



Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and its consequences

## **WALK FREE'S INPUT ON THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FACILITATING AND PREVENTING CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY**

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### **Introduction**

Walk Free is an international human rights group working to accelerate the end of all forms of modern slavery.<sup>1</sup> We are the creator of the Global Slavery Index, the world's most comprehensive dataset on modern slavery. We use this data to mobilise powerful forces for change against these human rights abuses. We work with governments and regulators, businesses and investors, faith, and community leaders to drive systems change and partner directly with frontline organisations to impact the lives of those vulnerable to modern slavery. We work with survivors to build the movement to end modern slavery, recognising that lived experience is expertise and they are central to identifying lasting solutions.

Social media has enabled unprecedented levels of global connectivity and created many socio-economic benefits,<sup>1</sup> however this greater connectivity has simultaneously brought new risks, with consequences that transcend the digital world. There is mounting evidence social media is used to facilitate modern slavery,<sup>2</sup> with perpetrators able to simultaneously target multiple people in different geographic locations, access their personal information, and exploit vulnerabilities while shielded by online anonymity.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, rapid technological advancements have outpaced the development of regulatory frameworks, resulting in a lack of effective governance and accountability, and allowing modern slavery risks to flourish online.

Walk Free welcomes the opportunity to submit information to inform the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences. Our submission focuses on the use of social media in facilitating and preventing modern slavery. Information contained within this submission is drawn from the 2022 Global Slavery Index (forthcoming). We welcome any requests to discuss the submission contained herein.

### **1. Is there evidence of modern technology (e.g., platforms including social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, websites, applications, artificial intelligence, the dark web) being used to recruit and subject people to contemporary forms of slavery in your country? If so, please provide details in relation to:**

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<sup>1</sup> Modern slavery covers a set of specific legal concepts including human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced or servile marriage, slavery and slavery-like practices, and the sale and exploitation of children. Although modern slavery is not defined in law, it is used as an umbrella term that focusses attention on the commonalities across these legal concepts. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.



- a. **Specific technology being used**
- b. **Profiles of victims (age, sex, gender identity/sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, migration status, socio-economic status, race and any other status)**
- c. **Profiles of exploiters (e.g. criminal organisations, human traffickers, private businesses/employers, public authorities or others)**
- d. **Manifestations of exploitation (e.g. forced/child labour, debt bondage, domestic servitude, online/offline commercial sexual exploitation of adults, forced/child marriage and criminal exploitation)**

Social media is used to facilitate forced commercial sexual exploitation (FCSE),<sup>4</sup> forced labour,<sup>5</sup> and trafficking for forced criminality,<sup>6</sup> illegal adoption,<sup>7</sup> and organ removal.<sup>8</sup> The facilitation of FCSE of adults and children using social media is relatively well documented.<sup>9</sup> Social media users may be recruited through deceptive job advertisements or targeted outreach using chat features, typically under the guise of building a relationship.<sup>10</sup> In June 2021, for example, 11 people were arrested for trafficking women and girls from Bangladesh to India for sexual exploitation, luring them via TikTok with the promise of work.<sup>11</sup> Following recruitment, social media may be used to track victims' locations, control their movements, and to record, advertise, and distribute FCSE material.<sup>12</sup>

### **Cherry's Story**

*Cherry, \* 25, migrated from the Philippines to Kuwait in 2013 to earn a better income as a domestic worker. Cherry used social media, especially Facebook, to connect with family and friends back home. It is how she met Joan, a domestic worker who lived in Kuwait. They became very close.*

*One day, Cherry received a message from Joan saying she had found someone willing to pay her a higher salary if she went immediately. Cherry sought her employer's permission, but was told she needed to wait three months before she could transfer to a new job. Believing this was her only chance to change her fate, she ran away.*

*Cherry went to the jamiya, excited to meet Joan for the first time, however Joan was not there. Instead, a man picked Cherry up and brought her to an old building. "The place was dark and scary. The man locked the door behind me...I was abducted and forced to have sex with men...I felt like I am no longer human."*

