



UN Human Rights Council: Modern-day Slavery: Forced Labor

Chair: Mei Reed '25

Rapporteurs: Aurora Hao '26 & Suri Tran '26

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Human Rights Council, where our topic will be Modern-day Slavery and Forced Labor. My name is Mei Reed and I will be serving as your chair. I live in Concord, MA, and this is my third year staffing CAMUN and second year chairing a CAMUN committee. I'm the Co-Director of Training for CA's Model UN Club and the CAMUN 2024 Under-Secretary-General of Communications. I've been doing Model UN since middle school and attended numerous committees over the past couple of years. Some of my hobbies include playing piano and cello, crew/rowing, and gaming! It's kind of scary how many hours I've sunk into Animal Crossing...

My team and I are ecstatic to see what you bring to the table for CAMUN 2024. The issue of modern-day slavery is one riddled with nuance and has been a key problem in the world for decades. In this committee, you will debate on which facet of this issue should be prioritized and how to attack this problem without disrupting the economic sector, which unfortunately can heavily rely on forced labor. I have limited the large topic of modern-day slavery to forced labor, bonded labor, and domestic servitude, so please take care in addressing these three issues.

This committee will take place in a typical GA format/parliamentary procedure. My team and I expect delegates to uphold procedure and come prepared to thoughtfully debate their position. By the end of the conference, I would look favorably upon one or two joint resolutions being passed. Collaboration between delegates is extremely important for any committee, but especially for an issue such as this one which impacts every country in the world.

Writing a position paper is not required, but if you'd like to be considered for awards, please email your position paper to the chair by **March 29th**.

I can't wait to see what you all bring to the debate! Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions, or if you just want to say hi.

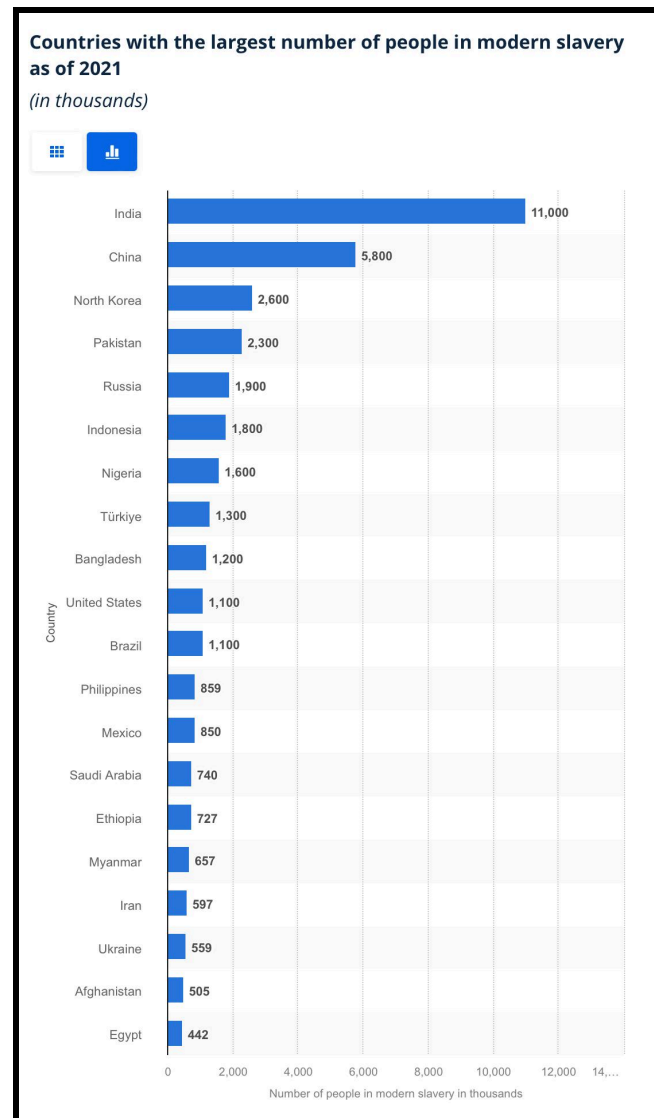
Sincerely,

Mei Reed '25, Under-Secretary General of Communications, Mei.Reed@ConcordAcademy.org

Background

Modern-day slavery is an ethically, politically, and economically complicated issue that currently affects over 50 million people worldwide¹ – threatening lives and creating controversy across the globe. While it has been almost a century since slavery was internationally abolished,² millions of people are currently in servitude and are in dire need of help to end these abuses of human rights.

