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## **Comprehensive Analysis of the Factors promoting human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan Province**

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**Abstract.** Human Trafficking is a topic of international attention in the organized crime. It has always been oppressed, criminalized and discouraged. Hence, there are certain hidden factors that promote human trafficking directly or indirectly in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. Some of these factors are internal and some of them are across the borders. Nevertheless, they are equally responsible in promoting, financing and increasing human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. This study focuses on the political, social, economic and societal factors that have direct or indirect influence on the promotion and finances of human trafficking, increasing organized crime in Sistan and Baluchistan Province of Iran. The literature has been taken from a span of 2 decades, considering the political and economic changes of the region. Specific discussions have been made leading to a literary conclusion and recommendations in order to decrease the influence of such factors.

**Keywords.** Human Trafficking, Organized Crime, National Security, Criminal Funding, Illegal Immigration

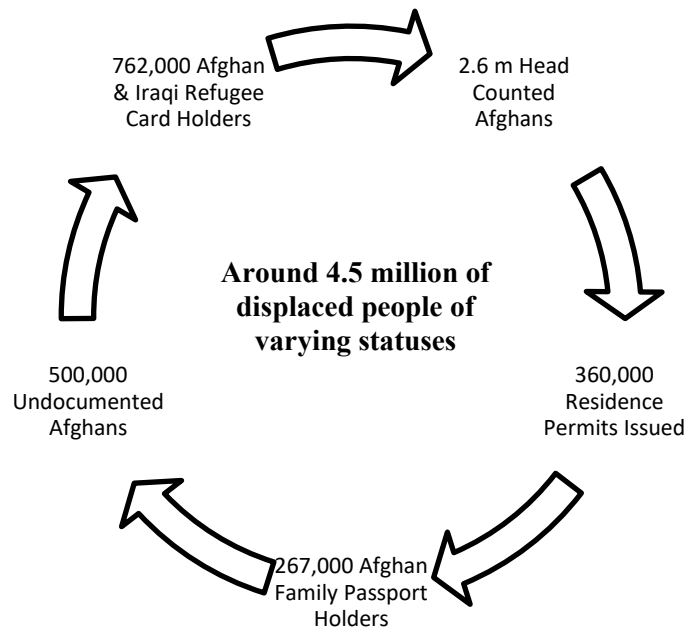
### **1. Introduction**

While human trafficking is a major factor that directly affects the national security of Iran, there are a vast number of factors that promote human trafficking as part of the organized crime in Sistan and Baluchistan province. In general, no region of the world has been left untouched by human trafficking (Freida, 2011). Measuring the impact of human trafficking on the national security is not accurately vivid due to the clandestine nature of the crime, however, there are several factors that promote this crime. The term used for this trafficking in the region is “migrant smuggling”. Lately, Iran has made significant progress in addressing and combating human trafficking in the country at a national, regional and international level (Hosseini, 2020). The Iranian Parliament ratified a law prohibiting trafficking of people in 2004 that had defined punishment for both the smugglers and the migrants.

There are a number of factors that secretly promote human trafficking in the region. The geographical and geopolitical placement of Iran has had a vivid impact on shaping terrorist activities, especially in borders and marginal areas (Keikhaee Rad, 2017). The existence of extremist supporting groups in Sistan and Baluchistan province of the country is a vital factor

that promotes human trafficking into and out of the country. On the other hand, Iran is situated between the junction of Afghanistan and Pakistan with Turkey, which is the easiest and cheapest pathway towards Europe. This fact influences labour trafficking from Afghanistan and Pakistan into Iran and the chain goes all the way to the Iran-Turkey border, which is also a significant part of human trafficking worldwide (Mackenzie, 2021). Nevertheless, the economic, political and security situation of Afghanistan, as well as, the day-to-day downfall of the economy of Pakistan have proved to be another constraint that influences human trafficking through this pathway (Michael Cox, 2022). Consented trafficking due financial hurdles in the lives of tribal population in all sides of the border is also of critical importance where a voluntary and consenting adult pays to these groups in order to cross the borders toward Europe (Angelis, 2016). This is mostly part of the organized crime in the Sistan and Baluchistan province having all sides of the borders involved.

The number of illegal aliens coming through Sistan and Baluchistan border both from Afghanistan and Pakistan are increasingly rising. This has led to a load of illegal immigrants to European Union through Turkey (Kirisici, 2010). The voluntary and consented illegal immigration through the border is also considered a major factor that promotes and supports human trafficking organizations. Despite declines, deportations, allegations and strict patrolling, these number increase from day to day, which has a negative response to the economic and national security measures of the country.