*The perpetrators stole Cherry's Facebook account, as they had done to Joan and the other women inside, before forcing them to call their friends. Eventually, a tip-off led to a rescue operation and Cherry was taken to the police station, then a shelter where she received assistance and a medical check-up.*

*"I got deported for running away from my employer. I was thankful being deported and seeing my family."*

*\*Not her real name*



Less is known about how social media impacts forced labour,<sup>13</sup> yet increasing use of social media to search for employment and the growing perception of it as a reliable source of information has created new opportunities for exploitation.<sup>14</sup> Fraudulent recruiters and traffickers may target potential victims via business pages,<sup>15</sup> recruitment advertisements,<sup>16</sup> and direct outreach on social media.<sup>17</sup> This includes contact via private community groups created by migrant workers as a source of information and support.<sup>18</sup> Traffickers may also use social media to lure victims onto end-to-end encrypted platforms, such as WhatsApp,<sup>19</sup> where oversight by law enforcement for prevention and evidence collection is legally and technically difficult.<sup>20</sup>

In 2021, leaked Facebook documents revealed that Instagram and Facebook were used to recruit migrant workers from low-income countries via deceptive job advertisements and traffic them to the Gulf for domestic servitude and forced sex work.<sup>21</sup> This followed a 2019 investigation which found that migrant domestic workers employed under the *kafala* system in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were traded via Instagram and other applications listed by Google Play and the Apple App Store.<sup>22</sup> Instagram's algorithm reportedly promoted hashtags used to advertise domestic workers on the platform.<sup>23</sup>

Walk Free are currently conducting research to address gaps in data and better understand the nature and scale of modern slavery risks on social media (forthcoming). Interim findings suggest that far greater numbers of posts potentially related to labour trafficking exist across major social media platforms<sup>24</sup> than previously thought. For example, several posts identified on TikTok advertising for jobs in the Gulf contained several 'red flags' noted in existing literature as indicators of trafficking in online advertisements,<sup>25</sup> such as the provision of free visas, travel, food, and accommodation, and high pay for low-skilled work. Most posts identified were made in Arabic, Swahili, English, Filipino, and Tagalog.

Interim findings also suggest recruiters may tailor candidate requirements to circumvent government measures to reduce risks for migrant workers. For example, many advertisements recruiting for migrant domestic workers from India requested NECR (no emigration check required) passports only, likely in an attempt to bypass airport emigration checks performed for ECR passport holders (to ensure they have gone through a certified agent). Recruiters may also embed potential 'red flags' (such as the offer of a free visa) in a video caption or on-screen text rather than the video description, possibly as a strategy to evade detection by platforms or regulatory agencies.

### **Marie's story**

*In 2015, Marie\*, 27, took up an opportunity to travel from the Philippines to Kuwait for domestic work to support her family. Her employer was good in the beginning and paid her salary according to her contract. However after nearly two years, with her contract nearing its end, everything changed.*

*Marie's employer began taking photos of her without explanation, then one day, he instructed her to go with him in his car. They arrived at a gasoline station where a man approached Marie's employer and handed him a bank envelope. "...My employer opened the car window and said, 'he is your new employer, go to him.'"*



*Marie was in a state of shock. She watched her old employer's car drive away. "I felt like crying...I want to ask my previous employer why; I was sold like an object without hesitation."*

*Marie was assisted by an NGO and later discovered that her first employer sent the photos to different people via WhatsApp and WeChat, and negotiated to sell her for KWD 1,500.*

*\*Not her real name*

While it is clear that social media poses risks, it can also provide an avenue for vulnerable users and survivors to access support.<sup>26</sup> In 2021, a Kenyan woman who was exploited while working as a cleaner in Saudi Arabia reported receiving assistance from an international organisation after posting about her situation on Facebook.<sup>27</sup> She was also recruited via Facebook, and claimed the platform saw her into and out of the situation.<sup>28</sup> Domestic workers experiencing abuse and mistreatment in the Gulf have also used TikTok to share their experiences and raise awareness.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that while this has reportedly helped some to connect with other workers on the platform, such behaviour can expose users to further harms, such as employer retaliation, without the necessary safeguards in place.<sup>30</sup>

