrom.org/sdgs/sdg-8-decent-work-and-economic-growth/sdg-87-end-modern-slavery-trafficking-and-child-labour#:~:text=Take%20immediate%20and%20effective%20measures,labour%20in%20all%20its%20forms>. Accessed 21 June 2023.



promoting decent work conditions, protecting labor rights, and eliminating exploitative labor practices. Eradicating modern slavery also contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Furthermore, the interlinkages between the various SDGs mean that progress in one goal can have positive ripple effects on others. For example, eliminating poverty (SDG 1) and ensuring quality education (SDG 4) contribute to reducing vulnerability to slavery. Similarly, promoting responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and fostering partnerships (SDG 17) can help address supply chains and prevent exploitative practices.<sup>11</sup> By integrating the goal of ending slavery across multiple SDGs, the agenda recognizes that slavery is a multifaceted issue requiring comprehensive approaches that address its root causes and consequences.

## **International Framework**

Commemorating the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery in 2022, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres beseeched international organizations and Member States alike to “end the degradation and inhumanity of modern slavery once and for all.”<sup>12</sup> This day, held on December 2, highlights the progress the UN has already accomplished in eradicating modern slavery. Yet, it also stands as a reminder of the extensive gap existing between achievements and truly resolving a plight that can be traced back thousands of years into humanity’s history. The yearly event marks the day that the GA adopted the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffics in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (resolution 317 (IV) of 1949). This convention was one of the first international treaties to address issues related to human trafficking and the exploitation of prostitution. At the time the convention was adopted, it was groundbreaking in recognizing the need for a coordinated international response to combat human trafficking. The convention provided an early and important definition of human trafficking, laying the groundwork for how the international community understands and combats this crime. It aimed at eliminating forced prostitution and the exploitation of prostitution, recognizing that prostitution should not be criminalized itself but rather the exploitation of individuals within prostitution. This distinction was an important step in shaping policies and legal frameworks related to sex work and prostitution.

The convention was shaped by several international legal frameworks that preceded it. These frameworks helped set the stage for the convention by addressing related issues and influencing the way human trafficking was approached at the international level. Adopted a year prior in 1948, UDHR enshrines the right to be free from slavery in Article 4.<sup>13</sup> In 1926, the Slavery Convention, or the Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery, was created under the League of Nations auspices. The convention aims to confirm and advance the suppression of slavery and the slave trade.<sup>14</sup> Three decades later, the United Nations extended that objective in

---

<sup>11</sup> *THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Nations, United. “International Day for the Abolition of Slavery - MESSAGES.” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/slavery-abolition-day/messages>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Nations, United. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2023.

<sup>14</sup> “Slavery Convention.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/slavery-convention>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

1956 with the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery,<sup>15</sup> which additionally built upon the Forced Labor Convention of 1930, a convention that banned forced labor by outlawing debt bondage, serfdom, child marriage, servile marriage, and child servitude.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the convention served as a basis for subsequent international agreements and protocols, such as the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (commonly known as the Palermo Protocol), which was adopted in 2000. The Palermo Protocol further expanded on the definition of trafficking and emphasized the protection of victims and the prosecution of traffickers. Its influence extends to domestic legislation and has played a crucial role in shaping the international response to modern slavery. From a legal and policy perspective, conventions possess the potential to influence governments of states that ratified the convention to assume legal obligation to implement and comply with the provisions outlined in the convention.

In 2007, the HRC in resolution 6/14 created the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences. Over subsequent years, the Council extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur through multiple resolutions. Resolution 51/15 grants the Special Rapporteur the mandate of “promoting the effective application of relevant international norms and standards on slavery,” “request, receive, and exchange information on contemporary forms of slavery,” and “recommend action and measures applicable at the national, regional, and international levels to eliminate slavery practices wherever they occur.”<sup>17</sup> The current Special Rapporteur is Tomoya Obokata who assumed the position in March 2020.

