

Forum: United Nations Development Program

Issue #2: Addressing the role of the dark web in facilitating illegal organ trafficking and harvesting

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"Despite Multiple Attempts by Human Rights Activists, Forced Organ Harvesting Thrives in China." *ThePrint*, 22 Apr. 2023, theprint.in/world/despite-multiple-attempts-by-human-rights-activists-forced-organ-harvesting-thrives-in-china/1533683/.

Introduction

Organ trafficking is a growing global phenomenon in which human organs, especially

kidneys, livers, and corneas, are illegally removed, sold, and transplanted outside formal medical systems and often without proper consent. This practice violates basic human rights and medical ethics. The dark web has made these crimes easier to commit by allowing traffickers to operate anonymously using encrypted communication and cryptocurrency, making detection and enforcement extremely difficult. Victims are frequently poor, displaced, or marginalized individuals who are targeted precisely because they lack legal and social protections.

The dark web enables traffickers to advertise organs, negotiate prices, and arrange illegal surgeries far from public oversight. Because legal organ donation systems cannot meet the high demand for transplants, many desperate patients turn to the black market. According to The Exodus Road, the illegal organ trade may account for up to 10% of all global transplants and generate as much as \$1.7 billion annually ("The Exodus Road"). This system not only exploits vulnerable populations but also undermines trust in healthcare systems. This issue is highly controversial. First, the question of consent is often unclear; many donors are misled, pressured, or forced into donating their organs. Second, the lack of medical standards in black market surgeries poses serious health risks to both donors and recipients, who may face long-term complications or even death (Wiley Online Library, 2021). Third, the dark web's anonymity makes legal accountability almost impossible, allowing international trafficking networks to operate with minimal interference. Lastly, this trade deepens global inequality by allowing wealthy individuals to buy organs from those in poverty, often in countries with weak legal protections. Solving this issue requires urgent action. Stronger legal frameworks, better online monitoring, and more accessible legal organ donation systems are needed. Governments and international bodies must cooperate to detect, prevent, and penalize organ trading. Addressing the role of the dark web and organ trafficking is essential to uphold the rule of law, protect vulnerable populations, and strengthen international criminal justice systems.

Definition of Key Terms

Organ Trafficking: The action of illegally buying, selling, and exchanging of organs where consent is present, but exploitative because those who sell their organs are

coerced, deceived, pressured, or, most commonly, financially vulnerable (Maginn).

Illegal Organ Harvesting: The action of surgically removing a person's organs without their consent or knowledge, typically through kidnappings or as a result of unsuccessful surgery, as a means to secure more transplantable organs for other patients ("Organ Harvesting").

Transplant Tourism: When people travel to a different country or region for an organ transplant, it's often followed by organ trafficking or commercialism. Transplant tourism restricts the host country's ability to provide organ transplants to its people legally (Ambagtsheer).

The Dark Web: The dark web is a part of the internet that is not included in ordinary search engines, and to reach it, a specific software needs to be used. It is normally used for criminal activities like the illegal trade of digital and physical material (Wikipedia Contributors, "Dark Web").

Exploitative Consent: The action of receiving verbal or signed consent through deception, coercion, abuse of authority, or based on vulnerability. This method does not properly inform participants of what they agreed to, leading to involuntary consent. This is used especially in illegal settings (UN Immigration IOM).

Non-state Actors: Individuals that play a role in organized criminal operations; in organ trade, surgeons, buyers, sellers, and brokers are non-state actors (Staff).

Black Market Surgery: Illegal medical procedures that are performed outside controlled health systems and their protocol; for example, surgery being performed by unqualified staff, or in unequipped, illegal clinics. These types of procedures endanger patients and occur most commonly in the cosmetic and organ trade industry (Linkov).

Broker: A person who manages transactions, including the organization of organ sales and the alignment of buyers and sellers of organs. They are mostly involved in the recruitment of donors or the logistics of transplant tourism (Ambagtsheer).

Digital Trafficking Platforms: Internet sites, possibly in the dark web or other virtual places that are used to facilitate human trafficking or illegal commerce, typically by connecting brokers, victims, and buyers ("Human Trafficking via Digital Platforms: What Is It and Now Interpol Is Trying to Tackle This New Cybercrime").

