



10th Annual Freedom from Slavery Forum  
**“Enabling Local Engagements and Global  
Synergies for Addressing Modern Slavery in the  
Middle East and North Africa”**

---

2022 MENA Regional Forum Report  
December 12-13, 2022

[www.FreedomFromSlaveryForum.org](http://www.FreedomFromSlaveryForum.org)

## Special Thanks to the 2022 Forum Funders

THE ELKES  
FOUNDATION

### 2022 MENA Regional Forum Team

Forum Lead: **Bukeni Waruzi**

Forum Manager: **Giselle Balfour**

Forum Team: **Rasha Al Manha, Friederike Lindenau**

External Committee:

- **Linda Alkalash**, *Founder and the Executive Director of Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights, Founder of Arab Network for Migrant's Rights (ANMR) Jordan.*
- **Awah Francisca Mbuli**, *Survivors' Network (SN). Founder & CEO. Cameroon.*
- **Rima Kalush**, *Deputy Director of Majal.org, Editor of Migrant-Rights.org. Libya.*
- **Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova**. *Founder & Director of Do Bold organization, protecting, promoting, and improving the rights of migrant workers in the GCC, Kuwait*

### Forum Secretariat

Free the Slaves

1320 19th St. NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20036 USA

Email: [giselle.balfour@freetheslaves.net](mailto:giselle.balfour@freetheslaves.net)

Website: [www.freedomfromslaveryForum.org](http://www.freedomfromslaveryForum.org)



# Table of Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Day One: Humanitarian Crises and Modern Slavery in the MENA Region</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Day Two: Engaging Different Stakeholder Groups</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Main Outcomes of the Forum</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Advisory Committee</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Participation and Evaluation</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Speaker and Presenter Bios</b>	<b>23</b>

## Introduction

---

The Freedom from Slavery Forum was established in 2013 to gather anti-slavery leaders from around the world to create a collegial space to coalesce, create partnerships, discuss promising practices, and develop a shared agenda for action. Participants have built relationships and prioritized actions in advocacy and collaboration with other sectors.

In 2021, the annual Global Forum was supplemented by a series of Regional Forums divided into the following regions: Latin America, North America and Europe, Africa, Asia, MENA, and the Caribbean. Last year's series took place online and thereby provided opportunities to increase access, ensuring grassroots ideas and voices were amplified within the movement. The 2022/23 series are divided into three in-person Forums (North America and Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean) to increase collaboration between regional actors and three online Forums (Latin America, Asia, and MENA). The series will be closed with the global convening in May 2023.

The theme for the series is “Enabling local engagement and global synergies to address modern slavery.” The respective agenda and expected outcomes are developed in consultation with survivors and other key local and regional partners. Therefore, the focus will vary slightly for each region, responding to the situation and needs of each region.

For the MENA Forum, anti-slavery movement leaders virtually convened via Zoom for two days to discuss issues most pertinent to the region that was identified by some of the main stakeholders in the region with the goal of bringing together a variety of regional actors, survivors of modern slavery, grassroots organizations, and civil society organizations from MENA to discuss the most pressing issues surrounding modern slavery in the region and to devise suitable recommendations. During the event, these experts and stakeholders shared their experiences and best practices and engaged in innovative discussions about the potential solutions to modern slavery.

Thus, the first day focused on Humanitarian Crises and Modern Slavery in the MENA Region. Four presentations and one workshop provided an opportunity to gather important information and discuss problems and potential solutions to the MENA region's many humanitarian crises and modern slavery. Over the course of the day, participants from various organizations shared their insights and expertise on regional humanitarian issues.

The second day considered Engaging Different Stakeholder Groups during two presentations, one workshop, and one research project on Legislative Frameworks on Modern Slavery in the region. During these presentations, workshops, and research projects, participants discussed ways to engage with the different stakeholders in their region to combat modern slavery.

## General Objective

The MENA Regional Forum's overall goal is to investigate and define key strategies for local engagements, find the most effective methods for reviving the movement and boosting resilience and resistance, and ascertain how these engagements might inform global synergies. The Forum acts as a cooperative setting for stakeholders to collaborate and advance the anti-modern slavery movement. The panels and workshops allow stakeholders from various countries and fields to discuss opportunities, challenges, and strategies for promoting actions and plans to end slavery in the region. The Regional Forum aims to offer a Forum for discussion and group action to investigate and specify the best procedures for regional participation in the fight against modern slavery.

## Specific Objectives

The Regional Forum aims to offer a space for discussion and group action in order to investigate and specify the best procedures for regional participation in the fight against modern slavery. Specifically served to promote collaborations and to identify strategies, proposals, and recommendations to eradicate slavery in the region. This Forum hopes to create a regional platform for the exchange of information and best practices and, by doing so, to strengthen regional capacities for successful interventions in the global struggle against slavery.

# Day One: Humanitarian Crises and Modern Slavery in the MENA Region

---

## Introduction

In addition to natural disasters and COVID-Pandemic, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to be affected by various crises, conflicts, forced migration, and damage to water resources, health care, education, infrastructure, and essential services. Economic crises, chronic underdevelopment, poverty, climate change, and migration, all of which contribute to modern slavery, intensify the needs of affected populations. The MENA region is diverse, encompassing the more affluent members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as well as nations like Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, which are dealing with the effects of the ongoing conflict in Syria as well as other ongoing crises in Yemen, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia.

