



## Statement of Caritas Ukraine on Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine at War Time 4 October 2023

*"I fled Bakhmut, appeared in Kyiv city, no shelter, no resources for surviving, after suffering and violence, without husband, with three small children! I thought I would not survive! I came to Caritas to ask for food and warm clothes for children. But I've received not only basic things; they've helped me with accommodation and work. I didn't know what human trafficking is. I thought that it might be my fault! I asked myself why I had to suffer so much and be sexually exploited. I had no idea before war that for my survival and for my children's sake I would give sex to invaders!"*

Alona, 34 y.o, victim of sexual exploitation in Ukraine

Since the beginning of full-scale war in Ukraine the violation of human rights of civilians rapidly increased. Russia's invasion of Ukraine totally changed human rights situation: millions of our citizens became refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people; thousands of civilians were killed or injured captured, murdered, tortured; they lost everything: their houses, business, properties and loved ones. By IOM statistics over 32 million people are estimated to be affected by the full-scale war. According to the Ukrainian government more than 19 thousand children were forcibly deported from Ukraine to Russia, 504 children were killed, 1125 children were wounded. But these are only verified numbers. The real figures may be much higher.

The situation with trafficking in the country became more difficult, the cases of sexual violation and sexual exploitation are more severe and cruel. We notice increasing vulnerability of population to recruitment and trafficking, especially among refugees and IDPs, more cases of sexual exploitation or sex for survival, involving into war conflict and criminal activities, domestic servitude, different forms of slavery. Though IOM, Caritas Ukraine and other CSO in Ukraine screen a lot of cases of human trafficking, by official statistics of Ministry of Social Policy in 2022 there were only 47 persons identified as the survivors in trafficking (for comparison in 2021 – 64, in 2020 – 134). Possibly because of war realities many cases are not classified as crimes of trafficking but as crimes against humanity. The prosecution of criminal cases of trafficking in Ukraine is also very low. In 2022 there were only 77 cases registered and there were none verdicts on the crime of trafficking in Ukraine.

To prevent the current humanitarian crisis in Ukraine from turning into a human trafficking crisis Caritas Ukraine suggests:

- to improve the mechanism of implementation of the Convention and the Protocols by active involving NGOs into review process;
- to enhance the system of monitoring and evaluation of implementation of UNTOC, through improvement the level of implementation of National Action Plan;
- to develop the programs of international and regional cooperation of national coordinators, police and NGOs dealing with issue of counter trafficking and to provide sustainable funding for those programs;
- to train better staff responsible for counter-trafficking, including representatives of police, law enforcement bodies, medical and social service organizations;
- to improve screening, identification and protection of survivors;
- to strengthen the cooperation of state entities, NGOs, business, survivors led organizations and other stakeholders working for counter trafficking.

**Caritas** is one of the largest international networks of charitable organizations in the world and in Europe. Since 2004, Caritas Ukraine through its network provides direct tailor made assistance to survivors of human trafficking and organizes awareness raising activities to prevent trafficking in person. For 20 years we have been constantly monitoring and actively contributing to the combating of the crime of human trafficking.

Caritas Ukraine appeals for justice, freedom, humanity, dignity, inclusion, merciful love and fraternity!

Prepared by  
Iryna Maievska, Program manager, [imaievska@caritas.ua](mailto:imaievska@caritas.ua)  
Nataliya Holynska, Expert in counter trafficking, [nholynska@caritas.ua](mailto:nholynska@caritas.ua)  
Caritas Ukraine, <https://caritas.ua/>