Cold Chain: A temperature-controlled supply chain that stores organs or other biological products at appropriate temperatures during transport, to preserve the functionality of the biological material for transplant (Advances in Computers).

Anonymity: The state of being untraceable or unidentifiable, typically sought by perpetrators of criminal acts to evade government monitoring systems (Wikipedia Contributors, "Anonymity").

Trafficking in Persons Protection (Palermo Protocol): An international agreement of the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which establishes international standards for identifying human trafficking (UN Immigration IOM).

General Overview

The Global Scale of Organ Trade

The global organ trade is an international and complex issue driven by a series of events, mainly the large gap between the demand for transplantable organs and the short and limited supply available, making this issue reach national borders. Worldwide, over 170,000 organ transplants happen annually; however, that number only satisfies a small fraction of the world's demand, leaving a vast majority of patients desperate to find an alternative solution (GLOBAL OBSERVATORY ON DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION). However, the governmental organ waitlist system does not prioritize money, unlike a free-market system, which runs based on pricing; its priority is a combination of medical urgency, compatibility, and time on the waitlist. This leads wealthy people who are unable to legally access organs fast enough to engage in the illegal organ market, paying unreasonable prices for alternative solutions to access

organs outside their countries illegally, using transplant tourism to fulfill their medical needs. Consequently, this practice commonly exploits poorer individuals from developing countries. Financially, this exploitation in the red market is estimated to make between \$840 million and \$1.7 billion annually, being organized by brokers who make most of the profits through other people's disparity (Maginn). Moreover, the organ transplantation and preservation cold chain systems are growing at a rapid rate, estimated to make from \$291 billion in 2025 to over \$513 billion by 2034, as medical technology and transplant services continue to grow and become more globalized, the facilitation of illegal organ trade will also expand across international borders (Cognitive Market Research).



Lara, Aurora Muñoz. "Vendo Mi Riñón Por 8.000 Euros." El País, 31 July 2011, elpais.com/diario/2011/07/31/sociedad/1312063203_850215.html. Accessed 27 June 2025.

Organ Trafficking vs. Illegal Organ Harvesting

Organ harvesting and organ trafficking are related and commonly used interchangeably; however, they are different regarding the nature of consent and type

of exploitation. Organ trafficking involves the illegal buying, selling, and exchange of organs where consent is present, but it is considered exploitative consent because those who sell their organs are coerced, deceived, pressured, or, most commonly, financially vulnerable, leaving their body as their only source of money (Maginn). Organ trafficking in this context relies on a transactional relationship where consent is compromised, but still there, as a way to remove the broker's accountability for the victim's suffering, therefore making organ trafficking a manipulative scam to force exploitative consent from victims while hiding the whole truth about the severity of the procedure.

According to The Guardian, "Patients, many of whom will go to China, India or Pakistan for surgery, can pay up to \$200,000 (nearly £128,000) for a kidney to gangs who harvest organs from vulnerable, desperate people, sometimes for as little as \$5,000." (Campbell), revealing that brokers use deception to earn their money. On the other hand, organ harvesting is the involuntary removal of organs without permission, typically by abduction, violence, or murder, and most often, organ harvesting is lethal or seriously damaging to the victim (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). Both organ trafficking and harvesting are heavily regarded throughout the world as a serious violation of international law regarding human rights. The Palermo Protocol and other international policies distinguish these offenses by highlighting the fact that organ trafficking exploits consent with deception, whereas harvesting bluntly disregards the will of the victim, going for their lives as well, considered a greater criminal offence (UN Immigration IOM).



PTI. "Kerala Police Arrest Mastermind of International Organ Trafficking Mafia from Hyderabad." *The South First*, 2 June 2024,

thesouthfirst.com/kerala/kerala-police-arrest-mastermind-of-international-organ-trafficking-mafia-from-hyderabad/.