*Figure 1: UNHCR Statistics (Refugees in Iran)*

## 2. Background

With all traditional criminal acts, it is vital to begin with the definitions that the world is obligated to declare criminal in their laws. Human trafficking of any kind, is one of these prohibited criminal acts throughout the laws of the globe (Elliott, 2015). Human trafficking can be defined as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people with or without consent through illegal ways, paths, borders for illegal immigration or other illegal and/or criminal activities. Human trafficking often presents itself as purely a victim versus the

offender matter, which ignores the reality that is present in real-world situations. Legal definitions of human trafficking concentrate around the concepts of "consent," "coercion," and "fraud," yet there is additionally mutual exploitation and "self-initiation" in certain cases (Albanese, 2022). Human trafficking has been a part of Sistan and Baluchistan region for decades. Cross border organized crimes have been part of this region for years (Grare, 2013). To overcome this, The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union (EU) are collaborating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to implement the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants - Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT Asia and the Middle East) over a four-year period in four countries: the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Iraq, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (UNODC, 2019).

Throughout the span of the modern era, Sistan and Baluchistan province has been home to criminal organizations. Organized crime has been on its peak in certain time and has been controlled at certain times, nevertheless, vivid or hidden, it has affected the national security of the country in certain ways. Human trafficking is one of the most predominant activities of these criminal organizations the effects of which have crossed border and have reached overseas.

### **3. Statement of Research Problems**

Human Trafficking is an understood, accepted and globally declared criminal act. However, there are certain factors that promote human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan province of Iran, despite the national and international treaties and regulations. In this study, these factors have been identified.

### **4. Research Objectives**

- To identify the predominant factors that unintentionally promote and support human traffickers and human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan province.
- To study the importance of public awareness in regard to the international treaties and cross-border rules for unauthorized immigration.
- To determine the social and societal indicators that lead to consented human trafficking, yet making it a factor promoting human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan province.
- To study the geographical structure of Sistan and Baluchistan province, a primary factor to the subject.
- To propose feasible way outs on a national and regional levels in order to address human trafficking problem in Sistan and Baluchistan province, decrease organized crimes and contribute to the national security of the country and region.

### **5. Research Methodology**

The research is descriptive in its nature; however, certain demographics and statistics have been cited from accredited organizations, books, research papers and United Nations Organizations. The subject of the research is a topic of political sciences and international security, however,

some of the factors studied for this research have social, civil, civil and societal roots, therefore, social psychology has also been a topic of the literature review. In addition, the current regional miseries have also been taken in account. The selection of articles has been considered with prudence, and when necessary, appropriate citations and copyright permissions have been obtained. The national and international press have only been taken into consideration for informational purposes. No news has been taken in account or citation for the completion of this research.

## 6. Literature Review

There are certain social, economic, political, societal and religious factors that have directly or indirectly promoted human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan province. Some of the most significant factors have been studied in this research in details.

*6.1.1. Geographical Location.* Sistan and Baluchistan is located in the south east of Iran bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sistan has since been employed to describe the relatively small portion of the province's northern border whereas Baluchistan runs from Zahedan County to Chabahar County from north to south. The Gulf of Oman, South Khorasan Province, Kerman Province, Hormozgan Province, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are the province's neighbors to the north, west, south, and east, respectively. Being connected to three international borders, the geographic location has been one the major factors that has been a major influence to the organized criminal groups to involve in human trafficking. On the other hand, millions of illegal immigrants arrive in Europe every year (Seefar, 2016) mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan via Iran, specifically, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, and are welcomed, that increases the effect of illegal immigration and encourages the involved organizations yet further in Sistan and Baluchistan province.

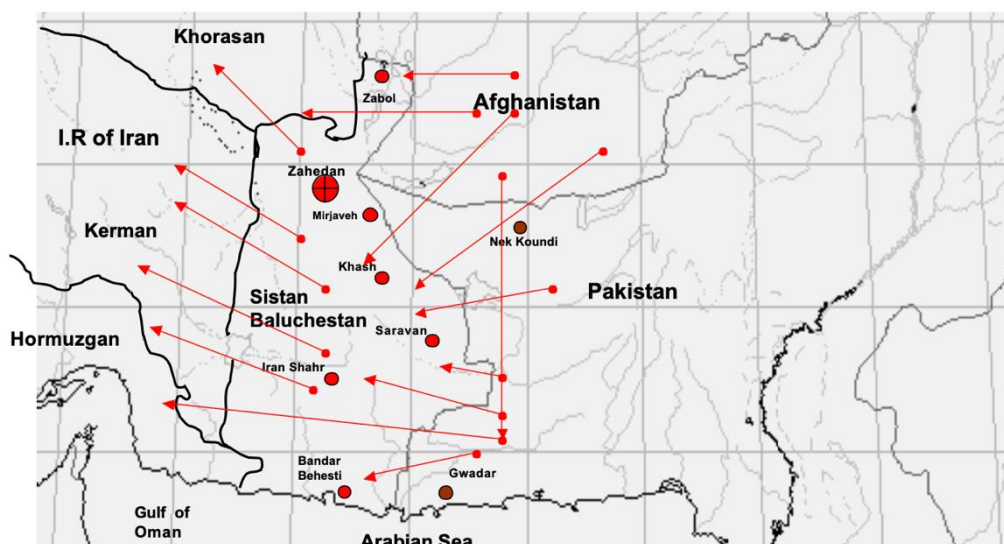


Figure 2: Sistan and Baluchistan, Southern Land Trafficking Route

*6.1.2. Consented Human Trafficking.* Though the term has not been of certain literary focus, as well as, trafficking in persons is prevented, suppressed and punished in all forms and ways (UNODC, 2014), there are certain people who write proper agreements and pay a

