

Reach every victim of trafficking, leave no one behind

“Being a survivor of trafficking in persons is like having a tattoo on the soul. No one can see it, but it is always there and remains forever,” said [Marcela Loaiza](#) who, when was just 21, ended up in the hands of human traffickers.

“I was offered a job outside of the country. I was promised I would be famous and make a lot of money as a professional dancer,” she explains. At that time in her life, her daughter was sick, and she had a lot of bills to pay for medical treatment. It was in this context that she accepted the job offer that landed her in human trafficking where Marcela was sexually exploited for 18 months in Japan. After dangerously escaping the traffickers, she arrived back in her own country, Colombia, feeling desperate. She felt like the only path for her was to resort to prostitution.

Tired of living a life not meant for her, she found refuge in the world of literature and managed to gradually heal the pain caused by the horrendous experience of being a trafficked victim by writing two books. After rebuilding her life, she created a foundation to raise awareness about human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a severe and pervasive crime involving the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of individuals through force, coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception to exploit them. It is a form of slavery that violates its victims' fundamental human rights and dignity. There are different forms of human trafficking, including but not limited to sex trafficking and labour trafficking.

Human trafficking is a global issue that affects millions of people worldwide. Globally, the detection of trafficking for forced labour in 2020 was equal to that of trafficking for sexual exploitation, at just under [40% each](#).

According to the [‘Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022,’](#) women and girls account for 60% of the total number of detected victims in 2020. Women and girls remain more detected as victims of trafficking than men and boys. But a longer historical trend towards identifying

more male victims seems to have accelerated in 2020. Moreover, girls and women are three times more likely to suffer explicit or extreme violence during trafficking than boys and men.

According to this report, four Maltese girls were trafficked in the country for sexual exploitation. From 2017 to 2020, Malta detected 50 victims of human trafficking, of whom 45 have been confirmed. 38% were Ukrainian nationals and 30% were from East Asia, with the remaining made up of persons coming from other regions.

Efforts to combat human trafficking include legal frameworks, victim support and public awareness campaigns to address this heinous crime. Every year, on the 30th of July, the United Nations observes World Day against Trafficking in Persons. This significant date prompts us to reflect on the profound consequences this crime inflicts on its victims and societies as a whole. The theme for this year, '[Reach every victim of trafficking, leave no one behind](#),' strongly urges us all to take decisive action and prioritize victims in all our endeavours.

At EU level, on the 14th April 2021, the EU Commission adopted a new [EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings \(2021-2025\)](#). The strategy aims to combat trafficking at reduced demand that fuels trafficking, disrupting traffickers' business model using effective operational methods, addressing the culture of impunity by strengthening the criminal justice response, countering the digital business model of traffickers, protecting, supporting, and empowering victims, with a focus on women and children, and promoting international cooperation in anti-trafficking efforts.

At a national level, Malta has adopted the fifth National Action Plan on Human Trafficking (2020-2023) to combat human trafficking. This action plan seeks to address the major aspects of the fight against human trafficking with a particular focus on awareness and prevention. The [National Commission for the Promotion of Equality \(NCPE\)](#) contributed to this National Action Plan during the public Consultation. Work has also been undertaken to raise awareness on human trafficking through various means of communication.

As António Guterres, [United Nations Secretary-General](#), said, *"trafficking in persons is a vile crime that feeds on inequalities, instability and conflict. Human traffickers profit from peoples' hopes and despair. They prey on the vulnerable and rob them of their fundamental Rights."*



National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

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