

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY SLAVERY IN WEST AFRICA

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### Abstract

This article aims to provide a study of slavery from a comparative point of view. Precisely, it looks for the root causes of the similar coverage and structure of traditional and contemporary slavery in West Africa. After determining the necessity of using the term of contemporary slavery for nowadays' human rights violations, the article provides the comparison of traditional and modern day slavery in Mauritania and Ivory Coast where chattel slavery and child labor still keep a lot of people in bondage. The author states that infractions were basic components of the traditional slave trade in the early modern and modern age, while they are still determining factors of these two countries' society and economy. Following the two case studies, the author discusses the efforts of the international community to abolish slavery by analyzing related legal instruments and it also looks into the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on all Forms of Contemporary Slavery. This part confirms the need for an increasing attention of the governmental and non-governmental actors of international politics to the issue of slavery.

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**Keywords:** Traditional and contemporary slavery, West Africa, international protection of human rights

### Introduction

According to the recent Global Slavery Index" surveys conducted by Walk Free Foundation in 2013, around 29, 8 million people are still living in slavery nowadays. Based on the prevalence of slavery, Moldova, Benin, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Gabon, Mauritania, Pakistan, Nepal, and Haiti have the highest numbers. On the other side, the index shows a slightly different picture if we take the number of people living under slavery conditions into consideration compared to the population. Then the first countries are India, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, Thailand, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. As a consequence, the survey shows that 76 % of the 29, 8 million people live in these countries.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the methodology of Walk Free Foundation, it considered the prevalence of slavery compared to the population of the 162 countries reviewed and it also took into consideration the measure of child marriage and the measure of human trafficking in and out of the country. Furthermore, the research did not only present the seriousness of the topic, but it had also identified the possible root causes of the increasing extension of slavery so that it would be feasible to compare the problem among touched countries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Global Slavery Index. Walk Free Foundation. 2013. <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/report> (Accessed April 30, 2014) pp.1.

<sup>3</sup> Upon that, the research also analyzed legislative actions that have already been done in order to abolish contemporary slavery in countries being in the first and last 20 positions of the list. Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Luxemburg can be found at the very end of the list having the lowest slavery index. (See at.

The introduction to the Walk Free Foundation's survey confirms the fact the slavery is still a topic that has to be discussed on different levels of international relations since the number of people concerned has been high despite of the abolition of slavery at the end of the nineteenth century. This article looks into the circumstances that still keep slavery alive with special attention to Mauritania and Ivory Coast, two West African countries where several forms of contemporary slavery such as chattel slavery and child labor can be observed. A comparison between traditional and contemporary slavery explains why such long series of human rights violations still survive in West Africa. The infractions were basic components of the Atlantic slave trade in the Modern Age and they are still determining factors of these two countries' society and economy. Slave owners and manufacturers consider slavery as easily accessible work force that is essential for the industry's development.

The problem is continuously dissolved by the international community, even though it has been developing a legal framework since 1926 with full of legal instruments targeting the abolition contemporary slavery such as child labor or human trafficking. Despite of the ratification of international conventions and the establishment of working groups within the United Nations, modern-day slavery will be flourishing in West Africa and other parts of the world until the efforts will not target the root causes of slavery. Poverty reduction strategies and structural adjustment reforms targeting social exclusion and economic development of the region would decrease the profitability of slavery on a long run.

### **The Concept of contemporary slavery**

What does exactly contemporary slavery mean and why is it crucial to make a distinction between traditional and modern day slavery in 2014? Nowadays, practices similar to slavery can be defined as "forced labor without payment" in the easiest way. Upon that "the control without ownership, violence (or the threat of violence); coercion (loss of freedom and choice); and exploitation (of labor power through unpaid work)" can be understood as modern day slavery.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the lack of payment separate slave from any other forms of employment and the lack of legal ownership can be considered as the most important difference in the slave and slave master relationship between the traditional and contemporary forms of slavery.

