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# AiPOI

Australasian Institute of Policing



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Volume 14 Number 4 • 2022

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN UKRAINE

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# Season's Greetings from the Aipol President

This is a time to gather with loved ones, look back on the year, and give thanks for living in a country where we are safe and protected by 65,000 police officers across Australia.

## JONATHAN HUNT-SHARMAN

President, Committee of management, Australasian Institute of Policing

As we celebrate the Christmas holiday season, let's take a moment to recognise our policing professionals who are working over the holiday period to allow us to enjoy our holidays in peace and safety.

Whilst the vast majority of Australians are spending their holidays with their families, friends and loved ones, police officers, law enforcement personnel and other first responders throughout Australia, will miss celebrations with their loved ones. They will be on duty keeping the Australian public safe.

As we travel to visit family to sit down for Christmas dinner, state and territory police officers and first responders are responding to emergencies and protecting local communities. The personnel at the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission continue to build intelligence profiles on transnational and national criminal targets and the Australian Federal Police personnel are protecting Australia and Australians from criminal attack.

Work does not "slow down" for emergency personnel between Christmas and New Year. In fact, this is one of the busiest and most dangerous times for law enforcement.

The holidays can also be a gruelling time for those suffering from depression and stress. Unfortunately first responders face higher instances of post-traumatic stress disorder and other work-related mental fatigue. This can be a difficult time of year and I urge police officers and first responders to keep a kind and gentle eye on your colleagues whom may be showing signs of mental fatigue or stress.

So as we celebrate the end of this year, and the beginning of 2023, let's us remember our fallen colleagues, their sacrifice and service to our communities and our serving police officers and law enforcement personnel whom are protecting all Australians, enabling us to not just enjoy these holidays in peace, but enjoy every day in peace.

In closing, I would like to thank the Australasian Institute of Policing Board of Management, Company Secretary Luke Farrell, Vice President Dave Allen, Treasurer Russell Rowell, and committee members Romi Gyergyak and Ian Lanyon. I would also like to thank our journal and research team, Dr Amanda Davies and Countrywide Austral Production Manager, Jason Jeffery.

On behalf of the Australasian Institute of Policing Board of Management and our team, we wish members and supporters a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Thank you for all that you do.



**Jonathan Hunt-Sharman**  
President

# Merry Christmas



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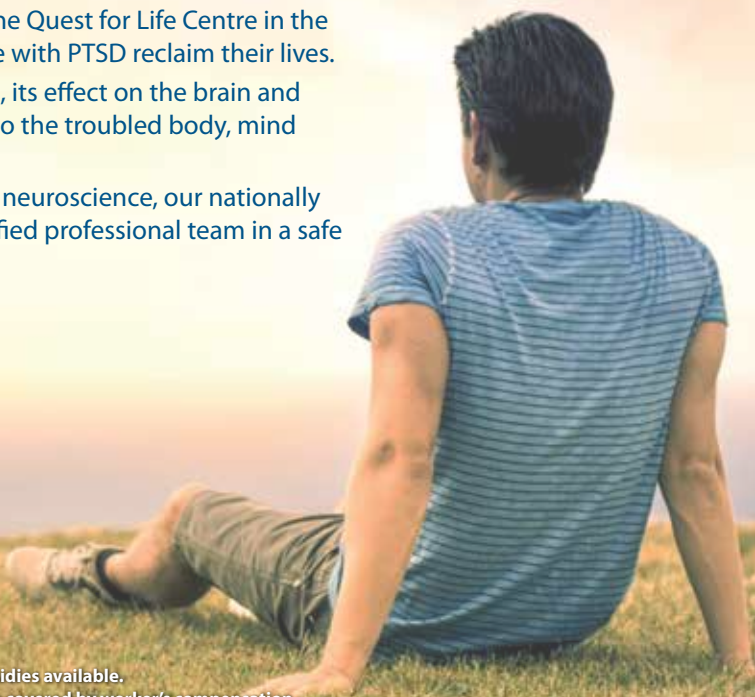
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# Editorial

## DR AMANDA DAVIES

Editor, Assistant Professor Policing and Security at the Rabdan Academy, Abu Dhabi



*To our frontline officers, managers, leaders and support personnel we owe a debt of gratitude for their commitment to confront the challenge presented by modern slavery with vigor, professionalism and dedication.*

Welcome to the final edition of AiPol for 2022. There is little doubt it has been a year of highs and lows for the domestic and international policing community – many wins for example on the cyber-crime front whilst also tackling increases in a range of emerging criminal activity. This edition is focused on the humanitarian crisis of human trafficking/modern slavery exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. The increase in modern slavery during and post war is not new, the article by Ross Archer refers to the impact of the war in Syria where the number of identified human trafficking victims from Syria located in Turkey, the Middle East, and Europe rapidly increased, according to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Two key issues in the current Ukraine/Russia conflict which have signposted the policing challenge in relation to modern slavery are (a) Ukraine was pre the current Russia/Ukraine conflict, a known area of modern slavery criminal activity, traffickers having recruited and exploited victims in Ukraine being trafficked both domestically and internationally. As discussed in the UNODC Research Update article, the UNODC global database on Trafficking in Persons provides evidence of Ukrainian victims being trafficked to many different

countries (29 countries reported Ukrainian victims in 2018). While most Ukrainian victims were identified in neighbouring countries like the Russian Federation and Poland, others were detected in the Middle East and South Asia; and (b) Of the estimated 12 million people who fled Ukraine when Russia invaded in February, 90% are women or children — the primary targets for trafficking. The conflict makes people vulnerable to trafficking for all of the reasons that are associated with circumstances of war, for example, no work, no homes, lack of safety, confusion and fear for the future of themselves, their families and their communities.

The articles in this edition provide valuable insight through multiple lenses into the modern slavery activities specifically associated with the Ukraine conflict all of which raise deep concerns for agencies responsible for humanitarian safety and security. Police and law enforcement community, governments, the United Nations, NGOs and multiple agencies are working on this very complex area of criminal activity. As discussed in the Europol article '20 countries spin a web to catch human traffickers during a hackathon' in which law enforcement agencies in Austria, Albania, Belgium, Denmark, France,

Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Ukraine compared to other crime areas, such as drug trafficking or trafficking of weapons, it is more challenging to identify the indicators of trafficking in human beings in an online environment. Importantly, the dedication of police and law enforcement agencies is evident in these collaborative endeavours to combat this area of criminal activity and build the safety and security of individuals and communities.

Historical experience indicates that whilst many across the world will celebrate peacefully and happily the festive end of year season, the nature of both local and transnational crime will demand the continued dedication and hard work of our police and law enforcement agencies.

To our frontline officers, managers, leaders and support personnel we owe a debt of gratitude for their commitment to confront the challenge presented by modern slavery with vigor, professionalism and dedication.

Wishing AiPol readers and officers near and far a safe festive season and prosperity and success in their efforts in 2023.



# President's Foreword

**JONATHAN HUNT-SHARMAN**

President, Committee of management, Australasian Institute of Policing

As we prepare for the Christmas season and we look around at the holiday spirit, the joy of children looking forward to Christmas gifts and the chance to catch Santa, with families, parents and loved ones enjoying their time together in peace and harmony, it is hard to fathom the hardship being endured by families, in particular the women and children in war-torn Ukraine.

The media around the world is focusing on war in Ukraine but there is also a far more sinister secret - human trafficking of displaced children and women.

It has been identified that **organised crime syndicates** are exploiting the war in Ukraine to increase human trafficking operations in the region. **Organised crime syndicates conducting human trafficking** are utilising force, fraud, and coercion, playing on the victim vulnerabilities, including displacement, isolation, poverty, lack of language, trust of volunteer groups and the sheer desperation of the vulnerable.

In response, Ukraine local and regional law enforcement, government agencies and non-government organisations are serving an irreplaceable role in preventing,

detecting and investigating human trafficking of displaced persons from Ukraine.

Indeed Law enforcement in neighbouring countries; Europol, Eurojust, and Interpol; and other international policing partners; are working together to uphold the rule of law within this unstable region.

Importantly the collective effort of local, regional, national and international law enforcement, government agencies and non-government organisations, is identifying and disrupting human trafficking by organised crime syndicates that are taking advantage of the war in Ukraine.

As we know, the exploitation of men, women, and children for forced sex or forced labor reduces people to 'a saleable product' for the enrichment of the traffickers and for the benefit of the buyers.

**Human trafficking by Organised crime syndicates need only three criteria to succeed:**

- vulnerable victims;
- willing buyers, and
- vulnerabilities in law enforcement.

All three can be found anywhere, regardless of geography, population, or a country's GDP. No country is immune from human trafficking. Law enforcement in first world countries, second world and third world countries, all struggle to cope with international organised crime syndicates involved in human trafficking, let alone, law enforcement in a war torn environment where confusion reigns and where law enforcement, government agencies and NGOs, are working in an unstable, unfamiliar and volatile environment.

When one considers that in Australia, with the law enforcement capabilities of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC); Australian Federal Police (AFP) and State and Territory Police, that in November 2022 a global human trafficking syndicate has only just been identified as exploiting flaws in Australia's border security and immigration system to run a national illegal sex racket moving exploited foreign women around the country like 'cattle', undetected for a number of years, one can see the enormous law





enforcement challenge brought about by the war in Ukraine.

It is alleged that the crime boss at the centre of the Australian operation set up the national illegal sex racket after his release from gaol in Britain, where he was implicated in a similar illegal sex ring and served a five (5) year sentence. How he has been able to reside in Australia as an extremely wealthy businessman, is a separate issue, but demonstrates that even when there is rule of law, high resistance to corruption and highly effective law enforcement capability and co-operation, international human trafficking by organised crime syndicates is still a major challenge.

From the criminal justice perspective, no prevention and deterrence; and no detection and investigation; means no arrest and no prosecution; no penalty and no compliance; and of course, no victim protection.

Organised Crime syndicates involved in human trafficking see a significant opportunity to exploit the war in Ukraine to increase their grotesque illegitimate

wealth, to the detriment of women, young children, teenage girls and teenage boys, who are being traded as 'commodities' on the international black market.

**The Australasian Institute of Policing (Aipol) recognises the enormous law enforcement challenge for the Ukraine Government and Ukraine law enforcement, including their local and regional police.**

AiPol acknowledges and commends the efforts of the Ukraine Government and Ukraine law enforcement and the supportive co-ordination efforts by Europol, Eurojust, Interpol, and other international law enforcement partners.

Law enforcement challenges exist, mistakes will be made, law enforcement effectiveness may be criticised, but what the war in Ukraine does demonstrate is that in such a crisis, coordination and cooperation of law enforcement at the local, national and international level, utilising the assistance of NGOs, local authorities and communities, provides a valuable template for preventing, identifying, disrupting, dismantling and

prosecuting organised crime syndicates involved in human trafficking.

For example, a lesson to be learnt, is the joint action day coordinated by the Netherlands, in September this year involving law enforcement from 20 countries, checking 114 platforms for human trafficking. The Hackathon focused on combatting criminal networks that use social media, the surface web and the dark web to conduct human trafficking, in particular, trafficking of Ukrainian refugees. The benefit of the Hackathon, was that the group of 85 experts across a number of countries got together and focused on finding ways to solve or to investigate, the same problem, in a limited amount of time.

The Hackathon model could be replicated by Australian law enforcement in cooperation with our international law enforcement partners, to also identify human trafficking by transnational organised crime syndicates.

At this time, our thoughts and prayers are for the safety of the law enforcement personnel who are attempting to enforce the rule of law in war torn Ukraine.



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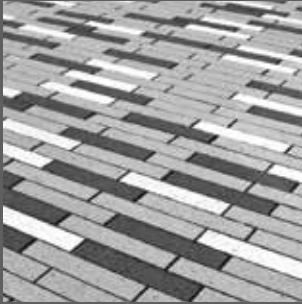
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# Human Trafficking in Ukraine

June 22, 2022

**ANNA MACKELLAIG**

[stjamesresearchcentre.org](http://stjamesresearchcentre.org)

## Human Trafficking and War

Has the recent conflict between Ukraine and Russia caused an increase of human trafficking within Ukrainian residents fleeing war? This post aims to provide a discussion on how local organisations and volunteers are protecting vulnerable citizens.

## What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is a global phenomenon that occurs in most countries around the world, with a staggering 40.3 million individuals estimated to be in situations of forced labour and marriage (Zimmerman, 2021). Today it is commonly referred to as "modern slavery".

There is no 'specific' profile for potential victims of human trafficking. Victims can be of any age, any gender or from any cultural background. Certain populations are more vulnerable, including runaway and homeless individuals, those fleeing violence or natural disasters, and those who have suffered from other types of abuse or

exploitation in their lifetime (Engage Together, ND). Traffickers specifically exploit vulnerabilities that many people already face by using compelling stories of a better life, such as false economic opportunities or emotional support.

## Has the Conflict in Ukraine Caused an Increase in Human Trafficking?

According to the United Nations, more than 12 million people are believed to have fled their homes in Ukraine since the war commenced. Within that staggering statistic, over 5.6 million have fled to neighbouring countries, mostly women and children (BBC News, 2022).

Undoubtedly, those women and children fleeing from the current war in Ukraine are at tremendous risk of human trafficking due to the sudden increase of vulnerability these citizens are facing. IOM Ukraine's Chief of Missions stated, "We know how quickly the criminal world adjusts to changing realities and finds new victims. We call on Ukrainians and other nationals leaving Ukraine to stay

alert and be cautious when on the move, at a new place or at home" (The Cube, 2022).

Assuredly, there has been reports of increased human trafficking due to the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Vulnerable Ukrainian citizens are approached by criminals posing as labour recruiters frequently targeting those in need of work promising them safety, money, and hope (Gardner, 2022). This false assurance of security is leading to various forms of human trafficking through forced labour, debt bondage, and forced prostitution.

Unaccompanied minors fleeing the war are also at a heightened risk of kidnapping and forced into forms of human trafficking such as labour, begging, marriage, or commercial sexual exploitation. Generally, traffickers seek to exploit the chaos of large-scale population movements, and with millions of children fleeing Ukraine since February, the threat of human trafficking is increasing substantially.



White house, Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC, USA

### How are Organisations Protecting Survivors Fleeing the Ukrainian War?

Protection is vital to ensure the safety of refugees fleeing Ukraine, therefore, UNICEF is working alongside UNHCR, local authorities, and partners to bring safety, stability, and advice to families feeling the war in Ukraine. Blue Dots have been

established to provide safe spaces through border crossings in neighbouring counties of Ukraine, which are providing children and families with information and services (UNICEF, 2022).

At a time where children's lives have been drastically altered by fear and panic and they face immense trauma

from leaving behind family, friends, and their familiarities, Blue Dot hubs are providing a safe, welcoming space to rest, play, and simply be a child.

Not only has Blue Dot hubs become safe spaces to provide comfort to children, they are also providing key information to travelling families, help to identify unaccompanied and separated children and ensure their protection, and provide a hub for essential services. Creators of the Blue Dot hubs encourage refugee border crossings to implement every method of strengthening screening processes.

UNICEF is urging for screenings to be implemented in shelters, large urban train stations, and other high traffic locations through which refugees may be gathering or passing. This additional screening should further provide protection for children and families migrating their way through unfamiliar places and experiences whilst finding their footing in a new life (UNICEF, 2022).