According to reports, the majority of victims of modern slavery in the MENA region were victims of forced labor, followed by forced marriage; approximately half of all victims of forced labor exploitation were held in debt servitude, and one percent of all victims of forced sexual exploitation worldwide were from the MENA. Syria, Iraq, and Yemen had the highest prevalence of modern slavery as well as the highest absolute number of victims in the region. The countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are dealing with a wide range of social and economic issues that expose them to exploitation, making them especially vulnerable to modern forms of slavery.

## Speaker Overview

- **Forum Opening Keynote:** Bukeni Waruzi | Free the Slaves | USA
- **Moderator:** Rasha Al Manha | Free the Slaves | Jordan
- **Speakers:**
  - Ali Nasser Aljali | President of the National Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking and Child Trafficking (NOFCHT) | Yemen
  - Namrata Raju | Labour Expert, India Director Labour Expert | Equidem| India
  - Maryam Almalki | Deputy Regional Representative of Child Support Lines in the MENA, Legal Expert, Combating Human Trafficking Trainer | Qatar
  - Ekaterina Porrass Sivolobova | Founder and Director of Do Bold | Kuwait

## Summary of Day One

The first day examined how multiple humanitarian crises have contributed to modern slavery, with various actors from across the region discussing how war and conflict impact modern slavery, specifically child labor in Yemen, as well as how the influence of terrorism and the existence of militant groups within the region have increased modern slavery and multiplied the factors that are driving up the demand for exploitation and increasing the vulnerability of affected communities, especially women and children, in times of war and disaster. All of this has contributed to and created a larger effect on social injustice, irregular migration and migration exploitation, sex trafficking, organ trafficking, forced labor, and forced marriage, especially in Iraq and Syria.

Despite the various actors and multiple causes that have contributed to the growing problem of modern slavery, the consequences are clear: vulnerable populations are exposed to horrific violations of their rights, such as physical and psychological abuse, malnutrition, and a loss of education. All of these issues can cause long-term damage to the victims of modern slavery and lead to greater poverty and inequality in the regions affected.

The day was divided into four presentations and ended with a workshop to share with the participants the outcome of the report on "Discrimination and Exploitation of Migrant Construction Workers on FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022", where participants explored the gaps in protections for migrant workers and forced labor in construction works, and practices included illegal recruitment charges, nationality-based discrimination, unpaid wages, working in extreme heat and other health and safety risks, overwork, and workplace violence. Participants discussed the practices of construction companies and offered practical strategies to protect migrant workers.

The first presentation concentrated on the impact of Yemen's war and humanitarian crisis on modern slavery. The panel discussed how the civil war, poverty, and a lack of government regulation created an environment that enabled traffickers to exploit vulnerable people. Mr. **Ali Al Jalai**, a Human Rights Activist, President of the National Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking and Child Trafficking (NOFCHT), and Member of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, shared that human trafficking has become more prevalent in Yemen and various forms of modern slavery, including organ trafficking, child labor, and the exploitation of child beggars.

Mr. Ali discussed how Yemen's volatile political situation had created a breeding ground for human trafficking and slavery, leading to higher figures than reported. Nearly 200 cases of slavery have been monitored in some governorates, but victims are unaware of their rights or lack the means to assert them. Mr. Ali and the participants discussed ways to help these victims and groups.

The findings of Equidem's most recent report on "Discrimination and Exploitation of Migrant Construction Workers on FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022" were presented in the second presentation by **Namrata Raju**, director of Equidem India and a labor expert. She began her presentation with an overview of the report's research methodology, highlighting that over the course of an 18-month investigation, Equidem contacted nearly 1000 workers and that the report includes both worker testimony from 60 in-depth qualitative interviews and findings from this investigation. She emphasized the significance of cooperation between governments and FIFA to ensure the long-term safety and welfare of migrant workers.

**Dr. Maryam Almalki**, a legal expert and trainer in the area of preventing human trafficking, was the third speaker. She discussed and highlighted the nexus between modern slavery, terrorism, and the emergence of militant groups in the region. She explained to participants the various forms of terrorism and the emergence of terrorist groups, as well as the importance of using international law and policies to combat them, and she emphasized that all studies and training manuals produced by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Related to Human Trafficking Crimes, as well as training manuals produced by the ILO, were aimed at equipping participants with the knowledge and skills required to address human trafficking crimes.

The final presentation on domestic servitude shared the experience of a domestic worker from Kuwait, highlighting the plight of people who were in a vulnerable position. Their stories emphasized the need for better pay, working conditions, and the difficult daily realities they had to deal with. Do Bold's founder and director, **Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova**, has provided direct assistance to migrant workers affected by modern slavery in the GCC. She emphasized in her presentation the challenges these domestic workers faced and the need to provide them with better, more equitable working conditions and fair pay. At the end of her presentation, Ekaterina offered a list of recommendations for raising awareness and improving their living conditions.

## Problems Identified

### **The Increase of Modern Slavery in Conflict Zones is a Pressing Issue that Demands Immediate Attention from the International Community**

Participants discussed the impact of wars, including political and military conflicts, on the emergence of other forms of modern slavery, such as human trafficking, child soldiers, forced labor, and early or forced marriage, particularly among the most vulnerable groups, including refugees and displaced individuals in both conflicted and hosting countries. During the discussion, it was clear that war zones create an environment of violence, displacement, and chaos in which these forms of modern slavery have become an endemic part of life and that



environmental and agricultural degradation, as well as socioeconomic conditions, have increased the drivers of modern slavery, resulting in an alarming increase in their prevalence.