## **Current Problems and Areas of Action**

Modern slavery occurs due to a combination of complex factors, often interrelated and reinforcing each other. Poverty and economic disparities create vulnerable populations who are susceptible to exploitation. Lack of access to education, job opportunities, and social support systems can lead individuals to accept hazardous and exploitative work conditions out of desperation or lack of viable alternatives.<sup>18</sup>

Global economic pressures, consumer demand for inexpensive products, and cost-cutting practices by businesses contribute to the perpetuation of modern slavery. In search of maximizing profits, some companies may engage in exploitative practices, such as subcontracting to unregulated factories or farms where forced labor is prevalent.<sup>19</sup> Long and

---

<sup>15</sup> “Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/supplementary-convention-abolition-slavery-slave-trade-and>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>16</sup> *Convention C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)*. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C029](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029). Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>17</sup> “Overview of the Mandate.” *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-slavery/overview-mandate>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>18</sup> “Poverty and Lack of Education” Increases Slavery | | *UN News*. 28 Dec. 2016, <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2016/12/620302>.

<sup>19</sup> LeBaron, Genevieve. “Business Models Have Evolved to Profit from Slave Labour.” *News.Trust.Org*, <https://news.trust.org/item/20210303131815-7j8lt/>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

complex supply chains increase the difficulty to oversee working conditions. Voluntary ‘corporate social responsibility’ initiatives have failed to protect workers from forced labor and other human rights abuses. Member States have implemented various policies to address the abuses of workers’ rights in supply chains. In 2015, the United Kingdom passed the Modern Slavery Act which provides law enforcement the necessary mechanisms to fight modern slavery, ensure perpetrators receive just punishment, and provide sufficient support and protection for victims.<sup>20</sup> The Dutch Senate adopted the Child Labor Due Diligence Law in 2019 which requires companies to be transparent to “identify and prevent child labor in their supply chains.”<sup>21</sup>

Conflict, political instability, and environmental factors force many people to migrate or become displaced. These individuals often find themselves in unfamiliar and vulnerable situations, making them targets for traffickers and exploitative labor practices. Dire circumstances in camps for refugees and internally displaced people attract human traffickers. Displaced individuals, particularly women, children, and marginalized groups, may lack social support networks, face economic hardships, and be cut off from their usual sources of protection, making them easy targets for traffickers and slaveholders.

Weak governance, corruption, and inadequate law enforcement exacerbates the present issue. Insufficient regulations, lack of monitoring mechanisms, and bribery allow exploitative practices to flourish without proper accountability. Governments with political instability display a higher risk for trafficking. Sex trafficking is most pervasive in Southeast Asia, child trafficking occurs most in India and Pakistan, and labor trafficking is the worst in the Middle East and South America.<sup>22</sup> Modern slavery often operates in hidden or underground economies, making it difficult to track and address. Limited awareness and inadequate data on the extent and nature of modern slavery hinder effective responses and policy interventions.

## Conclusion

Combatting modern slavery requires a multifaceted approach involving government, civil society organizations, businesses, and individuals. Efforts to address this issue include strengthening legislation and law enforcement mechanisms, improving victim identification and support services, raising public awareness, promoting responsible business practices throughout supply chains, and fostering international cooperation. Additionally, it is crucial to tackle the root causes of modern slavery, such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, and lack of access to education and economic opportunities. By working collectively and adopting a human rights-based approach, societies can strive to eradicate modern slavery and ensure the freedom and dignity of all individuals.

---

<sup>20</sup> *Modern Slavery Act 2015*.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/enacted#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20make%20provision,Commissioner%3B%20and%20for%20connected%20purposes>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Hoff, Anneloes. *Dutch Child Labour Due Diligence Law: A Step towards Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence* | OHRH. <https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/dutch-child-labour-due-diligence-law-a-step-towards-mandatory-human-rights-due-diligence/>. Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>22</sup> “7 Facts You Didn’t Know about Human Trafficking.” *USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work*, [https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/news/7-facts-you-didnt-know-about-human-trafficking%3Futm\\_source%3Dtest](https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/news/7-facts-you-didnt-know-about-human-trafficking%3Futm_source%3Dtest). Accessed 21 June 2023.

## **Questions to Consider**

1. How can awareness and education campaigns be effectively utilized to combat modern slavery?
2. What incentives or regulations can be implemented to encourage businesses to address modern slavery in their operations?
3. What measures can be taken to facilitate the reintegration and empowerment of survivors into society?
4. How can international collaboration and information-sharing be enhanced to combat modern slavery effectively?
5. What mechanisms can be established to gather accurate and reliable data on the prevalence and patterns of modern slavery?