While there are many aspects of modern-day servitude, ranging from child soldiers to human trafficking, this committee will focus on forced labor. The 1930 Forced Labor Convention defined servitude as “all work or service in which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered themselves voluntarily”³. Modern-day slavery is rarely chattel slavery and is instead found in the forced and exploitative labor found in every continent and almost every country in the world, regardless of economic prosperity.



Slavery in the contemporary world is divided into multiple subcategories, which will be detailed below. However one throughline is that marginalized communities (groups in extreme poverty, children, women, indigenous communities, etc.) are disproportionately affected by contemporary slavery. The International Labour Organization estimated that over 8.4 children are in some form of slavery, ranging from prostitution to forced labor and marriage.⁴ Furthermore, the Global Slavery Index study of 2016 presented data that shows that out of the 40.3 million people in modern slavery, 71% identified as female.

While this issue is extremely encompassing and could easily be discussed for a full four-day conference, we are restricted to one day of committee. As such, the focus of this committee will be on labor. I will restrict this to the following three types of labor: forced labor, bonded labor, and domestic servitude.

History of the issue

Slavery was already a prominent part of society by the time the first large civilizations appeared, such as Sumer circa 3500 BC. It can be traced back to the Neolithic Revolution, wherein the creation of agriculture demanded a greater workforce. Members of multiple ethnic and religious groups were captured and enslaved from the second century and on. Almost every “great ancient civilization” had some form of servitude, spanning from China to the pre-Columbian American civilizations.⁵

European merchants established the transatlantic slave trade in the early 16th century. The most common route taken was purchasing Africans from West Africa and transporting them to the American colonies (especially Haiti and the Dominican Republic during the beginning of the slave trade). Also during this time, the Dutch imported enslaved people from Asia into the Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town). An inane population of Africa was enslaved between the 1300s and 1900s, ranging from populations 30% enslaved to 90%.^{6,7}

In Asia, the concept of serfdom was extremely popular. The country of Rus’, now known as Russia, was almost entirely built on serfs until the late 19th century. China has had a history of domestic servitude since the Shang dynasty (c. 2200 BC) and slavery in India raged during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The abolition of slavery started roughly in the 18th century, wherein the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II prohibited serfdom in the Habsburg region. In 1807, Great Britain passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, and a year later the USA banned the slave trade. This sparked a wave of legislature across many countries to follow suit and abolish servitude. However, almost all of these legislations were about abolishing the slave trade, not necessarily about abolishing slavery itself. In 1981, Mauritania became the last country to abolish slavery, and it became criminalized in 2007.⁸

In 1999, the first global analysis of modern-day slavery was published. This study decided that there were 27 million modern-day slaves, a number we now know to be much lower than the truth. A year later, the US passed an act to fight trafficking and modern-day slavery. In 2002, the International Cocoa Initiative was established to avoid slavery in chocolate factories.⁹ Much of Africa and the Middle East still illegally participate in modern-day slavery. Much of modern servitude is found in factories

across the world, whether it is through the agricultural sector, manufacturing, or construction. Lots of work still must be done to ensure that this issue does not fester and create even larger problems later in the global future.

The Issue Today

While many people associate slavery with the past, it is extremely predominant in the modern world. There are multiple different types of servitude, but for this committee, I will be focusing on these three types of slavery:

Forced Labor

This form of enslavement is defined as working against your will due to external physical or mental



threats. In some cultures, forced labor is so ingrained that there is no existent physical threat. This type of labor can be found globally in industries that require large sums of manpower but have poor regulations, creating opportunities for the exploitation of labor. There are many circumstances where the workers in a forced labor setting have been kidnapped and brought to a foreign country.

