**Committee:** World Health Organisation (WHO)

**Issue:** Combating Illegal Organ trafficking in Egypt

**Student Officer:** Millianna Zinnaida Vengerets

**Position:** Co-Chair

**PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

Dear delegates,

My name is Millianna Zinnaida Vengerets and I have the utmost honour to serve as one of your presidents of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in this year's DSTMUN. Having started my journey with the Model UN as one of the youngest developing delegates I can’t wait to see development and growth throughout the three days of the conference. Moreover, I will be as attentive and helpful as possible and listen to you all carefully. The study guide following will proceed to have index information regarding the topic and act as a guide to the topic prior to the conference, however you are encouraged to do further research about the topic and specifically your country’s involvement and policies.

I look forward to meeting you all in November. I wish you all the best time preparing. If any questions arise, feel free to reach out to me by my email: mvengerets@students.isa.edu.gr

Thank you all, and best of luck!

Sincerely,

Millianna.

**TOPIC INTRODUCTION**

Organ trafficking is a global issue, impacting not only individuals, but also governments and international security. It is a widespread transnational crime recognised as one of the most lucrative forms of illicit human trafficking, and it involves the transport of human organs, their illegal removal and sale, and rapid increase for need of organs leaving certain individuals upon the waiting list have to stay patient for a longer period of time due to the supply and demand of organs. In regions where the governance performed less research, law enforcement agencies that work with nations' governments have a majority of the national police to assist with criminalizing traffickers in order to have additional assistance to locate traffickers.

In Egypt, the issue of organ trafficking has been a subject of concern and has impacted citizens for over four decades. It received significant attention in the 1980s-2000s and started drawing widespread international condemnation. The issue of organ trafficking vastly expanded and became more well-known after the Egyptian Revolution in 2011. During that year, economic sanctions and political repression escalated to an unprecedented level, mainly due to social unrest and the economic crisis at the time. Due to the Egyptian revolution and the economic sanctions and rapid increase of refugees and asylum seekers, Egypt became known as a country where illegal organ transplants were extremely common especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Criminality (UNODC)report that Egypt ranks among the five regions globally with the highest incidence of illegal organ transplants. Among these transplanted kidneys are the most frequently removed and traded organs by traffickers.

Because of its location, bordering Libya and Sudan and being situated right across from the European Mediterranean, Egypt has become a central transit point for refugees and asylum seekers. During 2024, Egypt hosted over 500,000 asylum and refugee seekers, according to statistics by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). “Egypt.” *UNHCR*, 2024[[1]](#footnote-0) The massive increase of the 500,000 people in merely one year created a major risk for these refugees and asylum seekers because of their safety and prior to such a large number being less prone to get trafficked, however since most of them are unregistered and undocumented leading to a lack of legal protection and safety concerns. Both of these issues lead to traffickers having easier access to organ trafficking networks, since asylum seekers and refugees are often specifically targeted by traffickers.

**DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

**Organ Trafficking**

The unlawful removal or transport of human organs for transplant or profit.[[2]](#footnote-1)

**Human trafficking for organ removal**

The process of recruiting or enforcing individuals into organ removal usually as part of broader trafficking networks. [[3]](#footnote-2)

**Medical tourism**

The practice of traveling outside your country to receive medical care, often for specialized treatments, lower costs, or because a procedure isn't available at home. [[4]](#footnote-3)

**Economic Hardship**

The struggle is caused by having less money and resources, often due to unemployment, [low income](https://www.google.com/search?q=low+income&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en-gr&client=safari&mstk=AUtExfAb0kFhV8za-b7WZ6FbW-8l3QbgD05shiu2lKJpnBCZvDplsX8i14gy33hgAxVqWhEdPgtRmqExVpGat-LG-R1-FVyGPtQzqerE72tz_lEzQIMZiPWE0EO0q9SJefR2_Xo-a6RKLaF40gz_6BSnUtRi_BJAWS7TzddCRp-0_cH4KuHSGlPaNKoaxwhANed7t8JQoNsC_KBNdlIG_dxurtlbTejbptme8bfh0jkdLuOytiLxK01x-GGyBLN9ITpWlgaDylRwewg4yXrAvxNvKtLN&csui=3&ved=2ahUKEwjRhp_Nx4SPAxXulP0HHcv4I1AQgK4QegQIARAC), or job instability, leading to negative impacts on health, family well-being, and the ability to access necessities like housing, healthcare, and food. [[5]](#footnote-4)