### Volunteering Efforts

A great number of volunteers have mobilised to help Ukrainian refugees, which have become vital. Volunteers are providing free transport, accommodation, employment, and other forms of assistance.

"Part of it is an awareness of the power dynamics at play, the immense power volunteers hold when they step out here and they're dealing with people who are incredibly vulnerable", says Abu-Amr (UNHCR, 2022).

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) are commending volunteers for their help over the last couple of months. With a focus on awareness and training, volunteers can facilitate forms of assistance and prevent human trafficking (Prio, 2022).

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# Addressing Human Trafficking in Ukraine

As the conflict between Russia and Ukraine rages on, increased displacement makes millions of individuals vulnerable to the threat of human trafficking.

June 30, 2022

**LAURA SHAW**

Summer intern, usidhr.org

According to BBC News (2022), more than 14 million Ukrainians have been displaced since Russia's invasion on February 24th, 2022. A mass exodus that has become the largest European migration since World War II (Berger 2022). Ninety percent of these refugees are women and children, a population exceptionally vulnerable to human trafficking (Gijs 2022). As the conflict in Ukraine continues and millions of people flee their homes, there needs to be a concerted human-rights-based effort to protect refugees from the dangers of human trafficking. The USIDHR team has seen the devastating impacts of trafficking first-hand after

visiting the CATTIA Community Center in Brasov, Romania. Conflicts are one of the biggest catalysts for an increase in human trafficking hence why, the municipality, entrepreneurs, and civil society organizations in Romania united, in the Nobody Left Behind project, to work on the integration of Ukrainian refugees that arrive in the country. At USIDHR, we champion education as critical in fighting back against human rights violations such as human trafficking. The following article will explore why human trafficking in Ukraine has increased as a result of the ongoing war and what can be done to address this issue.

## Human Trafficking and Factors of Vulnerability

First, though, we need to clarify what is meant by human trafficking. There are many practices associated with human trafficking, but at its core trafficking in persons is "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons—by force, coercion, fraud or some other form of deception—for the purpose of exploitation" (OHCHR). The key component of trafficking is "for the purpose of exploitation". For the explicit purpose of forced labor, forced marriage, organ trade, slavery, and

*continued on page 14*

sexual exploitation humans are treated as commodities for monetary and power gains. Although there is an international legal framework in place to criminalize and mitigate trafficking, millions of people are trafficked around the world each year. The “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery” (2016) from the International Labor Organization estimates that there are 24.9 million victims of human trafficking worldwide. Women and girls continue to be the primary targets for human trafficking as well as sex trafficking which continues to be the most common form of human trafficking (OHCHR). UNICEF further reports that the trafficking trade is the 2nd largest criminal industry in the world, an industry that is rapidly growing (UNICEF USA).

Human trafficking is a gross violation of our universal human rights. In particular, the human rights most relevant to human trafficking are the right to life, the right not to be submitted to slavery, the right not to be subjected to torture, the right to be free from gendered violence, the right to freedom of movement, and many more (OHCHR). The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner highlights the following as the main international instruments used to combat this horrific crime: the Palermo Protocol, the ILO Forced Labour Convention, the ILO Abolition of Forced Labor Convention, the Slavery Convention, the UN Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Most importantly is the Palermo Protocol which requires all member States “to criminalize trafficking, attempted trafficking and any other intentional participation or organization in a trafficking scheme” (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner). This protocol, which is a supplement to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime is an essential milestone in human rights laws as it provided the first internationally agreed definition of human trafficking (OHCHR). These international human rights laws are critical to anti-trafficking efforts as it is a difficult crime to detect and prosecute.

Although women and children appear to be the primary targets for trafficking in persons, there are a wide variety of factors that make an individual vulnerable to the threat of trafficking.

Individuals already isolated from their social networks can be susceptible to trafficking. Social inequalities, poverty, and gender/race-based discrimination have been identified as important factors in increased vulnerability to trafficking. (OHCHR). The Human Trafficking Institute also identifies substance use dependency, unstable housing conditions, and migration as socio-economic factors often targeted by traffickers (2022). UNODC further details political instability and lack of education as contributing factors (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). For this article, it is important to look at migration/movement as a factor of vulnerability. Because of language barriers, economic hardship, and/or lack of social connections migrants are increasingly susceptible to being taken advantage of. Large waves of migration due to armed conflicts can additionally create vulnerable populations who can become victims of trafficking.

### **Human Trafficking in Ukraine Before the War**

Now that we have established a comprehensive understanding of human trafficking and the elements that go into it, we need to apply this to the context of Ukraine. Since the separation of Ukraine from Russia in 1991, the country has been a hotspot for the slave and human trafficking trade (Thelwell 2021; U.S. Agency for International Development 2022). In 2013 the country was listed among those with a great problem of human trafficking and is recognized as a country of origin, transit, and destination for human trafficking (Melnik 2014). By GDP Ukraine is the second poorest country in Europe and for the past three decades, the country has struggled with government consolidation (Tucker 2016). Conditions that play into vulnerability factors for trafficking in persons. To escape political instability and poverty millions of Ukrainians have fled to Germany, Russia, Belarus, Poland, and Israel (Tucker 2016). Putting displaced persons into popular trafficking routes. As a transit country for human trafficking, Ukraine geographically maintains efficient transportation routes that allow for quick and undetectable trafficking. Particularly its vast sea borders and large migration corridor with Russia (Melnik 2014). Over the last 30 years, there have been more than 260,000 known Ukrainian trafficking

victims (Thelwell 2021). Between 2019 and 2021 there were an estimated 46,000 Ukrainians trafficked (U.S. Agency for International Development 2022).

The 2014 occupation of the Donbas region and Crimea has exacerbated civilian safety concerns. This population has been especially susceptible to labor trafficking, due to limited employment options and displacement. In 2020, more than 90% of Ukrainian victims of human trafficking were for labor exploitation, this is up from 80% in 2012 (Hoff and de Volder 2022; Melnik 2014). Specifically in the agriculture, construction, and manufacturing sectors (Hoff and de Volder 2022; Melnik 2014). Although women and girls remain the primary targets of traffickers, the increased trend of men as victims highlights exploitation in forced labor (Melnik 2014).

Even though there are many NGOs and state authorities involved in combating human trafficking in Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy is the primary actor. The Ministry was appointed in 2012 to form, implement, and integrate all of the state’s policies in combating human trafficking. While there are several national laws relating to combating human trafficking, the 2004 ratification of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocols is a critical milestone. As is the 2011 ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. Holding the Ukrainian government accountable to international law to protect victims of human trafficking and enforce measures to mitigate the crime (Melnik 2014).

### **Human Trafficking in Ukraine after the Russian Invasion**

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, more than 14 million people have fled their homes. Eight million are displaced within Ukraine while over 7 million have fled to the neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania, Russia, Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia, and Belarus (BBC News 2022). According to UN reports 90% of those refugees are women and children (Gijs 2022). In March, more than 1.5 million children had fled Ukraine, many of whom were unaccompanied (Diaz 2022). Additionally, 2.8 million children have been internally displaced (Hoff and de Volder 2022). Putting them at even higher risk of trafficking.

With already existing human trafficking rings and routes in place in Ukraine, the fog of war is likely to increase business. There have already been hundreds of reports of traffickers showing up at refugee camps preying on women to be sold into the sex trade. Social media platforms are also being used to lure in refugees in the disguise of housing or job opportunities (Berger 2022). In one case a Ukrainian woman had fled to Düsseldorf, Germany following an online offer for housing. When she arrived the man confiscated her identification papers, and demanded labor and sexual acts (Adler 2022). The lack of regulation at border points and refugee camps is another red flag. While it is wonderful to see massive volunteer forces coming to help there are few registration systems to verify the legitimacy of volunteers. In a BBC article, Elena Moskvitina, a Ukrainian refugee, details how fake volunteers would turn up at a refugee center demanding to know where she was staying and aggressively pressure her and her children to travel to Switzerland with them (Adler 2022). There have also been several cases of groups of men pretending to be military and police claiming that they are there to help the refugees. Now four months into the war the more overt indicators of trafficking have largely disappeared as police regularly patrol refugee centers (Fallon, Cundy and Crean 2022).

## Conclusion

Evidence indicates that the instability created by war breeds ample conditions for traffickers, seeking to exploit vulnerable populations (United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime 2022; Hoff and de Volder 2022). In the case of Ukraine, a country with an already well-established trafficking trade the risks are clear. While countries around the world have welcomed Ukrainian refugees, there needs to be a human-rights-based effort to acknowledge and tackle the threat of human trafficking amidst this conflict. Key areas to address the gaps in the anti-trafficking response to this conflict should be reducing vulnerabilities to human trafficking, strong anti-trafficking structures, and essential assistance programs for victims of trafficking. This includes a coordinated effort from governments, international organizations, and NGOs. With the intention to provide widespread

trafficking education campaigns, increased refugee registration, immediate physical and mental health care, safe transport routes out of Ukraine and within neighbouring countries, accountability for family reunification, and the promotion of decent employment for refugees.

At the US Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights, our mission is to advance education and recognition of global human rights. As an industry and

a crime human trafficking is severely taboo and unprosecuted, due to a lack of awareness. To address this inadequacy USIDHR has developed the Human Trafficking Prevention Training to help all individuals learn about trafficking in person and strategies to mitigate it. Through this course, students become certified Anti-Trafficking Consultants and further educate their communities on the factors that contribute to human trafficking.

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Cash, credit cards and passports were found in the house of the alleged ringleader of a sex trafficking gang. Photograph: Handout

# Ukraine prosecutors uncover sex trafficking ring preying on women fleeing country

Authorities arrest suspected gang leader who allegedly lured women with false job offers then forced them into prostitution.

July 7, 2022

**LORENZO TONDO**

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Investigators in Ukraine said they had foiled a criminal gang who forced women into sex work abroad after luring them with false adverts for legitimate employment.

Authorities in Kyiv arrested the suspected leader of the gang after months of surveillance resulted in them stopping a woman as she was about to cross the border. They were then able to confirm the suspect's involvement.

The 21-year-old, who has a son to support, had lost her job because of the

war and was about to cross into Hungary, travel on to Vienna and, from there, board a flight for Istanbul, where she believed a legitimate job offer waited for her.

After assisting her, prosecutors were then able to arrest a 31-year-old male suspected of being the leader of a trafficking ring. Based in the Kyiv region, the gang allegedly recruited a number of vulnerable Ukrainian women after the Russian invasion with the false prospect of a legal job, sent them to Turkey and forced them into sex work.

In the suspect's home, prosecutors found thousands of dollars in cash, credit cards, some registered in China, and a diary, seen by the Guardian, in which the suspect kept a record of the women and their activity in Turkey.

"Since the beginning of the war a lot of women in Ukraine bear financial hardship," said Oleh Tkalenko, a senior prosecutor for the Kyiv region who led the investigation. "A lot of them lost their jobs. It was very hard, especially for single mothers. In one of the towns in the

Kyiv region, a group of men organised a series of Telegram channels, called 'Meetings', 'Meet your future husband' or 'Escort service' where they recruited these women. Preying on their vulnerable situation, they were offering them jobs in Turkey."

Prosecutors said that women were offered work accompanying wealthy men to prestigious events. "When the women got there, they were involved in prostitution," said Tkalenko. "They were scammed."

In early June, investigators began tracking the movements and contacts of a man living near the capital who appeared to be the ringleader. After a few weeks, the authorities managed to trace one of his victims, a woman from Donetsk who had been living in Kyiv and was making her way to the border village of Chop, on to Hungary, then Austria where she would board the flight for Istanbul.

"With the detectives, we decided to intervene," said Tkalenko. "We stopped the woman at the border. Her vulnerable condition was clear: absence of money, a child to support, overall financial difficulties because of the war. The ringleader we were surveilling had bought her tickets, given her some money and organised her route. At that point, we arrested the man and searched his so-called 'office', where we found irrefutable evidence."

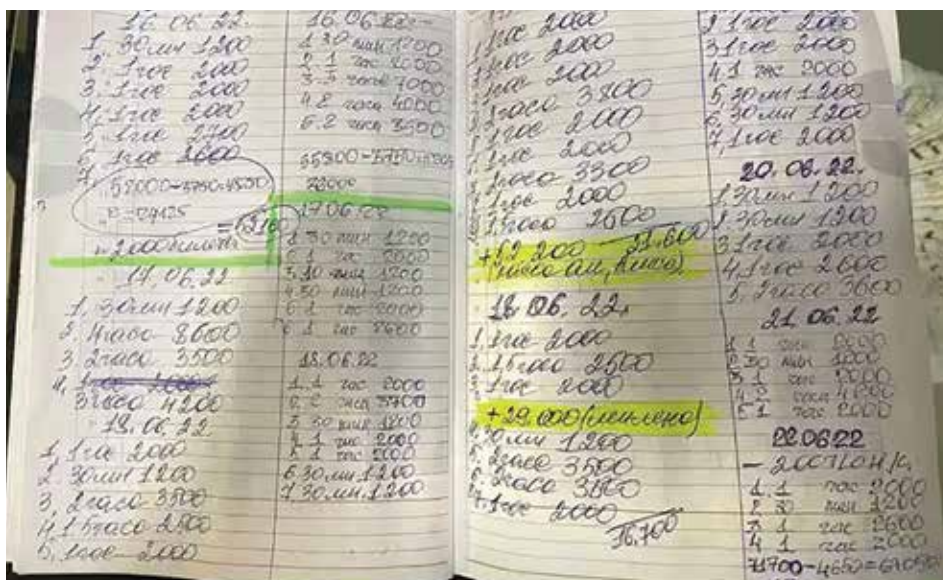
The man allegedly kept records of the women in Turkey in a notebook. Under their real names or nicknames he had listed their work days, and a price list for each service.

At the moment, prosecutors do not know how many women were forced into sex work and sent to Turkey and allegedly other countries in the EU. At least 10 women's names were listed in the ringleader's notebook.

"Men and women in Ukraine in this period can be vulnerable to labour and sexual exploitation," said Varvara Zhukhtenko, communications officer at the UN's International Organization for Migration in Ukraine. "We have a hotline that has been operating for many years to provide assistance to victims of human trafficking. Since the beginning of the war, we have cases of Ukrainian women who are looking for accommodation abroad in EU member states and they are communicating to potential hosts over the internet while they are still in Ukraine."



Senior prosecutor Oleh Tkalenko, who led the investigation into the trafficking ring. Photograph: Alessio Mamo/The Guardian



The notebook recording details of the trafficked women's activity. Photograph: Alessio Mamo

"We had a case of a flat owner living in Europe who told a woman that she could stay at his place in exchange for sex. There are also men who present themselves as travel agents and push Ukrainian women to go with them in order to leave the country, and they are insisting like this is the last chance for them to leave Ukraine, which is very suspicious."

Tkalenko said: "Based on the evidence collected, we suspect that there are more women being exploited

in Turkey at the moment. There are records in the man's notebook. We are now getting ready to cooperate with our Turkish colleagues."

Prosecutors said the woman stopped at the border is cooperating with the authorities and is prepared to testify against the gang leader and his associates.