Human trafficking and slavery have emerged in Yemen as a result of the conflict caused by the division of powers and governments and the extension of their control in various regions by competing authorities. Traffickers take advantage of the country's chaotic political situation to avoid detection, and humanitarian organizations cite a lack of resources and access to certain areas as a reason. Many of the victims are either unaware of their rights or lack the resources to assert them, which has made the situation more complicated. Moreover, terrorism and the rise of militant groups in the region are interconnected and require a comprehensive solution to combat modern slavery.

### **Migrant Workers are Vulnerable to Exploitation Due to their Status, Lack of Legal Protections, Limited Access to Justice, and Lack of Awareness of their Rights**

Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation because of their limited legal protections and their dependence on employers for work and sponsorship. This can lead to situations of forced labor, human trafficking, and other forms of abuse. This vulnerability is frequently exacerbated by discriminatory attitudes and practices and by economic and social conditions that force people to migrate in search of work.

Systemic issues concerning the practical application of national and international labor laws, employers' discriminatory attitudes and practices, and migrant workers' rights protection. Participants at the forum discussed migrant worker issues such as poor working conditions, low wages, and limited access to health care and other basic necessities, with a particular focus on the Qatar World Cup injustice, which drew global attention to the plight of migrant workers in the Middle East, as well as Kafala's sponsorship-based foreign worker employment system.

## Solutions Proposed

### **Enforcement of Laws and Regulations is Essential to Prevent Labor Exploitation and Modern Slavery Among Vulnerable Populations, such as Migrant Workers, Women, and Children**

Effective policy implementation and enforcement of international and national laws can help prevent migrant worker exploitation and ensure their basic, appropriate working conditions while also contributing to the prevention of terrorism in conflict zones by addressing the root causes of violent extremism and promoting social awareness and economic development in affected regions. It is crucial for governments, civil society organizations, and international

bodies to work together to develop and implement comprehensive policies that prioritize the protection of migrant workers and address the underlying issues that lead to exploitation in any form.

As a result, having effective mechanisms in place is essential; these mechanisms can also contribute to the sustainable development of these regions by promoting economic growth and social inclusion, which can help reduce poverty and inequality, both of which contribute directly to modern slavery. To promote a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law, governments and international organizations must prioritize the implementation and enforcement of policies that protect the rights of migrant workers and address the root causes of modern slavery. This approach can lead to long-term peace and stability, as well as economic growth and social development in conflict-affected regions.

While the complete dissolution of these crimes is a long-term goal, immediate measures that must be implemented include more vigorous enforcement of existing anti-trafficking laws, greater vigilance of local and international agencies to identify trafficking networks, improved international cooperation, and education initiatives to increase awareness of the problem, increase funding for human rights organizations dedicated to ending modern slavery, and educate local organizations. In addition, it is crucial to address the demand side of human trafficking by targeting those who exploit vulnerable populations and creating alternative economic opportunities for individuals at risk of being trafficked. This requires a multi-faceted approach involving law enforcement, policy implementation, and social and economic development initiatives.

### **Increase Inter-Institutional Collaboration, Synergies, and Awareness by Establishing Regular Meetings, Promoting Joint Projects, and Organizing Events**

Strengthen inter-institutional collaboration, synergy, and awareness. This can be accomplished by establishing regular meetings and communication channels between various institutions, promoting joint projects and initiatives, and organizing events and workshops that bring representatives from various organizations together. Creating a shared platform or database for information exchange and resource sharing can also help inter-institutional collaboration.

Work more efficiently as part of an inter-institutional coordination mechanism tasked with promoting the adoption of treaties, conventions, and protocols to eradicate modern slavery and achieve humanitarian and development goals.

To that end, these institutions must continuously strive to provide knowledge and technical assistance to their stakeholders in order to assist them in putting these international and national instruments into action. By working together, institutions can leverage their collective resources and expertise to achieve greater impact in the fight against modern slavery. This

can also help to ensure that efforts are coordinated to avoid duplication of effort. Incorporating media campaigns that include arts, drama, film production, social networking platforms, and websites affiliated with local institutions in order to influence key audiences, including decision-makers, as well as to support local CSOs, CBOs, and NGOs fighting modern slavery through partnerships and coalitions to help victims.

# Day Two: Engaging Different Stakeholder Groups

---

## Introduction

The importance of increasing knowledge about stakeholder engagement in human trafficking, as well as stakeholder involvement in anti-trafficking policy implementation and service responses, has been extensively researched. However, there is still a lack of understanding about how stakeholder engagement knowledge can be used to strengthen evidence-based responses to human trafficking while also involving survivors.

Such knowledge can help in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of human trafficking, identifying new gaps and opportunities, developing improved methodologies and policies for a victim-centered approach, and contributing to the development of more effective solutions to the human trafficking problem. It can also help them access previously untapped resources and partners, which they can use to improve the outcomes and impact of their efforts.

The need to engage different stakeholder groups in modern slavery is driven by the need to create an environment of collective responsibility and commitment, with all stakeholders playing an active role in combating modern slavery survivor engagement and the difficulties and challenges that survivors of human trafficking face.

To that end, different stakeholders must understand their roles and responsibilities, and survivors must be actively involved in decision-making. Research is vital for policy engagement because it allows stakeholders to better understand survivors' perspectives and needs and identify appropriate solutions tailored to their situation. As a result, research into modern slavery should be conducted from the standpoint of survivors and used to inform policies to ensure solutions are implemented.