**Asylum seekers**

A person who has left their country, often suddenly, because they are faced with persecution, war or violence and cannot get protection there. Once an asylum seeker has been officially granted asylum, they are then legally recognised as a refugee.[[6]](#footnote-5)

**Dark web**

Parts of the internet that are encrypted, that cannot be found using ordinary search engines, and that are sometimes used for criminal activity.[[7]](#footnote-6)

**Black Market**

Illegal trading of goods that are not allowed to be bought and sold, or that there are not enough of for everyone who wants them.[[8]](#footnote-7)

**Refugees**

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion or membership in a particular social group. [[9]](#footnote-8)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Historical Background of Organ Trafficking**

Illegal organ trafficking has been a severe issue in Egypt and dates back to the late 1970s and 1980s. During that period a significant shift began to occur in Egypt, due to the large influx of patients arriving from neighboring countries near Egypt in order to seek cost-effective medical procedures. This led to both an extremely rapid development of medicine and the emergence of immense amounts of unregulated practices, making Egypt a known area for organ transplants. However due to the vast rise of medical care needed for the transplants and with patients in need of organs in order to get transplants it wasn’t balanced with the legal and financial status Egypt was in during the 1970s and 1980s, therefore leading to unethical medical procedures. There was a vital decrease in organs available for patients due to the financial status of Egypt and lack of organ donations for transplantations. There was also a large imbalance between supply and demand regarding the amount of medical professionals and organs available to operate which led to underground illegal institutions such as the black market arising.

**Organ trafficking in the early 2000s**

A pivotal point in Egyptian organ trafficking was during the early 2000s, when international agencies such as the World Health Organisation brought to their attention the underground black markets. On several occasions, Egypt was on the list of countries-hotspots for illicit trafficking. In 2009 a report from the World Health Organisation stated that Egypt was among the five major countries involved in trafficking.[[10]](#footnote-9) Moreover, it mentioned not only victims’ reports of their traumatic experience with trafficking but also high amounts of undocumented organ transplants.

**Egyptian Revolution**

Regardless of the amount of evidence shown against the traffickers, governments oftentimes have limited files and information from being available. There have been testimonies made by Egyptian citizens by religious Egyptian citizens due to their belief that organ transplantation should only be done after the death of an individual. After decades of abuse and trafficking Egypt implemented Law No.5 in 2010 which aimed to regulate organ transplantation and the criminalisation of commercial trade of organs. Even though the new added law created safety concerns, since it was implemented decades after the issue had already expanded and there was already a major black market which was already put into use. After 2011 Egypt became a transit nation for refugees and migrants because of the Egyptian Revolution which was driven by majorly the lack of human rights and political freedom, as well as having a geographical landscape for refugees and migrants arriving from Eritrea or Sudan since they are both nations which are easier to go to from Egypt. The Egyptian Revolution led to an increase in death rates and dangerous areas within the nation throughout Egyptian organ trafficking.

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**Figure 1: Graph on the increase of asylum seekers and refugees after the Egyptian revolution (2005-2016)[[11]](#footnote-10)**

The graph depicts the increase of asylum seekers and refugees throughout the years 2005-2016. It’s visible throughout the graph the great increase of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt from the years of 2005 up until 2016. The years which tend to be the years of 2013 and 2014 where Egypt was a highly known destination and a major percentage of explicit trafficking happened during that time frame. This graph highlights the impeccably quick rise of Egypt's refugee and asylum seeker population.

**Economic Hardships through the Black Market**

Organ trafficking is a common phenomenon in many countries as the demand for organ transplants far exceeds the supply which medical facilities provide. Across the world the issues of organ trafficking often are caused by restricted access to healthcare for all citizens, and lack of medical infrastructure creating a higher possibility for human trafficking to occur. Wealthier individuals tend to have connections through underground networks, such as the black market. The black market is estimated to profit billions of dollars annually from trafficking. This often leads to online-advertising for organs to be sold on the black market. From 2017 and onward, it’s been reported to be majorly used in Egypt.

