

Africa is again the world's epicenter of modern-day slavery

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Published July 23, 2018



Africa just recorded the highest rate of modern-day enslavement in the world.

Armed conflict, state-sponsored forced labor, and forced marriages were the main causes behind the estimated 9.2 million Africans who live in servitude without the choice to do so, according to the [2018 Global Slavery Index](#). And despite these practices being widespread, slavery has remained a largely invisible issue, in part, because it disproportionately affects the most marginalized members of society, such as minorities, women, and children.

Slavery was especially prevalent in Eritrea and Mauritania, where slavery has even been, at times, an institutionalized practice. In Eritrea, for instance, the one-party state of president Isaias Afwerki has overseen a notorious national conscription service accused of drafting citizens for an indefinite period, contributing to the wave of refugees fleeing the country. Workers that have claimed that they were forced to work in the nation's first modern mine are also currently suing the Vancouver-based mining company Nevsun that owns a majority stake in the mine.

The situation is more acute in Mauritania, which has the title of the world's last country to abolish slavery. For centuries, members of the black Haratin group were caught in a cycle of servitude, with the slave status being inherited. Reports have also shown the existence of government collusion with

slave owners who intimidate servants who break free from their masters. A January landmark ruling from the African Union stated Mauritania wasn't doing enough to prosecute and jail the perpetrators of slavery.

In recent years, serfdom in the continent has attracted global attention after videos showed “slave markets” in Libya where African migrants were being auctioned off in car parks, garages, and as well as public squares. Migration to Libya has also put Nigerian women in the crossfire, with many being sucked into Italy's dangerous world of sex trafficking. During the World Cup games in Russia, anti-slavery group Alternativa said sex traffickers were also planning to exploit Russia's lax visa rules for the soccer fanfare to pimp Nigerian women.

The study, conducted in collaboration with Walk Free Foundation and the International Labor Organization, also notes how consumers all over the world are getting products that at some stage were touched by the hands of modern-day slaves. This was especially the case with the G20 nations, who have strong laws and systems against servitude, but who collectively import \$354 billion worth of at-risk products annually.

As previous reports have shown, cases of slavery still persist lower down the supply chain in commodity-producing nations like the DR Congo and Cote D'Ivoire.