handsome amount to the human traffickers in Sistan and Baluchistan province to traffic them across the borders, through the west border of Iran to Turkey and all the way to European Union. This consented trafficking has a major role in financing these human trafficking organizations and individuals. Most of these groups, families and individuals being trafficked are from across the border from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

*6.1.3. Border Control.* Human trafficking can be considered as an element of mixed migration (*Reisen, Rijken, 2015*). Societies across the borders and the decades of war in Afghanistan are not an exception to the global phenomena of poverty, which is thought to be the primary driver of human trafficking. Human trafficking is more common among families who live in poverty (*Bales, 2011*). On the other hand, the criminal organizations also hire such individuals who have critical financial situations and are in urgent need of income. These individuals are the resource to traffic humans across the borders. By most accounts, human trafficking is a highly attractive business for criminal groups because it is low in risk and high in payoffs (*Steocker, 2018*). In addition, human traffickers target on those who are weak, the impoverished, and the solitary. Policies and practices that marginalize entire groups of people and render them especially susceptible to being trafficked are the cause of problems like disempowerment, social exclusion, and economic vulnerability (*UNGIFT, 2008*). When developing comprehensive policies and practices for the prevention of human trafficking, the vulnerability of an individual in the social context stands out as the crucial component that is most often missing.

*6.1.4. Poverty.* Sistan and Baluchistan province shares a relatively long border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Most of the human trafficking in the area is carried out from these two neighboring counties. Therefore, the border control has a major role in the confidence of criminal organizations encouraging individuals to work for them and traffic groups and individuals from across the borders. The low domestic and political security coefficient, together with economic development, is the most important fundamental factor in the relationship between economic development and security in Iran (*Ebrahimzadeh, Sahraei, 2012*).

## **7. Discussion and Conclusion**

Despite all the regulations, punishable laws, international treaties and the involvement of governments and the United Nations, human trafficking has neither been decreasing, nor has it been being properly traced in the organized crime of Sistan and Baluchistan Province of Iran. Though the act has been oppressed, discouraged and criminalized, there are certain factors that promote human trafficking directly or indirectly in Sistan and Baluchistan. Some of the major factors have been studied in this research including the geographical placement of the province and the long borders connecting to the neighbouring countries, the willingness of cross border people to be trafficked all the way to European Union countries, poverty, education, labour and many more. These factors influence and finance human traffickers and gives them a very high payoff for every border cross. On the other hand, the sanctions of Iran and the lack of international support towards the illegal immigrant control also has a vital role in the overall operations of illegal immigration and human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan province.

This research concludes with an analysis of regional patterns of human trafficking and the major factors that promote it as part of the organized crime in Sistan and Baluchistan. Proper

awareness campaigns need to be raised on a regional and international levels in order to discourage human trafficking in the area. In addition, the European Union may come up with resources, solutions and way outs to address the inflow of illegal immigrants and trafficked humans via the land and ports of Iran and Turkey into their countries. Alternative immigration ways need to be proposed in order to save lives and decrease organized crime. Moreover, the government of Islamic Republic of Iran needs to increase border patrolling forces and involve technological solutions such as closed-circuit surveillances in order to control the border and inhibit human trafficking from the neighbouring countries. Furthermore, Iran-Turkey border control also has a vivid role in the control of human trafficking in Sistan and Baluchistan province, since most of the individuals, groups and families trafficked from Pakistan and Afghanistan and transited to European Union Countries through Turkey.

## **8. Recommendations**

1. Public awareness in the region, discouraging human trafficking, by collecting accurate data of accidental and criminal lives loss.
2. The involvement of European Union in making work specific, education specific and immigration specific policies in order to discourage those who enter their borders via Iran.
3. To allocate more border patrolling forces and involve technological solutions to border control in Sistan and Baluchistan province in order to control illegal border crossing.
4. The involvement of international community across borders to find alternative ways for illegal immigration in order to discourage the human trafficking routes.
5. The western neighbours of Iran to implement strict policies for human trafficking to avoid illegal entries of alien citizen to their countries transiting via the land of Iran.

## **9. Scope for Future Work**

Future researchers are encouraged to work on the statistics of the immigrants, trafficked humans and the regulations indirectly encouraging such trafficking, especially consented illegal immigration via Iran.

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