The following human rights violations can be identified with the concept of contemporary slavery: adult and child forced labor, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, prostitution, debt bondage, human trafficking or „serfdom”.<sup>5</sup> These forms of appearance are all laid down in the human rights instruments concerned so that forms of contemporary slavery belong to the *ius cogens* norms of international law. Consequently, this norm as the highest of international law applies unconditionally. Kevin Bales quotes that „the Human Rights Council emphasizes in its report to the UN General Assembly that the prohibition of slavery is one of the oldest norms of international law.”<sup>6</sup> So slavery can belong to crimes against humanities. Furthermore, the freedom from slavery conditions and slavery-like practices is one of the most basic rights of the human being, similarly to the right to life or the freedom of press and religion. It was strengthened by the International Court of Justice when it states that „the protection from slavery is an obligation *erga omnes* of states arising out of

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<sup>4</sup> Manzo, Kato: Modern Slavery, Global Capitalism & Deproletarianisation in West Africa. In: *Review of African Political Economy* No.106. pp. 522.

<sup>5</sup> Global Slavery Index. Walk Free Foundation. 2013. <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/report> (Accessed April 30, 2014) pp.1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.19. o. (See also: Report of the International Law Commission to the General Assembly, UN Doc.A / CN.4/ Ser.A/Add.1 (1963).

human rights law”.<sup>7</sup> In other words, states are obliged to make efforts for the abolition of slavery regardless of the fact that they joined the related legal instruments of international law or not.

### **Traditional vs. Contemporary Slavery in West Africa**

The circumstances such as the lack of payment or the brutal and violent conditions of employment could suggest the question of what the difference between the slavery of the period of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century and the slavery of nowadays that concerned 29, 8 million people around the world in 2013 can be. In order to show that traditional and contemporary slavery looks quite similar but we still need to differentiate them from each other, I will discuss the widespread forms of traditional and contemporary slavery in two West African Countries, namely Mauritania and Côte d’Ivoire. The article targets these two countries as they are having critical slavery issues according to the Global Slavery Index report.<sup>8</sup>

Having a look at slavery in West Africa during the Early Modern and Modern Age, it becomes clear that the violation of human rights was a socially embedded phenomenon. In other words, slavery practices, like chattel slavery and forced labor were key factors of the countries’ economic structure for development. Regarding Mauritania and the rest of the Sahel region, “slave trade peaked between the 1850s and the 1860s, and then again in the 1880s, after which it began to subside. While the demand rose- perhaps in response to declining relative prices, historical sources generated by Africans point to the tremendous value the human commodity continued to hold.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, slaves represented a precious property for slave owners since they meant cheap and easily accessible labor force for the higher layer of the society.

In Mauritania, a special form of slavery both in the traditional and in its contemporary form can be found, that is chattel slavery. As Suzanne Miers explains, the black Haratin, who are descendants of slaves freed in the past and of the original inhabitants of Mauritania are usually victims of racial discrimination in everyday life or at the labor market. Then another major part of the population is represented by the Abd community who were neither told officially that they were free nor encouraged to leave. Masters, themselves often poverty stricken, continue to use them as cheap labor, often paid only with food.”<sup>10</sup> The main feature of chattel slavery that makes it different from forced labor and serfdom is that the descendants of slaves may suffer discrimination when it comes to questions of marriage, inheritance, and worship. In some instances, especially in Mauritania, the descendants have to continue living as slaves in the property of the same master.

The international community has always been keeping an eye on Mauritania and following the increasing pressure from the UN, the government announced in 1981 that it had

<sup>7</sup> Bales, Kevin and Robbins, Peter T.: No One Shall Be Held in Slavery or Servitude: A critical analysis of international slavery conventions. In: *Human Rights Review*, 2001.2(2), pp. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Mauritania is ranked number 1 in the Index. This reflects the high prevalence of slavery in Mauritania – it is estimated that there are between 140,000 – 160,000 people enslaved in Mauritania, a country with a population of just 3.8 million. (Global Slavery Index. Walk Free Foundation. 2013. <http://www.globallslaveryindex.org/report> pp. 6. ). Regarding the Ivory Coast, the Index ranks it on the 8<sup>th</sup> position based on the prevalence of slavery compared to the country’s population of around 19 million. Here the majority of the victims suffer from forced labor. (Global Slavery Index, Walk Free Foundation. 2013. <http://www.globallslaveryindex.org/report> pp. 62. ).