The agenda for the second day focused on empowering survivors of modern slavery and how to engage anti-modern slavery stakeholders from various contexts and industries to play an active role in combating human trafficking, focusing on survivor engagement, gaps, challenges, and opportunities. The Forum discussed how to expand survivor-led initiatives and increase meaningful policy engagement, as well as how to increase stakeholders' understanding of the complexities of modern slavery and facilitate more informed collaborations to ensure long-term change and more effective anti-trafficking strategies and share perspectives, emphasizing the importance of survivor leadership, meaningful survivor participation in policymaking, and the need for increased collaboration among stakeholders to promote more effective anti-trafficking strategies.

## Speaker Overview

- **Forum Opening Keynote:** Awah Francisca Mbuli | founder of Survivors' Network (SN) | Cameroon
- **Moderator:** Rasha Al Manha | Free the Slaves | Jordan
- **Speakers:**
  - Linda Al Kalash | Founder and the Executive Director of Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights| Jordan
  - Rima Kalush|Deputy Director of Majal.org, and Editor of Migrant-Rights.org | Libya
  - Vani Saraswathi | Editor-at-Large and Director of Projects, Migrant-Rights.org | India/Qatar
  - Hind Cherrouk | Regional Program Director (RPD) for the Middle East and North Africa, Solidarity Center | Morocco
  - Mary Prieto | Kombu Cha Chá | Chile
  - Pamela Vargas-Gorena | Rights Lab Research Fellow in Anti-Slavery Law and Human Rights, University of Nottingham Rights Lab | UK

## Summary of Day Two

The second day of the Middle East and North Africa Regional Forum focused on stakeholder engagement to ensure that those most affected by decisions and contextual circumstances are heard and their interests are taken into account, specifically survivor engagement and their inclusion in decisions related to justice, and equality. It was argued that stakeholder engagement could help increase the efficiency and effectiveness of responses to combat issues of modern slavery by ensuring that survivor needs and demands are given the priority they deserve, as well as drive meaningful policy change.

Also, participants discussed that research and policy engagement is important to ensure a holistic approach to regional cooperation and raise the voices of survivors. The day began with a keynote speech, continued with two presentations, and concluded with a research project in which participants were asked to discuss legislative frameworks on modern slavery as well as national and regional strategies for various stakeholders and actors.

In order to ensure that partnerships are both survivor-centered and trauma-informed, the second day of the Forum would therefore be centered on survivor engagement. It would also address the compelling role that survivors of human trafficking play in the global and regional fight against human trafficking in the MENA. Because they bring a profound understanding of human trafficking based on their lived experience, survivors can offer the indications investigators need as evidence as well as the signs a community needs to identify and ultimately prevent trafficking.

Additionally, they offer a distinctive viewpoint on the short- and long-term efficacy of programs created to support survivors during times of crisis and throughout their long-term recovery. At all levels of policymaking, it is crucial to recognize the significance of survivor inclusion. Although a survivor can choose to get involved in the anti-trafficking movement in many different ways, there has been significant involvement and knowledge gained from people with lived experiences in all areas.

The day began with a keynote speech from **Awah Francisca Mbuli**, a sex and labor trafficking survivor and the founder of Survivors' Network (SN), a Cameroonian NGO led by women that combat all forms of human trafficking and aids in the recovery of victims of human trafficking. Awah is an advocate for both governments and the general public.

In her speech, she urged survivors to be of good morals and respect in carrying out their work and for organizations to practice ethical survivor engagement; it is critical that survivors' voices use their voices to call for leaders to put in place strong anti-trafficking policies and harsher punishments for traffickers. This reflects her belief that survivors must understand their rights and be mindful of the power dynamics at play when interacting with authorities and decision-makers.

Regardless, survivors should all remember the recent high demand for survivor engagements in the anti-trafficking fight, but many factors still hold this back. For example, formal education, peer and community stigmatization, building public speaking capacity, and tokenism, i.e., the re-exploitation of survivors.

The first presenter was **Linda Al Kalash**, who founded Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights in Jordan and serves as its Executive Director. "Survivor Engagement in the MENA Region: Difficulties and Opportunities" was her central subject.

Al Kalash emphasized the difficulties that survivors face in gaining access to justice, engaging with legal aid providers, and actively participating in criminal proceedings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. She also emphasized the significance of empowering survivors and providing comprehensive support services to ensure their full participation in the justice system. Al Kalash's remarks highlighted the importance of legal aid providers and justice systems being more responsive to the unique challenges that survivors face in the MENA region. This requires a diverse approach that addresses not only legal but also social, economic, and cultural factors that may prevent survivors from seeking justice.

**Rima Kalush**, Editor of Migrant-Rights.org, and **Vani Saraswathi**, Director of Projects, Migrant-Rights.org delivered their second presentation, "Research and Policy Engagement in the MENA Region: Challenges and Opportunities," in which they discussed the various

practices their organizations had implemented to combat human trafficking, primarily in the GCC.

Speakers acknowledged that the ability to conduct research and the means of engaging with government in other parts of the MENA region is very different and that the issues they face are not the same as those in the GCC. They also discussed their organization's approach to engaging with governments across the MENA region and their unique challenges in international engagement, inter-regional advocacy, collaboration, and reporting from origin.

The speakers provided a list of recommendations at the end of their presentation, which included that governments are increasingly vocal in spaces where they are not held accountable and need to be in those spaces to observe, intervene, and watch trends. There is a lot of pressure on the origin to clean up recruitment and migration corridors, and this is not enough. Additionally, there should be multilateral or regional advocacy with sending country blocs to negotiate better and facilitate the mobilization of migrant voices and give them space in such Forums.