**2. Are there examples of positive measures (legislative, administrative, institutional and others) taken by your Government to prevent modern technology from being used to facilitate contemporary forms of slavery? If so, please provide details.**

The international community has recognised the need for increased action to safeguard human rights in the digital era,<sup>31</sup> yet overall, regulation of digital platforms to prevent modern slavery risks remains weak. While some positive measures have been found within national legislation, gaps undermine these efforts. For example, under current Modern Slavery Acts (MSAs) in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, certain companies are required to report on modern slavery risks in their operations and supply chains,<sup>32</sup> yet social media companies are not required to report how they are addressing modern slavery on their digital platforms.<sup>33</sup> This allows social media companies to evade responsibility for potential violations linked to their platforms.

Promisingly, some countries have introduced human rights due diligence laws with sufficient scope to cover digital platforms. For example, the *2017 French Duty of Vigilance Act*, *2021 German Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains*, and proposed *EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive*<sup>34</sup> go beyond due diligence in business operations and supply chains and require companies to consider human rights risks across the entire value chain. In the context of evolving digital technologies, which carry the potential to create wide-reaching adverse impacts, this is increasingly important.<sup>35</sup>

The 2021 Australian *Online Safety Act* establishes an eSafety Commissioner who, among other duties, may issue a removal notice to social media service providers, hosting service providers, or end-users, to remove cyber-abuse material.<sup>36</sup> While a positive step, it is important to note that content removal alone is not enough to address the issue. Further, the Act does not explicitly cover slavery-related content. Similar legislation has been proposed elsewhere, including the UK: the *Online Safety Bill*<sup>37</sup> includes measures to regulate harmful material while maintaining a free and open online environment, yet academics note potential issues related to enforcement given the



broad scope of the proposed law, and argue that further evidence is needed to reduce the risk of unintended harmful impacts.<sup>38</sup>

Potential unintended consequences of legislative and policy responses to modern slavery must be considered. For example, the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (FOSTA-SESTA), introduced in the United States (US) in 2017, established criminal penalties for those who promote or facilitate sex trafficking and sex work through control of online platforms.<sup>39</sup> Since coming into effect, FOSTA-SESTA has reportedly negatively impacted sex workers by placing greater pressure on platforms to censor users, thereby removing safer spaces for sex workers to communicate and reduce their risk of harm, while increasing their risk of violence and poverty.<sup>40</sup>

- 3. Are there examples of positive measures taken by technology companies to prevent their technologies and platforms from being used to facilitate contemporary forms of slavery? If so, please provide details, which may include proactive identification and reporting of exploitative contents, activities and perpetrators, creation of robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms, closing down/removing technologies, platforms and contents used to recruit and exploit victims, awareness-raising and/or warning among users of technologies, and collaboration with public authorities and non-governmental stakeholders?**
- 4. Are there examples of positive measures taken by technology companies to promote access to protection, justice and remedies for victims? How do they cooperate with other relevant stakeholders in this regard?**

In 2023, Walk Free assessed statements<sup>41</sup> published under UK and Australian MSAs by 10 companies, covering 10 social media platforms and two e-stores distributing social media applications.<sup>42</sup> In addition to assessing company compliance with minimum requirements under the UK and Australian MSAs,<sup>43</sup> Walk Free assessed how well companies are reporting on their actions to address modern slavery risks on their platforms, including whether they disclosed having modern slavery policies covering social media users;<sup>44</sup> efforts to detect,<sup>45</sup> remediate,<sup>46</sup> and prevent<sup>47</sup> modern slavery on social media; and collaboration to lift industry standards.<sup>48</sup>

Only half of the statements assessed made specific disclosures relating to modern slavery risks on platforms. Four companies reported having modern slavery policies on social media, including policies against apps, content, and behaviours that facilitate human trafficking and exploitation. Only three companies reported activities to detect modern slavery on social media, including through use of image matching technology and mechanisms allowing users to report slavery-related content, indicating that efforts to understand how modern slavery manifests on social media are limited.