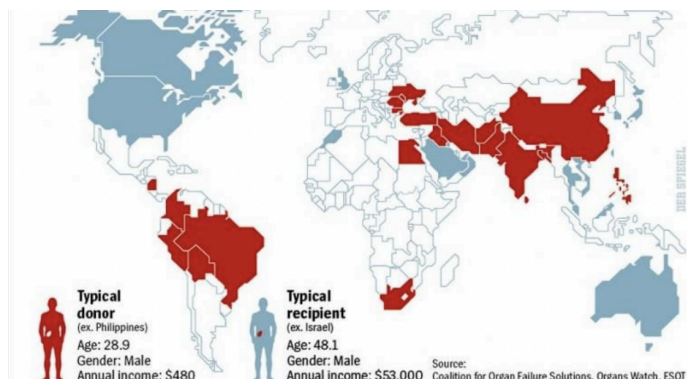
The Role of The Dark Web in Organ Trade

Anonymity, confidential communication networks, and digital trafficking platforms are only available through the dark web, continuing and protecting the illegal organ trade, making brokers, buyers, and victims completely anonymous. By using confidential websites and cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Monero, where all users' transactions are anonymous, traffickers can carry out these activities with almost complete protection from law enforcement (Welle). These internet sites for trafficking allow vulnerable people to be recruited as “donors” and connected to recipients worldwide, placing both parties in the procedure in danger involving medical risks, due to the unreliability of black market surgeries (Maginn). Current technological advancements make it almost impossible to track current perpetrators, since encrypted messages and confidential cryptocurrency transactions leave little room for any evidence of illegal activity (Singh and Avishek).

Legal Vacuums and International Law Enforcement Challenges

Legal loopholes and enforcement issues continue to present major challenges in fighting against organ trafficking and harvesting worldwide. Even after the Palermo Protocol established international standards for identifying human trafficking, including for organ removal, its enforcement is inconsistent and hindered by a lack of resources and the governmental political will to act (UN Immigration IOM). The vast majority of countries haven't yet finished passing and implementing these laws into effect. Moreover, traffickers, due to inconsistency in law enforcement and jurisdictional weakness, make money off of other people's bodies through the dark web with impunity, completely undetected (Rawat et al.). International laws' focus on the trafficking of only human beings allows brokers to create legal loopholes for organ trafficking, which they then exploit, creating a cycle of organ trade (Welle).

Major Parties Involved and Their Views



Directorate-General for External Policies. *Trafficking in Human Organs*. European Parliament, Policy Department, 2015.

[www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549055/EXPO_STU\(2015\)549055_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/549055/EXPO_STU(2015)549055_EN.pdf).

United States

The United States enforces strict domestic laws against organ trafficking, yet it remains connected to global transplant tourism. Although there is no verified evidence of U.S. citizens purchasing organs through the dark web, global shortages have contributed to an increase in illicit online sales targeting desperate patients (Newsweek, 2024). Federal agencies such as the FBI and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) actively collaborate with INTERPOL, EUROPOL, and the UNODC to disrupt cyber-based trafficking operations (UNODC, 2015). Despite these efforts, challenges such as anonymized transactions, cross-border traceability, and weak international oversight persist. Ethical concerns also arise from U.S. patients traveling abroad for questionable procedures, highlighting potential complicity in unethical medical practices (Budiani-Saberi & Delmonico, 2008).

China

China has faced consistent international criticism for unethical organ procurement practices, especially involving prisoners and religious minorities such as Falun Gong. While there is no direct evidence proving that organs are sold on the dark web, reports

suggest that transplant operations in China have used online platforms to attract international recipients, often by offering faster access to organs compared to legal systems in Western countries (Newsweek, 2024). Although China officially banned the use of organs from executed prisoners in 2015 and introduced the China Organ Transplant Response System (COTRS) to improve oversight, major concerns remain about the transparency of the system. Investigations by the China Tribunal in 2019 and human rights groups have raised concerns about coerced or non-consensual organ donation, especially in detention centers. Many critics argue that without independent international monitoring, China's transplant system continues to lack accountability and enables ongoing abuse. The combination of limited transparency, weak enforcement, and state control over medical institutions raises serious ethical and legal questions about complicity in forced organ harvesting.

