

**PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN
CONSTITUTING OBLIGATION *ERGA OMNES***

Farhad Malekian
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Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation of Children
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P U B L I S H I N G

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Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation of Children Constituting Obligation *Erga Omnes*

... for the enforcement of the rights of children...

ABSTRACT

Whilst the value of human integrity within the laws of individual states and the documents of international human rights is being increasingly consolidated and will become, sooner or later, the primary concern of the law, severe breaches of this value are indeed still widespread. In particular the sexual exploitation of children constitutes one of the most serious questions of national, regional, transnational and international law. According to international records, every fifteen seconds a child is raped in Africa alone. Almost half of the cases heard by the ICTY concern the sexual exploitation of women and children during armed conflict. More or less similar conclusions may be reached regarding the ICTR or the SCSL. In Rwanda alone, 500,000 females were raped. Almost 200,000 females and children have been the victims of cruel forms of sexual violence during the conflicts in Congo. Sexual abuse of children by priests cannot any longer be ignored in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, France, Ireland, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States, although it is ignored in most Islamic countries. The sexual exploitation of children is also widely practised in many other countries. Regrettably, 79% of all world trafficking is for sexual exploitation.

The principal subject matter of this book is the legal etymology of sexual exploitation governing minors. The aim is to identify and analyse *jus cogens* and obligation *erga omnes* in relation to the sexual exploitation of children and to evaluate the international responsibility of states in relation to the elimination or prevention of the crime, and the prosecution and punishment of offenders.

PREFACE

Whilst the value of human integrity is increasingly developing into the primary concern of the laws of individual states and the documents of international human rights law, severe violations of these laws, provisions, norms, conventions and documents remain commonplace and widespread. A particularly grievous example is the trafficking in persons, which constitutes one of the most serious questions for national and international law. The term "trafficking in persons" does not only deal with the sexual exploitation of females and males, but also applies to the position of persons who have, by one means or another, lost the potential to control their personal integrity through working under conditions of forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, or servitude, and extraction of organs, or tissues. Although defining sexual exploitation minutely is a challenging task, it broadly means to impose the interests of a person or persons or an organized group onto the body of the victim who has no right to choose but only to serve her or his master. This is what is also called prostitution, with *forcibly* given consent being typically characterized as rape.

The principal subject matter of this book is sex trafficking, with a particular concentration on the situation of young females. Unfortunately it has not been possible to produce anything comparable on the situation of boys. The reason for this is that most relevant documents deal with the position of women and girls, while documents dealing with the questions of the sexual exploitation of boys are very few in number. In any case, the sexual exploitation of children is one of the important concerns of the book. The intention is to identify and analyse the existing documents in the field of trafficking and see whether their provisions, norms and principles can be considered under *jus cogens* norms and consequently obligation *erga omnes*, which constitute the unavoidable international norms that have to be protected by the legal authorities of governments within the national, transnational and international arenas. Based on this aim, the theoretical understanding of the subject from the point of view of positive law is exhaustively investigated. With this in mind, the chapters of the book present a large number of norms and principles constituting an integral part of the body of international legislation concerning the prohibition of all forms of sex trafficking in children. It is however true

that the law applicable to the trafficking in women and children is a significant part of international human rights law instruments and cannot be studied in isolation. This means that the law governing trafficking should be examined in conjunction with a considerable number of principles of human rights law which have a dominant role within international legal community as a whole.

Since the subject matter of the book falls broadly within the field of international law and particularly international criminal law, the function of this branch of jurisprudence is also one of its fundamental concerns. Throughout the work, we will concentrate on various definitions of the law governing sex trafficking, particularly as it applies to children. The book therefore explores the definitions of sex trafficking which are adopted at a regional and international level. The aim is to examine these different systems and to see whether there are any differences between them. But since the national rules are essentially supposed to be in accordance with regional rules and the latter should not legally be in conflict with international norms and principles, this means that there are certain strong connections between these three systems and that they ought to follow one another in form, phrasing and principles. This is what is required for the fulfilment of the principle of cooperation. By way of introduction, the chapters of the book emphasise the fundamental duties and responsibilities of states to face their international obligations.

Briefly, several principles of criminal law which are also an integral part of international criminal law are examined in scope. These include *inter alia* the principle of *de lege lata*, *de lege ferenda*, *ex post facto law*, *nullum crimen sine lege*, *nulla poena sine lege*, *mens rea* or 'mental elements', *ne bis in idem* and individual criminal responsibility. These are internationally recognized as an integral part of criminal systems within the legislations of different states.