One company reported making information on support services available for users, however no other prevention measures were disclosed: some companies reported having policies against sexually explicit advertisements, however none reported assessing advertisements for indicators of modern slavery, despite known risks and the significant control companies have over paid advertisements. Further, none reported building modern slavery considerations into product design and development, which is essential to address structural risks before they can adversely



impact vulnerable end-users. While companies are not presently required to report on these issues under MSAs, it is concerning that none have done so given the real risk of harm to users.

Only four companies reported remediation strategies for incidents identified on social media: measures included cooperation with law enforcement and removal of content, user accounts, or apps. While most platforms have content removal policies in place, resources to moderate content are unevenly distributed.<sup>49</sup> Notably, the leaked Facebook documents revealed that of over 3.2 million hours employees and contractors spent searching content in 2020, only 13 per cent were allocated outside the US.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, without further action to investigate and remove the source of risk, content removal merely displaces risk.

Multi-stakeholder cooperation is vital to lift industry standards, foster greater transparency, and ensure that modern slavery risks are effectively removed.<sup>51</sup> Tech Against Trafficking,<sup>52</sup> the Tech Coalition,<sup>53</sup> and WeProtect,<sup>54</sup> for example, represent multi-stakeholder initiatives to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation online respectively. Half of the companies assessed reported participation in industry collaborations seeking to combat modern slavery on social media.

**5. Are there examples of positive measures taken by civil society organisations and other non-governmental stakeholders in preventing modern technology from being used to facilitate contemporary forms of slavery? If so, please provide details.**

Several civil society initiatives exist to prevent the use of technology to facilitate modern slavery. Spotlight, for example, is a web-based tool developed by US organisation Thorn, which is freely available to law enforcement agents working on domestic human trafficking cases in the US and Canada. It uses smart algorithms to rapidly sift through large amounts of online data and identify child sex trafficking victims falsely being advertised as escorts, dramatically reducing investigation times. Since its launch in 2014, Spotlight has reduced investigation times by over 60 per cent and has helped to identify over 17,000 child victims.

Legal actions against social media companies are also underway in response to modern slavery on platforms. In March 2023, several pension and investment funds that own Meta shares launched a complaint against the company for failing to respond to evidence of sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation on its platforms.<sup>55</sup> This follows several other lawsuits, including three lodged by alleged victims of sex trafficking who claimed that traffickers used Facebook to facilitate their abuse.<sup>56</sup>

**6. What are remaining challenges in preventing modern technology from being used to facilitate contemporary forms of slavery?**

A number of challenges hamper efforts to prevent technology being used to facilitate modern slavery. Advances in technology have outpaced the development of corresponding regulatory frameworks. The need to consider potential unintended consequences and to protect freedom of expression and other rights when seeking to regulate modern slavery risks online pose further challenges. Thus far, the absence of legislation designed to mitigate modern slavery risks on social media has translated to weak governance and poor accountability. Consequently, social media companies are still dedicating insufficient resources to tackle the issue, despite receiving growing





attention in recent years for abuses on their platforms. More collaboration is needed between industry stakeholders, survivors, anti-slavery practitioners, academics, and law enforcement to effectively tackle the root causes of modern slavery on social media and prevent risks merely being displaced to other platforms.

## **7. What practical recommendations would you propose for Governments and technology companies to overcome these challenges?**

*Governments should:*

1. Introduce mandatory human rights due diligence laws,<sup>57</sup> which require organisations to proactively identify and remediate forced labour risks and cover the entire value chain including end-users.
2. Strengthen existing MSAs in the UK and Australia to require social media companies to report on how they are addressing modern slavery on their platforms (including companies with a significant userbase in-country, regardless of annual revenue) and issue detailed guidance to support implementation.<sup>58</sup>
3. Cooperate with other governments to strengthen governance and accountability frameworks for social media companies. Such frameworks must consider the constantly evolving nature of digital technologies and ensure sufficient geographic coverage.
4. Consider potential unintended consequences, such as the removal of safeguards for sex workers, in all legislative and policy responses to modern slavery risks on social media<sup>59</sup> Including through consultation with affected groups.
5. Ensure all legislative and policy responses are informed by research and developed in consultation with survivors, social media experts, and anti-slavery stakeholders.

