

KEY JUDGEMENTS

JUNE 2023

Title: Organ Trafficking in Pakistan

Location: Pakistan

Issue Number: 001

Date: 20.06.2023

Disclaimer: *Please note that this assessment is based on a combination of open-source research, input from subject matter experts on the ground, survivor accounts, and data analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a global centre for the illegal organ trade and is a destination for transplant tourism. Trafficking networks are embedded in poor communities, creating a pipeline to private hospitals and clinics where illegal transplantations occur.

WE ASSESS AS FOLLOWS

RECRUITMENT

- a) People vulnerable to organ trafficking include undocumented immigrants, prisoners, political or economic refugees, those in bonded labour working in the agricultural sector, and men of the Mussali caste working as brick kiln workers.
- b) The feudal Wadera system creates mass debt bondage and bonded labour situations. Selling a kidney is sometimes offered to men to pay off their debts. Recruitment agents who recruit victims through false face-to-face offers of large payouts are embedded in this system.
- c) Recruiters find donor victims in poorer areas, particularly in the Punjab and South Punjab provinces of Pakistan; in government and private hospitals where they offer large amounts of money in exchange for a kidney; and through false promises of lucrative jobs.
- d) Donor victims are usually men between the ages of 28 and 40 with families to take care of. However, young and vulnerable victims, including boys as young as 14, are also targeted. Donor victims generally lack education and access to the internet.

RECRUITMENT CONT.

- e) Donor victims are kept at private hospitals and clinics or in buildings nearby, together with groups of other donor victims. Doctors do not inform them about the health impacts of removing a kidney. Victims are taken to medical testing labs prior to transplants for tissue typing.
- f) In one case, a donor victim was falsely promised a job as a watchman at a plaza building in Rawalpindi. He was then imprisoned with 20-25 other men held captive in a commercial building, in some cases for several months. Their phones were taken, and they were padlocked in, subjected to beatings, and threatened with violence and; that the police would beat or kill them if they were found.
- g) Traffickers sometimes take donor victims to court to create false identity documentation to facilitate the transplant.
- h) Some donor victims are unaware that they will have an organ removed and only discover what happened after the transplant has taken place.
- i) Selling an organ is criminalised in Pakistan, so donor victims rarely come forward.

DEMAND

- a) Individuals requiring organ transplants travel to Pakistan for illegal kidney transplants. Recipients include Jordanians, Omanis, Saudis, Libyans, and people of Pakistani origin from the UK, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Canada. Pakistan is the number one destination for UK patients seeking a kidney overseas.
- b) Facilities for clandestine surgeries often lack proper medical equipment and standards. Organ recipients often face infections such as Hepatitis C, medical complications, and insufficient aftercare, sometimes resulting in death. Death certificates have been known to be faked by doctors if a donor-recipient dies.
- c) Transplants take place in private hospitals and clinics throughout Pakistan, including Lahore, Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The Punjab province of Pakistan appears to be a centre for organ transplants.
- d) Illegal transplants have taken place at the Rawalpindi Kidney Centre, one of many Kidney Centres in Pakistan.
- e) Organ trafficking networks include hospital owners, doctors, transplant surgeons, anaesthesiologists, paramedical staff, and a chain of middlemen and recruiters who connect the doctors with donor victims.

MONEY (REVENUE)

- a) Illicit market prices for the entire transplant procedure range between \$50,000 USD to \$60,000 USD per patient. One transplant patient from the UK paid \$22,000 USD for the operation. The kidney alone costs approximately \$4,000 USD.
- b) Donor victims are promised as little as \$1,200 USD and often receive far less after the transplant.

INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

- 1) How are organ recipients connected with the trafficking networks? Information about medical tourism brokers.
- 2) In which clinics and private hospitals have illicit transplants taken place?

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