**Economic collapse**

When economic hardship weakened following the Egyptian revolution the black market generated billions of dollars annually coming from the UNODC on their report in 2015[[12]](#footnote-11) however it profits a major amount. Due to the aforementioned 2011 major economic collapse and the increase in trafficking it undermined patient safety rights which are given to citizens through the government, which improves citizens’ trust in the health care system.

**Supply and Demand**

Throughout the years in which organ trafficking has been present in Egypt, there has been an extreme issue of supply and demand for the amount of organs available. Specifically, there was a global shortage of legally registered and available organs for the victims to use during transplants. This raises transplants’ prices, creating lengthy waitlists which in turn impacts individuals’ health and in a vulnerable state.

**Legal and Political Context**

Ever since the early 1970s Egypt has struggled politically due to the absence of comprehensive legislations in regard to organ transplantations. Because of the lack of clarity in legislation, it became easier for organ trafficking to flourish underground via the black market, with different brokers who sell things destined for individuals and doctors.

**Donation of organs**

Prior to 2010, Egypt's governance didn’t include a law where the commercial sale of organs was criminalized and ethical transplant standards hadn’t been set. Even though there were some medical guidelines, the existing ones were vague and not targeting the topic itself (organ trafficking). Due to the lack of sufficient legal guidelines it was permitted for all transplants to take place without the proper verification of knowing where the organs of the donor go, which is crucial for safety reasons and legal consent documents. Multiple of these transplants were transmitted in private clinics where it was made more difficult for the responsible authorities to track down and properly fine all the illicit practices. During this period before 2010, organ donation was authenticated by the donor to the recipient, the major issue was centered around the documents and their legality, since a majority were fraudulently transmitted instead of properly authenticated.

**Law No.5 of 2010**

Law No.5 was firstly published in 2010 and was Egypt's first initiative upon the prohibiting of human organ trafficking. It included an official ban on the commercial trade of organ trafficking and established a national committee also known as the Higher Committee for Organ Transplantation, tasked with the recording of donor records for additional safety measures. However this all changed when a national policy was implemented, namely Law No. 5, which led to a major turning point for Egypt since it was the first law mentioning human organ transplants.

**Geography and Healthcare**

Egypt’s location, as mentioned previously, plays a vital role in the situation and prevention of the issue due to it being located at a key migration centre between Africa and the Middle East. Not only does this cause tourism to be a key aspect of revenue growth but it also results in more migration and refugees arriving from other regions. Oftentimes that causes issues for Egyptians since traffickers often target more vulnerable individuals and demographics such as refugees and tourists. Moreover, since it’s in such an abundant area of the world, making it a destination point for illicit transplantation and an area where underground networks such as the black market thrive, there are more people that can be targeted more easily by traffickers, such as refugees and asylum seekers.

**Healthcare in Egypt**

Additionally, Egypt has a healthcare system which lacks financial support and causes a limit in people and resources available for the transplant procedure and regulation helping towards the victims. Moreover, individuals who aren’t legally registered in Egypt such as refugees and asylum seekers face a lack of legal protection.

**MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

**Egypt**

Egypt is the key actor in this topic, since it has become a significant location in which illicit organ trafficking occurs, with kidney transplants and major underground trafficking networks having been reported on several occasions. What often seems to be the case is that the victims get drugged prior to the trafficking leaving them with trauma that could be lifelong. Egypt is placed exactly between Africa and the Middle East making transportation of refugees and asylum seekers through boat or land travel easier. Several neighbouring countries of Egypt such as Eritrea and Sudan have major poverty issues and therefore their citizens enter Egypt for better life opportunities. Moreover clandestine clinics placed throughout Egypt have been bringing major issues. A clandestine clinic is an unlicensed medical facility which is not legally recognized by health organisations. Clandestine clinics are oftentimes where a victim is brought for surgery without any records or medical follow-ups.

**Sudan**

Sudan is a region near Egypt and therefore has a large impact upon it. It is a major transit area for migrants and refugees who travel across the Sahara Desert and oftentimes end up in Egypt. The overcrowding and lack of accommodation in their own state makes citizens want to flee for better opportunities elsewhere. Therefore, Egypt accepts a lot of refugees and asylum seekers from Sudan. Moreover, individuals who play large roles in the Sudanese criminal networks are often the same individual smugglers who illegally cross the border from eastern Sudan towards Egypt.