## Annotated Bibliography

**“A/77/163: Contemporary Forms of Slavery in the Informal Economy - Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Including Its Causes and Consequences.” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a77163-contemporary-forms-slavery-informal-economy-report-special>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

This is the latest report issued by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences. This report specifically focuses on the economic drivers of modern slavery and main challenges and developments of the human rights issue.

**“Abolishing Slavery and Its Contemporary Forms.” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/special-issue-publications/abolishing-slavery-and-its-contemporary-forms>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

The report details the relationship between international law and slavery as well as the progress made by international policies to fight against slavery. It also explains the mechanisms the United Nations possesses to address slavery and delves further into the various contemporary forms of slavery.

**“Annual Thematic Reports.” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-slavery/annual-thematic-reports>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

Every year, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, and its causes and consequences, presents a report to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. The annual report describes activities undertaken and current trends and developments of modern slavery.

**“Anti-Slavery International | Fighting for Freedom from Slavery.” Anti-Slavery International, <https://www.antislavery.org/>. Accessed 22 June 2023.**

Anti-Slavery International is one of the oldest human rights organizations dedicated to combating all forms of contemporary slavery and supporting its victims. Their website features resources, reports, campaigns, and news update on modern slavery.

**Caballero-Anthony, Mely. A Hidden Scourge. International Monetary Fund, Sept. 2018, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2018/09/human-trafficking-in-southeast-asia-caballero>.**

This article details how Southeast Asian refugees and displaced people are victims of slavery and human trafficking.

**Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking).** <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm>. Accessed 22 June 2023.

The International Labor Organization is a United Nations agency whose objective is to set international labor standards. This page describes the current situation of modern slavery and delves more into the prevalence of forced labor worldwide. It is a great resource for understanding the human rights issue and also what various international agencies are doing in order to combat slavery.

**“Global Slavery Index.” Walk Free,** <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/>. Accessed 22 June 2023.

The Global Slavery Index is a report produced by the international human rights organization Walk Free. The index provides national estimates of modern slavery for 160 countries. This resource helps to understand which areas are higher risk for slavery and human trafficking.

**Harroff-Tavel, Helene, and Alix Nasri. Tricked and Trapped: Human Trafficking in the Middle East. International Labor Organization, p. 2013,** [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_211214.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_211214.pdf).

This report was written by the International Labor Organization and explains the occurrence of forced labor and human trafficking in the context of the Middle East. Labor trafficking occurs most in the Middle East due to ineffective labor migration governance.

**“International Standards.” OHCHR,** <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-slavery/international-standards>. Accessed 22 June 2023.

This website provides significant UN documents and conventions that address modern slavery. It helps to explain what the UN has done to address this human rights issue and what it is currently doing.

**Landman, Todd, and Bernard W. Silverman. “Globalization and Modern Slavery.” Politics and Governance, vol. 7, no. 4, Nov. 2019.** [14ottingham-repository.worktribe.com, https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i4.2233](https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i4.2233).

This journal article expounds upon the relationship between globalization and modern slavery. The findings reveal that economic measures of globalization and higher levels of democracy are linked to lower levels of modern slavery.

**ODS HOME PAGE. <https://documentsddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/012/56/PDF/N9401256.pdf?OpenElement>. Accessed 19 June 2023.**

Resolution A/HRC/51/15 extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, for an additional three years. The resolution conveys the mandate of the Special Rapporteur which is to report on the current situation and recommend actions to eradicate modern slavery.