Russia

Russia has been identified as a source country in the global organ trade, particularly through networks that recruit individuals via online platforms (UNODC, 2015). These networks operate in an environment marked by weak law enforcement, corruption, and minimal cyber-monitoring, which allows trafficking to persist with little disruption (Budiani-Saberi, 2008). Reports indicate that traffickers use encrypted messaging services, untraceable cryptocurrencies, and unregulated digital forums to arrange illegal transplants. Vulnerable populations, including prisoners, undocumented migrants, and people living in poverty, are particularly at risk. In many cases, these organs are transported through transnational criminal networks to recipients in wealthier countries across Asia and the Middle East. Addressing this issue requires stronger surveillance systems, anti-corruption measures, and international cooperation to strengthen accountability and border enforcement.

France

Actively supports international efforts to combat organ trafficking, particularly through advocacy for enhanced digital regulations and support for relevant UN resolutions (FasterCapital, 2025). While France is not a major center for organ trafficking, its financial intelligence units and cybersecurity agencies have identified online activities linked to illegal transplants. These include cryptocurrency transactions and anonymized

advertisements posted on unregulated digital platforms. Investigations have indicated that these operations often target vulnerable donors from the Middle East and Africa, while recipients are based in Europe. France continues to push for tighter regulations on technology companies, greater accountability from online service providers, and a unified global approach to tackling online-enabled trafficking (Council of Europe & UN, 2009).

India

India continues to face challenges with illegal organ trading, with reports highlighting the use of online platforms and social media to advertise and sell organs, mainly to international patients looking to bypass long waiting periods (Wired, 2007; Budiani-Saberi, 2008). Numerous scandals have revealed the use of fake documents, coercion, and manipulation of impoverished individuals, which have implicated several private hospitals in unethical practices. Although the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) was introduced to prevent illegal transplants, enforcement remains weak and inconsistent. India's relatively low costs for transplant surgeries, widespread internet access, and poverty make it a key destination for organ tourism. Strengthening cybercrime laws, ensuring ethical medical oversight, and improving international data sharing and enforcement mechanisms are necessary steps to counter the illicit organ trade.

Nepal

Nepal has become a notable example of how poverty and weak regulation make some countries particularly vulnerable to illegal organ trafficking. Although there is limited evidence of dark web involvement, encrypted messaging apps, cryptocurrencies, and social media platforms are frequently used to coordinate illicit organ sales (Newsweek, 2024). The Kavre district, often referred to as "Kidney Valley," has become a symbol of systemic poverty, where individuals are persuaded or coerced into selling their kidneys. The government's limited capacity to enforce cyber laws and the lack of regional cooperation have allowed these operations to continue with minimal oversight. To address this, Nepal must enhance its cybercrime enforcement units and build stronger collaboration with regional organizations like SAARC. Cross-border investigations and digital tracking mechanisms are essential to dismantle

these operations (WHO, 2015).

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
Late 1990s - Early 2000s	As the internet expanded globally in the late 1990s, the illegal organ trade began moving online. Early cases involved small forums and private websites, often in countries with weak regulation. Although limited, this marked the beginning of a shift from street-level organ trafficking to digital black markets (Shimazono, 2007).
May 2005	The Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism was drafted, promoting ethical practices and global collaboration against organ trafficking. While not focused on digital platforms, it signaled rising awareness of international illegal markets (DICG, 2008).
March 2008	The UNODC began formally collecting global data on trafficking for organ removal. Between 2008 - 2022, over 700 confirmed cases were documented. Organ prices, especially kidneys, surged on the black market (UNODC, 2021).
2010-2012	Throughout the early 2010s, organ traffickers began using social media platforms and the dark web to advertise organ sales and communicate with buyers. Encrypted platforms such as early versions of Tor (the privacy-focused network that anonymizes internet activity, often used to access the dark web) and private messaging apps enabled greater anonymity. Transplant tourism surged, with wealthy patients traveling abroad to purchase organs from impoverished sellers (Budiani-Saberi & Delmonico, 2008; GFI, 2011).