Since the Russian invasion, human rights organisations said women and child refugees fleeing Ukraine to Poland are being targeted by suspected sex traffickers, operating alone and in gangs.



# Human traffickers luring Ukrainian refugees on the web targeted in EU-wide hackathon

On 23 May 2022, an EMPACT coordinated online joint action day targeted criminal networks grooming Ukrainian refugees for sexual and labour exploitation via websites and social media platforms.

June 23, 2022

## EUROPOL

europol.europa.eu

Law enforcement authorities from 14 EU Member States\* took part in this hackathon\*\*, coordinated by the Netherlands. The investigators monitored different online platforms to detect criminal networks attempting to recruit vulnerable Ukrainian refugees.

The online investigations focused on the monitoring of posts offering help to refugees for transportation, accommodation and work. Dating sites and recruitment websites were monitored, as well as platforms offering sexual services. The countries bordering Ukraine focused on recruitment, transportation and accommodation of refugees, while others focused on platforms offering housing and jobs to refugees. During the action day, investigators identified suspicious advertisements targeting Ukrainian refugees, looked into tips received from citizens, reviewed indicators of potential trafficking of human beings for sexual and labour exploitation and updated their situational awareness on existing online platforms linked to trafficking activities.

### Main figures

- 125 online platforms monitored in total;
- 42 online platforms suspected for links to human trafficking checked;
- 6 online platforms linked to human trafficking checked;
- 9 suspected human traffickers identified;
- 9 possible victims identified;
- 15 new investigations initiated;
- 93 officers participated;
- 351 persons/user names checked.



The monitoring activities led to the identification of new trends, and gathered insights into the threat of sexual and labour exploitation of Ukrainian refugees. Suspicious activities were detected in a wide range of platforms, including in the Russian language. Different platforms were prioritised depending on the specific social media use per country.

Many online marketplaces and websites appear to be taking significant steps to combat the misuse of their platforms for trafficking Ukrainian refugees. However, law enforcement officers found a significant number of suspicious job offers targeting Ukrainian women, some of which described as 'photo shoots'. Investigators identified attempts to lure victims through offers of a 'bright future', which tricked them into sexual exploitation, or accommodation offers specifically targeted at Ukrainian refugees.

**\*Participating countries:** Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom.

**\*\* Hackathon:** when a group of experts get together, in this case online, and work jointly focusing to find ways to solve, or to investigate the same defined problem in a limited amount of time.

Europol supported the coordination of the operational activities, facilitated the exchange of information and provided analytical support. On the action day, Europol activated a virtual command to facilitate the information exchange in real time, while a dedicated analyst cross-checked operational information against Europol's databases. This provided further investigative leads to the participating officers from involved national law enforcement authorities.





# Conflict in Ukraine: key evidence on risks of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants

The outbreak of an armed conflict raises serious concerns about human trafficking inside the affected country; and about human trafficking and migrant smuggling of people fleeing the conflict.

August 17, 2022

## UNODC RESEARCH UPDATE

[www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)

In the six months since the war broke out in Ukraine, reports have emerged of potential abusive and exploitative situations inside Ukraine, and among those fleeing to neighbouring countries.

This brief overview sets out key research findings, in order to better understand and prevent these risks. The paper has been updated in August 2022 from the original version, to take account of findings that have emerged since March 2022.

### **The conflict makes people vulnerable to trafficking inside Ukraine**

According to extensive research published by UNODC in 2018, inside a conflict-affected country, the vulnerabilities to trafficking of girls, boys, women, and men arise from the impacts of armed conflict: lack of opportunities for income generation; interruption in the provision of essential services, such as healthcare and education; issues with rule of law;

and internal displacement; as well as the risk of exploitation in armed conflict. People living in conflict zones may adopt negative coping strategies to gain access to food and other supplies, or for their own safety and security.<sup>1</sup>

The Ukrainian population prior to the outbreak of the war was 44 million people.<sup>2</sup> UN agencies (as of 17 August 2022) estimate that 17.7 million people

*continued on page 19*

are currently in need of humanitarian aid and protection assistance, including at least 2.1 million children; and 6.6 million people are internally displaced.<sup>3</sup>

The number of civilian casualties since the outbreak of the war (up to 14 August 2022) is 13,212, including 5,514 people killed (at least 2,125 men, 1,451 women, 147 girls, and 170 boys), and 7,698 injured (at least 1,560 men, 1,149 women, 164 girls, and 231 boys), according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).<sup>4</sup> Inside Ukraine, people are at risk of sex trafficking, labour trafficking, illegal adoption and exploitation in armed conflict, particularly children, minorities, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and elderly and disabled people.<sup>5</sup> Ensuring sustainable provision of humanitarian aid and access to essential services makes people more resilient to trafficking and exploitation in a conflict context.

### **Legal pathways to European countries prevent migrant smuggling**

People are fleeing Ukraine to seek international protection in neighbouring countries and further afield. As of 23 August 2022, 6.9 million people have fled Ukraine and been registered in European countries, including 2.2 million in the Russian Federation, 1.3 million in Poland, 971,000 in Germany, 413,000 in Czech Republic, 160,000 in Italy, 145,000 in Türkiye, and 133,000 in Spain.<sup>6</sup>

The United Kingdom is among the few European countries requiring entry visas from Ukrainians, and as of 16 August 2022, a total of 206,000 applications had been made to the UK's Ukraine Visa Scheme, with a total of 177,000 visas issued, and a total of 115,200 visa holders who arrived in the UK.<sup>7</sup>

Around half of those fleeing are adult women, 40 per cent are children and 10 per cent are adult men. Over 13,000 unaccompanied and separated children from Ukraine were registered in the European Union (EU) as of 6 May 2022, a sub-group of whom were orphaned due to the war, or were already orphans in institutional care.<sup>8</sup> The refugee movement has resulted in widespread family separation. According to UNHCR research in Ukraine's bordering countries, among over 23,000 refugees from Ukraine, 80 per cent had to separate from at least one immediate family member in

order to flee.<sup>9</sup> Inter-Country Adoptions from Ukraine are currently prohibited.

The activation of the 2001 European Union (EU) Temporary Protection Directive,<sup>10</sup> agreed upon by the Council of the EU on 4 March 2022 and applying to all Ukrainian nationals arriving in the EU, together with visa-free entry for Ukrainians to other European countries, significantly reduces the need for those fleeing the war to resort to migrant smugglers. As of 21 August 2022, over 4.1 million people who fled Ukraine have been registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe, comprising at least 95% Ukrainians, as well as non-Ukrainians from outside the EU (especially Moroccans, Russians and Nigerians). Just 24,500 Ukrainians have applied for international protection through the regular asylum systems.<sup>11</sup>

The "Dublin Regulation" of the EU, requiring asylum applicants to apply for international protection in the first EU country of arrival, does not apply to temporary protection of Ukrainians, and therefore it is also unlikely that smuggling of migrants is being perpetrated in the context of Ukrainians moving within the EU, from border countries to other EU Member States ("secondary movements").

The legal framework for refugees from Ukraine arriving in the EU is therefore distinct in very significant ways from the framework that applies to refugees, asylum applicants and migrants from other non-EU countries. Legal entry and legal status are an important factor of resilience to trafficking in persons.

### **But some people fleeing the country may still be at risk of trafficking in persons**

People fleeing Ukraine are vulnerable to different forms of trafficking due to the displacement context and attendant vulnerabilities during the journey and upon arrival in a country of destination. According to the EU's Common Anti-Trafficking Plan to respond to the crisis, launched on 6 May 2022, investigations have been initiated in a number of EU countries on potential cases, and the threat of trafficking in persons is considered "high and imminent."<sup>12</sup>

The risks of trafficking in persons are higher for certain groups: unaccompanied and separated children and children travelling with adults whose

relationship with the children cannot be verified; people who are unable to access temporary protection, because they are not eligible, or due to lack of information or incorrect information; non-Ukrainians, including undocumented and stateless people; Ukrainian Roma people; LGBTQI+ people; elderly people; and mentally and physically disabled people.<sup>13</sup>

Risk factors include the large numbers of unregistered volunteers offering help, and in some cases also accommodation, to people who are fleeing, a small minority of whom may intend to traffic refugees, combined with refugees' determination to travel onwards as quickly as possible.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Ukrainians can travel through Europe regularly, quickly, safely and cheaply, and access employment and social services, is a major source of resilience to trafficking in persons.<sup>15</sup> However, criminal networks operating between Ukraine and countries in Europe and Central Asia may take advantage of people separated from their support networks and with an acute need to identify alternative methods of income generation. UNODC research has found that economic need is one of the most often identified vulnerability factors for trafficking in persons.<sup>16</sup>

The forms of trafficking that refugees from Ukraine are at risk of include sexual exploitation, forced labour, illegal adoption and surrogacy, forced begging and forced criminality.<sup>17</sup> There is particular concern around the risks of online sexual exploitation and abuse, as many Ukrainians use social media (particularly Facebook, Telegram and Viber) to seek support, and sex traffickers carry out recruitment of victims and advertise exploitative services online. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) cites Thomson Reuters data indicating "huge spikes in online searches – across multiple languages and countries – for explicit content and sexual services from Ukrainian women and girls."<sup>18</sup>

In a case covered by the media in July 2022, the Ukrainian authorities investigated a suspected case of trafficking for sexual exploitation of at least ten Ukrainian women to Türkiye. The police intercepted a 21-year-old Ukrainian woman who was allegedly being trafficked for sexual exploitation in prostitution in Türkiye, via Hungary and Austria. According to a Ukrainian



prosecutor, cited in a media article: “Her vulnerable condition was clear: absence of money, a child to support, overall financial difficulties because of the war.” The investigation led to the arrest of a suspected trafficking organizer in Kyiv, Ukraine. The 30-year-old man allegedly led a group of men who moderated targeted Telegram channels entitled: Meetings; Meet your future husband; and Escort service; in order to recruit victims.<sup>19</sup>

In recent months, many people have moved on from the countries bordering Ukraine to other parts of Europe. If Ukrainians or others are trafficked en route, it is difficult for final destination countries to follow up on abuses perpetrated in origin or transit countries.

Among 5,105 people interviewed after crossing from Ukraine into Poland during the period 28 February to 4 May 2022, 48% intended to stay in Poland, while 17% intended to travel onward to Germany, with others intending to travel on to Spain, Denmark and France.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the displacement situation is highly dynamic. As of 23 August 2022, over 4.98 million people have crossed Ukraine’s western borders back into the country, for reasons including joining family, accessing economic opportunities, perception of safety in specific areas and for temporary trips.<sup>21</sup>

### AND NON-UKRAINIANS FLEEING THE COUNTRY MAY NEED TO RESORT TO MIGRANT SMUGGLING

The visa-free and temporary protection provisions do not apply to all non-Ukrainian, non-EU citizens who were residing in Ukraine at the outbreak of the war, with the exception of recognized refugees and long-term permanent residents. This means that this group (including citizens of India, Russia, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, among others <sup>22</sup>) may need migrant smuggling in order to leave Ukraine and enter another country irregularly, and are more vulnerable to trafficking in persons in this context.

Over 302,500 non-Ukrainians have fled Ukraine since the outbreak of the war.<sup>23</sup> In Poland, for example, non-Ukrainian people fleeing Ukraine who do not have an entry visa can stay regularly for up to 15 days.<sup>24</sup> While there are no

official statistics available on the number of foreign residents in Ukraine, UN sources report that as of the beginning of 2022, 470,000 non-Ukrainians were resident in the country.<sup>25</sup>

### PRIOR TO THE CONFLICT, UKRAINIANS WERE IDENTIFIED AS TRAFFICKED TO MANY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Traffickers have recruited and exploited victims in Ukraine, and Ukrainians have been recorded as trafficked both domestically and internationally for years. The UNODC Global Database on Trafficking in Persons provides evidence of Ukrainian victims being trafficked to many different countries (29 countries reported Ukrainian victims in 2018). While most Ukrainian victims were identified in neighbouring countries like the Russian Federation and Poland, others were detected in the Middle East and South Asia.

Many detected Ukrainian victims were trafficked by domestic traffickers with lower levels of organisation, while others were trafficked by complex networks of individuals spanning multiple nationalities, linking several of the countries in the region.<sup>26</sup>

Some court case proceedings make explicit mention of transnational organized criminal group structures with significant victim counts, perpetrating multiple forms of exploitation.<sup>27</sup>

While many victims were recruited in Ukraine and exploited abroad, other victims were trafficked domestically, for a range of forms of exploitation, but predominantly for the purpose of forced labour.<sup>28</sup> Many were recruited by traffickers and exploited in agriculture, stone processing, construction or similar physically demanding labour sectors.

While efforts to find a resolution to the war are ongoing, concerted and evidence-based measures by the international community, as well as by state and non-state organizations, can ensure that vulnerabilities to trafficking in Ukraine are alleviated, by ensuring access to safety and essential services. For people fleeing Ukraine and seeking safety in neighbouring countries and further afield, legal entry and legal status, as well as access to essential services, employment and education, are crucial in preventing both migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

Figure 1: Top 5 countries where Ukrainian victims of trafficking were identified 2017 – 2020 (total: 2,437)

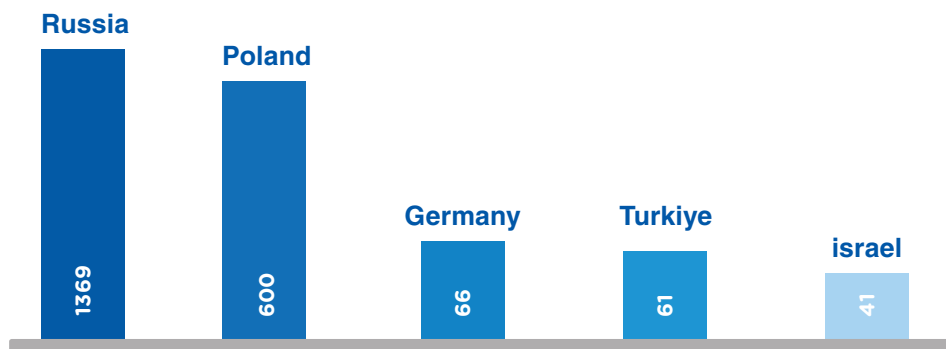
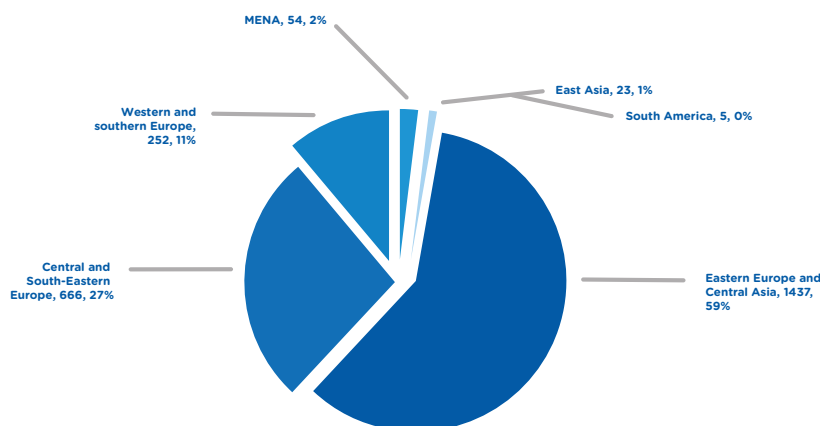


Figure 2: Regions of destination for Ukrainian victims of trafficking 2017 – 2020 (total: 2,437) \*

\*Data for 2020 are still partial; figures below five are presented as five for privacy reasons.