Bonded Labor/Debt Bondage

This typically occurs when an individual makes a loan that they cannot pay in full. This typically creates two situations: one where the lender hikes up the interest rate to extreme inflation, essentially ensuring that the individual will be working the rest of their life to pay off the debt. The second situation is when the individual works in drastic conditions, as they are exploited due to their outstanding debt.

Domestic Servitude

This type of modern slavery is the easiest to hide, and therefore extremely popular in many countries. Domestic slavery can be camouflaged as an au pair, and migrant workers are usually the most vulnerable population for this form of servitude. This form of slavery can be a form of bonded labor, wherein the “employer” compounds costs until the individual can not repay the debt.¹⁰

Past UN action

The “United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons”, adopted in 2010 by the UN GA, urges governments worldwide to take consistent action to mitigate these issues. This resolution calls for a strengthening of security around borders and the creation of a trust fund for the victims of modern slavery, especially women and children.

In 2017, the UN unanimously decided to act on resolution 2388, which clarified the importance of preserving evidence in accordance with trafficking cases. This therefore ensured that those responsible for the slavery could be investigated and held to court standards thoroughly.

Recently, a joint EU, UN, and African Union summit was held in 2017. The leaders discussed and vowed to evacuate immigrants if they are threatened by traffickers during emergency states.

Questions to Consider

1. What should you prioritize in creating a resolution regarding these issues?
2. What measures can be applied to help victims of modern-day slavery reintegrate to society?
3. What is the role of non-governmental organizations in helping defeat modern-day slavery?
4. What measures should governments take to prevent companies from worker exploitation?

Resources for Further Research

1. <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery>
2. www.endslaverynow.org
3. Walkfree, (2022). "Global Slavery Index", *Global Findings*.
<https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/global-findings>
4. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf>
5. ILO, (1930). "CO29 - Forced Labour Convention"
https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029
6. ILO, *General Survey on the fundamental Conventions concerning rights at work in light of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, 2012, ILC.101/III/1B, para. 272.,
<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/definition/lang--en/index.htm>
7. Stilwell, Sean (2013), "Slavery in African History", *Slavery and Slaving in African History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 38.
8. Lovejoy, Paul E.; Hogendorn, Jan S. (1 July 1993). *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897–1936*
9. Peterson, Derek R.; Gavua, Kodzo; Rassool, Ciraj (2 March 2015). *The Politics of Heritage in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-1-107-09485-7.
10. Wikipedia, (Dec 2023). *Slavery in Mauritania*.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_Mauritania
11. <https://www.cocoainitiative.org>
12. End Slavery Now, (2024). Domestic Servitude.
<http://www.endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/domestic-servitude>



CONFERENCE POLICIES

Gratefully adapted from the NAIMUN LX delegate guide

1. Position Papers

Position Papers are required for all delegations who wish to receive an award. Position papers should be emailed to the chair by March 29, 11:59 p.m. ET. Please email the chair with any additional questions regarding position papers.

2. Plagiarism and Pre-writing

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited at CAMUN. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, verbatim or near-verbatim copying from digital or physical sources. This rule applies to any document submitted by delegates throughout the conference, including position papers, draft resolutions, directives, and other documents. Additionally, CAMUN prohibits the use of artificially intelligent generators like ChatGPT in the creation of written documents. All work will be thoroughly checked for plagiarism.

3. Technology

CAMUN prohibits the use of technology in committee sessions, including but not limited to computer and cell phones, except during unmoderated caucuses as directed by the Chair.

4. Accommodations

For questions and requests related to disability and special accommodations, please email the CAMUN secretariat at ModelUN@ConcordAcademy.org. CAMUN will do its best to fulfill all appropriate requests.