*Social media companies should:*

1. Develop and publish clear modern slavery policies to detect, prevent, and remedy modern slavery risks across the entire value chain.
2. Conduct due diligence by implementing and reporting on measures to systematically detect modern slavery on social media, accounting for different cultural and geographic contexts, including through dedicated monitoring for indicators of modern slavery, and mechanisms for users to report modern slavery and for local support providers to safely and securely reach out to at-risk users.<sup>60</sup>
3. Provide effective remediation through legitimate state remediation processes for incidents caused or contributed to, for example, through removing violating accounts and transparent reporting on content moderation, cooperating with law enforcement (while safeguarding privacy and human rights) and referring affected persons to support services.
4. Actively prevent modern slavery risks on social media, for example, through verification of recruitment advertisements and business pages, targeted awareness raising on risks and promotion of anti-slavery hotlines,<sup>61</sup> identity verification options for all users, and compulsory modern slavery training and guidelines for product and third-party software developers.
5. Engage in meaningful partnerships and industry collaborations to lift industry standards for preventing, identifying, and mitigating modern slavery risks. Partnerships should have



sufficient geographic spread to ensure risk is addressed in different contexts and must involve meaningful consultation with survivors and anti-slavery experts.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Report of the Secretary-General 2020, *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, United Nations. Available from: [https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap\\_for\\_Digital\\_Cooperation\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap_for_Digital_Cooperation_EN.pdf). [20 May 2022]; Sarangi, A, Amor, W, Co, ELF, Javed, S, Usmani, S & Rashid, A 2022, 'Social Media Reinvented: Can Social Media Help Tackle the Post-Pandemic Mental Health Onslaught?', *Cureus*, vol. 14, no. 1. DOI:10.7759/cureus.21070. [25 August 2022]; Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2021, *Leveraging digital technologies for social inclusion*, United Nations. Available from: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/02/PB\\_92-1.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/02/PB_92-1.pdf). [25 August 2022]; Page-Tan, C 2021, 'Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital and social media use: How hyperlocal social media platforms serve as a conduit to access and activate bridging and linking ties in a time of crisis', *Natural Hazards*, vol. 105, no. 2, pp. 2219-2240. DOI:10.1007/s11069-020-04397-8. [25 August 2022]; Rosen, AO, Holmes, AL, Balluerka, N, Hidalgo, MD, Gorostiaga, A & et al 2022, 'Is Social Media a New Type of Social Support? Social Media Use in Spain during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Mixed Methods Study', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 19, no. 7, p. 3952. DOI:10.3390/ijerph19073952. [25 August 2022]; Lin, Y & Kant, S 2021, 'Using Social Media for Citizen Participation: Contexts, Empowerment, and Inclusion', *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 12, p. 6635. DOI:10.3390/su13126635. [25 August 2022].