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# 20 countries spin a web to catch human traffickers during a hackathon

Working together, 85 investigators from across the EU checked 114 platforms for human trafficking activities.

September 21, 2022

## EUROPOL

[europol.europa.eu](https://europol.europa.eu)

On 6 September 2022, an EMPACT joint action day, coordinated by the Netherlands, targeted criminal networks using websites and social media platforms to recruit victims for sexual exploitation. This first online, EU-wide hackathon against trafficking in human beings, supported by Europol and Eurojust, involved law enforcement authorities from 20 countries.\* The action day brought together 85 experts from different EU law enforcement authorities at the Dutch Police Academy in Apeldoorn. They focused on combating criminal networks that use social media, the surface web and the dark web to conduct human trafficking. Compared to other crime areas, such as drug trafficking or trafficking of weapons, it is more challenging to identify the indicators of trafficking in human beings in an online environment. This joint action day gathered criminal intelligence to determine these indicators as part of the fight against criminal networks using the online environment to exploit the most vulnerable people. In particular, the investigators targeted human traffickers attempting to lure Ukrainian refugees.

The internet and human trafficking are interlinked. Many social media platforms, dating apps and private groups online are being 'hijacked' by individuals involved in human trafficking for sexual or labour exploitation. These individuals are trying to mislead law enforcement and avoid detection. The joint efforts of law enforcement in the monitoring of platforms which may offer sexual services, recruitment, and the harbouring

or transportation of victims increases the intelligence picture. The international cooperation, exchange of knowledge, expertise and technology, served the better mapping out of this criminal landscape and served new investigations.

### Main figures:

- 114 online platforms monitored in total, of which 30 were related to vulnerable Ukrainian refugees;
- 53 online platforms suspected of links to human trafficking checked, of which 10 were related to vulnerable Ukrainian refugees;
- Five online platforms linked to human trafficking checked, of which four were related to child sexual exploitation on the dark web;
- 11 suspected human traffickers identified, 5 of whom were linked to trafficking of human beings, and specifically to vulnerable Ukrainian citizens;
- 45 possible victims identified, 25 of whom were of Ukrainian nationality;
- 20 platforms with possible links to trafficking of human beings identified for further investigation and monitoring;
- 80 persons/user names checked, out of which 30 were related to possible exploitation of vulnerable Ukrainian citizens.

Although the actions focused mainly on trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, the officers also looked for leads to identify other forms of exploitation, including labour exploitation.

The investigators managed to explore a wide range of websites and other online platforms for trafficking in human beings and other criminal activities. These platforms include social media, dating platforms, advertising and aid platforms, forums and messaging applications. Investigators also checked platforms on the dark web in relation to trafficking in human beings and child sexual exploitation online.

**\*Participating countries: Austria, Albania, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Ukraine**

**Hackathon: when a group of experts get together and focus on finding ways to solve, or to investigate, the same problem in a limited amount of time.**

Europol supported the coordination of the operational activities, facilitated the exchange of information and provided analytical support. On the action day, Europol deployed two experts to the coordination centre to facilitate the information exchange in real time and crosscheck operational information against Europol's databases. This provided further investigative leads to the participating officers from involved national law enforcement authorities.

# Russia's war on Ukraine has increased human trafficking across the war-torn region, humanitarians say

More than six months into Russian President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked war on Ukraine, the region has become ripe for human trafficking.

September 5, 2022

**TAIYLER SIMONE MITCHELL**

businessinsider.com

- **Russia's war in Ukraine has grown the booming human trafficking industry.**
- **Ukrainian refugees are especially vulnerable as they seek shelter and safety.**
- **While reporting has increased, it's also impossible to track to its full extent.**

Of the estimated 12 million people who fled Ukraine when Russia invaded in February, 90% are women or children – the primary targets for trafficking.

"Out of all the violence against women and girls that exist around the world, the little that we actually know about is truly the tip of the iceberg," Mendy Marsh, a humanitarian aid worker, told Insider.

The number of people impacted by trafficking is suspected to be expanding rapidly throughout Europe, two humanitarian sources at VOICE Amplified told Insider.

"Trafficking – including trafficking for sexual exploitation – was an entrenched reality in the region before the war," said Marsh, Co-Founder and Executive Director of VOICE told Insider, "so that reality gets exacerbated."

The international organization "supports women- and girl-led organizations, networks, and movements working to dismantle the hierarchical, colonial, racist, and unequal practices and structures of the aid industry," according to its website.

The trafficking emergency comes alongside another crisis: an increasing number of women reporting that Russian troops have been using sexual violence as a weapon throughout Ukraine. While reporting has increased, it's also impossible to track to its full extent, Marsh told Insider.

Marsh said refugees who moved to border countries – Moldova, Poland, Romania, Belarus, Hungary, and Slovakia – are vulnerable to trafficking, not just those individuals moving around in Ukraine.

"And then you have more people because there's so much fluidity in the region, lots of people can get to it, honestly," Marsh continued, pointing to volunteers from across the globe who have come at a time when the country needs aid.

"And so that all creates this unfortunate storm for increased sexual exploitation and risk related to trafficking and forced labor," Marsh added.

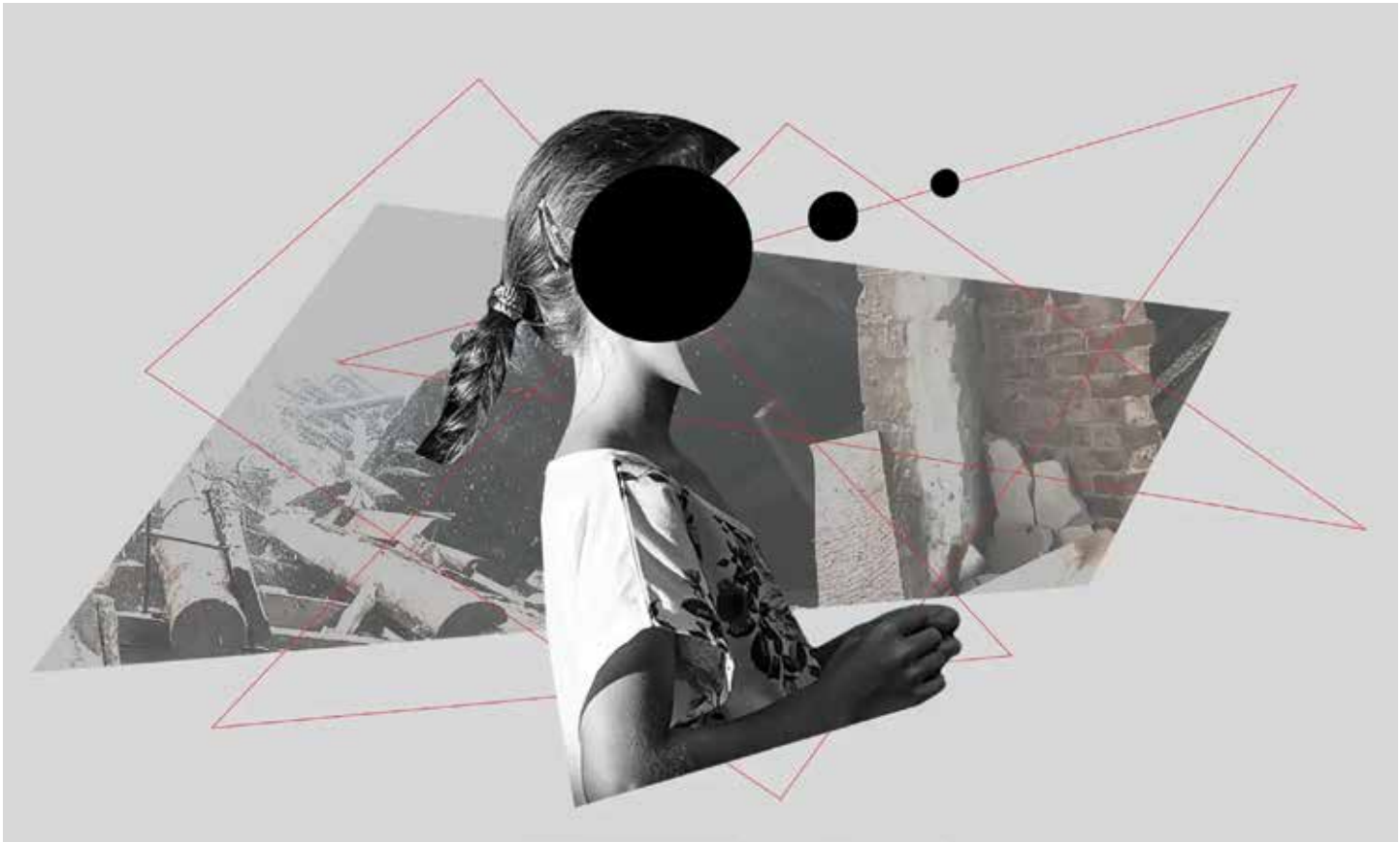
Yana Tovpeko, Women's Rights Ukraine Crisis Response team member at VOICE and a Ukrainian advocate, told Insider that while it's nearly impossible to track the full extent to which people are lured into labor exploitation, the organization has received an increase in reports.

"Often people are just trying to get through their day-to-day reality," Marsh said, which is why some people may not report forced labor – and why numbers on the issue are hard to come by.

This day-to-day reality can include searching for necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, work, and education.

"Often you speak to women who are fleeing conflicts and situations of violence and often last thing they're going





Sofia Bobok/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images; Metin Aktas/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images; Rebecca Zisser/Insider

to prioritize is that, they're going to be focused on, 'Are my children safe? Do I have this for my children?'" Marsh added.

In some instances, abuse is the unfortunate price to pay for survival. Reporting it to authorities could result in the loss of housing or other necessities, Marsh said.

"When a woman with a little child just crossed the border, and there are people who offer transportation who offer housing, there is a space for people with not good intentions here. And as it always happens during the armed conflict, the violence raises. And the biggest target

are vulnerable women from the Roma community, LGBTQIA women," Tovpeko told Insider.

Human trafficking is a \$150 billion business that often operates in plain sight – touching on banking, hotel, and healthcare industries. And with traffickers using social media as a recruiting tool, the threat is present in many people's realities.

Roughly 40% of sex trafficking victims have been recruited through online means, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported in 2021.

Traffickers, for example, can social media to monitor victims or potential

victims. They can also lure victims by creating foster predatory relationships or posting about fake job opportunities.

"In the humanitarian world, you often will hear people say, 'Oh, we're prioritizing life-saving needs. And they identify life-saving as access to water and sanitation, access to food, access to education,'" Marsh told Insider.

"All of that is life-saving, for sure. But if you ask a woman or girl, not being sexually assaulted is life-saving for them. And so working on violence against women and girls has to be prioritized at the same level," she added.



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The Russians sent Oleksandr to “the pit” twice and searched his house four times

# Ukraine war: A village celebrates Russian retreat

A Christmas tree wrapped in suspicious looking wires grows on the lawn near an abandoned village building. It is dangerous to go closer – you can come across a mine anywhere here. So we look through our camera lenses.

September 20, 2022

## OLEG KARPYAK

BBC News, Velyki Prohody near Kharkiv

False alarm. The wires are not explosives, but the remains of New Year decorations which had not been removed before the Russian invasion on February 24. We are in the village of Velyki Prohody near the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, 10 kilometres from the Russian border. Over the past weeks, the Ukrainian army, in a rapid offensive, liberated dozens of villages like this one.

But the Russian army has left its mark. On the wall behind the Christmas tree, a large white letter “Z” is visible.

The sign is everywhere: on old cars, farm equipment, fences, on the walls of gutted houses. Some, though, have now been painted over with fresh paint.

In some streets, there is not one single surviving house. There are burnt cars along the roads. A battered armoured vehicle, is rusting in the bushes. Its caterpillar track, placed near the edge of the road, now serves as a speed limiter in front of the checkpoint.

Oleksandr is a pensioner, and a former electrician and mechanic.

“Of course, I’m glad that the village has been liberated. I was a partisan here for six months,” he says proudly. “Every day was a war for me. My personal war.”

He stole ammunition from Russian soldiers, put bars of soap into their fuel tanks, and drained diesel from their vehicles.

He suspects that one of the neighbours reported his activities, because he was subjected to regular searches of his house, and twice he was put into “the pit”. This was a dark



basement in the nearby village of Mali Prohody, which served as a prison. He was taken there with a sack on his head.

"I learned that basement inside out," he says. "I could distinguish people by only their voices. The floor was wet. Nothing to lie on. A few torn tyres, nothing else."

He says his Russian captors did not seem to care about the conditions in which he was kept. They would bring him food that had gone off. Conditions were overcrowded.

"You ask them: 'Give me some toilet paper,'" he says. "You hear the answer: 'I'll punch you in the face right now.'"

Oleksandr's wife, Lyubov agrees. "They never address you in a polite way, no matter how old you are."

She was also detained by the Russians, not in the basement but in the premises of an abandoned store.

"Eighteen men in a room and I'm the only woman. Can you imagine? I'm 64 years old. No washing, nothing. It's terrible," says Lyubov.

She says she was not tortured or interrogated. But she heard screams through the walls - someone she believes was being electrocuted: "At first we thought they were torturing a child, because a young voice was screaming. It turned out that it was a woman."

Other residents of the village also speak about detentions, abuse and forced labour.

We did not find evidence that any civilians were killed here. However, the military showed us the place where Russian soldiers threw the bodies of three Ukrainian soldiers who died in battles at the beginning of the war. They were left lying on a pile of rubbish among some bushes.

Ukraine says their bodies will be taken for examination and buried with military honours.

We see the village council building, where Russian soldiers and officers lived. Judging by the hand-made plaques on the doors, this building served as a military hospital with an isolation room and other wards. An icon of St. Nicholas, Russia's most beloved saint, is hanging on the wall.

There are also two children's drawings. One of them features a red flower and a heart surrounded by five-pointed stars and the letter Z. The other portrays the figure of a girl in headphones, standing on a rainbow,



Over a hundred people live in the village. The inscription on the gate says "People live here"



Mines found in both intact and destroyed houses



A child's drawing on the wall of the village council

facing the sun, and holding two red hearts in her hands. A grey letter Z is hesitantly drawn in the corner.

"Thin, small, just a kid"

Their village may be largely in ruins, but Oleksandr and Lyubov radiate joy.

"Now I have nothing to fear. And I am not a chicken-hearted type. I've become even more confident in myself. Had I been younger, I would have gone to the fighting with you," Oleksandr brags to some Ukrainian soldiers.

I ask how his experiences have changed him.

"I don't even know what to say to you. The hatred for these creatures has increased," he says in Russian.

Yet immediately he adds: "But I know that there are decent guys, decent Russians. Of different ages. And they don't want this war. They don't want to shoot."

Oleksandr says that although most Russians in their village behaved extremely rudely and cruelly, some of them were compassionate.

The soldier who guarded him during his first arrest called him by the informal nickname "Uncle Sasha", and told him: "You are older than my father. Forgive me for what is happening."