<sup>9</sup> Lydon, Ghislaine: Islamic Legal Culture and Slave-Ownership Contests in Nineteenth-Century Sahara. In: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3. Boston University African Studies Center: 2007. pp. 392

<sup>10</sup> Miers, Suzanne: Contemporary Forms of Slavery. In: *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol.34, No. 3, Special Issue: On Slavery and Islam in African History: A Tribute to Martin Klein(2000), Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of the Canadian Association of African Studies. pp. 723.

abolished slavery. However, observers of the United Nations have still found hundreds of people in bondage in chattel slavery despite of the fact that country-wide NGOs like SOS slave have been fighting against slavery for long years.<sup>11</sup> The abolition of the socially accepted chattel slavery in Mauritania is mainly because the government depends on the slave holder class of the society. The Beydans who form nobility made up of former warriors and clerics, known as "white Moors" provide the government with serious financial and political support. They were promised compensation in 1980, when slaves were legally freed, but this has not been paid, therefore the mutual interdependence between the government and them does not make any of the two sides interested in the decrease of the number of people living in slavery.<sup>12</sup> According to NGOs and non-governmental initiatives, such as CNN's "Freedom Project", from 300 to 600 thousand people are involved in these series of infringements.<sup>13</sup> Despite of that, the government of Mauritania is not willing to recognize the problem. As CNN quotes one government official's comment, "'All people are free in Mauritania and this phenomenon (of slavery) no longer exists".<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the future steps for Mauritania, both the international community and the Mauritanian government should be aware of the issue. For example, efforts have to target awareness rising in local communities since slavery is still considered to be a taboo subject in the society. Of course, the government should also find a solution for the possibilities of stepping out of the dependence circle with the Beydan. The UN welcomed the adoption of a new law in 2007 that did not only introduce a new definition of slavery to the Mauritanian legal context but it also included a penalty of five to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine for violations of the law. As the Global Slavery Index report states, "The 2007-048 law provides for victim compensation and assistance for those released from slavery and makes liable those who do not follow-up a denunciation of slavery to sentencing and a fine".<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, only one slave owner has been sentenced to prison based on the 2007 law so far. The human rights crisis in Mauritania is a confirmation for the disabilities of the international human rights system as the country has ratified most of the instruments referring to slavery.

While chattel slavery keeps the full Mauritanian society in bondage, Côte d'Ivoire has been struggling for decades with the elimination of child labor in the country's most profitable industry. The West African country's primary export is cocoa, providing 40 per cent of the world's cocoa, making it the world's leading supplier. Therefore, the industry needs continuous and sufficient production from the cocoa bean manufacturers. The industry can maintain the required level of production only by using child labor force. As Global Slavery Index stands, it has been discovered continuously since 2000 that many children have been subjected to the worst forms of child labor in this sector, forced to work in hazardous conditions.<sup>16</sup> A government report from 2010 estimated that over 30,000 children were in conditions of forced labor in rural areas. Apart from cocoa, children are employed in the production of grains, vegetables, coffee, fruit, cotton, palm, rice and rubber. This estimate, however, does not take into account the larger number of children working on their families'

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* pp. 722.

<sup>12</sup> Miers, Suzanne: Contemporary Forms of Slavery. In: *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol.34, No. 3, Special Issue: On Slavery and Islam in African History: A Tribute to Martin Klein(2000), Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of the Canadian Association of African Studies. pp. 723.

<sup>13</sup> Stutter, John D.: Slavery's last stronghold. (Accessed April 30, 2014) <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/>

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Global Slavery Index. Walk Free Foundation. 2013. <http://www.globallslaveryindex.org/report> (Accessed April 30, 2014) pp. 33.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* pp. 62.

farms under conditions which can be akin to the worst forms of child labor. An estimated 600,000 to 800,000 children are working on small family-owned farms in Côte d'Ivoire."<sup>17</sup>

Even though Côte d'Ivoire has joined numerous human rights instruments, for instance the Supplementary Convention on Slavery or the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, its commitment to the international efforts for the protection of human rights can be easily questioned after considering the high number of children involved in forced labor.<sup>18</sup> Having a look at the issue of slavery from a historical point of view, it is clear that the cocoa industry has employed slave labor since the Atlantic Slave Trade. Even though Portuguese, British, French and Dutch slave traders focused more on the Slave Coast's or Gold Coast's slave supply, Ivory Coast also provided slave labor to the cocoa and ivory production.<sup>19</sup> Cocoa plantation owners couldn't afford not to employ children as they were the cheapest and easily available labor for them.