Near the end of the second day, **Pamela Vargas-Gorena**, Rights Lab Research Fellow in Anti-Slavery Law and Human Rights, University of Nottingham Rights Lab, conducted data collection with Forum participants. She began with a brief presentation introducing the research project "*Co-developing a Framework for Effective Anti-Slavery and Anti-Trafficking Legislation.*" The aim of the research project is to co-develop frameworks for evaluating domestic legislation in addressing slavery and related practices with regional stakeholders. Participants contributed to identifying legislative indicators applicable to the region's legal systems that can test the strength and shortcomings of domestic legislation and to a broader discussion on the importance of different indicators. Furthermore, Pamela shared a preliminary set of indicators based on international laws, standards, and guidelines as the foundation for the workshop discussion.

Following this, participants were invited to engage in a general discussion about what legislation is necessary to effectively address slavery and trafficking and what indicators should be included in the framework. After the workshop, a survey was shared with participants to rate the significance of specified legislative provisions before discussing the results.

## Problems Identified

### **The Lack of Responsibly Sustaining Survivor Engagement is a Major Issue in Combating Human Trafficking and Ending Modern Slavery**

The Forum discussions focused on and highlighted the importance of the survivors' engagement. Survivors should not feel neglected or disempowered because this hinders their ability to recover and rebuild their lives, as their engagement is critical for ending human trafficking by providing long-term support and empowerment while also ensuring safety and privacy.

Participants identified legal matters and survivors' legal status as major barriers to successful survivor reintegration into their communities. The discussions centered on changing the laws to require survivors to be granted temporary residency, as well as the need to clarify process rules and regulations by involving government parties, policymakers, and community-based organizations by increasing their involvement and connection, as well as expanding their efforts to ensure survivors' voices are heard, and needs are met. Another issue raised was exempting survivors from paying fines unless the victim is deported due to their low financial capacity and physical or mental hardships.

It was also claimed that survivor engagement and reintegration do not take a trauma-informed approach and do not prioritize survivor well-being. Survivors' educational and employment opportunities are also limited, in addition to public stigma and misconceptions.

### **Policy Engagement Should be Incorporated into a Multidisciplinary Response and Research to Action**

Policy engagement should be part of a multidisciplinary response and research to action that seeks to understand the motivations of human trafficking survivors and provide solutions to them. While survivors play an essential role in the movement, it is also critical that policymakers, government representatives, and anti-trafficking organizations understand and advocate for their rights. As a result, an effective anti-trafficking strategy must include both survivors and policymakers. collaborative research to organize action to provide evidence-based responses to the issue and solutions. To accomplish this, policy engagement should not be viewed as a one-time event.



## Solutions Proposed

The proposed solutions include both recommendations given by speakers and strategies discussed during the working sessions of Day Two.

### **Establishing a Victims' Compensation Fund and Community-Based Assistance for Reintegration**

Advocate for survivors to be exempt from fines and work permit fees retroactively, as well as license and court filing fees, among other things. These exemptions and waivers would assist survivors in regaining financial stability while working to rebuild their lives following exploitation and violence. Establishing a victims' compensation fund to assist survivors with legal aid and mental health support would also be a great step in providing for their financial obligations and would provide vital resources for survivors and ensure that survivors are not forced into additional financial burdens due to the already tragic circumstances they have faced.

Forming coalitions to coordinate local actors' efforts to identify and protect victims. These coalitions would also assist victims in gaining access to services and rebuilding their lives, in addition to providing the necessary assistance and services. Assist local CSOs, CBOs, and NGOs in developing tailored educational training programs for survivors to aid in their reintegration into society and provide economic opportunities.

These economic opportunities could include initiatives to provide income-generating activities, such as microfinance, or to create employment or self-employment opportunities, as well as to help establish community shelters, safe spaces, and legal service access, as well as to advocate for better working conditions and adherence to human rights standards and protocols in a variety of industries.

### **Strengthening Anti-Human Trafficking Legal Frameworks is Critical for Promoting Transparency, Accountability, and Good Governance**

Emphasize collaboration with local governments, the private sector, and non-governmental partners across migration corridors and other forms of modern slavery to ensure that all stakeholders work together to identify the underlying drivers of exploitation and to build a sustained response and support mechanisms to protect and empower those affected by modern slavery, such as the establishment of effective victim-centered and trauma-informed anti-trafficking and modern slavery programs on a local, national, and regional scale.

To effectively respond to the prevalence of modern slavery and human trafficking, there must be a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach that emphasizes cooperation and collaboration between governments, which can also use their existing resources and relations, which have a critical role in playing due diligence, to reduce vulnerability and make a significant difference in the lives of those affected by modern slavery.

The importance of conducting and designing ongoing research to better understand the dynamics of modern slavery, evaluate the effectiveness of responses, and inform decision-making, policy-making, and practice by forming collaborations between the public and private sectors, as well as civil society actors and governments, to ensure a sustained response and strategies, plans, and linking research outcomes to national indicators for more effective and efficient solutions.