## II. Protecting the Rights of Children in Armed Conflicts

*“It is our fundamental duty as leaders to do everything in our power to protect children, our future, from the chaos and madness of wars that have nothing to do with them.”*

- Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General

### Introduction

In 2007, the United Nations defined children in armed conflicts in the Paris Principles as “any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies, or for sexual purposes. [A child associated with an armed force or armed group] does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.”<sup>23</sup> During 2021, about 450 million children globally – one in six children – were living in a conflict zone. Africa, followed by Asia, and then the Americas harbored the most children affected by conflict.<sup>24</sup> Children caught in the midst of armed conflicts face severe violations of their rights and endure unimaginable suffering. They are recruited as child soldiers, forced into combat, and subjected to physical and psychological trauma. Approximately 250,000 child soldiers exist today in at least 20 countries.<sup>25</sup> These children may be abducted, threatened, or coerced into joining an armed force or group. Financial reasons motivate others who seek to provide an income for their impoverished family.<sup>26</sup> Of the 250,000 child soldiers, 40% of these children are girls who are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Male fighters will use these girls as sex slaves and take them as their “wives.”<sup>27</sup> Additionally, many children are separated from their families, displaced, and denied access to education, healthcare, and basic humanitarian aid. The long-lasting impact of these experiences can hinder their physical, emotional, and cognitive development, perpetuating a cycle of violence and depriving them of a promising future.

Ensuring the protection of children’s rights in armed conflicts directly aligns with several SDGs and contributes to the overall achievement of sustainable development. First and foremost, by preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, prosecuting those responsible for grave violations against children, and promoting accountability, societies fulfill SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Furthermore, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) also intersect with the protection of children’s rights in armed conflicts due to children in conflict-affected areas often facing limited access to educational opportunities healthcare services. Additionally, considering girls are disproportionately affected by sexual

---

<sup>23</sup> *The Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*. The Paris Principles, Feb. 2007, [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/ParisPrinciples\\_EN.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/ParisPrinciples_EN.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> *New Report: Number of Children Living in Deadliest Conflict Countries Jumps Nearly 10% in One Year*. Save the Children, 20 Nov. 2022, [https://www.savethechildren.net/news/new-report-number-children-living-deadliest-conflict-countries-jumps-nearly-10-one-year#:~:text=About%20449%20million%20children%20worldwide,the%20Americas%20\(64%20million\)](https://www.savethechildren.net/news/new-report-number-children-living-deadliest-conflict-countries-jumps-nearly-10-one-year#:~:text=About%20449%20million%20children%20worldwide,the%20Americas%20(64%20million).).

<sup>25</sup> “Child Soldiers.” *Theirworld*, 12 Apr. 2023, <https://theirworld.org/resources/child-soldiers/>.

<sup>26</sup> *Children Recruited by Armed Forces or Armed Groups | UNICEF*. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>. Accessed 11 July 2023.

<sup>27</sup> “Child Soldiers.” *Theirworld*, 12 Apr. 2023, <https://theirworld.org/resources/child-soldiers/>.



violence and exploitations in armed conflicts, addressing these violations promotes the achievement of SDG 5 (Gender Equality).<sup>28</sup>

The problem of children in armed conflicts calls for concerted efforts from governments, international organizations, civil society, and the global community to address the root causes, protect children's rights, prevent their recruitment, and use in hostilities, and provide them with the necessary support and opportunities for recovery and reintegration into society. Only by prioritizing the protection and well-being of these vulnerable children can we hope to build a more just and peaceful world for future generations.

## **International Framework**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty addressing children's rights. The core principles of the document comprise non-discrimination, the child's best interests, the right to life, survival, and development, as well as protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation.<sup>29</sup> Article 38 of the convention specifically addresses the issue of children in armed conflict, outlining that Member States must follow international humanitarian law "applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child." Additionally, it admonished Member States to refrain from recruiting children under the age of 15. The GA adopted the convention in November 1989, and it came into effect the following year. In 2000, the GA adopted two optional protocols, the First Optional Protocol being the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, also known as the child soldier treaty. This protocol sets forth specific measures to prevent the conscription of children under 18 into the military, prohibits recruiting children younger than 16, and ensures that recruits aged 16 and 17 have no direct involvement in hostilities.<sup>30</sup> Currently, 173 countries have ratified the protocol. Additional efforts have been made to achieve universal ratification, including the Global Campaign for the universal ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocols to the CRC and the Zero under 18 Campaign. The Zero under 18 Campaign concluded in 2012 and, in conjunction with the outreach efforts of the Global Campaign, resulted in 21 new ratifications for the Optional Protocol.<sup>31</sup>

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child oversees the implementation of the CRC and the Optional Protocols to the Convention. The committee comprises 18 independent experts and is responsible for examining reports submitted by Member States, addressing concerns, and making recommendations in the form of "concluding observations." Recent sessions addressed strengthening the treaty body system, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic children in

---

<sup>28</sup> "Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme." *UNDP*, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<sup>29</sup> "Convention on the Rights of the Child." *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>. Accessed 17 July 2023.