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, United Nations, p. 15. Available from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP\\_2020\\_15jan\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf). [9 February 2022]; Brown, E 2022, 'Dozens Of Teenage Girls Trafficked In UK Modern Slavery First', *Unilad*, 10 Feb. Available From: <https://www.unilad.co.uk/news/dozens-of-teenage-girls-trafficked-in-uk-modern-slavery-first-20220210>. [23 February 2022]; 2016, 'Babies for sale: 101 East investigates Malaysia's underground baby trade', *Al Jazeera*. Available From: <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2016/malaysia-babies-for-sale-101-east/index.html>. [23 February 2022]; 2016, 'Babies for sale: The investigation', *Al Jazeera*. Available From: <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2016/malaysia-babies-for-sale-101-east/investigation.html>. [23 February 2022]; Ward, O 2018, 'Babies for sale: ASEAN's insidious underground baby market', *ASEAN Today*, 19 October. Available From: <https://www.aseantoday.com/2018/10/babies-for-sale-aseans-insidious-underground-baby-market/>. [23 February 2022]; 2021, 'Melaka cops bust Instagram baby-selling ring, nab 14 suspects', *The Vibes*, 20 December. Available From: <https://www.thevibes.com/articles/news/50115/melaka-cops-bust-instagram-baby-selling-ring-nab-14-suspects>. [23 February 2022]; Polaris 2018, *On-Ramps, Intersections and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking*. Available from: <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/A-Roadmap-for-Systems-and-Industries-to-Prevent-and-Disrupt-Human-Trafficking-Social-Media.pdf>. [9 February 2022]; Nicola, AD, Baratto, G & Martini, E 2017, *Surf and Sound: The Role of the Internet in People Smuggling and Human Trafficking*, eCrime Research Reports. Available from: [https://www.academia.edu/34645738/Surf\\_and\\_Sound\\_The\\_role\\_of\\_the\\_Internet\\_in\\_people\\_smuggling\\_and\\_human\\_trafficking?p\\_p\\_sutd=false](https://www.academia.edu/34645738/Surf_and_Sound_The_role_of_the_Internet_in_people_smuggling_and_human_trafficking?p_p_sutd=false). [24 February 2022]; Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings & Tech Against Trafficking 2020, *Leveraging innovation to fight trafficking in human beings: A comprehensive analysis of technology tools*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Available from: [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206\\_1.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf). [24 February 2022]; Pinnell, O & Kelly, J 2019, 'Slave markets found on Instagram and other apps', *BBC News*, 31 October. Available From: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-50228549>. [9 February 2022]; Scheck, J, Purnell, N & Horwitz, J 2021, 'Facebook Employees Flag Drug Cartels and Human Traffickers. The Company's Response is Weak, Documents Show', *The Wall Street Journal*, 16 September. Available From: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-drug-cartels-human-traffickers-response-is-weak-documents-11631812953>. [9 February 2022]; Nortajuddin, A 2020, 'ASEAN's Black Market Babies', *The ASEAN Post*, 2 March. Available From: <https://theaseanpost.com/article/aseans-black-market-babies>. [11 July 2022]; Save the Children 2021, 'Save the Children fears trafficking and abuse amid social media pleas to adopt India's covid orphans', 7 May. Available From: <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/save-children-fears-trafficking-and-abuse-amid-social-media-pleas-adopt-india%E2%80%99s-covid-orphans>. [25 July 2022]; Taskin, B 2021, 'Beware of traffickers: Social media posts seeking adoption for 'Covid orphans' raise concern', *The Print*, 15 May. Available From: <https://theprint.in/india/beware-of-traffickers-social-media-posts-seeking-adoption-for-covid-orphans-raise-concern/658695/>. [25 July 2022]; Gebeily, M 2022, 'Iraq's Yazidis want Big Tech held to account over Islamic State crimes', *Reuters*, 17 February. Available From: <https://www.reuters.com/article/socialmedia-yazidis-rights-idUSL8N2UC1U8>. [4 August 2022].

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2020, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, United Nations, pp. 15 & 19. Available from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP\\_2020\\_15jan\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_15jan_web.pdf). [9 February 2022]; Working Group on Trafficking in Persons 2021, *Successful strategies for addressing the use of technology to facilitate trafficking in persons and to prevent and investigate trafficking in persons: Background paper prepared by the Secretariat CTOC/COP/WG.4/2021/2*, United Nations Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Available from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/WG\\_TiP\\_2021/CTOC\\_COP\\_WG.4\\_2021\\_2/ctoc\\_cop\\_wg.4\\_2021\\_2\\_E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/WG_TiP_2021/CTOC_COP_WG.4_2021_2/ctoc_cop_wg.4_2021_2_E.pdf). [24 February 2022].