## Main Outcomes of the Forum

---

The Forum was deemed a success by its organizers after carefully considering the outcomes and participant feedback, as it met the objectives it set out to achieve. Participants provided constructive feedback on their experiences and perspectives during the Forum, and the main outcome was achieved. The final goal of the Forum was to promote meaningful and productive dialogue between different members of the community, and it was clear that was accomplished by the end of the event, where members of the Forum emphasized four major themes as an outcome to move forward, as listed below:

1. The nexus between the humanitarian crises and modern slavery and the importance of resilience and recovery for sustainable development
2. The nexus between terrorism, extremist groups, and modern slavery, and the challenges of migrants and refugees in the MENA region
3. Importance of responsibly maintaining survivor engagement as evidence-based advocacy in combating modern slavery
4. Engage policymakers in multidisciplinary problem-solving and action research.

The MENA Regional Forum provided an excellent opportunity to address and discuss some of the region's pending challenges against modern slavery. It is becoming clear that more actors must be included to achieve more effective collaborations at the regional, national, and local levels. The migration crisis caused by wars and conflicts, as well as its impact on armed groups, is a factor contributing to trafficking and exploitative situations such as child trafficking into armed groups, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, and forced marriage, which magnifies the social and economic vulnerabilities of affected people in the region.

Despite the challenges, it is possible to combat modern slavery in the Middle East and North Africa by bringing together all relevant stakeholders, including national and local governments, civil society organizations, and private sector actors. Regional and international experts facilitated multi-stakeholder discussions at the Forum, allowing participants to exchange experiences and identify concrete actions that can be taken with diverse leadership from various fields, including survivors, advocates, academics, researchers, civil society organizations, and non-governmental and government institutions.

The following are the results obtained:

- Creation and building of a network of anti-slavery actors in the MENA region to improve collaboration, coordination, and communication among stakeholders and actors and to free slaves in the region.
- Investigation of regional challenges, identifying promising solutions, and identifying best practices in the MENA region to combat modern slavery and strengthen regional collaboration.

- Establishment of an Advisory Committee for the Regions to provide support and assistance with regard to the Forum's outputs in particular, as well as to act as a link between Free the Slaves and grassroots organizations operating in MENA, with the goal of preserving the Forum's outputs. Participation in this committee is entirely voluntary and not required.

## Advisory Committee

---

Following the conclusion of the MENA forum, Free the Slaves (FTS) initiated the establishment of an advisory committee, whose main goal is to provide support and assistance with regard to the forum's outputs in particular and to be the link between Free the Slaves and organizations operating in the region, with the goal of maintaining the outputs and work points of the Freedom from Slavery Forum in the Middle East and North Africa in 2022 and to maintain continuity in reflecting the needs of the region.

Members of the committee were chosen based on the advisory committee's selection criteria, which include a geographical presence in MENA and subject matter expertise in modern slavery. At the end of the forum, FTS announced the idea of the formation of an advisory committee and invited participants to join. FTS also sent invitation emails to participants, inviting them to join the committee. FTS arranged for member profiling after receiving interest in joining the committee. Following the member profiling, an induction meeting was held to introduce the terms of reference of the committee and to discuss each member's expectations and responsibilities. The induction meeting also provided an opportunity for members to meet and get to know each other.

The advisory committee is initially composed of three members (details below):

- **Rasha Al Manha**, MENA Regional Manager at Free the Slaves, Jordan
- **Farah Salka**, Founder of the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) and Migrant Community Centers in Lebanon
- **Abla Masroujeh**, Solidarity Center Country Program and Director for the Arab Mashreq-MENA Department, Jordan and Palestine
- **Christy Fujio**, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Synergy for Justice

## Next Steps

---

It is our hope that this Forum will lay the groundwork for future exchanges of practical experience and lessons learned about various approaches to combating modern slavery in the Middle East and North Africa.

Participants left the Forum with a better understanding of the various forms of modern slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the challenges that communities, governments, and civil society face in combating it. They were also able to share their experiences, expertise, and lessons learned from working in the field. Furthermore, international frameworks were presented, and strategies for increasing corporate participation in the fight against human trafficking and labor exploitation were discussed.

Given the Forum's connections and partnerships, we hope participants will benefit from the corporations formed and further the anti-slavery movement.

This Forum was one of a series of Regional Freedom from Slavery Forums that convened in 2022 and 2023 in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America, Europe, and the Caribbean before concluding with the Global Forum in the Dominican Republic in May 2023. Check out our website and follow us on Twitter at @FFS Forum to keep up with each of the regional Forums.

## Participation and Evaluation

---

Across the two days of Forum virtual events, 95 individuals from 36 countries registered. A total of 55 individuals from 24 countries participated. The countries with the most participation included: Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

An evaluation form was sent to all participants to receive necessary feedback, which can be implemented in future Forums, both for the MENA Regional Forum and other upcoming Regional Forums, as well as the Global Freedom from Slavery Forum.

Participants' feedback appreciated the Forum, responding to all questions regarding logistics and content with "Excellent" and "Good." The comments shared indicated appreciation for the lessons learned on migrant workers and their rights, as well as best practices of advocacy. Furthermore, the opportunity to learn from local as well as international initiatives was well-received.

After the Forum, participants were sent a list in which they could share their emails. Numerous participants were able to exchange contact information with stakeholders in this way.

A second evaluation form will be sent out six months after the MENA Regional Forum to enquire about any relationships that developed out of the Forum.