One important orientation of the subject will be on the progressive development of the law governing the sex trafficking in persons within the law of different international criminal tribunals/courts. These include the Nuremberg Charter, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone and, most importantly, the Statute of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Our hope is that the work opens a window onto a vast array of legal materials which are not only today a part of national, regional, and international legislation, but are also an integral part of customary international criminal law, all of which have to be respected by all states regardless of their political, economic, military, cultural and religious

situations. This does not only include Western states, but also those states which, while claiming to implement Islamic law and its principles, are seriously violating international law by misinterpretation and mistreatment of its jurisprudence. The main argument throughout the book is to emphasise the primary responsibility of governments, individually and together, for the prevention of sexual exploitation of children within and outside their territories. The book argues that the exploitation constitutes one of the heinous national, international, and transnational *erga omnes* crimes, the perpetrators of which should be prosecuted under the principle of universality of jurisdiction.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	xiii
Preface	xiv
Chapter One.....	1
The Emergence of Obligation <i>erga omnes</i> in International Criminal Law	
Introduction	1
What is International Criminal Law.....	3
Sources of the Law	7
<i>Jus Cogens</i>	12
Normative Function	12
Superiority	13
Precedence Over National Law.....	14
Precedence Over International Law	14
Characterization	15
Categories	16
Criteria of Recognition	17
<i>Jus Cogens</i> Crimes.....	18
Obligation <i>Erga Omnes</i>	19
Function	19
Definite implementation	20
Differences.....	24
Enforcement.....	25
International Law Commission.....	28
Chapter Two	33
Basic Principles of Criminalization of Trafficking in Children	
Introduction.....	33
<i>De Lege Lata</i>	33
<i>De Lege Ferenda</i>	34
<i>Ex Post Facto</i> Law.....	35
<i>Nullum Crimen Sine Lege</i>	37
Criminal Responsibility	38
<i>Mens Rea</i>	41
<i>Ne Bis in Idem</i>	44
Transnational Organized Crime	49

Chapter Three	54
The Prohibition of Sex Trafficking in Children within the General Framework of International Human Rights Law	
Introduction.....	54
The Message of United Nations Charter.....	54
The Value of Human Rights Declaration.....	57
The Legacy of the Vienna Declaration	59
The Origins of the Millennium Declaration.....	63
Chapter Four.....	65
Prohibition of the Sexual Exploitation of Children within the Specific Framework of International Human Rights Law	
Introduction.....	65
Elimination of Discrimination against Females	65
Suppression of All Forms of Discrimination against Females.....	67
Elimination of Violence against Females	70
Struggles for the Equality of Females.....	72
Prevention and Punishment of Violence against Women	74
Globalization of Commitment on HIV/AIDS	76
Chapter Five	79
Prohibition of Sex Trafficking in Children within the Regional Human Rights Law	
Introduction.....	79
African States.....	80
The Contribution of the African Charter.....	80
The Protocol to Strengthen the African Charter.....	84
American States	90
Protection of the Victims of Trafficking.....	92
Arab States.....	94
The Concept of Prohibition in Islamic Law	94
Suppression under the Arab Charter	96
European States.....	99
Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.....	99
The Council of Europe against Trafficking in Human Beings.....	101
Purposes.....	102
Scope of Application.....	103
Definitions	104
Prevention of Trafficking.....	108
Substantive Criminal Law.....	110
Attempt and Other Acts	112

Joint Criminal Responsibility.....	113
Principles of Jurisdiction.....	114
Prosecution and its Subjects.....	116
Remarks	118
Chapter Six	120
Abolition of Slavery and Suppression of the White Slave Trade on Children	
Introduction.....	120
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	121
Abolition of Institutions of Slavery	123
Development.....	123
Efforts	124
Abolition within the First Slavery Convention	124
Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery	126
The New Convention	126
Descriptions	126
Slave Trade	127
Attempt	129
The First International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic	129
Criminalization	130
Repatriation.....	131
Women of Colonies	132
The Second International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic.....	133
Modification.....	133
Criminalization	133
Complicity	134
International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children	135
Creation.....	135
Key Policy	135
Assistance	136
Lost Policy	136
International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age.....	138
Criminalization	138
Legislation	139
Disputes	140

Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.....	140
Intention.....	140
Punishment.....	141
Knowledge.....	142
Abolition and Disqualification.....	142
Extradition	143
Chapter Seven.....	145
Strengthening the Prohibition of Sex Trafficking in Children	
Introduction.....	145
Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child	146
Declaration of the Rights of the Child	147
Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	149
Overview.....	149
Characterization	150
Definition.....	151
Protection.....	152
Exploitation.....	153
Interchangeable Terms.....	156
Problematic Reservations.....	157
Inadequacy.....	160
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child	
Pornography	161
Overview.....	161
Criminalization	162
Punishment.....	163
Jurisdiction.....	165
Extradition	166
Prevention of Impunity	168
Protection of Child Victims	170
The Advantages of the Optional Protocol.....	171
Problematic Reservations.....	173
Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.....	175
Rights and Welfare of the Child in Africa	177
Overview.....	177
Criminalization	179
Sexual Exploitation.....	179
Sale of Children	181
Begging.....	181

Suppressing and Punishing Trafficking in Persons	182
Overview.....	182
Purposes.....	183
Scope and Definitions	184
Criminalization	185
Preventive Measures.....	187
Protection of Victims.....	189
Protection of Identity	190
Assistance in Proceedings	190
Recovery.....	191
Special Need.....	191
Physical Safety	192
Compensation	192
Victims in Receiving State	193
Repatriation of Victims	194
Justice	195
Chapter Eight.....	196
Prosecution of Trafficking at the International Criminal Court (ICC)	
Background.....	196
<i>Ad hoc</i> Tribunals.....	198
Cases	199
The ICC	203
Crimes against Humanity.....	204
Conditions for Prosecution	207
Sexual Violence	208
Rape.....	209
Sexual Slavery	211
The Geneva Conventions.....	212
Cases	212
Requirement for Identification.....	214
Complementarity Jurisdiction.....	217
Chapter Nine.....	219
Reaching Effective Criminalization	
Protection of Values	219
Underlying Reasons.....	221
Conclusion.....	226

Appendices

Appendix One.....	228
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
Appendix Two.....	238
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime	
Appendix Three.....	250
European Parliament Resolution on the Trafficking of Women and Children in Cambodia (2005)	
Bibliography.....	254

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMERGENCE OF OBLIGATION *ERGA OMNES* IN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW

Introduction

The very rapid development of global sex trafficking and its serious infringements of the provisions of international human rights law have raised basic questions regarding the relationships between the laws of individual states, regional law and international criminal law as a whole.¹ This is because an examination of various international conventions, agreements, treaties and other documents concerning sex trafficking in human beings proves that they have, in one way or another, some connection with the system of international criminal law, and almost none of these instruments applicable to trafficking may be treated without a proper examination of the systems of regional and national law. This is particularly significant in the case of provisions governing children who are subject to comparatively differing statutes under various national systems. Although one cannot deny that the system of international criminal law strongly protects the rights of children through various international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the position of the child is relatively unstable due to the policy of most states of the world, and the child is one of the most vulnerable subjects of sex trafficking under international social or economic systems.²

¹ Human trafficking has long existed within human civilization but has not until recently been identified as a crime.

² Farhad Malekian, Kerstin Nordlöf., *Confessing the International Rights of Children* (2012).

In this section we are focused on the foundations of the system of international criminal law with particular consideration of the question of sex trafficking. The purpose is here to analyse the relevant laws and to see to what extent the system prevents, prohibits, eliminates, prosecutes and punishes acts concerning sex trafficking with a special focus on children. We have therefore taken into examination various developments in international criminal law, including the statutes of the *ad hoc* tribunals, and the ICC. Certain practices of the *ad hoc* tribunals have been focused on with the intention of emphasizing the development of the principle of obligation *erga omnes*. This section includes, therefore, a discussion on the legal validity of the principle of *jus cogens* in the system of international criminal law and its effect concerning the position of the principle of obligation *erga omnes*. The section will stress the role of governments in the prevention, elimination, application and prosecution as well as punishment within the law of trafficking in persons.³ The principle of obligation *erga omnes* is also of vital importance in laying the groundwork for all other sections of this book. They will discuss various legislations on trafficking issued by different regional and international instruments constituting an integral part of *jus cogens* or general international law and therefore obligation *erga omnes*. In addition, both principles – *jus cogens* and obligation *erga omnes* – are integral to the structure of all sections of this book. The purpose is to examine their validity within the relevant instruments applicable to the trafficking in persons and, particularly, children.

³ The European Convention uses the terminology “human beings” instead of “person”. See Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings adopted by the Council of Europe in 2005 and entered into force in 2008.