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<sup>32</sup> *Modern Slavery Act, 2015* (United Kingdom) ; *Modern Slavery Act, 2018* (Australia Cmlth)

<sup>33</sup> Guidance issued under section 54(9) of the UK MSA does not explicitly require companies to report on modern slavery risks linked to their products or services, meanwhile, the Australian MSA guidance explicitly states companies are not obligated to report on risks relating to customers. Home Office 2017, *Transparency in supply chains: a practical guide*, Government of the United Kingdom, p. 32. Available from:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1040283/Transparency\\_in\\_Supply\\_Chains\\_A\\_Practical\\_Guide\\_2017\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040283/Transparency_in_Supply_Chains_A_Practical_Guide_2017_final.pdf). [11 July 2022]; Australian Border Force n.d., *Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act 2018: Guidance for Reporting Entities*, pp. 33-34. Available from: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/files/modern-slavery-reporting-entities.pdf>. [27 February 2022].

<sup>34</sup> Council of the European Union 2022, 'Council adopts its position on due diligence rules for large companies', 1 December. Available from: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/01/council-adopts-position-on-due-diligence-rules-for-large-companies/>. [4 April 2023].

<sup>35</sup> BSR 2021, *Human Rights Due Diligence of Products and Services: Assessing the Downstream Value Chain*, p. 1. Available from: <https://www.bsr.org/reports/BSR-Human-Rights-Due-Diligence-Products-Services.pdf>. [20 May 2022].

<sup>36</sup> *Online Safety Act, 2021* (Act No. 76) (Australia Cwlth)

<sup>37</sup> UK Parliament, United Kingdom 2023, Online Safety Bill

<sup>38</sup> Trengove, M, Kazim, E, Almeida, D, Hilliard, A, Zannone, S & Lomas, E 2022, 'A critical review of the Online Safety Bill', *Patterns*, vol. 3, no. 8, pp. 1-10. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2022.100544>. [12 April 2023].

<sup>39</sup> Government Accountability Office 2021, *Sex Trafficking: Online Platforms and Federal Prosecutions*, Government of the United States. Available from: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-385.pdf>. [11 July 2022]; Blunt, D & Wolf, A 2020, *Erased: The Impact of FOSTA-SESTA, Hacking//Hustling*, pp. 9-12. Available from: <https://hackinghustling.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HackingHustling-Erased.pdf>. [11 July 2022]; *Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, 2017* (No. 115-164) (United States) ; *Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, 2017* (United States)

<sup>40</sup> Government Accountability Office 2021, *Sex Trafficking: Online Platforms and Federal Prosecutions*, Government of the United States. Available from: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-385.pdf>. [11 July 2022]; Blunt, D & Wolf, A 2020, *Erased: The Impact of FOSTA-SESTA, Hacking//Hustling*, pp. 9-12. Available from: <https://hackinghustling.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HackingHustling-Erased.pdf>. [11 July 2022]; *Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, 2017* (No. 115-164) (United States) ; *Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, 2017* (United States)

<sup>41</sup> We were able to identify and assess 27 statements produced by ten reporting entities from 2018 to 2022, covering 10 social media platforms, with two companies also distributing social media applications. Eighteen out of 27 statements explicitly mentioned at least one social media platform (or stores distributing social media platforms) under their control.

<sup>42</sup> For the purposes of the assessment, 'social media' refers to computer and Internet-based technologies that facilitate sharing of user-generated content through virtual networks via computer or smartphone.



<sup>43</sup> Walk Free 2022 Global Slavery Index (forthcoming)

<sup>44</sup> For example, the policy states that use of the social media platform to facilitate modern slavery/exploitation is prohibited, or content or behaviours that may lead to modern slavery are prohibited.

<sup>45</sup> For example, they have a dedicated team to actively monitor content for indicators of modern slavery; they use artificial intelligence (AI) to detect modern-slavery related content; they have mechanisms for users to report modern slavery risks or incidents.

<sup>46</sup> For example, the company cooperates with law enforcement (while safeguarding privacy and human rights); the company removes violating content, user accounts, or apps; the company refers victims to support services or provides other remediation for affected users.