Compared to Mauritania, the Côte d'Ivoire government has done more significant steps to have a nationwide framework for the elimination of slavery, namely child labor. In 2007 and in 2010, the National Action Plans targeted the goal of reducing child labor. Even though it does not have a nationwide coverage, the National Oversight Committee for Action against Child Trafficking, Exploitation and Labor aims to reduce child labor significantly by 2014.<sup>20</sup> Côte d'Ivoire has established a specialist anti-trafficking law enforcement unit, as well, overseen by a police chief and staffed by four police officers and two social workers. This unit investigates cases of child trafficking. New monitoring brigades established as part of the new National Monitoring Committee for Actions to Fight against Trafficking, Exploitation and Child Labor in 2011 also are responsible with investigating trafficking.<sup>21</sup>

In the issue of child labor, the involvement of the global cocoa industry is a key factor for success. The Harkin-Engel Protocol can be considered as a good start since it is about public-private agreement for the goal of the abolition of child labor in line with the ILO's No. 182 Convention about the Worst Forms of Child Labor.<sup>22</sup> According to the Walk Free Foundation, in 2010 a Declaration of Joint Action Support Implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol and a Framework of Action to Support Implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol were signed by the Ivorian Government and representatives of the international cocoa industry, renewing their commitment to the goals of the Protocol, aiming to reduce it by 70% by the year 2020.<sup>23</sup>

The motivations seem to be high both in the government and in the industry. Recently, CNN dedicated an evening long program for the issue of child labor in Côte d'Ivoire within the framework of its Freedom Project.<sup>24</sup> But as it turned out, slavery is so deeply integrated into the history and the society of the Ivorian that for most of them, the word 'freedom' has to be explained, similarly to the case in Mauritania. Even though, both countries have ratified several international human rights instruments, they are one of the

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* pp. 62.

<sup>18</sup> However, Côte d'Ivoire has not ratified the Slavery Convention of 1926.

<sup>19</sup> Manzo, Kato: Modern Slavery, Global Capitalism & Deproletarianisation in West Africa. In: *Review of African Political Economy* No.106. pp.524.

<sup>20</sup> Global Slavery Index. Walk Free Foundation. 2013. <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/report> (Accessed April 30, 2014) pp. 63.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* pp. 63.

<sup>22</sup> The Agreement was result of cooperation among ILO, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the Chocolate Manufacturer's Association and the World Cocoa Foundation. The US Congressmen, U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin and U. S. Rep. Eliot Engel also witnessed the negotiation. (See also „Oversight of Public and Private Initiatives to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Cocoa Sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana". <http://www.childlabor-payson.org/Tulane%20Final%20Report.pdf> Accessed May 1, 2014)

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* pp. 64.

<sup>24</sup> Can the Chocolate Industry change its ways? *CNN Freedom Project*. (Accessed May 1, 2014.) <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/category/chocolates-child-slaves/>

model countries of contemporary slavery, mainly because of the long integration of slave labor in the key industries of the countries. After seeing in what forms contemporary slavery keeps traditional elements of bondage alive, it is worth having a deeper look into what kind of protection the international law including the protection of human rights guarantee for those suffering from slavery conditions.

### **Legal efforts of the international law to abolish slavery**

The international community has been dealing with the problem of slavery for a long time and it has already established a wide legal structure for the protection against such human rights violations. The term of contemporary slavery can be recognized in the texts of international law firstly in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The League of Nations set up the Temporary Commission on Slavery that was in charge of research the existence and the extension of slavery worldwide. Based on the findings of the commission, the League of Nations adopted the **Slavery Convention in 1926**. The Convention defines slavery in the following way.

(1) *Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.*

(2) *The slave trade includes all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with intent to reduce him to slavery; all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him; all acts of disposal by sale or exchange of a slave acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged, and, in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves.*<sup>25</sup>

The concept that appeared in the Convention had been predominantly inspired by the widespread forced labor practices on British and French colonies in the 1920s, since for instance, it was absolutely acceptable to employ local citizens under violent conditions in several industries of the Belgian Congo by restricting their personal freedom.<sup>26</sup>

Even though, the Slavery Convention of 1926 determined the meaning of slavery as “a status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”,<sup>27</sup> it had a few missing points from the point of view of an efficient legal protection system. First and foremost, it did not establish an internationally approved system of sanctions that would provide with the possibility of the abolition of slavery and it did not create an international body that could evaluate and pursue allegations of violations.<sup>28</sup> However, it could be seen as a positive result that countries like Burma and Nepal joined the Convention thanks to the lobby power of the League of the Nations, undertaking commitments for the abolition of slavery in their own countries.