Lyubov has similar conflicted views. She has just called the Russian army "cattle" and said that "they bark at everything."

But suddenly she remembers an encounter with a Russian soldier that makes her face light up: "I have a grandson who is 26 years old. And this one [a soldier] was very young, younger than my grandson. He stands in front of me, thin, small, just a kid. He stands and says: "Oh, a plum. He has never seen a plum."

Of the several dozens of farmers who survived the occupation in Velyki Prohody, there are mainly elderly people. There are no children on the streets. No one is hurrying to return to the village.

A wire is stretched at the roadside, hinting at the dangers of leaving the path. The Ukrainian military says mines can be found anywhere here - in the grass, in the bushes, in both destroyed and intact houses.

One of the explosives experts accompanying us pulls a rectangular, bent, sand-coloured box on thin legs from the boot of his car. It is a MON-50 anti-personnel mine that he found in the grass near the village council. Such mines are prohibited by an international convention - although Russia has not signed up to it.

"Imagine, this land is still full of shells from the Second World War," he says.

As we speak, muffled explosions are heard over the horizon. There is still a lot of work to be done, and it is going on.

# The war in Ukraine raises the risk of modern slavery

Be aware of red flags for modern slavery risk, following the UN's International Organization for Migration's warning relating to the war in Ukraine.

June 10, 2022

## ROSS ARCHER

fm-magazine.com

### Global economy and markets

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine has had multiple impacts for businesses. One that has not been at the forefront but is looming is the heightened risk of modern slavery resulting from the conflict.

Modern slavery is the extreme exploitation of other people for personal or commercial gain. Victims are forced into working for little or no pay and with no choice in how, where, or when they work. Modern slavery can take many forms, including child labour, human trafficking, forced labour, and bonded labour.

The UN and other bodies are already warning of modern slavery risks associated with the war in Ukraine, and initial reports from within and outside Ukraine indicate human traffickers have begun exploiting people displaced by the war, the UN's International Organization for Migration reported.

Accountants and finance professionals may not directly encounter modern slavery, but they play a key role in stopping and preventing modern slavery within their organisation and supply chains. They are well placed to identify the risks and red flags associated with this crime.

### How to fortify against risk in the supply chain

Having the right processes in place and asking the right questions are crucial in managing the risk of modern slavery in the supply chain.

One of the first risk management steps is to ensure you know your supply chain from origin to distribution. Establish a detailed map that looks at every

component and organisation involved in the supply chain and conduct increased due diligence in spots where greater risk resides.

Another step is to ensure your company has a code of conduct for suppliers that covers modern slavery and establishes clear expectations of how to comply with it.

Thirdly, internal controls to spot money laundering can inform measures a business can take to check for human trafficking and modern slavery. These internal controls can include ensuring good risk assessment processes are in place to spot this activity or suspicions of this activity; ensuring staff — particularly the finance team — are trained in this area to spot the risks and how to report suspicions; and ensuring there are clear responsibility lines for compliance and good records are kept when this activity is found or suspected.

### Red flags of modern slavery risk

Many previous wars and conflicts have led to a rise in human trafficking. For example, a few years after the war in Syria started, the number of identified human trafficking victims from Syria located in Turkey, the Middle East, and Europe rapidly increased, according to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The UK's National Crime Agency investigates crime in the UK and across borders, including organised crime, cybercrime, and economic crime. It warns in its guidelines for the accountancy sector to look out for red flags when interacting with clients, other businesses, or their supply chains.

### These include:

- Cash-based businesses. These include car washes, cleaning companies, nail bars, and agriculture businesses, which are easier for criminals to exploit because cash is harder to trace.
- Where business output is not proportionate to size and staffing. Exploitation may be taking place within a business's labour force when the volume of production does not seem right given the size of the business.
- A business on the brink of insolvency. Companies at financial risk are vulnerable to manipulation by traffickers.
- A lack of investment in the business. Investors tend to have controls and processes in place to detect criminal activity during due diligence.
- Unnecessary use of an accountant or use of an accountant not registered with a professional body. A business that uses an unregistered accountant or insists on using an accountant for a transaction or activity that does not normally require one could be trying to use the accountant's knowledge to hide criminal activity.
- Diverse business portfolio in high-risk industries. Be wary of client companies or suppliers with a portfolio of businesses or business interests in industries that are typically cash-based and therefore at high risk of modern slavery, such as construction, agriculture, high-cash generating personal services (for example, spas, massage parlours, and restaurants), cleaning, maintenance, and transportation.





- Unclear ownership and source of wealth. Beware when it is unclear who the owner of the business is and where money comes from or is directly going to, and when unusually complex business structures are in place. It must be clear whom you are doing business with to do adequate due diligence.
- Lack of audit and anti-money-laundering compliance. Businesses that do not claim an audit exemption even though they appear to meet the criteria may be trying to avoid having to provide misleading financial information to hide criminal activity. If found out later, the false reporting could lead to severe repercussions.
- Unusual payment systems and flows. These include cash transfers to high-risk countries, payments and income received at times of the day that are unusual for the sector, and payments diverted through different countries before reaching their destination.

**A high-risk workforce profile.** Risk factors for modern slavery include low-paid manual labour, irregular hours of work with all staff getting paid the same, lower national insurance contributions than expected, and unexplained lack of staff costs.

### Disclosure efforts to counter modern slavery

Lawmakers worldwide have begun to ask businesses to report on efforts they are taking to help prevent and stop modern slavery in their supply chains.

Among the disclosure laws that have taken effect are the UK Modern Slavery Act, the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act and the Dodd-Frank conflict mineral rule in the US, and the Australian Modern Slavery Act.

Companies with annual revenue exceeding a certain threshold (£36 million in the UK, \$100 million in California, and AUD 100 million in Australia) are affected, but compliance can be patchy. For example, only one-third of statements filed under the UK Modern Slavery Act mandate were clear and easy to read and 12% of companies failed to provide a statement, according to a 2022 UK regulatory report.

Also, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights set guidelines for businesses and UN member countries to prevent and address human rights abuses committed in business operations.

The EU does not yet have disclosure legislation, but in February 2022, the European Commission published its long-awaited proposal for a Directive on

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence. The directive sets mandatory human rights' supply chain due diligence rules for large companies headquartered or operating in the EU.

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'We are determined to anchor Moldova in the free world:' Moldova's Prime Minister on joining the EU

# Millions of women and children have fled the war in Ukraine. Traffickers are waiting to prey on them

There was nothing obviously untoward about the woman who approached the Palanca border crossing between Ukraine and Moldova with a 15-year-old boy she said was her nephew. But something about the pair just seemed odd. The boy, in particular, appeared embarrassed and uncomfortable.

August 1, 2022

**IVANA KOTTASOVÁ AND ANA SÂRBU**

CNN, cnn.com

There was nothing obviously untoward about the woman who approached the Palanca border crossing between Ukraine and Moldova with a 15-year-old boy she said was her nephew. But something about the pair just seemed odd. The boy, in particular, appeared embarrassed and uncomfortable.

Suspicious, border officials started asking questions, bringing in social workers and psychologists. "We saw something was not okay, but didn't know

what. So we interviewed them separately," the psychologist who helped conduct the interview told CNN.

It turned out their story was a lie. The woman was a stranger who had promised the boy a lucrative job in Cyprus – a chance to "be a man" and support his family living in Ukraine.

All he had to do was pretend to be her nephew, give her his passport and help her write a fake parental consent letter, he told the officials.

"We found his mother and called her, and she was crying and said she did not write any declaration and had no idea about this, it was terrible," the psychologist said. CNN is not using their name for security reasons.

The incident was referred to Moldovan law enforcement for an investigation, the psychologist added. The border authorities did not respond to CNN's request for more information about the case.

Authorities in the region and international organizations have warned that the number of women and children at risk of human trafficking has skyrocketed because of the war in Ukraine. While the boy at the Palanca crossing was reunited with his family – his mom came to the border to pick him up – many others may not be so fortunate.

CNN has spoken this month to a number of organizations involved in the humanitarian response to the crisis. All had examples of suspicious behaviour targeting refugees, especially women – including a man who sought to lure away 10 pregnant women with a bogus offer of housing.

Another woman, Ludmila, who ended up in Moldova after escaping an abusive relationship in Ukraine as the war began, told CNN that her three children had been put at risk in what should have been a sanctuary. They were offered alcohol and worked for strangers, she said, before she managed to find a place in a shelter for vulnerable women in Chisinau, the Moldovan capital.

When Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to attack Ukraine in late February, volunteers from across Europe rushed to the Ukrainian borders to offer help to those fleeing the violence. But so did people looking to exploit the situation.

Pramila Patten, the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, warned last month that the humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's war in Ukraine was "rapidly turning into a human trafficking one in which women and children are being exploited."

More than 5.9 million people have fled Ukraine since the start of the war, according to the UN's refugee agency. The vast majority are women and children, many of them very vulnerable.

"And the longer the crisis goes on, the more desperate people get," said Mendy Marsh, co-founder and executive director of VOICE, a non-profit focused on ending violence against women and girls in conflict, crisis, and disaster settings.

"In the beginning of a crisis, you have people who are the most mobile, who have the best connections, maybe a family to get to in Poland or other places in the region. As the crisis goes on longer and longer, there are fewer people who have those connections," she said, and many are poorer. "Some people have



**Ukrainian refugees are seen waiting to cross the border at the Palanca crossing between Ukraine and Moldova, on April 9, 2022.**



**The women of Memoria, a rehabilitation center for victims of violence in Chisinau, have been handling dozens of extra cases each day.**

had to move inside of Ukraine and then maybe they're moving again."

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says its anti-trafficking advice hotline in Ukraine has received almost 19,000 calls since the war began – twice the monthly average. "We know that these evil predators are using every trick in the book to dupe confused, vulnerable people with promises of a safe onwards journey," IOM spokesman Joe Lowry told CNN.

### **Traffickers' tactics 'getting better'**

It's not a new problem – some of the countries Ukrainian refugees are fleeing to, including Moldova, have long-term problems with human trafficking. Moldova has received 570,000 refugees from the war in Ukraine, with about 88,000 still in the country, according to UNICEF, the UN children's agency.

A 2021 US State Department report into the issue said Moldova still doesn't meet the minimum policy standards



**Border official Anton Zagore said every child traveling on their own or with a stranger is referred to social services to prevent trafficking.**

needed for the elimination of trafficking – despite making "significant efforts" to do so in recent years.

The war has amplified the risks. "Trafficking was entrenched in the region before the war and traffickers are not going away because of a conflict or crisis, they're actually getting better in their tactics," Marsh said.

Money is a key issue, according to the State Department report. Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe and resources are limited.

"Moldova already had a serious issue with social services, protection services" for children, victims of domestic abuse and those suffering gender-based violence, said Ilija Talev, UNICEF's deputy representative in Moldova. "The crisis added to the issue and it also made the response more expensive."

One organization that took on new responsibilities as the refugee crisis

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ballooned in Moldova is Memoria, a Chisinau-based rehabilitation center for victims of torture, violence and other inhuman or degrading treatment. The center offers medical assistance, psychological therapy, counseling, material help and information and advice.

A team of nine women – all of the employees there are women – used to see five to six clients a day before the war. These days, Memoria might need to assist as many as 80 – the majority of them from Ukraine. The group has encountered new issues, while also trying to keep focused on its core clients: Moldovan victims of violence and trafficking.

The center's assistant project manager Andriana Zaslavet said money is tight and the group is struggling to hire more experts. As in other conflicts, foreign donations often target big, international organizations rather than local groups. Yet it is precisely groups like Zaslavet's that can offer personalized help because of their local expertise. This extends to educating refugees about the risks of trafficking.

"I had a [client] who is divorced with two little children, she is young and beautiful and she got a contact for someone in France who was supposedly providing support for refugees," Zaslavet said.

"She contacted him on WhatsApp and he began to ask for photos and was sending her compliments and began to be very insistent that she comes to France, offering money and support if she did, and she became very uncomfortable," Zaslavet said. In the end, the woman did go to France, but to a different place, where she felt safe, she added.

### Dubious offers of help

Yana Tovpeko, who is part of VOICE's Ukraine response team, recalled cases of people coming to refugee shelters offering dubious work opportunities or transport to other countries.

"Many people try to help, some are volunteers, some are just random people offering a ride and that can be a problem," she said. "A woman with heavy luggage, with children, needs help; if somebody offers transport, it can be a potentially dangerous situation."

Tovpeko said VOICE had come across a number of examples of suspicious behaviour. There was the



**Ludmila has managed to leave her violent husband - her future is uncertain because of the war.**



**Natasha and her son have found refuge in Moldova.**

man who came into one shelter offering housing for 10 pregnant women. When social workers accompanied the women who wanted to stay with him to the accommodation, it turned out to be a scam – there were no supplies and almost no equipment.

"Ukrainian refugees constantly look for job opportunities, for more permanent, more stable housing opportunities and there are many suspicious offers," Tovpeko said. "Many women are staying in unofficial shelters, private homes and private hotels ... we met with women who were forced to wash dishes seven days per week.

"And when we talked to them, it's been two months, they were staying at this private place, without any weekend, any time off and they were happy about the conditions and didn't complain, but when you analyze this situation, it seems like it is a forced labor," she said.

Talev, of UNICEF, said many refugees are at their most vulnerable – and most at risk of being exploited – immediately after crossing the border.

"[They] need to deal with that initial shock of what is happening in this moment: 'I am a refugee.' I think the first time that really hits them is when they cross the border, and they separate from whoever left them on the other side, it's usually a husband or father or brother," he said, adding that this initial shock is why UNICEF and other aid organizations tend to concentrate their forces near the border.

Officials at the border crossing in Palanca are well aware of the risk. Anton Zagore, the deputy head of the East Directorate of the Moldovan border police, said his team had come across numerous cases of minors traveling on their own or with people who were not their parents.





**An Ukrainian mother and her daughters are seen waiting for a bus at a transit point for refugees in Palanca, south Moldova.**

While most cases are not nefarious – kids might be traveling to safety with relatives or family friends – officials are required to refer each case to specially trained social workers, because of the risk of trafficking.

On the day of the invasion, Zagore remembers hearing loud bangs from explosions across the border. And then the crowds came – thousands of people, many with no documents, he said. The line of cars waiting to cross the border was as long as 20 kilometres (12 miles), according to the border police.

“We have protocols to follow when ... a minor is traveling with a stranger – we bring in social workers and our partners. We have many minors coming through – every day, even now, maybe four or five kids, mostly [teenagers] traveling on their own,” he said.

### **New beginnings**

When help is not available, the consequences can be dire. Other times, that help comes just in time.

Ludmila, a 35-year-old mother-of-three from Izmail in southwestern Ukraine, was in an abusive relationship for more than a decade. Ludmila is not her real name – she is so scared of her husband and his family, she asked CNN to use a pseudonym.

She said her husband, an alcoholic, beat her and their children. Everybody in their village knew, as did her family, she said. But nobody helped. Sometimes people asked why she didn’t leave – but that was impossible, she said, with no money, three children and a controlling husband.

The war gave her an opportunity finally to escape. Since Ukrainian law currently prevents men aged 18 to 60

from leaving the country, her husband was forced to stay behind. Ludmila and her two sons, age 17 and 15, and her 9-year-old daughter walked all day to get to the border with Moldova.

