



SUPPORTING GOVERNMENTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING (HT)

The vital connectivity provided by airlines is a force for good, connecting businesses to markets, reuniting families and friends and facilitating tourism and cultural exchange. However, the global air transport system can also be exploited by criminals for the illegal trafficking of men, women and children.

The responsibility for detecting, apprehending and prosecuting those perpetrating human trafficking (HT) rests with governments and national law enforcement agencies. However, airline, airport, ground handling, security screening, customs and other staff can provide an important source of additional intelligence when they are able to recognize signs of potential trafficking situations and report their observations to the authorities.

The Issue

HT is a crime against humanity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights. It is the fastest growing and second largest criminal industry in the world. It is estimated that 24.9 million people are trafficked globally, more than 75% of which are women and children¹. It involves the *“recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”*².

Recent investigations indicate a link between HT and international terrorism where trafficking is used as a means of funding terrorism, including acts of unlawful interference directed against civil aviation.

The responsibility for dealing with this crime rests with States and their respective law enforcement agencies. While many governments have recently enacted legislation to prevent and suppress HT, prosecutions and convictions are currently disappointingly low. The number of countries with a national statute that criminalizes most forms of trafficking in persons in line with international standards (UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol) increased from 33 in 2003 (18%) to 158 in 2016 (88%). However, between 2012 and 2014 only 15% of countries had more than 50 convictions annually for HT³.

Governments, international organizations and civil society have launched various initiatives to raise awareness of HT in the hope that this leads to greater reporting of suspected criminal activity and an increase in prosecutions. This includes the Blue

¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, 2017 and United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2016

² Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children agreed at Palermo (2000)

³ UNODC, 2016



Lightening Initiative⁴ run by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), US Customs and Border Protection and the campaign run by Airline Ambassadors International⁵. Some airlines are participating in these initiatives, often as part of existing corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Airlines are also increasingly required to comply with legislation relating to HT, such as the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015.

With respect to aviation, cabin crew in particular can play a supporting role against HT by recognizing and reporting potential trafficking situations, in addition to their primary role of ensuring the safety and security of passengers while on board⁶.

However, a key issue for airline staff, particularly cabin crew, is that there is no standardized method of reporting observations to the national law enforcement agencies around the world. Similarly there is no agreed protocol for the handling of suspected victims or traffickers after landing.

IATA's work on Human Trafficking

The airline industry is committed to playing a responsible role in helping authorities put an end to the evil of HT.

IATA is working with member airlines to increase staff and passenger awareness concerning the nature, scale and humanitarian consequences of HT. In particular, we are encouraging airlines to train airline staff on how to recognize and report potential trafficking situations. To assist, we are developing practical tools that airlines can integrate easily into existing employee training programs.

In addition, IATA is calling on governments and their enforcement agencies to provide clear, practical and anonymous mechanisms for airline staff so they can report their observations on potential trafficking situations. A good example of best practice is in the United States, where the Department of Homeland Security provides a national toll (cost) free "tip line" and web form where airline staff can report their observations anonymously.

IATA is also working with airports and other stakeholders within the air transport sector to:

- Raise awareness on HT
- Share guidance material on HT, including on 'recognize and report' practices.

⁴ www.cbp.gov/border-security/human-trafficking/blue-lightning

⁵ www.airlineamb.org

⁶ It should be noted that airline crew should never confront suspected traffickers or to try and rescue suspected victims. Actions should be limited to reporting suspicions to police or other authorities.