

Child Labour and Contemporary Slavery: A Nigerian Perspective

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Abstract : Millions of Nigerian children are subjected daily to all forms of abuse, ranging from trafficking to slavery, and forced labor. These under age children are taken from different parts of the Country to be used as sex slaves and laborers in the big cities, killed for rituals, organ transplantation, or used for money laundering, begging on the streets or are put to work in the fields. These children are made to do inhuman jobs under degrading conditions and face all kinds of abuse at the hands of their owners with no hope of escape. While lots of people blame poverty or culture as a basis for human trafficking in Nigeria, the National Agency for the Prohibition and Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) says other causes of the outrageous rate of human trafficking in the country are ignorance, desperation, and the promotion and commercialization of sex by the European Union (EU) as dozens of young Nigerian children and women are forced to work as prostitutes in European countries including the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Spain. In the cause of searching for greener pastures, they are coerced into work they have not chosen and subjected to perpetual life in bondage. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 prohibits slave trade and slavery. Despite the fact that Nigeria is a Sovereign member of the United Nations and signatory to this International instrument, Child trafficking and slavery is still on the increase. This may be caused by the fact that the punishment for this crime in Nigeria is a maximum term of 10 years imprisonment with some of the worst offenders getting off with as little as 2 years imprisonment or an option of fine. It goes without saying that this punishment is not sufficient to act as a deterrent to these modern slave traders. Another major factor oiling the wheel of trafficking in the country is voodoo. The victims are taken to shrines of voodoo priests for oath taking. There, underage girls and boys are made to swear that they would never reveal the identities of their traffickers to anyone if arrested whether in the course of the journey or in the destination countries and that they would pay off debt. Nigeria needs tougher Laws in order to be able to combat human trafficking and slave trade. Also there has to be aggressive sensitization and awareness programs designed to educate and enlighten the public as to the dangers faced by these victims and the need to report any suspicious activity to the authorities. This paper attempts to give an insight into the plight of under-age Nigerian children trafficked and sold as slaves and offer a more effective stand in the fight against it.

Keywords : child labor, slavery, slave trade, trafficking

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