September 2013	Journalist investigations by BBC Panorama and The Guardian uncovered direct listings for kidneys and livers on dark web forums. Some of these were linked to Syrian refugees, highlighting how conflict zones were increasingly tied to exploitative organ markets (BBC Panorama, 2013).
February 2014	The U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) launched the Memex Project, a search tool designed to help law enforcement detect illegal activities, including organ trafficking, on the deep and dark web. This marked a significant development in cyber-policing technology (DARPA, 2015).
November 2015	By 2015, organized crime groups had fully transitioned their organ trafficking operations to the dark web. Use of cryptocurrency and encrypted messaging apps allowed traffickers to advertise and negotiate organ sales with relative impunity. Studies indicated that the price of a black market kidney had more than doubled since 2010 (Europol, 2016).
June 2016	The Global Financial Integrity (GFI) report emphasized how financial tracking methods could be used to detect and analyze transnational organ trade operations. This marked one of the first attempts to systematically link organ trafficking with financial crime patterns (GFI, 2016).
December 2017	In a landmark case, Interpol assisted Egyptian authorities in arresting dozens of individuals involved in illegal organ transplants. Among those arrested were medical professionals. Investigations revealed they had recruited donors through encrypted forums and social media platforms like Facebook (Reuters, 2017).
May 2018	The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 10,000 illegal

kidney transplants were being performed annually worldwide, roughly one per hour. Many of these transactions were coordinated via dark web forums, online ads, and transplant tourism networks (WHO, 2018).

October 2019 During Operation Pangea XII, INTERPOL targeted the online sale of unlicensed medical goods. Investigators discovered forums and websites advertising illegal organ offers, underscoring the overlap between organ trafficking and counterfeit medicine markets (INTERPOL, 2020).

April–July 2020 Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, global economic hardship led to a documented rise in individuals advertising organ sales online. Law enforcement agencies reported increased trafficking activity on Telegram, WhatsApp, and Signal, while dark web markets shifted to more hidden infrastructures (UNODC, 2020; OHCHR, 2021).

June 2021 A report by Global Financial Integrity described how traffickers used cryptocurrencies and offshore hosting to operate websites like <https://organcity.com>. These platforms were difficult to shut down due to their presence in jurisdictions with lax enforcement (GFI, 2021).

February 2022 The UNODC released a thematic report on trafficking for organ removal. It emphasized that digital platforms had become central to recruitment, with traffickers increasingly posting on job boards, body-selling forums, and similar online venues. The report also noted an alarming rise in doctor involvement (UNODC, 2022).

May 2023 A new cyber task force involving Europol, Interpol, and national law enforcement launched targeted surveillance of dark web forums. Tools derived from the Memex Project were deployed to trace organ trafficking operations in Eastern Europe, South Asia, and North Africa

(Europol Briefing, 2023).

March 2024

Despite advanced monitoring technologies, darknet organ marketplaces continued to emerge using zero-knowledge encryption (e.g., Zcash). NGOs reported that organ sales were increasingly bundled within multi-crime ecosystems, including human trafficking and forced labor operations (Freedom Collaborative, 2024).

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Protocol

Adopted in 2000, the UNTOC and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons have been key in defining trafficking for organ removal as a serious human rights violation (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”). While they provide an important legal foundation, their effectiveness has been limited by uneven national implementation. Many countries still lack specific legislation addressing organ trafficking, and enforcement is often weak due to limited training and cross-border coordination. The Palermo Protocol wasn’t designed with the complexity of the organ trade in mind, especially when cases involve both legal and illegal actors. To strengthen its impact, the UN should release updated technical guidance and expand support for national laws targeting organ removal more directly (“Seventy-Ninth Session Agenda Item 107 Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”).

UN General Assembly Resolution on Illegal Organ Trafficking and Harvesting

This resolution urges member states to take thorough legal, investigative, and preventative action against trafficking for organ removal, while also calling for victim protection and international cooperation (“Document Viewer”, 2017). It emphasizes the role of healthcare and law enforcement professionals in identifying cases of illegal organ harvesting (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Prevention of Trafficking in Persons”). However, as a non-binding framework, it does lack enforcement power.

Many governments have not taken meaningful steps to follow through on their recommendations, and there are no consequences for failing to implement or act.