# Speaker and Presenter Bios

---

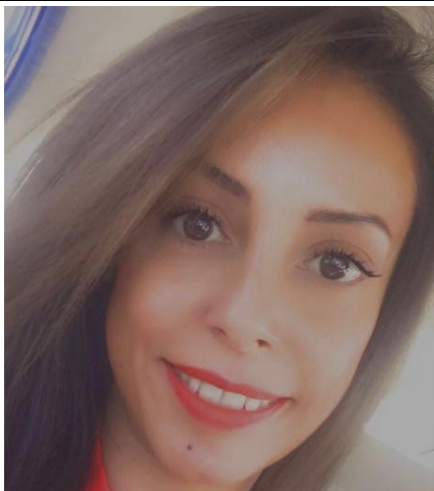
## Day One: Humanitarian Crises and Modern Slavery in the MENA Region

### Welcome and Introduction



**Bukeni Waruzi** is the Executive Director of Free the Slaves. Previously, he formed the non-profit grassroots group AJEDI-KA/DRC Child Soldiers Project to confront widespread slavery and the use of child soldiers by militias and armed forces. In Kenya, Waruzi worked for the Porticus Foundation, overseeing projects on human rights, civic engagement, education, and climate change. For nearly a decade, he was the director of programs for WITNESS in New York, a group that empowers victims around the world to collect evidence to bring the guilty to justice. Waruzi has spoken before high-level audiences, including the United Nations Security Council, the International Criminal Court, and the US Congressional Children's Caucus. She currently represents anti-slavery groups as a civil society member of the Global Coordination Group of Alliance 8.7, the global initiative to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, an end to child and forced labor worldwide.

### Moderator



**Rasha Al Manha** is the MENA regional manager of Free the Slaves, representing FTS in the region, and provides ongoing technical assistance to FTS's partner organizations in strategic design and implementation.

She is a goal-focused, versatile project professional with 20+ years of experience supporting the strategic direction of large-scale humanitarian programs, specifically with UNICEF and USAID, as well as both national and international non-profit organizations on a local and cross-border basis, with extensive experience in budgeting and risk management while achieving overall goals.

Rasha has been involved in the emergency and relief response to Syrian crises either inside Jordan or cross-border, in addition to local community capacity building and engagement by supporting the strategic direction



of large-scale humanitarian programs, either locally or cross-border basis, with extensive experience disseminating project information to project stakeholders, oversee the operational aspects of an ongoing project, and are accountable for leading, organizing, budgeting, and managing staff, as well as monitoring project progress, developing and maintaining project deliverables, and adhering to data quality standards.

**Speakers**






**Ali Nasser Aljali** is a Human Rights Activist, President of the National Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking and Child Trafficking (NOFCHT), and Member of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking.




**Namrata Raju** is a labor expert, leads Equidem’s India work, and collaborates closely with Equidem’s initiatives across South Asia, South East Asia, East Africa, and the GCC. With close to 15 years of research experience, Namrata has worked on a range of labor and migration issues, including but not limited to, recruitment; remittances; the linkages between trafficking and migration; the future of work; informality and informal migration; post-conflict livelihoods; financial inclusion; and modern slavery in South Asia’s garment sector. Namrata set up the first in-house consumer research unit in banking at Bank Dhofar in the Gulf state of Oman, where she lived for close to 2 decades. She has also worked with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), helping with the establishment of an internal Labour Migration Unit with the ILO-Country Office, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives when she was a fellow at Harvard University’s Women and Public Policy Programme (WAPP) in 2017.

Namrata has been a research advisor across an array of sectors in the MENA region, including with various government departments in the GCC, banking and financial institutions, and an array of private sector entities. Namrata has a Master in Public Administration from Harvard University (2018), Masters of Economics

	<p>from University of Warwick, UK (2008), and a Bachelors of Economics from Madras University, India (2006).</p>
	<p><b>Dennis Dome</b> is responsible for designing, implementing and supervising research projects in East and the Horn of Africa and labour migration corridors to the Gulf countries. His experience includes data mining on engendering inclusivity for UNWOMEN and conducting violent extremism research for USAID. He has also been involved in a range of projects for clients, including Core Group Polio Project, Kenya’s Ministry of Education, Save The Children and CARE International.</p>
	<p><b>Maryam Almalki</b> is a social and family counselor, a legal expert, as well as a trainer in the field of combating human trafficking. She also serves as Deputy Regional Representative of Child Support Lines in the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, Maryam is the Former President of the Qatari House for Shelter and Humanitarian Care and Director of the Qatari Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking. She contributed to the launch of the Arab initiative to build national capacities working in the field of combating human trafficking in cooperation with the Office of Combating Crime and Drugs and the League of Arab States. Maryam also has many publications in the field of combating human trafficking. She is a Doctor of Philosophy (Human Rights) and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work/Sociology, as well as a Master’s in Public Policies in Sharia.</p>
	<p><b>Ekaterina Porras Sivolobova</b> is the Founder and Director of Do Bold. She has been working on the ground supporting migrant workers affected by modern slavery in the GCC countries while harnessing data to advise and campaign for better policies and practices. Her work has been shortlisted for the World Justice Challenge and the Nelson Mandela Prize Walk for Courage. And her efforts have been highlighted in the BBC, The Guardian, and the Washington Post.</p>

# Day Two: Engaging Different Stakeholder Groups

<b>Moderator</b>	
	<p><b>Rasha Al Manha</b> is the MENA regional manager of Free the Slaves, representing FTS in the region and provides ongoing technical assistance to FTS’s partner organizations in strategic design and implementation.</p> <p>She is a goal-focused, versatile project professional with 20+ years of experience supporting the strategic direction of large-scale humanitarian programs, specifically with UNICEF and USAID, as well as both national and international non-profit organizations on a local and cross-border basis, with extensive experience in budgeting and risk management while achieving overall goals.</p> <p>Rasha has been involved in the emergency, relief response to Syrian crises either inside Jordan or cross-border, in addition to local community capacity building and engagement by supporting the strategic direction of large-scale humanitarian programs, either locally or cross-border basis, with extensive experience disseminating project information to project stakeholders, oversee the operational aspects of an ongoing project and are accountable for leading, organizing, budgeting, and managing staff, as well as monitoring project progress, developing and maintaining project deliverables, and adhering to data quality standards.</p>
<b>Keynote Speaker</b>	