<sup>30</sup> *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/opac/>. Accessed 17 July 2023.

<sup>31</sup> *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/opac/>. Accessed 23 Aug. 2023.

vulnerable situations, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and children's rights in relation to the digital environment.<sup>32</sup>

Several NGOs work tirelessly to protect and support children affected by armed conflicts. These organizations provide critical assistance, advocacy, and intervention to ensure the rights and well-being of children caught in the midst of war and violence. Some prominent NGOs working in this area include Save the Children, War Child, Child Soldiers International, and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. From providing education, psychosocial support, and access to healthcare to conducting research, the dedication and efforts of NGOs are crucial in mitigating the impact of conflict and advocating for the protection of children.

### **Current Problems and Areas of Action**

While significant progress has been made in protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts, several ongoing problems persist, demanding continued action and attention. In conflict-ridden areas like the Middle East, children face recruitment as child soldiers, targeted attacks, and the destruction of schools and hospitals. The issue continues to exacerbate considering the number of child soldiers in the Middle East doubled in 2019.<sup>33</sup> In Sub-Saharan Africa, children are forcibly conscripted into armed groups, subjected to sexual violence, and exposed to attacks on educational institutions.<sup>34</sup> South Asia witnesses the recruitment of children into armed forces and extremist groups, putting their lives at risk. Southeast Asia struggles with similar issues, with child recruitment and violence affecting children. In Latin America, particularly in Colombia and parts of Central America, children are vulnerable to exploitation by armed groups and the consequences of armed conflicts. "It has been estimated that some 14,000 children, or 'little bees' as they are known to the paramilitaries, serve in combat, make and deploy mines, and gather intelligence as well as commit atrocious human rights violations in countries like Colombia."<sup>35</sup> These regions demand immediate action to protect the rights of children caught in the crossfire.

Key areas of action include strengthening mechanisms for monitoring, documenting, and reporting human rights violations against children in armed conflicts is crucial. Additionally, enhancing data collection, supporting independent monitoring bodies, and ensuring effective reporting channels contribute to evidence-based advocacy and accountability. Furthermore, collaborative efforts between governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities are vital for addressing the complex challenges of protecting children's rights in

---

<sup>32</sup> *ODS HOME PAGE*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/355/04/PDF/G2235504.pdf?OpenElement>. Accessed 17 July 2023.

<sup>33</sup> "Begin with the Children: Child Soldier Numbers Doubled in the Middle East in 2019." *Middle East Institute*, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/begin-children-child-soldier-numbers-doubled-middle-east-2019>. Accessed 17 July 2023.

<sup>34</sup> "Factbox: Ten Facts about Child Soldiers around the World." *Reuters*, 12 Feb. 2021. [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-childsoldiers-factbox-trfn-idUSKBN2AC0CB>.

<sup>35</sup> "From Cradle to Conflict: Child Soldiers' Growing Role in Latin America's Drug Wars." *COHA*, 24 Apr. 2012, <https://coha.org/from-cradle-to-conflict-latin-americas-child-soldiers-new-direction-to-drug-wars/>.

armed conflicts. Sharing best practices, resources, and expertise can amplify impact and ensure a coordinated response.

Moreover, humanitarian efforts must prioritize the physical and psychological well-being of children, providing them with access to essential services such as healthcare, psychosocial support, and protection from further harm. Raising awareness and mobilizing public support is crucial to garnering greater attention and resources to address the dire situation of children in armed conflicts. Only through comprehensive and sustained efforts can the international community effectively protect the rights of these vulnerable children and strive towards a future free from the horrors of armed conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