They ended up in a small village living with relatives of her husband. It wasn’t the safe haven she imagined. The kids worked for strangers in the village to make money and were regularly offered alcohol, she said.

She got sick and, after months of suffering physically and mentally, turned to local authorities for help and was offered a place with her children in a shelter for vulnerable women in Chisinau. Now, she and her children have access to therapy and other resources and are slowly rebuilding their lives. “Strangers here treat me better and offer me more respect than my husband,” she told CNN, nervously clutching her fists and struggling to maintain eye contact.

Ludmila’s neighbor in the shelter, Natasha, who asked for her last name not to be published for safety reasons, had spent the past nine years in Burundi. She was trafficked there by a man she trusted who offered a lucrative business opportunity. All she had to do was travel to the African country and help him set up a gaming business there, she recounted. He promised to pay \$1,500 a month – big money for Natasha, whose mother was ill and needed care.

Things didn’t go the way she imagined. The business plan fell through and the man quickly abandoned her, she said. She was stuck in a foreign country, with no money and no way to go back. She worked in low paid jobs, lived in unsafe accommodation and later gave

birth to a boy whose father turned out to be abusive and violent. He threatened to kill her if she left, Natasha said.

Last month, six years after the birth of her son, she finally managed to escape, with the help of a UN-affiliated NGO. She was going home – except she wasn’t. A war is raging in her home country of Ukraine.

Like Ludmila, Natasha and her son found refuge in Moldova. The little boy is full of energy, doing cartwheels mid-sentence and running around with the other kids living in the shelter. He proudly informs everyone he meets that he is Ukrainian – despite never having set foot in the country.

Natasha says he is very excited about the prospect of going “home.” The biggest draw? Something he’s never experienced in Burundi: Snow. “He wants to see the winter and snowflakes and to wear gloves. He keeps asking when will it get cold.”

The boy will have to wait a few months to get his first taste of a European winter, but it may be even longer before it’s safe to go to Ukraine.

Ludmila has a different dream. “I want to start from the beginning and have a new life. I don’t want to go back to my husband. If I can find work here, I would like to stay here,” she said, adding that her children are also getting therapy, slowly working through the trauma they’ve experienced.

“I’d like to find a place where I can cook for them, all the dishes they’d like, borscht of course, they ask about that all the time,” she said tearfully. “I really wish that would happen. I believe in God, I believe in miracles.”



IOM Moldova training on the identification, assistance, and referral of victims and presumed victims of trafficking in human beings organized by IOM. ©IOM

# Ukraine response: counter trafficking

Trafficking was already a phenomenon of concern in Ukraine and surrounding countries prior to the invasion of country by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022.

July - September, 2022

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

[iom.int](http://iom.int)

### OVERVIEW

There is broad consensus that crisis situations exacerbate the risk of human trafficking and may give rise to new trends in trafficking as opportunists seek to exploit vulnerabilities of people impacted by instability and displacement. Trafficking was already a phenomenon of concern in Ukraine and surrounding countries prior to the invasion of country by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is deeply concerned about the reported increase in human trafficking and exploitation. The majority of those fleeing Ukraine since the start of the crisis are women and children. In addition to human trafficking, key protection concerns include family separation, exposure to violence, exploitation and abuse, and subjection to trauma, gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation.

### 1. DIRECT ASSISTANCE

To ensure needs are addressed and people have access to timely and quality care, IOM offers comprehensive direct assistance packages to victims of trafficking in collaboration with our partners. During the reporting period, the following assistance was provided by IOM Country Offices:

#### IOM Poland

Since March 2022, conducts vulnerability screening for Ukrainian and third country nationals fleeing Ukraine. Based on the screenings, IOM referred three suspected trafficking cases to Border Guards and law enforcement.

#### IOM Belarus

IOM has been delivering vulnerability screenings, identification, and referral of protection cases, including victims of trafficking, to national support services. As of September, the needs of 1,141

Ukrainian refugees were assessed across Belarus. In order to protect the vulnerable refugees from ending up in an exploitative situation, IOM Belarus supported 97 Ukraine refugees into employment in Belarus, through established referral pathways. Assistance included micro-business / entrepreneurship courses, payment of special employment permits, legal aid and notary certified translation.

#### IOM Moldova

Two Mobile Teams (MTs) supported by its Implementing Partners, IOM are raising awareness on the risk of human trafficking, informing people on IOM support services available. Additionally, MTs are providing direct social and legal assistance to people in need. To date, IOM Moldova's MT's have reached 1,907 people, while IOM Moldova Implementing Partners have reached 2,295 people. Since the beginning of the crisis, the IOM

Moldova Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) team assisted 616 third country nationals by offering them accommodation, food, pocket money, and a safe return ticket to their home countries.

### IOM Slovakia

IOM continues to provide legal, labour and social counselling, support to education, language courses and cultural orientation support to Ukrainians in Slovakia through its Migration Information Centre, to reduce trafficking risks of vulnerable people. Since February there have been 8,114 consultations, out of them 4,431 to people from Ukraine and 3,683 to third country nationals. As part of this exercise, IOM Slovakia distributed leaflets with hotline numbers for victims of trafficking and operated a helpline to support victims navigating through the national referral systems.

### IOM Ukraine

IOM has identified and assisted 26 trafficking survivors, 10 victims of exploitation and 70 people at high risk of being trafficked or exploited. Since February 2022, a total of 61 trafficking survivors, 47 victims of exploitation and 104 people at high risk of being trafficked or exploited were assisted by IOM in Ukraine. Beneficiaries received individual-based assistance, which included psychological, medical, legal, family and housing support, as well as income-generating equipment.

Between July and September 2022, the 527 National Counter-Trafficking and Migrant Advice Hotline, supported by IOM Ukraine, has provided 36,757 consultations in response to 9,814 calls received.

### IOM Czech Republic

Since May 2022, runs an information hotline that provides legal counselling and support to potential victims of trafficking and exploitation, in Ukrainian, Czech, English and Russian. Until September 21, IOM provided information to 1,036 beneficiaries from Ukraine within 561 incoming calls and 508 outbound calls. The questions asked by beneficiaries are mainly related to residence permit (28%), labour law (14%), referrals to services (11%), accommodation (6%), schooling (4%) and others specific requests (37%). Since March 2022, IOM Czech Republic provided support to 49 protection cases through personal counselling.



Senior prosecutor Oleh Tkachenko, who led the investigation into the trafficking ring. Photograph: Alessio Mamo/The Guardian



Counter trafficking social media post.

## 2. THEMATIC GUIDANCE

IOM provides thematic guidance to various stakeholders, including by establishing standards on counter trafficking approaches, and providing technical support to Member States in developing their own policies and guidelines, in adherence with appropriate international legal frameworks and standards. During the reporting period the following initiative was implemented:

### IOM Moldova

IOM shared inputs with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the National Agency for Social Assistance representatives on the Action Plan (2022-2024), related to the National Referral Mechanism program creation and development, meant to protect, and assist victims of crimes during 2022-2026.

### IOM Poland

IOM, as part of the inter-ministerial working group on counter trafficking, provided inputs to a number of working documents, with the aim to support the Polish National Referral Mechanism.

### IOM Ukraine

IOM provided inputs and comments to the first draft Implementation Plan of the Framework of Cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations on the Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, including trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

### IOM Czech Republic

IOM took a active part in regular meetings of the counter trafficking National Referral Mechanism.

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### 3. CONVENING & DIALOGUE

IOM works in partnership with governments, the United Nations system, international and non-governmental organizations, civil society actors, the private sector and development partners on all aspects of counter trafficking responses – prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. As part of this approach, the following initiatives took place during the reporting period:

#### IOM Hungary

IOM is organising, in coordination with UNHCR, a thematic session on trafficking within the framework of the Protection Working Group and is planning a series of workshops on labour exploitation with relevant national stakeholders. Stakeholders will include governmental institutions, as well as non-governmental organisations and UN agencies.

#### IOM Poland

IOM co-leads and convenes the national Counter Trafficking working group with La Strada Foundation. The working group is held simultaneously in Polish and English and aims to bring together governmental, international, and civil society actors active in the field of counter-trafficking to share trends, best practices and sectoral knowledge.

#### IOM Belarus

IOM takes part in the bi-weekly meetings of the UN Belarus Refugee Coordination Forum. While the group is chaired by UNHCR, IOM and other UN agencies, the Belarusian Red Cross and the Ministry of Interior participate as members. The Working Group serves as a platform for coordination of the Ukraine response and knowledge sharing, including on counter-trafficking initiatives.

#### IOM Moldova

IOM's fruitful cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs resulted in signing of a Memorandum of Understanding which constitutes a major step in the renovation of the Centre for Prevention and Combating Domestic and Gender-Based Violence in Moldova. This action contributes to upholding the rights of victims of trafficking and gender-based violence in the Republic of Moldova.

On 14 July and on 12 August, IOM Moldova Protection Unit co-chaired, together with the State Chancellery and UNHCR, meetings of the National



**Memorandum signing with Lars Johan Lonnback, IOM Moldova Chief of Mission, and Ana Revenco, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova/ Chisinau ©IOM**

Counter-Trafficking Task Force operating under the Protection Working Group. The meetings were focused on the National Counter-Trafficking Action Plan covering the period 1 July 2022 - 1 July 2023, training plans, as well as prevention activities. IOM Moldova organized a workshop that brought together all IOM's Protection Implementing Partners (IPs). IOM IPs offer assistance services to vulnerable groups, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, as well as survivors of gender-based violence, in the context of the refugee crisis. During the workshop, all partners have had the chance to present the impact and results of their ongoing cooperation. Additionally, IOM presented and hosted a discussion on winterization planning.

#### IOM Slovakia

IOM is leading a Task Force on Trafficking in Person, as a part of Refugee Coordination Forum on Ukraine Response. So far, IOM organized 3 meetings during which participants discussed how to implement effective prevention activities at the borders, how to enhance referral pathway and how to tackle labour exploitation.

#### IOM Ukraine

IOM continues to co-lead the Anti-Trafficking Task Force (ATTF), which gathered five times between July and September 2022. During the meetings,

the following issues were discussed: implementation of the developed ATTF workplan; the needs to continue the ATTF in view of the rapidly changing situation; and the inclusion of trafficking indicators into the Protection Cluster Monitoring Tool. On 15 September, IOM Ukraine presented updates of the National ATTF during the meeting with the Global Protection Cluster ATTF.

#### IOM Czech Republic

IOM took part in the Regional Advisory platform of state institutions, municipalities and NGOs. Within the platform, IOM presented its protection activities, as well as results of its DTM activities. IOM also participated in a Ukrainian diaspora meeting where it identified potential implementing partners focusing on direct assistance of victims of trafficking.

### 4. ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS

Through information campaigns and outreach initiatives, IOM seeks to equip vulnerable populations with the information they need to migrate safely and access assistance when necessary. IOM also aims to address the root causes of vulnerability to trafficking through the implementation of programs targeting not only the individual but also the household, community, and structural levels. Some examples of activities implemented during the reporting period are available below:

### IOM Switzerland

On 24 August, started a social media campaign coordinated with about 20 NGOs and counterparts working in the field of counter-trafficking in Switzerland. 12 joint messages were developed in cooperation with the partners and translated in six languages (English, French, Italian, German, Russian, Ukrainian) for dissemination on social media and victims support webpages.

### IOM Poland

IOM is in the process of developing a country-wide information campaign targeting persons fleeing Ukraine, as well as members of the general public, in order to raise awareness on the risks of trafficking. This initiative will complement the ongoing 'Be Safe' campaign, which made it possible to produce and disseminate counter trafficking information materials in English, Russian and Ukrainian at reception centres and border crossing points in Mazowieckie and Podkarpackie.

On 18 and 28 July, IOM Poland, in cooperation with the Polish Labour Inspectorate, organized a series of webinars titled 'My work, my rights', focusing on labour rights and prevention of labour exploitation. The events were attended by 27 participants in total (Russian and Ukrainian- speakers).

### IOM Germany

IOM Germany conducted a social media campaign on counter-trafficking. The campaign provided tips for avoiding the risk of human trafficking along the migration pathway to a safe country. It consisted of one image advert adapted into English, German, Russian, and Ukrainian, which resulted in 549 link clicks, a reach of 36,879 users, and 69,735 impressions. Beyond Facebook and Instagram, the materials were also shared with civil society organizations, volunteers and diaspora organizations, German government entities working on the Ukraine response, as well as Ukrainians and third country nationals, directly through Telegram chats as well. IOM Germany also shared the material on its website.

### IOM Belarus

IOM continues to raise awareness among migrants fleeing Ukraine, on safe migration pathways and human trafficking protection measures, through the IOM



**Volunteers assisting refugees at the West Station in Warsaw participating in IOM Poland trainings on psychological first aid and counter-trafficking ©IOM**



**5,000 printed copies of this online counter trafficking leaflet were distributed by IOM Hungary.**



**One of the posters created by IOM Ukraine for their campaign.**

support hotline. Every week, the hotline provides phone and online consultations to more than 100 migrants, 33% of whom are refugees who have fled Ukraine.

### IOM Slovakia

IOM is part of national expert working group established by the Ministry of Interior to implement counter trafficking measures as part of the is part of national expert working group established by the Ministry of Interior to implement counter trafficking measures as part of the national resilience plan. IOM is currently updating the IOM SAFE Travel & Work Abroad which aim to raise awareness about the risks of human trafficking through an interactive game.

### IOM Estonia

IOM provided trafficking prevention materials in Russian and Ukrainian to the Welcome Centre, temporarily opened by

volunteers, in the border city of Narva. The Centre aimed to provide Ukrainian nationals and third country nationals fleeing the war with useful information upon their arrival to Estonia.

IOM Estonia has established an information point in the border city of Narva, where people fleeing Ukraine and transiting through Estonia have access to information materials in Russian and Ukrainian on how to travel safely and avoid risks of trafficking in persons.

### IOM Hungary

IOM's counter trafficking team, in cooperation with the local police authorities, participated in a major music festival (Sziget) to disseminate information and raise awareness on trafficking in August.

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## IOM Ukraine

On 2 September, IOM launched the nation-wide information campaign “They used you”, which is aimed at telling stories of survivors of human trafficking, exploitation and gender based violence, raising people’s awareness about available support and encouraging them to apply for assistance through the 527 hotline. As part of the campaign, IOM developed five 30-second videos and a set of visual materials about different types of exploitation, namely labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, survival sex, exploitation in armed conflicts and forced begging. All these materials are being widely promoted on social networks, YouTube and through the main TV channels. The info campaign is also accompanied by billboards and citylights exhibiting the main info campaign visuals, as well as posters displayed in trains and other transports.

**IOM has Launched the 527 Telegram chat-bot @safemigrationBot, where IOM consultants provide online consultations for people inside and outside of Ukraine.** The chat-bot also answers to the most frequently asked questions related to safe migration. Each user receives an online leaflet on safe migration and a link to the Telegram sticker pack which includes key safety rules.

Between June and September, 283 people visited the 527 Telegram chat-bot (28% men, and 72% women).

## IOM Czech Republic

IOM is currently developing an awareness raising video focusing on trafficking in persons, in cooperation with a Ukrainian director. The spot will be published on social media at the end of October.