Multidisciplinary and systematic approaches supported by the UN

Beyond the legislative and policy-driven structure encouraged by the UN, they also promote a multidisciplinary approach to address organ trafficking involving law enforcement, healthcare, and society. The *Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice* has repeatedly highlighted the need for coordinated action, referencing the UNTOC and its protocols, along with the *Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants* (GLO.ACT). The GLO.ACT is a four-year joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that began in 2015 through 2019. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are in partnership with the UNODC. In 13 carefully chosen nations, "Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, South Africa, Ukraine", the GLO.ACT sought to support civil society organizations and government officials. It encourages the creation of more efficient countermeasures to human trafficking and smuggling, such as aiding vulnerable migrants and trafficking victims by bolstering direct support, referral, and identification systems ("Workshop to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons for Organ Removal in Nepal"). These sections urge states to exchange information, share best practices, and develop national strategies to address both illegal organ harvesting and the trafficking in humans for organ removal, ensuring a thorough and collaborative response (United Nations, "What We Do to End Human Trafficking").

Capacity Building (2021)

UN resolutions have increasingly emphasized the need for specialized training and capacity building, especially for border authorities, law enforcement, and healthcare providers ("Document Viewer", 2021). The release of resources like the Toolkit on the Investigation and Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons for Organ Removal has improved global standards and helped guide complex investigations (Toolkit on the Investigation and Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons for Organ Removal). Still, many states lack the infrastructure to apply this training effectively. In lower-income or high-risk regions,

reporting mechanisms remain weak, and few professionals know how to recognize or document trafficking indicators.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

A Look at What's Been Done to Fight Organ Trafficking

Over the last two decades, several international treaties, conferences, and legal reforms have tried to address the issue of illegal organ trafficking. Still, their success has been limited, especially when it comes to the growing use of the dark web. The Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs was one of the first binding legal documents to criminalize organ trafficking and promote international cooperation directly (Council of Europe, 2015). While this was a major advancement, the enforcement has been inconsistent, and many countries have yet to ratify or fully implement the treaty. Other legal instruments like the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons also include provisions for organ removal (OHCHR, 2000), but they were not designed with digital platforms or the dark web in mind, limiting their impact today. The Declaration of Istanbul (2008) helped raise awareness among healthcare professionals about transplant ethics and organ tourism, but as a non-binding declaration, it cannot hold governments or doctors accountable (Declaration of Istanbul, 2008). Resolutions like UNGA Resolution (2022) have called on states to update their laws and pursue traffickers more aggressively, including those using online platforms (EDQM, 2022). However, there are still no unified global protocols for monitoring organ trafficking on the dark web, and traffickers continue to exploit anonymous browsers, cryptocurrencies, and encrypted messaging apps. What's clear is that while awareness and international consensus have improved, enforcement is still weak, digital tools are underutilized, and cross-border coordination remains limited. To improve, countries must create stricter online regulations, invest in cybercrime task forces, and hold medical professionals accountable when they violate transplant ethics. Without these changes, traffickers will continue to operate with impunity, especially in hidden corners of the internet.

Possible Solutions

Develop Mechanisms To Monitor And Take Down Organ Marketplaces In The Dark Web

A possible solution could include the promotion of development in the international legislative framework for identifying, tracking, and closing down illegal organ trafficking, harvesting, and black market surgery with the help of non-actors on the dark web. This could include cooperation with cybersecurity experts and the use of forensic software to expose hidden online activities.

Strengthen National Cybercrime Units To Investigate Trafficking - Related Digital Activity

Another possible solution is to propose the extension of international and regional cybercrime units, like INTERPOL's Cybercrime Directorate, to add a specialized group to focus on organ trafficking and illegal organ harvesting. These units could be trained to detect and investigate online activity related to cases of organ trafficking and illegal organ harvesting, which would include the ability to trace cryptocurrency transactions, which are often used to fund illegal organ sales anonymously. Additionally, brokers typically use encrypted communication platforms like Telegram or dark web platforms to remain anonymous. Therefore, these cybercrime units would also be able to decrypt secure communications by brokers, allowing them to intercept trafficking networks. Additionally, strengthening international cooperation between these units would be useful in cybercrime units for the elimination of transplant tourism and cross-border trafficking.

Introduce Organ Traceability Protocols Through Digital Technologies

Moreover, another important factor in solving this issue and a possible solution is to promote the establishment of a traceable, secure system, using advanced computing technologies like blockchain to track the trajectory of organs from donation to transplant. This means that there would be digital monitoring of legally donated organs in places like the cold chain, or other places the organ would go before the transplant. This system can attempt to prevent trafficked organs from entering the legitimate supply chain of legal organs, which is most commonly practiced in illegal organ harvesting.