"Everyone talks about 'the impact of war on children.' But how do you measure the impact of war? Who suffers the greater horror, the child who is violated or the child who is forced to become a perpetrator? We are the victim, the perpetrator, and the witness, all at once."<sup>36</sup> The prevalence of children affected by armed conflicts is a distressing reality that demands urgent attention and concerted action from the global community. The devastating impact of war on children's lives, rights, and well-being is undeniable as they face unimaginable violence, exploitation, and deprivation. In this context, the HRC plays a pivotal role in advocating for the protection and promotion of children's rights in conflict zones. Through its sessions, resolutions, and engagement with Member States and civil society, the HRC amplifies the voices of these vulnerable children and addresses the grave human rights violations they endure. By strengthening international legal frameworks, promoting accountability, and fostering cooperation among stakeholders, the HRC aims to alleviate their suffering and create a safer and more secure world where the rights and dignity of every child are upheld. Although significant efforts have been made, challenges persist, and the work of the HRC in protecting children's rights in armed conflicts remains crucial.

## **Questions to Consider**

1. How can education and access to healthcare be ensured for children living in conflict-affected regions?
2. How can innovative technologies and data collection be leveraged to improve child protection efforts during armed conflicts?
3. How can international cooperation and partnerships be strengthened to enhance the protection of children's rights in conflict zones?

---

<sup>36</sup> *Sierra Leone TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report for the Children of Sierra Leone.* <https://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-the-final-report/popular-reports/item/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-report-for-the-children-of-sierra-leone>. Accessed 17 July 2023.

## Annotated Bibliography

**Baghat, Karim, et al. Children and Armed Conflict: What Existing Data Can Tell Us – Peace Research Institute Oslo. 15 Dec. 2017, <https://www.prio.org/publications/10867>.**

This report provides trends and patterns that exist for indicators of children's well-being during conflict: the numbers of children living in conflict-affected areas; trends in child soldiering; trends in sexual exploitation; and trends in infant mortality.

**Children and Armed Conflict. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, Aug. 2016, [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Children-in-Conflict\\_WEB.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Children-in-Conflict_WEB.pdf).**

This report details the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It includes information on the timeline of the UN's efforts to protect the rights of children as well as the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign.

**"Committee on the Rights of the Child." OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc>. Accessed 17 July 2023.**

This website contains extensive information on the Committee on the Rights of the Child which monitors the implementation of the Optional Protocol. It provides the Committee's sessional reports and decisions.

**Consolidated Recommendations from the Regional Consultations on Children and Armed Conflict. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Oct. 2021, [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/21-00068\\_CAAC\\_Report2021\\_final.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/21-00068_CAAC_Report2021_final.pdf).**

This document provides background information on the regional consultations on Children and Armed Conflict and their key findings.

**"Convention on the Rights of the Child." OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>. Accessed 17 July 2023.**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most comprehensive and widely ratified international treaty specifically addressing the rights and well-being of children. It sets a global standard for the protection, survival, development, and participation of children, ensuring that their rights are recognized, respected, and upheld by Member States.

**Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict – Children and Armed Conflict. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>. Accessed 17 July 2023.**

This website provides specific information on the UN's efforts to protect children affected by armed conflicts. It offers reports, action plans, and updates on the situation of children in various conflict zones.

**Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict – Children and Armed Conflict. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>. Accessed 17 July 2023.**

Resolution A/RES/54/263 put in force the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Children on the involvement of children in armed conflict. This treaty is a foundational document in the HRC's work of protecting the rights of children.

**Statistics Should Never Overshadow the Individual Suffering of Children in Armed Conflict, “We Must Redouble Efforts to End Grave Violations” – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2022/07/statistics-should-never-overshadow-the-individual-suffering-of-children-in-armed-conflict-we-must-redouble-efforts-to-end-grave-violations/>. Accessed 17 July 2023.**

This site from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict provides statistics surrounding children in conflict zones including what regions experience the greatest human rights violations.

**“Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.” Watchlist, 3 July 2023, <https://watchlist.org/>.**

The website for the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict provides reports and advocacy materials on the impact of armed conflicts on children. It includes updates on the UN's actions to protect children in conflict situations.

**Wessells, Michael G. “Children and Armed Conflict: Introduction and Overview.” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 3, Aug. 2016, pp. 198–207. Semantic Scholar, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac000176>.**

This paper addresses how children are affected by war and how to intervene on behalf of war-affected children. It presents obstacles to fully understanding the impact of war on children. The paper serves as a means to better understanding the current issue and the present gaps of finding solutions.