The legal efforts toward the acknowledgement of contemporary slavery received a big boom following the establishment of the United Nations since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has declared that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms”.<sup>29</sup> After continuing the research in the field of contemporary slavery, the United Nations’ Ad hoc Committee on Slavery emphasized the need for the extension of the concept, so the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of

<sup>25</sup> *Slavery Convention of 1926*. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SlaveryConvention.aspx> (Accessed April 15, 2014) para 1. and 2.

<sup>26</sup> Bales, Kevin and Robbins, Peter T.: No One Shall Be Held in Slavery or Servitude: A critical analysis of international slavery conventions. In: *Human Rights Review*. 2001. 2(2), pp.21.

<sup>27</sup> *Slavery Convention of 1926*. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SlaveryConvention.aspx> (Accessed April 15, 2014) para 1. and 2.

<sup>28</sup> Bales, Kevin and Robbins, Peter T.: No One Shall Be Held in Slavery or Servitude: A critical analysis of international slavery conventions. In: *Human Rights Review*. 2001. 2(2), pp. 22. o.

<sup>29</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, December 10, 1948, UN Doc A/810 at 71 Article 4. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a4> (Accessed April 29, 2014)

Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956 already showed a wider acknowledgement of slavery-like conditions. It covers debt bondage, serfdom, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, prostitution, the sale of children including child labor under the term of “slavery”.<sup>30</sup> Of course, it is important to state that the adoption of the Supplementary Convention on Slavery of 1956 was not a replacement of the Convention of 1926; rather it can be seen as the extension of the resolutions presented in the earlier.<sup>31</sup> But the definition of 1926 has still been serving as the basic concept that the UN considers in case of slavery practices.<sup>32</sup>

The protection of international law in the field of slavery extended more due to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Social, Cultural, and Economical Rights in 1966. Kevin Bales calls the attention to the fact that “It took nearly 20 years for the obligations set out in the Universal Declaration to be given international legal effect by the introduction of two binding Covenants”.<sup>33</sup> Even though the Covenants do not deal explicitly with slavery, they state the protection of so many rights and freedoms whose violation would belong to the category of slavery. In the contrary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenants were legally enforceable documents. In other words, states undertook legal commitments to make the respect of the rights come true in their own judicial system.

On behalf of the UN, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations was in charge of the implementation of the Slavery Convention of 1926 and its related protocols. In the frame of its mandate, it established the subcommittee that prepared the draft of the Supplementary Convention of 1956. The Subcommittee emphasized that an individual, independent body had to be created within the organization of the UN that would have the mandate to control the worldwide efforts for the abolition of slavery. Even though it can be considered as progress in the international effort that the UN Working Group on Forms of Contemporary Slavery stood up, it dealt with the international fight against slavery only until 2006. Then, since the Commission could not provide the international community with significant improvements in the field of contemporary slavery, the UN decided to give the mandate over to the position of the Special Rapporteur on all forms of contemporary slavery.<sup>34</sup>

Even though several legal instruments such as the Slavery Convention of 1926, or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants of 1966 call the attention of states to acknowledge the existence of contemporary slavery and fight for its

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<sup>30</sup> *Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery*. Adopted by a Conference of Plenipotentiaries convened by Economic and Social Council resolution 608(XXI) of 30 April 1956 and done at Geneva on 7 September 1956. Entry into force: 30 April 1957, in accordance with article 13. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SupplementaryConventionAbolitionOfSlavery.aspx> (Accessed on Apr 29, 2014)

<sup>31</sup> Bales, Kevin and Robbins, Peter T.: No One Shall Be Held in Slavery or Servitude: A critical analysis of international slavery conventions. In: *Human Rights Review*. 2001. 2(2), pp. 25..

<sup>32</sup> Similarly to the UN’s global initiatives to decrease the prevalence of slavery around the world, UN organs have also been playing a key role in the creation of UN’s legal protection framework against slavery. For instance, the ILO Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor; and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (Entry into force: 01 May 1932) Adoption: Geneva, 14th ILC session (28 Jun 1930). [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C029](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029) (Accessed April 29, 2014)

<sup>33</sup> Bales, Kevin and Robbins, Peter T.: No One Shall Be Held in Slavery or Servitude: A critical analysis of international slavery conventions. In: *Human Rights Review*. 2001. 2(2), pp. 25.