<sup>47</sup> For example, through awareness raising for at-risk non-paying users (e.g. risks associated with labour migration online or recruitment); promotion of support services for users (e.g. targeted ads for anti-slavery organisations or hotlines); verifying recruitment advertisements or business pages (e.g. through research, screening, or risk-based questionnaires) or implementing guidelines or training for paying users and third parties (e.g. software developers building consumer-facing apps).

<sup>48</sup> For example, collaboration with industry stakeholders (e.g. other social media companies, tech companies), non-industry stakeholders (e.g. anti-slavery and civil society organisations, experts, academics, law enforcement), and survivors.

<sup>49</sup> Personal communication

<sup>50</sup> Scheck, J, Purnell, N & Horwitz, J 2021, 'Facebook Employees Flag Drug Cartels and Human Traffickers. The Company's Response is Weak, Documents Show', *The Wall Street Journal*, 16 September. Available From: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-drug-cartels-human-traffickers-response-is-weak-documents-11631812953>. [9 February 2022].

<sup>51</sup> Surf and Sound n.d., *Surf and Sound: Improving and sharing knowledge on the Internet role in the human trafficking process*. Available from: [http://www.surfandsound.eu/?page\\_id=763](http://www.surfandsound.eu/?page_id=763). [15 July 2022].

<sup>52</sup> BSR 2022, *Collaborative initiatives: Tech Against Trafficking*. Available from: <https://www.bsr.org/en/collaboration/groups/tech-against-trafficking#:~:text=Tech%20Against%20Trafficking%20is%20a,eradicate%20human%20trafficking%20using%20technology>. [27 May 2022].

<sup>53</sup> Tech Coalition 2022, *Tech Coalition*. Available from: <https://www.technologycoalition.org/>. [27 May 2022].

<sup>54</sup> Iain Drennan 2020, 'ITU Joins WePROTECT Global Alliance to help combat online child sexual abuse', *WeProtect Global Alliance*, 16 October. Available from: <https://www.weprotect.org/blog/itu-joins-weprotect-global-alliance-to-help-combat-online-child-sexual-abuse/> [12 April 2023].

<sup>55</sup> Stempel, J 2023, 'Zuckerberd, Meta are sued for failing to address sex trafficking, child exploitation', *Reuters*, 22 March. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/legal/zuckerberg-meta-are-sued-failing-address-sex-trafficking-child-exploitation-2023-03-21/> [11 April 2023].

<sup>56</sup> Supreme Court of Texas 2021, *No. 20-0434 IN RE FACEBOOK, INC. AND FACEBOOK, INC. D/B/A INSTAGRAM, RELATORS On Petition for Writ of Mandamus*. Available from: <https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1452449/200434.pdf> [12 April 2023].

<sup>57</sup> For example, the 2017 French *Duty of Vigilance Act* and 2021 German *Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains*, which entered into force on 1 January 2023.

<sup>58</sup> Australian Border Force n.d., *Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act 2018: Guidance for Reporting Entities*, pp. 33-34. Available from: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/files/modern-slavery-reporting-entities.pdf>. [27 February 2022]; Home Office 2017, *Transparency in supply chains: a practical guide*, Government of the United Kingdom, p. 32. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1040283/Transparency\\_in\\_Supply\\_Chains\\_A\\_Practical\\_Guide\\_2017\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040283/Transparency_in_Supply_Chains_A_Practical_Guide_2017_final.pdf). [11 July 2022].

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of the unintended negative impacts of the United States *Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (FOSTA-SESTA)* 2018, see: Blunt, D & Wolf, A 2020, *Erased: The Impact of FOSTA-SESTA*, Hacking//Hustling, pp. 9-12. Available from: <https://hackinghustling.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HackingHustling-Erased.pdf>. [11 July 2022].

<sup>60</sup> Polaris 2018, *On-Ramps, Intersections and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking*. Available from: <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/A-Roadmap-for-Systems-and-Industries-to-Prevent-and-Disrupt-Human-Trafficking-Social-Media.pdf>. [9 February 2022].

<sup>61</sup> As above