SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
2 December 2025

UN experts stand up for Freedom on the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

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GENEVA (1 December 2025) – Ahead of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, UN experts issued the following joint statement:

"As we approach the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, we are reminded that the pledge of eradicating slavery in all its forms remains unfinished. This year's commemoration carries particular weight as the world prepares to mark, in 2026, the centenary of the 1926 Slavery Convention. Adopted one hundred years ago, the Convention set the cornerstone of international law on the prohibition of slavery and helped galvanize global action. Its centenary is both a testament to progress and a solemn reminder that the struggle is far from over.

Contemporary forms of slavery continue to affect millions worldwide. Forced labour, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, child and/or forced marriage, and the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and by terrorist groups remain pervasive, reflecting entrenched inequalities, harmful gender stereotypes, and the persistent gaps in protection systems. Countless victims suffer torture, are killed or disappeared every year. Families are often helpless bearers of enduring pain and also victims of this global tragedy. Emerging forms of exploitation—such as forced criminality through cyber-scamming operations—are subjecting hundreds of thousands of people to coercion, confinement, and severe debt bondage. These crimes, often operating across borders and enabled by irresponsible business practices, technology and corruption, reveal the evolving nature of exploitation and the need for coordinated responses based on States and businesses' firm commitment.

Furthermore, major challenges in ending contemporary forms of slavery, including of women and girls persist worldwide, fuelled by gender inequality, economic vulnerability, lack of access to regular migration pathways and significant weaknesses within legal and justice systems. These factors create an environment where exploitation is easily perpetrated and difficult to escape or prosecute.

This continuum of exploitation underscores the importance of remembering the historical legacies of enslavement and the transatlantic slave trade, which provide critical context for understanding and addressing contemporary forms of slavery.

Commemorating 2 December is not only an act of remembrance; it is an affirmation of our collective responsibility to protect the rights, humanity and dignity of all people. Central to this commitment is the recognition of survivors' agency. Survivors of slavery forced labour, and human trafficking must be at the heart of all efforts to address, remedy and prevent the recurrence of these abuses. Their voices, expertise, and

leadership are essential in shaping laws, policies, and assistance programmes that truly respond to their needs. Survivors should have access to comprehensive support throughout their path to a dignified recovery. Ensuring their meaningful participation in every decision that affects them is not optional—it is a fundamental principle of justice and empowerment. Their participation is also a way to give them back their voices and the ability to claim their human rights. Meaningfully engaging with human rights defenders striving to eliminate contemporary forms of slavery is also crucial.

On the occasion of the Convention's centenary, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Special Procedures, Treaty bodies, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and the United Nations Human Rights Office are launching a global campaign to honour this historic milestone and to galvanize renewed international action. This campaign will serve as a platform to raise awareness, mobilize partnerships and trigger global action. It will also amplify survivor leadership and promote solutions that address root causes, strengthen accountability, and build resilience against exploitation.

On this International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, and in the lead-up to the Convention's 100th anniversary, we reaffirm a simple but powerful truth: every person, everywhere, has the right to live free from bondage, exploitation, and fear. Let us honour the legacy of the 1926 Convention by renewing our resolve to end all forms of slavery—old and new—and by ensuring that survivors and their families are partners, leaders, and central agents of change".

ENDS

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery marks the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (resolution 317(IV) of 2 December 1949). Today, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery recalls the date of the adoption of this first Convention to fight human trafficking by the United Nations General Assembly.

**** The experts: Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Ecaterina Schilling (Chair), Susan Coppedge, Hina Jilani, Fatimata M'Baye and Suamhirs Piranio-Guzman, Bernard Duhaime, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; Mai Sato, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Michelle Small (Chair-Rapporteur), Ravindran Daniel, Jovana Jezdimirovic Ranito, Joana de Deus Pereira, Andrés Macías Tolosa, Working Group on the use of mercenaries Cecilia M. Bailliet, Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Mama Fatima Singhateh, Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; Richard Bennett, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan; George Katrougalos, Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Alexandra Xanthaki, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Pichamon Yeophantong (Chairperson), Damilola Olawuyi (Vice-Chairperson), Fernanda Hopenhaym, Lyra Jakulevičienė and Robert McCorquodale, Working Group on business and human rights.; Vitit Muntarbhorn, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in***

Cambodia; Alice Jill Edwards, Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Bina D'Costa (Chair), Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent Graeme Reid, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; Ms. Gina Romero, Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.; Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Claudia Flores (Chair), Ivana Krstić (Vice-Chair), Dorothy Estrada Tanck, Haina Lu, and Laura Nyirinkindi, Working group on discrimination against women and girls; Ana Brian Nougrères, Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy; Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; Ashwini K.P. Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance ; Siobhán Mullally , Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Surya Deva, Special Rapporteur on the right to development; Elisa Morgera, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change; Elizabeth Salmón is the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Gabriella Citroni (Chair-Rapporteur), Grażyna Baranowska (Vice-Chair), Aua Baldé; Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez, and Mohammed Al-Obaidi, Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; and Astrid Puentes Riaño, Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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