**Eritrea**

Eritrea is a country in Africa bordering the Red Sea and therefore accessible to Egypt by boat. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have been fleeing toward Egypt due to repression and violence. However, these people often get forced into organ harvesting since the travel to get to Egypt can be extremely dangerous due to the conditions the people are in. The individuals often the target democrats in this case tend to be young men and women who are misled into thinking they will have access to better job opportunities but end up getting drugged and trafficked for their organs often through underground networks such as the black market.

**WHO**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has been extremely helpful to the victims and successful prevention of organ trafficking to an extent. It has made recommendations which have been implemented, such as donor screening, promotion of transplant surgeries and different ways in order to educate individuals about the problem. The WHO’s contribution towards the prevention of the problem has been critical since multiple people working in the medical field such as doctors prioritise certain patients over others from the waiting list, this is often caused by families donating additional money towards the doctor illegally. Since 2011 the WHO has made an impact by making protocols for clinical staff training programmes more complex which leads to a slighter possibility of bias or clandestine clinics occurring. The WHO has not only assisted with the development and implementation of healthcare systems but has also played a crucial role in the assistance in victims’ recovery after such traumatic events by offering rehab services for them.

**UNODC**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Criminality (UNODC) has been very attentive in criminal justice including human organ trafficking. It has been a strong advocate regarding assistance for victims and the cross border situations especially between Egypt and Eritrea. Additionally UNODC has been a major contributor towards the afterlife a trafficker lives opposing their actions and enduring their actions and wrongdoings of the case. Which includes how the trafficker is treated oftentimes through the process of firstly attending a court and after the judges deliberation spending their registered time in prison.

**BLOCS EXPECTED**

**Bloc 1**

There are to be two alliances created, one alongside the country tackling the issue as well as Middle Eastern and Asian nations and including member states whose primary focus is regarding adding upon law enforcement.

**Bloc 2**

The second alliance will consist of the nations whose main focus is victim protection and safety of all the individuals involved as well as consisting of WHO board health care leaders and main representatives which include countries in Europe and Africa.

**TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

| **Date** | **Description of event** |
| --- | --- |
| 1990-2000s  | Rapid increase of violence and kidney transplants documented in Egypt. |
| 2005-2009 | Social media becomes larger; some of the first documented incidents of organ trafficking occurred.  |
| March 2010 | Law No. 5 of 2010 is implemented. |
| 2016 | Egyptian governance conducts one of the biggest anti-trafficking schemes in the nation's history. |
| 2018 | Multiple chiropractic-based clinics suspected of illegal face transplants closed down. Major investigation begins with the assistance of UNODC to improve the cross-border issues. |
| 2019 | WHO updates guidelines on organ transplantation and encourages all nations to adopt stricter regulations, enforcing penalties and consequences in the case of infringement.  |
| 2021 | COVID-19 pandemic had a large impact and made governance raise concerns for the underground trading centres such as the black market. |

**RELEVANT TREATIES AND EVENTS**

**United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Trafficking in Persons (UNTIP)**

This treaty specifically mentions trafficking especially of marginalized or target groups, such as women and children. This treaty was adopted internationally in 2003 and widely implemented. Moreover, the main purpose this treaty brings is firstly collaboration among states in order to meet the objectives the treaty initiated, as well as providing protection and assistance for victims who have gone through trafficking. The protocol’s obligations include victim protection mentally and physically also including the safety of their identity since it is extremely fragile. Additionally, prevention measures such as raising awareness and addressing where the issue of organ trafficking mostly occurs. Lastly, international cooperation between member states is crucial as it can prove to be helpful during investigations, important information sharing and victim assistance.

**The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation (GP-HTOT)**

These principles were implemented in 2010 and emphasise how to make ethical donations and transactions of human cells, tissues and organs towards victims. The purpose of the treaty was primarily to ensure safety and consent during the transplant. Moreover it was to promote how to ethically donate tissues and organs. Furthermore, it strictly mentions how organs and tissues should not be sold or bought and how any form of financial gain is unethical. This treaty encouraged all member states to adopt laws and regulations which will protect transplant tourists visiting Egypt and generally internationally. Additionally, throughout the treaty it emphasized on multiple occasions the enhancement of accessibility which it has created for patients doing their surgeries. It declares all financial gains which are coming from donations made by individuals not to be profited of since it's seen as unethical. The people oftentimes gaining the unethical donations are organ brokers.