## IOM Moldova

IOM distributed over 90 sets of “Liza and her friends traveling the world”, a board game that has the objectives of increasing awareness and prevention of trafficking in persons, designed for children aged 8 to 14.

## 5. TRAINING & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

IOM works with a variety of partners, from governments, civil society organizations, international organizations, and the private sector, to combat human trafficking. This includes providing support to strengthen policies and



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) together with IOM has set up information on how to remain safe on the way to protect people fleeing Ukraine against human trafficking.

This flyer 'How to remain safe on the way - 5 tips for refugees' is available in the following languages:

- Ukrainian: Як залишитися в безпеці
- English: Be Safe on the Way
- German: So bleibst du sicher unterwegs
- Russian: Как оставаться в безопасности

### COUNTER TRAFFICKING FLYER



## IOM Germany's counter trafficking page.

procedures to facilitate the identification, referral, and protection and assistance of vulnerable to or subjected to trafficking. During the reporting period, IOM supported the following initiatives:

## IOM Poland

IOM supported 497 persons since February with capacity development on protection-related matters, including local authorities, volunteers, social workers, IPs, border guards, policemen as well as IOM staff. Counter trafficking trainings have been delivered to over 245 Border Guards, volunteers and local authority representatives.

## IOM Moldova

IOM provided counter trafficking trainings for Refugee Accommodation Centers' staff. Trainings focused on the identification of victims of human trafficking and exploitation in emergency settings. Additionally, IOM Moldova organized a workshop on trafficking in persons, involving various organizations working with people with disabilities.

IOM Moldova organized an online learning session on trafficking in persons for 104 professionals working with refugee children in refugee accommodation centers, day care centers, and other social and educational service providers for children.

## IOM Austria

Together with victim protection agencies and the criminal police, provided three informational sessions

on human trafficking in the Ukraine crisis to frontline responders, including the child and youth welfare authority in Vienna, accommodation centres, legal counsellors and the Austrian Integration Fund. The sessions focused on vulnerabilities to human trafficking in crisis situations, trafficking trends and observations in the Ukraine crisis and how to refer suspected cases. Online sessions are recorded and shared with participants to increase impact. Since April 2022, a total of six informational sessions have reached 99 frontline responders. At least one criminal investigation on human trafficking was initiated based on information provided by participants during an informational session. Participants have shared further observations of potential trafficking situations, including indications of exploitation in private accommodation and aggressive offers of assistance by private individuals.

## IOM Belarus

In August and September 2022, IOM has been delivering protection trainings for its new field staff in charge of vulnerability assessments, referrals and direct assistance to people fleeing Ukraine. These trainings are designed to equip field staff with essential skills of identifying vulnerable protection cases, including early indicators of human trafficking and gender-based violence, child protection and referring individuals to available protection services.



### IOM Ukraine

Conducted three Youth Summer Schools for 61 active youth from Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv Oblasts (IDPs and host community members). Participants learned about safe migration and prevention of human trafficking as well as enhanced their leadership skills. IOM further supported organization of four prevention actions by the alumni of the Youth Summer Schools on 29 and 30 July 2022, to mark the World Day Against Human Trafficking. On 21-22 July IOM Ukraine gathered NGO implementing partners from 18 oblasts of Ukraine to discuss collaboration to strengthen protection response and case management as well as ensure referrals when needed.

On 10 September IOM Ukraine educated over 300 active youth on prevention and combating human trafficking and exploitation as part of Molodvzh Fest in Lviv.

### IOM Norway

During the period of April - September, 2022, IOM visited 33 emergency reception centres to train selected focal points and organize information sessions for Ukrainian refugees on the topics of trafficking and labour exploitation.

### IOM Slovakia

IOM is organizing training and workshops as part of its prevention activities. IOM trained frontline staff helping at the borders and in information centres, as well as municipalities's staff working in registration/integration centres, NGOs providing legal and social assistance, and State institutions, including labour inspectorates. Since February 2022, 202 individuals participated in IOM's trainings.

### IOM Germany

Together with KOK- the German NGO network against trafficking in human beings, IOM conducted a virtual training targeting volunteers working with persons who fled Ukraine. The training focused on counter trafficking and prevention of exploitation.

## 6. DATA, RESEARCH & LEARNING

IOM is committed to strengthening the evidence base on trafficking in order to understand its root causes and combat this crime. Through its programming responses, IOM collects data on human trafficking and associated forms of



IOM Ukraine's presentation at the Molodvzh youth festival in Lviv ©IOM



Special live studio with IOM Ukraine's expert at "Snidanok 1+1" morning show on labour exploitation.

exploitation and abuse in situations of humanitarian crisis, displacement, and large-scale migration. During the reporting period, the following developments took place in this field:

### IOM Moldova

IOM organized a focus group discussion on trafficking with different organizations working with people with disabilities, to collect relevant data and information. Following the focus group, IOM designed a project concept note for the ELRHA organization.

### IOM Ukraine

IOM has finalized field works of the survey on people's vulnerabilities to



DTM survey among refugees from Ukraine by IOM Czech Republic.

human trafficking, exploitation and gender-based violence. The report presenting the findings of the survey is expected to be presented at the beginning of October to the national and local counter-trafficking stakeholders as well as to the wider audience.

### IOM Czech Republic

IOM continues to implement its DTM activities. In August, IOM published its first DTM report covering period from 15 June until 29 July. The report processed the results of 1,006 surveys. According to the report 42 % of respondents were unemployed and 1.4 % of respondents reported to have experience unfair or unequal treatment.

# 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ukraine

Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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### Ukraine (Tier 2)

The Government of Ukraine does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. Despite the documented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the government's anti-trafficking capacity, the government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Ukraine remained on Tier 2. These efforts included investigating more suspected traffickers, allocating significantly more money to the national budget for anti-trafficking measures, and improving access to identification documentation and official registration for vulnerable populations. The government also took steps to prevent child trafficking and reduce re-traumatization of child victims during the criminal justice process. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Authorities convicted fewer traffickers and most convicted traffickers avoided imprisonment, likely due to judges' underestimation of the severity of trafficking crimes, entrenched stereotypes about what constitutes trafficking in persons, and corruption. This lenient sentencing weakened deterrence, did not adequately reflect the nature of the crime, and undercut broader efforts to fight trafficking. Reports of officials complicit in human trafficking persisted. While the government initiated an investigation into two allegedly complicit officials during the reporting period, for the fifth consecutive year it did not secure any convictions. The government officially identified far fewer victims in 2021 than in 2020, while international organizations continued to identify far more victims than the government, highlighting the

government's inadequate identification efforts and a continuing lack of trust in authorities' ability to protect or assist victims. Observers highlighted the government's ineffective coordination and implementation of anti-trafficking policies, and NGOs continued to identify systemic shortcomings in implementation of the national referral mechanism (NRM) at the regional level.

#### PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify and certify the official status of more victims to ensure they are afforded their rights under the trafficking law and modify the procedure for granting victim status to lessen the burden on victims to self-identify and divulge sensitive information.
- Vigorously investigate and prosecute alleged trafficking crimes and punish convicted traffickers with significant prison terms.
- Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict officials allegedly complicit in trafficking crimes under the trafficking statute.
- Establish and fill a dedicated National Coordinator position to lead national efforts to coordinate and implement anti-trafficking policies.
- Provide additional, extensive training on the NRM to local officials and service providers throughout the decentralization process to minimize disruption in identification, referral, and assistance to trafficking victims.
- Increase worker protections by eliminating recruitment fees charged to workers by labor recruiters and ensuring employers pay any recruitment fees.
- Increase training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases (particularly on

forced labor), using a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach, and on how to gather evidence outside of victims' testimony.

- Increase victims' access to legal assistance throughout the criminal process and improve victims' ability to access court-ordered restitution in criminal cases and compensation through civil proceedings.
- Increase government funding for anti-trafficking efforts, particularly funding for local communities.
- Increase training for officials on victim identification, particularly in proactive screening for labor trafficking and of vulnerable populations, such as women in commercial sex, children exploited in sex trafficking, foreign migrant workers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- Increase law enforcement investigations and prosecutions of labor recruitment firms engaged in fraudulent practices.

#### PROSECUTION

The government maintained law enforcement efforts. Article 149 of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of three to eight years' imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Law enforcement investigated 222 trafficking cases in 2021, an increase from 203 in 2020. These included 85 new sex trafficking cases and 137 new labor trafficking cases, of which 54 were for forced involvement in criminal activity. An international organization stated pandemic-related travel restrictions changed traffickers' recruitment tactics and exploitation patterns, hampering law enforcement's detection capabilities. The government prosecuted 101 suspected

traffickers in 2021, compared with the prosecution of 51 cases with an unknown number of defendants in 2020. The government convicted 24 traffickers in 2021, compared with 29 in 2020 and 35 in 2019. Of the 24 convicted traffickers sentenced in 2021, only five (21 percent) received prison sentences, all for a term of five to 10 years; nineteen traffickers received suspended sentences. This was similar to 2020 when courts sentenced only 17 percent of convicted traffickers to imprisonment. Observers reported many judges underestimated the severity of trafficking offenses and continued to hold entrenched stereotypes about what constitutes trafficking in persons, while some engaged in corrupt practices. These lenient sentences weakened deterrence, did not adequately reflect the nature of the crime, and undercut broader efforts to fight trafficking. An international organization reported pandemic-related restrictions adversely affected the court system, delaying some legal proceedings. In a notable case during the reporting period, law enforcement arrested the leader and indicted in absentia eight members of an organized criminal group operating in Russia-controlled eastern Ukraine accused of exploiting illegally detained residents for labor to support Russia-led forces' military activities. Authorities cooperated with foreign governments on multiple transnational investigations, including through joint investigation teams (JIT) established with Georgia, Greece, France, and Italy. In April 2021, authorities established a JIT with Georgia, Greece, and Italy to investigate a criminal organization that used fraud to coerce hundreds of Ukrainian citizens to smuggle migrants from Iran, Iraq, Syria, and other Middle Eastern countries to Europe by sea. Authorities worked with foreign law enforcement to extradite one suspected trafficker to Moldova and to support the extradition from Cyprus to Ukraine of one suspected trafficker. The government amended an agreement with the government of Turkey to improve law enforcement cooperation between the two countries, including cooperation on anti-trafficking efforts.

Continued institutional reforms led to widespread turnover in many government institutions, including within the ranks of the National Police and the judiciary. Experts reported these institutional reforms created temporary

obstacles to anti-trafficking efforts but ultimately could lead to improved efforts if changes were properly implemented. The National Police counter-trafficking unit was incorporated into the Migration Police (MiPol) in December 2020; MiPol headquarters staffing almost doubled from 27 to 45 officials in 2021. Observers assessed many of the newly hired MiPol staff, as well as National Police investigators, were not sufficiently trained on trafficking. As of November 2021, the government reported nearly 2,000 judicial vacancies; these vacancies exacerbated delays in court cases caused by pandemic-related restrictions. Turnover of personnel led to a lack of qualified prosecutors to supervise trafficking cases at the regional level. The government, in conjunction with international funding and partners, conducted multiple trainings for law enforcement and other officials. All new police recruits received trafficking training. Observers reported the National Police counter-trafficking unit used outdated online investigative tools and collaborated poorly with other financial or cybercrime investigations, leading to missed opportunities to identify trafficking crimes in money laundering or pornography cases.

Corruption remained a serious concern in the police and judiciary. Authorities investigated two city council members for recruiting and transporting vulnerable people to two agricultural companies for the purpose of forced labor. Although the government continued to report investigations of officials allegedly complicit in trafficking, for the fifth consecutive year, the government did not report any convictions of complicit officials. The government also did not report on the status of high-profile cases from previous years, many of which have remained stalled with the courts for years, including those against the former commander of the Kyiv City police counter-trafficking unit, three police officers, recruiters accused of trafficking Ukrainians into a drug-trafficking ring in Russia, and a teacher at a government-run boarding school for orphans in Kharkiv who attempted to sell one of her students.

## PROTECTION

The government demonstrated mixed efforts in victim protection; although the government allocated significantly more funding to the national budget for

victim protection efforts and took steps to reduce re-traumatization of child victims, the government identified, officially recognized, and provided services to far fewer victims. In 2021, authorities reported there were 64 officially-identified victims—a status that granted victims access to government services upon approval of an application—a decrease compared with 134 officially-identified victims in 2020, although the number of applications decreased by almost 60 percent from 2020 to 2021. The government reported police identified and referred to services 155 potential victims in 2021 (146 in 2020 and 262 in 2019). The majority of the 64 officially-identified victims were men (45); authorities identified two female child victims. Observers noted the pandemic exacerbated existing long-term problems in victim identification and assistance. NGOs reported the government nearly ceased targeted proactive identification efforts because of the pandemic and pandemic-related restrictions reduced cross-border movements, including the return of trafficking victims exploited abroad. The government reported screening undocumented foreign migrants for indicators of trafficking; however, observers noted authorities did not consistently do so.

The government provided services, including medical, psychological, and legal assistance and temporary shelter, to victims granted official victim status. **The government approved 67 percent (64 of 96) of applications for official victim status in 2021, compared with 57 percent (134 of 235) of applications in 2020.**

The National Social Service (NSS), formed in 2020, assumed the role of granting official victim status to potential victims in May 2021 and began devolving the responsibility of granting official victim status to local communities through the ongoing decentralization reform process. The government took steps to improve the victim designation process by introducing an electronic register of victims and outlining the procedures for notifying potential victims of the outcome of their application; observers attributed the decrease in the number of applications in 2021 to a lack of qualified personnel and infrastructure at the NSS and pandemic-related

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restrictions. Civil society previously reported the government rejected a high percentage of applications due to strict internal guidelines for classifying cases as trafficking crimes, police pursuing indictments under statutes other than the trafficking law, and the government demanding additional evidence to confirm victim status contrary to Ukrainian law, including confirmation that the victim was recognized as such in court proceedings or demanding evidence to show movement across a border. Victims not requiring specialized services may have chosen not to apply for official victim status, and NGOs reported the emphasis on documents requiring the divulging of sensitive information likely deterred some applicants from applying. An international organization reported pandemic-related restrictions likely limited the number of applications for official victim status as potential victims must submit applications in person. The government granted official victim status to one individual incarcerated abroad in 2021, compared with zero in 2020 and 40 in 2019; in 2020, the government discontinued the use of a simplified application process for potential victims incarcerated abroad, which included waiving the in-person interview requirement.

Although the government, in collaboration with partner organizations, trained local officials in effectively assisting potential victims, newly-devolved local administrative structures were not yet officially part of the NRM, resulting in some confusion over responsibilities. Civil society reported continued systemic shortcomings in the functioning of the NRM at the regional level and emphasized government agencies identified a low number of victims through the NRM. Some newly established communities, especially smaller communities, lacked sufficient personnel, infrastructure, and financial resources to effectively provide services to trafficking victims. Observers noted some local officials responsible for identifying and screening victims were not trained on trafficking. Moreover, pandemic-related restrictions and the diversion of funding to combat the pandemic further limited trafficking victims' access to state assistance. The government continued to rely on international organizations and NGOs, with international donor funding, to

identify victims and provide the vast majority of victim protection and assistance. An international organization in Ukraine assisted 1,010 victims in 2021, compared with 1,680 victims in 2020. International organizations reported the majority (93 percent) of their identified victims were exploited by labor traffickers. An international organization reported NGOs identified 102 victims in eastern Ukraine, including in Russia-occupied and Russia-controlled territories; the majority of these victims were IDPs, and 98 of the 102 victims were exploited for labor.