**Awah Francisca Mbuli** is a survivor of sex and labor trafficking. She is the founder of Survivors' Network (SN), a Cameroonian-based, female survivors-led NGO that fights against all forms of human trafficking. SN rescues and provides temporary housing, psychosocial services, vocational training, and economic empowerment programs to victims of human trafficking and internally displaced women. She advocates both with governments and the general population.

For her efforts, Awah has been awarded numerous distinctions, including, but not limited to, being one of the 50 Most Influential Cameroonians and an Obama Africa Leader and having received the African Dream Achievers Award, the US Trafficking in Persons Hero award, and the World of Difference Award 2022 for Economic Empowerment of Women.

Furthermore, Awah is one of the Freedom From Slavery Forum Ambassadors.

**Speakers**



**Linda Al Kalash** is the Founder and the Executive Director of Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights. Tamkeen's mandate focuses on topics related to labor rights, migration, and combating the crime of human trafficking. She leads a team that consists of lawyers, researchers, and field officers and represented Tamkeen in a number of national, regional, and international conferences and events that focus on Labour issues, Migrant Workers and Migration, Legal Aid, and Human Trafficking. In 2013, Linda formed the Arab Network for Migrants' Rights (ANMR), established in five Arab countries.





**Rima Kalush** is the Deputy Director of Majal.org and editor of Migrant-Rights.org. She joined Migrant-Rights.org in its infancy and has overseen its financial and programmatic growth. Her work has been published and referenced by institutions including Al Jazeera, the International Labor Organization, Jadaliyya, Gender Across Borders, and the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights. She holds a Master of Philosophy in Middle Eastern Area Studies from the University of Oxford.



**Vani Saraswathi** is the Editor-at-Large and Director of Projects at Migrant-Rights.org and the author of *Stories of Origin: The Invisible Lives of Migrants in the Gulf*. The book is an anthology of reporting from seven origin countries over a period of three years.

Since 2014, in her role with Migrant-Rights.org, she reports from the Gulf states and countries of origin. She also organizes advocacy projects and human rights training targeting individual employers, embassies, recruitment agents, and businesses in Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, working with nationals and long-term residents in these countries. A special emphasis is on female migrants, including domestic workers. Much of her advocacy effort is geared towards mainstreaming issues facing female migrant workers.

She is also a member of the Migration Advisory Group (previous Policy Advisory Committee) of ILO ROAS, the Policy Advisory Group of Freedom Fund's Ethiopia hotspot, Humanity United's Advisory Group on Forced Labour and Human Trafficking, and Steering Committee member for GAATW's cross-regional (Asia-GCC) work.




**Hind Cherrouk** is the Regional Program Director (RPD) for the Middle East and North Africa. She joined the Solidarity Center (SC) in 2005 and has been based in the SC field office in Rabat, Morocco, since 2011. Before becoming the SC's RPD, she was responsible for implementing programs on gender equality, economic literacy, and workers' rights in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya. Previously, she served as Field Program Specialist in Morocco, Deputy Country Program Director and Country Program Director for North Africa, and Program Officer at the SC headquarters in Washington, DC. She has extensive experience managing and implementing SC capacity-building programs with trade union partners and the broader labor movement funded by the Department of State, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Ford Foundation. She has led programs that have forged regional empowerment networks for women workers, built leadership skills, and strengthened the democratic practices of unions in the region.



**Dr. Katarina Schwarz** is an Associate Professor in Antislavery Law and Policy at the School of Law and Associate Director of the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham. Her research explores the intersections between slavery and the law, from the historical to the contemporary.

In her role leading the Rights Lab's Law and Policy Programme, Schwarz works at the interface of research and policy to deliver evidence-based guidance for contemporary antislavery action. Her Rights Lab research interrogates the law and policy frameworks operating at the global, regional, and domestic levels to determine the elements of effective antislavery governance and map trends, successes, and failures.

Schwarz is the lead author of the Antislavery in Domestic Legislation Database, the world's first comprehensive database of international obligations and domestic legislation on slavery and related practices. This project, initiated in 2015, maps the

	<p>current state of domestic legislation prohibiting slavery, servitude, forced labor, institutions and practices similar to slavery, and human trafficking in all 193 UN Member States, providing new insights for the global antislavery movement.</p>
	<p><b>Pamela Vargas Gorena</b> is part of the Rights Lab’s Law and Policy Programme, conducting contextual research and engagement focused on antislavery law and policy frameworks to deliver bespoke legislative toolkits. She contributes to the expansion of a database of domestic legislation and international obligations of all UN Member States, maps global legislation to understand trends, successes, and failures, and identifies factors contributing to positive legislative change. Her research background includes comparative law and jurisprudence, as well as the assessment of government law, policies, and capacities. As a qualified Bolivian lawyer, she previously held management positions in government, contributing to the development of law and public policy at central and local levels. She also has been part of UN-Habitat, working on the Urban National Policy, and has frontline experience working with vulnerable youth in the non-profit sector.</p>