[**United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/228 on Trafficking in Persons**](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4033020?ln=en&v=pdf)

This resolution is in regards to trafficking in person also known as TIP used as common text in UN and NGO writings. It calls upon all member states to assist victims and the people involved with organ trafficking like refugees and tourists. A crucial legislation which the resolution provided were, to strengthen the penalties and general legislation for criminalizing all types of human trafficking. Moreover, enhancing the cross border cooperation between member states in order to have a better chance of recognizing and tackling trafficking networks.

**PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

**Law No. 5 of 2010 On Combatting Trafficking in Persons:**

Law No. 5 was firstly published in 2010 titled the *Law Regulating Human Organ Transplantation* which showed Egypt's first large initiative upon tackling the issue of illicit human organ trafficking. Key provisions of the law included an official ban upon the commercial trade of organ trafficking, establishing a National Committee for Organ Transplantation also known as Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) tasked with the recording of donor records. Despite the law being Egypt's first initiative upon the issue, critics have spotted loopholes and weak enforcement on certain parts of the law. Certain inconsistencies noticed tend to include corruption in the medical and legal fields making it easier for professionals such as doctors to cover up their illegal transplants. There have also been very limited provision over the private medical facilities which is where a major amount of the illegal transplants occurred.

**WHO Guidelines on Organ Transplant**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued Guiding Principles on Organ Transplant providing support and protection. Urging Egypt to sustain a comprehensive transplant program for both the donor and victim. Additionally having voluntary and consent from both parties including the donor and the victim themselves prior to the surgery. Moreover, having issued guiding principles on organ transplant there has been dedicated special attention towards the migrants and refugees who tend to be the highest percentage of trafficking victims. Additionally it also highly encourages public awareness campaigns to inform people of organ trafficking and how to stay safe from it. Finally it has provided major technological assistance and training for ethics professionals to analyze traffickers through social media platforms or phone numbers.

**UNHCR Refugee protection measures**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had reached out to different camps and communities hosting refugees and educating them on the dangers of organ trafficking and how to protect themselves from being a victim. UNHCR had also provided medical and legal aid/support for legally identified victims. Furthermore, the major groups of individuals who are at risk by traffickers proved my percentage tend to be firstly unaccompanied minors, afterwards generally females across all ages mostly targeting younger girls. It also provided additional legal justice towards the victims in order to get clarity and equity.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

**Strengthen legal frameworks and existing laws**

There have been several legislations passed aiming to resolve the issue, however even though they mention the main issues it should be elaborated upon in order for it to include organ trade and declare it a criminal activity. Applying penalties enforced for all the parties as well as the doctors and intermediaries. Moreover, Egypt does not participate in many investigations and detections of trafficking cases. Which could involve training prosecutors, police and even judges to recognize signs of trafficking in order to criminalize them. Finally, there has to be implementation of stricter guidelines and rules during organ donations including background checks and verifications to ensure ethical donations were made.

**Awareness and Educational campaigns**

In order to make individuals aware of the dangers and causes of trafficking it is crucial to educate the public about the consequences it has and how to protect themselves. National campaigns can be launched explicitly raising awareness and the consequences of trafficking. There could be community outreach programs especially for low income individuals, refugees and asylum seekers who are oftentimes the target because of their easy access. Moreover, raising awareness through university and school programs in forms of workshops is highly educative since it makes students think and understand what they are discussing. Where it additionally can be shown in what form ethical donations are made.

**International cooperation of member states**

Trafficking isn’t an issue which only affects Egypt however it also affects the states bordering it. This can lead to trafficking gangs entering Egypt and harming individuals. Moreover, collaborating with international agencies such as interpol which is a law enforcement organisation helping to communicate severe issues safely and efficiently. Additionally UN offices like UNODC to dismantle trafficking organisations. This includes monitoring of cross border tourist transplant, a rising issue, especially for the people arriving in Egypt illegally. Finally, there need to be restrictions and limitations to the export of organs to nations with unauthorized transplant practices.

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