

PRESS RELEASE

Saudi Arabia Launches New Anti-Human-Trafficking Measures

31 March 2020 – RIYADH – The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT), in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), has launched a “National Referral Mechanism,” which outlines best practices for handling cases of trafficking in persons, specifying the coordination of roles and responsibilities of the mandated authorities in the Kingdom. The Mechanism is a collaborative framework that helps government officials to coordinate their efforts to better prevent trafficking in persons, protect victims or potential victims of human trafficking in the Kingdom, and investigate and prosecute suspected perpetrators.

The NCCHT, in collaboration with the UNODC and IOM, has begun to jointly train key members of the national anti-trafficking team in their respective roles to identify, refer and protect potential victims. Key staff, including labor inspectors, health professionals, and civil society representatives will learn a number of new skills depending on the roles mandated to them to help identify early warning signs of human trafficking and develop standard operating procedures to guide response staff. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the government is working closely with all parties to ensure that this valuable training continues through the use of teleconferencing.

“The fact that the capacity-building program continues even during this unfortunate pandemic, reflects the commitment and determination of the Kingdom toward improving the national response toward trafficking in persons cases,” said Dr. Hatem Aly, UNODC Regional Representative for the Gulf countries. He continued, “it is our pleasure and duty to partner with the NCCHT, to provide our tools and expertise to help implement these important national reforms.”

According to Mohamed El Zarkani, IOM Bahrain’s Chief of Mission, “The launch of the NRM is a key milestone in the fight to combat trafficking in persons in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.” He added that, “We are working in harmony, simultaneously, with a leading UNODC program focusing on partnership, prosecution, and data management. The collaboration shows a welcome and timely step into international collaboration on the subject of trafficking.”

The unveiling of the Mechanism coincides with the launch of an anonymous digital reporting service, embedded in the [NCCHT website](#) for persons with information on possible human-trafficking violations in the Kingdom. The referral service will be expanded to include a 24/7 hotline and mobile application, both of which are currently under development.

“Human trafficking is an affront to the dignity of all humanity,” said Dr. Awwad Alawwad, Chair of the NCCHT and the President of the Human Rights Commission. “It is our duty to eradicate this heinous practice and I am proud to report that the launch of the National Referral Mechanism is a major step to that end. The Mechanism will be complemented by additional human rights reforms which will further improve the quality of life of all citizens and residents of the Kingdom – barring none.”

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