Strengthen Legal Protection For Groups Vulnerable To Exploitation

A key factor in stopping organ trafficking is to protect those vulnerable to it due to financial vulnerability or disparity by assisting in the launch of better-supported public health, legal aid, and education initiatives within high-risk zones of exploitation for organ trafficking through exploitative consent. These can include migrant populations, impoverished communities, or those with limited access to healthcare.



"THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development." Un.org, 2015, sdgs.un.org/goals. Accessed 27 June 2025.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

The issue of organ trafficking through the dark web goes against everything Sustainable Development Goal 16 is trying to achieve. Goal 16 is about promoting justice, building strong institutions, and making sure that laws are enforced equally and fairly. But in this case, traffickers can use encrypted websites, anonymous browsers, and cryptocurrency to commit serious crimes without being held accountable. Because there is little oversight online, and because international cooperation is often slow or inconsistent, traffickers can continue exploiting people without facing consequences. Victims, often poor or displaced individuals, are denied justice, while those responsible operate in the shadows. This weakens public trust in legal and healthcare systems and shows that the

rule of law is not being applied equally. In order to meet the goals of SDG 16, governments need to update cybercrime laws, improve coordination between countries, and create stronger systems that can track and punish those involved in online organ trafficking. Without action, these crimes will continue to go unpunished, and justice will remain out of reach for the most vulnerable. (United Nations, "Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions")

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

Goal 3 focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all people; however, the dark web facilitates organ trade, which poses a serious risk to both of these objectives. Illegal transplants often take place in unsafe, unsanitary, and unregulated settings, which can lead to severe complications or death

for both donors and recipients. Many of the individuals who sell their organs do so because they are financially desperate, and they often don't receive proper care or even fully consent to the procedure. This is a direct violation of medical ethics and human rights. At the same time, people who receive organs on the black market may also face major health risks, since these procedures are performed outside the legal healthcare system. The dark web makes it easier for these illegal surgeries to happen by hiding the identities of everyone involved. This undermines public trust in legal transplant systems and discourages organ donation. If SDG 3 is to be achieved, countries need to make legal transplant systems more accessible, protect the rights of vulnerable individuals, and make sure that all organ transplants happen in safe, ethical, and regulated environments. (United Nations, "Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being")

Appendix

This section of the issue bulletin is dedicated to providing delegates with valuable sources to utilize during their research.

Source A: <https://theexodusroad.com/organ-trafficking-facts/>

The Exodus Road outlines key facts about global organ trafficking, highlighting exploitation of vulnerable populations and the involvement of organized crime in the

dark web.

Source B:

<https://www.magellantv.com/articles/cut-and-run-the-black-market-in-organ-trafficking>

MagellanTV Article - "Cut and Run" is an investigation on the shady underworld of the red market of organ trade, focusing on international operations and the desperation that drives both buyers and sellers.

Source C:

<https://safercommunities.wales/modern-slavery-exploitation/organ-harvesting/>

Safer Communities Wales explains organ harvesting as a whole, describing it as a form of modern slavery, highlighting how victims are often trafficked and exploited for their organs.

Source D:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/27/kidney-trade-illegal-operations-who#:~:text=Patients%2C%20many%20of%20whom%20will>

The Guardian - "Kidney Trade" exposes the illegal global kidney trade, with firsthand testimonies of donors and patients, and explores the complicity of some medical professionals.

Source E:

<https://www.acamstoday.org/organ-trafficking-the-unseen-form-of-human-trafficking/>

ACAMS Today discusses organ trafficking as an underrepresented form of human trafficking and calls for stronger financial and international collaboration.

Source F: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUsd7Qs4NOK>

PBS NewsHour explains the true nature of organ trafficking in Nepal and the reasons behind every party's cooperation in this illegal underground operation.

Source G: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMYsc2NDWIA>

News Central TV breaks down organ harvesting through the recent recurring events in Nigeria, with illegal organ harvesting being found and charged as criminal offences.

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