

**Please cite as:** EUAA, '[8.6.3. Victims of trafficking in human beings](#)' in *COI Report - Bangladesh: Country Focus*, August 2025.

## 8.6.3. Victims of trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings is a prevalent issue both for Bangladeshis working abroad, and inside Bangladesh.[1184](#) Inside Bangladesh, women and girls have been trafficked for sexual exploitation,[1185](#) but women and children have also been trafficked overseas for the purposes of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.[1186](#) Some of the groups vulnerable to sex trafficking included victims of child marriage and gender-based violence, as reported by USDOS.[1187](#)

In 2025, UNODC reported on socio-economic hardships, lack of employment opportunities, and demand for cheap labour in countries neighbouring Bangladesh and beyond, being factors contributing to trafficking and smuggling of Bangladeshis.[1188](#)

Bangladesh is among countries with the highest prevalence of 'modern slavery'[1189](#) within Asia and the Pacific (ranking 9 out of 27 countries) and ranks 56 out of 160 countries globally as per the 2023 Global Slavery Index.[1190](#) According to USDOS the Bangladeshi government identified 1 210 trafficking victims in 2023, including 210 sex trafficking victims, 795 forced labour victims, and 205 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking.[1191](#)

In 2022 Eurostat data, Bangladesh was ranked as the fourth non-EU country of origin of trafficking victims, with a total of 227 registered victims.[1192](#) Trafficking victims from Bangladesh were mainly male and subjected to labour exploitation.[1193](#) The 2023 Eurostat data showed a decrease in trafficked victims from Bangladesh, with 203 registered cases.[1194](#)

According to IOM, in 2024, Bangladesh was the 7th most-represented nationality in Libya with 3 % of migrants being Bangladeshis. The majority were single men between 20 and 39 years old, and working mainly as construction workers, cleaners or waiters.[1195](#) In March 2025, Libyan authorities arrested two Bangladeshi nationals and one Libyan in connection with a human trafficking network operating between Libya and Bangladesh.[1196](#) In March another ringleader of a trafficking network was arrested in Bangladesh. The network had been luring Bangladeshi nationals with promises of going to Italy but captured and trafficked them to Libya.[1197](#) In Libya, victims of trafficking were tortured and held captive for ransom.[1198](#)

### ○ **(a) Societal treatment of trafficked victims upon return**

According to the international development organisation BRAC and reports by the Daily Star in May 2025, more than 470 000 Bangladeshi migrant workers have returned home in the past six years, including 67 199 women who were subjected to sexual and physical abuse. Upon return to their communities, women face mental health challenges such as trauma, depression, and social isolation. In addition, women migrant returnees are often indebted and experience difficulty in finding employment.  
[1205](#)

The NGO Justice and Care reported on women being forced into prostitution facing judgement,[1206](#) shame and fear when re-entering society.[1207](#) A study from 2022, also found that many returning women who had been victims of trafficking in human beings experienced stigmatisation and blame from their families and community members, resulting in reduced self-esteem, confidence, and limited opportunities for successful reintegration.[1208](#)

According to a representative of BRAC Migration Program, returnee migrants ‘usually bring with them a celebrating story of achievement around which a new identity is built’ and ‘returnees are constantly evaluated by what s/he have achieved abroad’, and this is why social networks tend to be unwilling to provide economic assistance to ‘unsuccessful returnees’.[1209](#) Meanwhile many returnees return home indebted.[1210](#) More information is available in section 8.6.2. Illegal money lending.

### □ **(b) Legislation and access to justice and legal assistance**

In Bangladesh, there are laws to combat trafficking in human beings and specialised tribunals, while the police cooperate with INTERPOL on trafficking cases.[1205](#)

Bangladesh has inter alia ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United

Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,[1206](#) and has specialised national legislation on trafficking under the 2012 Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act.[1207](#) The former government, moreover, implemented five year action plans to combat trafficking in human beings.[1208](#) The 2023-2025 action plan identified five objectives, including prevention of trafficking in human beings, holistic protection of trafficking victims, prosecution of traffickers, partnership and transnational legal assistance, and monitoring and evaluation.[1209](#) Moreover, the former government amended its overseas migrant workers policy to bring recruitment agents under greater oversight and to increase accountability,[1210](#) and launched the guideline for a National Referral Mechanism to Protect and Assist Victims of Human Trafficking in February 2024.[1211](#) Sources reported on weak enforcement of existing anti-human trafficking laws,[1212](#) including lack of training for relevant stakeholders, low public awareness and understanding of the laws and court processes, lack of financial means to initiate and continue legal proceedings, insufficient protection and care for victims and witnesses, and complex and prolonged procedures of trials, as reported by Arafat Reza and Shahariar Sadat, scholars of BRAC University.[1213](#)

In September 2023, the former government adopted victim identification guidelines for front-line officials.[1214](#) Attitudes among inter alia police officers preventing victims from reporting crime, social stigma around sexual abuse[1215](#) and corruption have posed challenges in combating trafficking in human beings.[1216](#) The former government set up specialised Anti-Human Trafficking Tribunals in seven districts.[1217](#) The tribunals are comprised of judges and specialised prosecutors assigned to hear cases of trafficking in human beings.[1218](#) Although police, prosecutors and judges undergo anti-trafficking training,[1219](#) there have been calls for further training efforts.[1220](#) There was inter alia a reported lack of expertise in trafficking in human beings.[1221](#)

More information on state response to trafficking in human beings under the former government is available in the [2024 EUAA COI Report: Bangladesh Country Focus](#).

The interim government, through its Home Affairs Adviser, reaffirmed publicly in April 2025 Bangladesh's 'strong commitment to combatting human trafficking.' Furthermore, several recent initiatives were highlighted, including 'a national action plan to combat human trafficking, a web-based national referral mechanism for victim support, and the establishment of dedicated tribunals to expedite the prosecution of trafficking cases.'[1222](#) In May 2025, Bangladesh and Italy signed a memorandum of understanding to combat irregular migration and promote 'safe and legal migration pathways for workers.' Bangladesh and Italy both pledged to combat trafficking in human beings[1223](#) and agreed to establish a joint committee for cooperation in preventing and

combating transitional organised crime.[1224](#)

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