



24 May 2014 – The mistake of thinking slavery has been abolished is all too common. But slavery, under different names, exists all around the world. Forced labour, debt bondage and trafficking are all forms of modern slavery. It doesn't take place in isolated areas, but everywhere in the world from the Sinai desert to Amsterdam's Red Light District.

The victims are the [most vulnerable](#) – women and girls forced into prostitution, migrants trapped in debt bondage, and sweatshop or farm workers kept there by clearly illegal tactics and paid little or nothing. However, domestic employers using threats and coercion also use forced labour in “developed” countries. From sweatshops to brothels, forced labour is used worldwide.

Forced labour generates 150 billion USD in illegal profits per year, which is about three times more than previously estimated, according to new figures released this week by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its report ‘[Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour.](#)’ The abusers come in many forms such as individuals, enterprises, rebel groups and even state's.

A group of United Nations independent experts on slavery, migrants and trafficking [called on world Governments](#) to adopt a legally binding international protocol to respond to today's challenge of forced labour worldwide. “A legally binding protocol is essential to fight forced labour and represents a crucial opportunity for more coherent international action to advance the eradication of slavery-like

practices around the world.”

“There are over 20 million people today who are victims of forced labour. These are women, men and children who are economically and sexually exploited,” the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Gulnara Shahinian, said. “Slavery like practices like forced labour continues to exist today because they are profitable.” UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crepeau stressed that “migrants are often willing to do the ‘dirty, difficult and dangerous’ jobs that nationals will not, at the exploitative wages that unscrupulous employers will offer, including in the construction, agriculture, hospitality and care-giving sectors.”

When examining the report the striking thing is that the countries that benefit most from forced labour are the most developed. Indeed the two leaders in illicit profits are Asia-Pacific and Developed Economies (such as the US) and the EU, together generating over \$98 Billion USD alone. By themselves the developed western economies generate more than Africa, the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean combined in total illicit profits.

Modern slavery isn't happening the shadows far away, it is happening right before our eyes. Taxi drivers, prostitutes, farm hands, construction workers all in “developed” countries could be victims of modern slavery. Thus the UN human rights experts have emphasized, “There is an urgent need for comprehensive approaches that take into account the labour market dimension to curb forced labour”.

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