<sup>34</sup> Bell, Jessica: Contemporary Slavery and International law. Human Rights and Human Welfare. <http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/researchdigest/slavery/law.pdf> (Accessed April 04, 2014) 35. o.

abolition, due to the lack of an internationally approved definition and the wide but not always efficient ways of protection, the number of people living in slavery is still high globally. Of course, the efficiency of giving the mandate of the abolition of slavery instead of a commission to one dedicated person can easily be questioned. How could one expert solve such a global issue that could not have been solved not only by the five experts of the UN Working Group on Forms of Contemporary Slavery but by the UN either? Ms. Gulnaira Shahinian has been the UN's Special Rapporteur on all Forms of Contemporary Slavery since in the organization of the Human Rights Council. Ms. Shahinian emphasizes the clandestine feature of contemporary slavery as one of the biggest obstacles in the abolition efforts. The slaveholder loses money and cannot claim compensation if the slave escapes or is liberated by officials. Legally, slaveholders are at risk of criminal prosecution if caught.<sup>35</sup> Regarding the two examples mentioned in this article it is obvious that both in the case of chattel slavery in Mauritania and child labor in the Ivory Coast, it is not possible to know exact data about the people being employed under slavery conditions, only estimations are available.<sup>36</sup> Of course, the measures to be taken should pay attention to the fact that mainly children and women, two marginalized groups of societies are the victims of slavery. Therefore, the necessity of action is more urgent but it can be successful, according to the Special Rapporteur, only if the root causes of slavery such as poverty, social exclusion, all forms of discrimination are targeted by the international and local efforts".<sup>37</sup>

Even though, the Special Rapporteur represents dedicated goals from the point of view of contemporary slavery within the framework of the UN, she can operate mainly with country visits and country reports including her recommendations. In 2012, Ms. Gulnara Shahinian did some research in Madagascar and Kazakhstan that provided her with the basic findings for her 2013 report. Here she addressed governments, donor organizations and NGOs, too and called them up for an increasing participation in UN's efforts to abolish slavery.<sup>38</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Although governments involved are not willing to face up with the issue of contemporary slavery, its abolition would be a key issue for the countries' development. The number of 29, 8 million people living under slavery conditions could be reduced, if reforms targeted poverty, discrimination and unemployment. For being able to conduct such structural reorganization, the nations concerned have to admit that traditional slavery still survives in its modern forms in their society and economy. As the two examples from Mauritania and Côte d'Ivoire showed, the clandestine feature of slavery prevents both the national governments and the international organizations from having a clear view on slavery. Therefore, both countries should perform a nationwide study to collect more precise data on prevalence and nature of existing forms of slavery, as part of a larger focus on eradication.

Naturally, the national efforts cannot succeed without the support of the international community, since contemporary slavery is a global problem without borders. The United Nations with its human rights instruments tend to keep a worldwide eye on the extension of the issue; however, the implementation of the Slavery Convention of 1926, for example, is

<sup>35</sup> Manzo, Kate: Modern Slavery, Global Capitalism & Deproletarianisation in West Africa. In: *Review of African Political Economy*. No.106. pp. 525.

<sup>36</sup> Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of slavery. Introduction. (Accessed April 2, 2014) <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/slavery/srslavery/pages/srslaveryindex.aspx>

<sup>37</sup> Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of slavery. Introduction. (Accessed April 2, 2014) <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/slavery/srslavery/pages/srslaveryindex.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> Shahinian, Gulnara: Rapport de la Rapporteuse spéciale sur les formes contemporaines d'esclavage, y compris leurs causes et leurs conséquences. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/153/38/PDF/G1315338.pdf?OpenElement> (Accessed April 2, 2014) pp. 8.

still incomplete, as a lot of countries seriously touched by slavery have not joined it yet. Nevertheless, UN is observing countries' efforts by the Special Rapporteur on all Forms of Contemporary. By emphasizing the increasing importance of the fight against slavery, UN can contribute to the development of the countries involved, but a mutual collaboration is strongly needed between the international and national level of protection. The continuous research in the field of traditional slavery can enhance the more widespread acknowledgement of contemporary slavery, starting with the fact that local governments admit the existence of child labor or chattel slavery in their society.

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