



World Day against Trafficking in Persons

Human Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. (United Nations)

Trafficking of persons is one of the worst forms of human rights abuse; it is even likened to modern day slavery. Although in Seychelles there are not enough reported cases to classify the situation as alarming, past reports from foreign experts (e.g. the UN) have stated that anecdotal evidence suggests that trafficking of persons, especially young girls for commercial sex work, is actually an issue of concern.

The Seychelles Human Rights Commission is pleased to note that Seychelles has put in place necessary mechanisms to deal with the problem of human trafficking, such as the establishment of a high level National Coordinating Committee on trafficking in persons under the 'Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2014', the National Labour Migration Policy and the inter-governmental discussions to conclude bilateral agreements on labour cooperation with countries having the largest migrant worker population in Seychelles. In 2017, the Government prosecuted its first case of trafficking which involved migrant workers; victims of forced labour in the construction sector. The Supreme Court has also issued sentence(s) for human trafficking.

Recently, it has come to the attention of the general public that trafficking of persons in the trade of illicit drugs is also taking place in Seychelles. With the economic hardships brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, a rise in crimes and human rights violation is not uncommon (as shown by worldwide trends for similar events of the past). It is due to this reason that there ought to be increased vigilance on the part of the authorities and community members alike. For the year 2020, the Seychelles Human Rights Commission registered 11 alleged cases of human trafficking but all were related to employment and lodged by foreigners. The Human Rights Commission condemns all forms of human rights abuse and calls on the reporting of these atrocious acts to the concerned authorities. These shameful crimes rob men, women and in some cases, even children, of their dignity. The impacts can have lasting psychological effects and other forms of mental and emotional trauma. As such, there is a need for strengthened mechanisms which cater to the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. We also need to consistently provide adequate training to our law enforcement officers and other related parties so that they can recognise, investigate and tackle the issues in an effective and timely manner, whenever they arise. Education of workers- both migrant and local, should be more intensive. The Seychelles Human Rights Commission has already started a series of education sessions in certain government departments and is also available to offer its assistance to other stakeholders in need of human rights training.

In its Preamble, our Constitution recognises the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, as the foundation for freedom, justice, welfare, fraternity, peace and unity. The human life is a gift and as such, it is not meant for sale. Every human being is entitled to a life lived in dignity. The upholding of human rights should not be merely a moral calling but also a duty to oneself and humanity.