**The government allocated 2.03 million hryvnia (\$74,350) to the national budget for anti-trafficking measures in 2021, a significant increase from 548,800 hryvnia (\$20,090) in 2020.**

No funding was allocated for local budgets in 2021, compared with 219,220 hryvnia (\$8,020) in 2020. Ukraine's trafficking law entitled victims with official victim status to housing at a government shelter, psychological assistance, medical services, employment counseling, and vocational training, regardless of whether a criminal case proceeded or the victim cooperated with law enforcement. The government did not integrate a rehabilitation center run by an international organization into the national social and health care system, despite the government's prior stated commitment to assume operation of the center; some trafficking victims received shelter at this center. Adult victims could also stay at government-run centers for psycho-social assistance for up to 90 days, with the option to extend, and receive psychological and medical support, lodging, food, and legal and social assistance. Authorities could accommodate child victims in centers for socio-psychological support of children for up to nine months and administer social, medical, psychological, education, legal, and other types of assistance. Authorities identified two child trafficking victims in 2021 but did not report what services they received, if any. The government maintained 21 centers for socio-psychological assistance, 33 state shelters for domestic violence and trafficking victims, and 796 social services centers. The government amended the regulations governing the centers for socio-psychological assistance to ensure trafficking victims receive the full range of necessary

services available. Observers reported that state assistance remained insufficient to meet victims' needs, and victims continued to rely on NGOs for assistance. Foreign victims were entitled to the same benefits as Ukrainian citizens and had additional access to interpretation services, temporary legal stay, and voluntary repatriation. Although legally entitled to the same benefits, observers noted some foreign nationals and members of underserved communities faced barriers to accessing services. Authorities could grant permanent residency to foreign victims in danger of retribution should they return to their country of origin. Foreign victims were able to obtain an immigration permit after residing continuously in Ukraine for three years.

The government, often in partnership with international organizations, provided training for officials on victim identification and assistance. In collaboration with an international organization, the government conducted five simulation exercises for law enforcement and frontline responders from ten regions to strengthen collaboration among anti-trafficking stakeholders in responding to suspected trafficking cases. The Witness Protection Law provided protections for victims, but observers noted courts rarely used protection measures. Closed hearings and remote procedures for questioning and identification were the most frequently used witness and victim protection mechanisms. The government did not restrict victims' movement. The government did not report if it granted personal protection to victims in 2021 (in 2020, the government granted eight victims personal protection and changed the personal data of three witnesses in criminal proceedings). Video testimony systems that ensured the complete separation of victims or witnesses from the accused existed in 14 courts in various regions; the courts used these systems 19 times during hearings of trafficking-related crimes in 2021. In 2021, prosecutors created specialized units to handle cases involving child trafficking victims and took measures to avoid their re-traumatization, including by preventing direct visual contact between the victim and other participants. The government, with the assistance of an international organization, also established several regional specialized centers for child



The photo was taken in Prague city in August 2019. We haven't given up. Ukrainians will never give up their freedom.

victims or witnesses; at these centers, specialized staff interviewed children in a trauma-informed manner and children received psycho-social, legal, and medical care, as needed. For the third consecutive year, the government did not report cases of courts ordering restitution for trafficking victims; however, an international organization confirmed some victims collected court-awarded restitution in 2021.

## PREVENTION

The government increased prevention efforts. The Ministry of Social Policy (MSP) continued to lead anti-trafficking efforts at the national and local levels, but observers widely criticized the ministry for ineffective coordination and engagement on anti-trafficking efforts. Experts noted no one individual held the position of National Coordinator to execute the ministry's anti-trafficking responsibilities, weakening its leadership on this issue. In July 2021, the government approved a general draft concept for a 2021-2025 national action plan; no further progress was made by the end of the reporting period. The MSP did not publish a report on the implementation of the government's anti-trafficking policies. The government and members of parliament created a working group to draft and implement a law to combat sexual exploitation of women.

In November 2021, the government issued standard operating procedures for a government-sponsored hotline dedicated to trafficking, gender-based violence, and violence against children. The government did not report how many calls the hotline received in 2021 (29,344 calls received in 2020), nor if any calls led to the identification of victims or their referral to services (38 victims identified and referred to services in 2020). A local NGO, with funding from international donors, operated a counter-trafficking and migrant advice hotline.

In 2021, the hotline received 22,128 calls, compared with 22,921 calls in 2020; 75 potential victims were identified and referred to responsible local agencies and NGOs for assistance (77 in 2020). The Office of the Prosecutor General, in collaboration with partner organizations, created dedicated channels on social media platforms to communicate with children to increase detection efforts, prevent child trafficking, and improve communication with child trafficking victims or witnesses. The government took several measures to improve access to identification documentation and official registration for vulnerable populations; lack of documentation and access to state services was a risk factor for trafficking. In December 2021, legislation to facilitate residence registration, a pre-requisite

for accessing state services, went into effect; experts believed this new law would reduce the risk of trafficking by ensuring the six million Ukrainians with incomplete registration could be recognized by the government. In April 2021, the government launched a statelessness determination process to facilitate the provision of documentation, residency, and citizenship for stateless persons, a vulnerable population; an international organization estimated there were 36,000 stateless persons in Ukraine. In October 2021, the government adopted a revised strategy to assist IDPs; the strategy included a focus on facilitating employment and education, documentation, and integration into host communities. In November 2021, the government passed legislation to allow Ukrainians living in temporarily Russia-occupied territories to register their existing residences and obtain identity documents. Authorities, in coordination with NGOs, international organizations, and local partners, continued to conduct a wide range of awareness campaigns throughout the country, including via television, social media, print media, and public events. In December 2021, MiPol, in collaboration with an international organization and a local university, launched an anti-trafficking chatbot to

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assist online users in quickly finding information on safe employment, study, and travel, as well as information on how to assist trafficking victims. The State Labor Service (SLS) published on its website recommendations for Ukrainians contemplating working abroad, including information on trafficking risks.

Police continued to monitor and investigate formal and informal recruitment networks, including companies advertising jobs abroad, and worked with other stakeholders to raise awareness about known recruitment schemes. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade oversaw the licensing of labor recruitment agencies and conducted regular and random inspections on their activities. Legislation banning recruitment companies from charging fees to citizens seeking employment abroad was registered in parliament; the legislation had not been adopted by the end of the reporting period. Labor inspectors conducted 7,231 inspections in 2021, compared with 14,803 unscheduled inspections in 2020; the government did not report if inspectors identified any potential trafficking victims in 2021. The government, in collaboration with an international organization, developed a distance learning anti-trafficking training for labor inspectors. NGOs previously reported there was an insufficient number of labor inspectors to effectively meet their mandate. The SLS maintained cooperation with Lithuania's labor inspectors, including by publishing information on employment opportunities and legal regulations for foreign nationals in Lithuania on Lithuania's State Labor Inspectorate website. The government made some efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts; Article 149 reportedly criminalized the act of knowingly soliciting or patronizing a sex trafficking victim, but an NGO noted the language in the statute is broad. The government continued to provide victim identification and referral training to diplomats.

## TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Ukraine, and traffickers exploit victims from Ukraine abroad. Ukrainian victims are exploited in sex trafficking and forced labor in Ukraine as well as in Russia, Poland, Germany,

other parts of Europe, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Kazakhstan, and the Middle East. Ukrainian victims are increasingly exploited in EU member states. Traffickers exploit most victims for forced labor. Traffickers exploit some Ukrainian children and vulnerable adults in forced begging. NGOs estimate 10-15 percent of the Roma community lack identification documents, leaving them unable to access state social assistance programs and thereby increasing their vulnerability to trafficking. Traffickers exploit a small number of foreign nationals in forced labor in Ukraine. A growing number of forced labor victims in Ukraine and abroad are exploited in a variety of sectors, including construction, manufacturing, agriculture, criminal activity, and street begging. Traffickers force some victims to participate in the illegal production of counterfeit tobacco products and well-established criminal groups force some Ukrainian victims to engage in other illegal activities abroad. Some traffickers exploit victims in forced labor at rehabilitation centers under the guise of providing treatment for alcohol or drug addiction. Pandemic-related movement restrictions and border closures resulted in traffickers exploiting a larger number of Ukrainians in labor trafficking within Ukraine and in commercial sex, increasingly online. Traffickers target low-skilled workers transiting Ukraine. Increasingly, well-educated workers are vulnerable to labor exploitation. The approximately 104,000 children institutionalized in state-run orphanages are at especially high risk of trafficking. Officials of several state-run residential institutions and orphanages have allegedly been complicit or wilfully negligent in the sex and labor trafficking of girls and boys under their care.

Prior to Russia's 2022 invasion, in areas of eastern Ukraine controlled by Russia-led forces, employment options were limited and Russia's proxy "authorities" placed restrictions on international humanitarian aid intended to help meet civilian needs. IDPs, those living in Russia-controlled territory or within 20 km of the line of contact in the Donbas, and residents of Crimea faced significant barriers to obtaining or renewing identification documents, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Uncorroborated reports indicated Russia-led forces exploited

Ukrainians for labor, particularly in the mines of Russia-controlled Donbas. International organizations reported the demographics of Ukrainian trafficking victims have shifted since the beginning of the conflict in 2014 to include more urban, younger, and male victims exploited increasingly in forced labor and criminality, such as for drug trafficking and as couriers. Traffickers reportedly kidnapped women and girls from conflict-affected areas for sex and labor trafficking in Ukraine and Russia. Traffickers targeted IDPs and subjected some Ukrainians to forced labor on territory not under government control, often via kidnapping, torture, and extortion. These abuses and vulnerabilities likely continued after Russia launched its all-out war against Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine forced more than four million people to flee Ukraine in the first five weeks of war and displaced almost 6.5 million more within its borders, a total of almost one quarter of Ukraine's population.

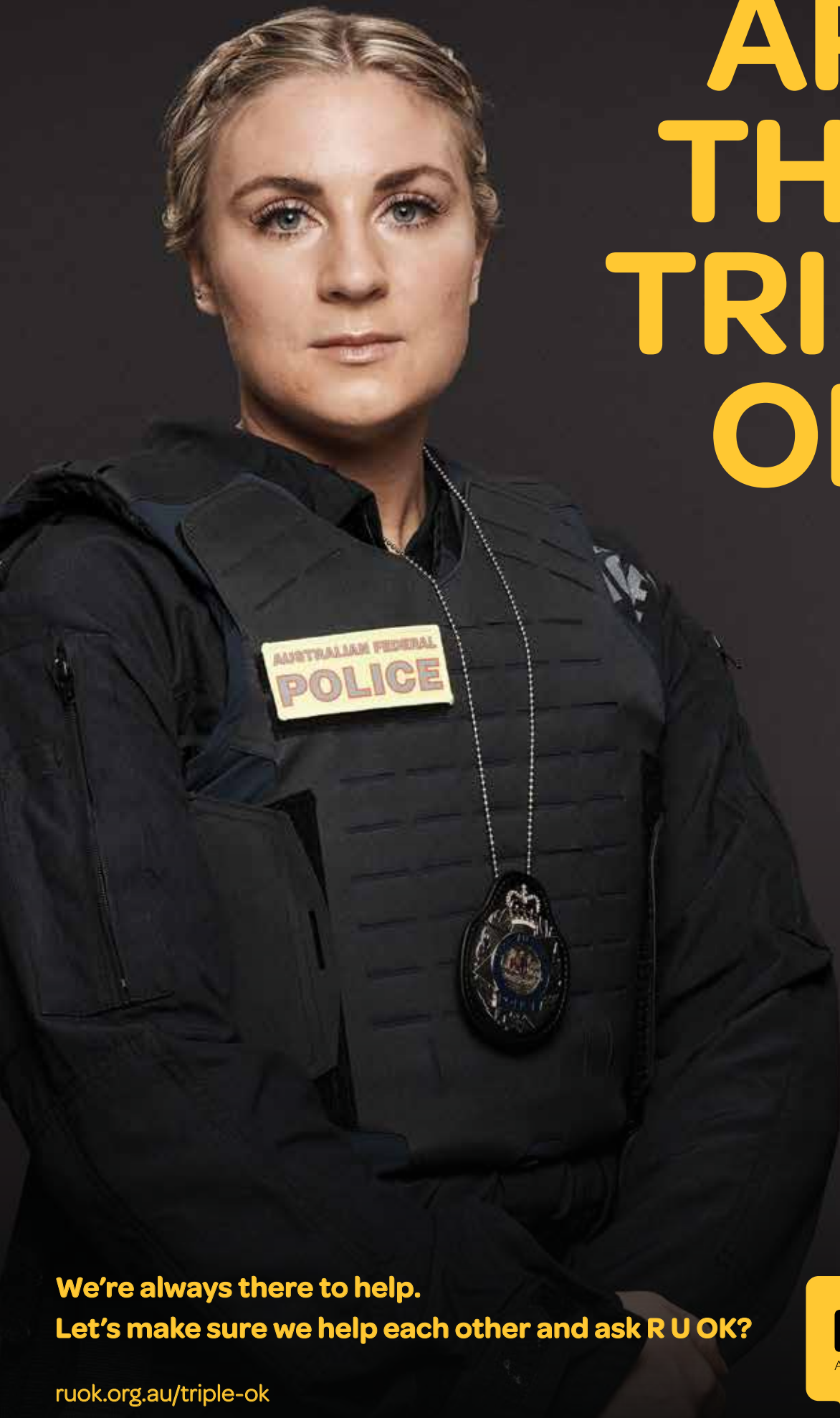
**Experts estimate as many as 90 percent of those who have fled the country are women and children, and that more than half of Ukraine's children—4.3 million out of seven million—have been displaced.**

These refugee and displaced populations are especially vulnerable to human trafficking. Even for those not displaced, the war heightens individuals' vulnerability to trafficking. By the end of March 2022, Ukrainian officials assessed Russian forces relocated thousands of Ukrainians to Russia, including some to remote areas; press reports indicate many of these Ukrainians were transferred forcibly. These citizens are highly vulnerable to trafficking.

Uncorroborated reports of Russia-led forces using children as soldiers, informants, and human shields persist. Russia-led forces in Russia-controlled areas of the Donbas have reportedly used children to take direct and indirect part in the armed conflict to perform armed duty at checkpoints, as fighters, and to serve as guards, mailpersons, and secretaries. The recruitment of children by Russia-led forces took place in territory controlled by Russia and in areas where the government was unable to enforce national prohibitions against the use of children in armed conflict.



# ARE THEY TRIPLE OK?



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TASMANIAN CHINESE BUDDHIST ACADEMY OF AUSTRALIA



Against the backdrop of its signature windmill, the historical town of Oatlands in Tasmania sprang to life in August with the Heritage and Bullock Festival. Bullocks, traditional trades and crafts from the olden days and live music entertained the sizeable crowd.

Master Zhi-Ji and members of Tasmanian Chinese Buddhist Academy of Australia were honoured to again be part of the festival, joining the parade with the lions, and sharing the weekend with the community.

