

West African Governance and the 21st Century Mediterranean Slave Trade: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has witnessed a revival of the slave trade in the Mediterranean, bringing to mind the transatlantic slave trade that plagued the West African region centuries ago. This article provides a critical analysis of the contemporary relationship between West African governance and the resurgence of the Mediterranean slave trade. This study investigates the socio-political, economic, and historical factors that contribute to the persistence of this contemporary catastrophe, drawing on extensive research and a multidisciplinary approach. The research used governance theory as its theoretical foundation. The data were obtained from secondary sources and analysed using a qualitative technique. Multiple socio-political and economic factors influenced the vulnerability of individuals in West African countries in relation to West African governance and the Mediterranean slave trade, as revealed by the study. The Mediterranean slave trade of the twenty-first century had severe consequences for both West Africa and the entire world. To prevent and eradicate this modern form of slavery, the study recommends addressing the fundamental causes, promoting regional cooperation, strengthening legal frameworks, and providing support for victims, among other measures.

Keywords: Contemporary Slavery, Governance, Human Trafficking, Mediterranean Slave Trade, West Africa

INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of slavery in the form of the Mediterranean Slave Trade shook the global community in the 21st century, which was a profoundly disturbing phenomenon. This modern-day slave trade primarily involves West African migrants who undertake dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea in quest of better economic opportunities, only to fall victims to human trafficking networks. The plight of these vulnerable individuals, their exploitation, and the systemic flaws that enable such atrocities require immediate attention and thorough analysis. With its complex history and diverse cultures, West Africa has long been a significant hub for transatlantic slavery (Manning, 1990). The socio-political landscape of the region has been complicated by centuries of colonisation, the exploitation of natural resources, and the legacy of socioeconomic inequality. In this context, the Mediterranean Slave Trade arises as a tragic result of multiple factors, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, political instability, corruption, and weak governance. The study tried to offer an exhaustive analysis of the causes and effects of the Mediterranean Slave Trade. The research included historical context, contemporary case studies, and qualitative research techniques. The analysis explored the duties and responsibilities of various stakeholders within the governance framework of West Africa.

THE DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

Slave trade: From the 15th to the 19th centuries, the slave trade involved capturing, transporting, and selling African slaves to the Americas. Millions of Africans were displaced

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and forced to labour in plantations and other sectors under harsh conditions due to transatlantic trade (Hochschild, 2005). Economic incentives and the demand for cheap labour drove the slave trade, which brought enslaved individuals from Africa to the Americas, Europe, and other regions. The capture, purchase, and transit of captives under horrific conditions had major social, cultural, and economic effects on both the origin and destination regions (Rediker, 2017). Davis (2014) defines the slave trade as the organised, often state-sanctioned capture, trading, and forceful relocation of people, mostly Africans, as chattel slaves worldwide. This system used racial hierarchies and economic interests to create modern racial dynamics and global inequity. The slave trade involved capturing, transporting, and selling people as commodities to make them labourers. This practise primarily the forced migration of Africans to the New World led to centuries of exploitation, dehumanisation, and brutality (Blackburn, 2011).

Human trafficking: This is the unlawful and harmful trade of recruiting, transporting, harbouring, or receiving people by force, compulsion, or deception for forced work, sexual exploitation, or other involuntary servitude. It often involves transnational crime and human rights breaches (UNODC, 2020). Abduction, fraud, or deception are used to recruit, transport, and control people for forced work, sexual exploitation, or other slavery. This international, covert technique exploits vulnerable communities through a multitude of crimes (Gallagher, 2010). Human trafficking is coercing, transferring, and exploiting people, sometimes across borders, for forced labour, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking. It degrades people and targets marginalised, vulnerable, and opportunity-seekers (Bales, 2007). Human trafficking is the illegal recruitment, transportation, and control of people for forced work, sexual exploitation, or other maltreatment. This multidimensional crime violates human rights and requires collaboration (Shelley, 2010).

Mediterranean Slave Trade: Between the seventh and eighteenth centuries, the Mediterranean Slave Trade captured, transported, and traded enslaved people throughout the Mediterranean Sea and its neighbours. Captives from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East were transported for employment and household chores (Davis, 2006). Seizing, buying, and selling Mediterranean Basin residents for slavery is called the Mediterranean Slave Trade. Captives migrated across North Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Europe via this trade route (Galvin, 2018). In the Mediterranean region, people were captured and traded as slaves, often across religious and cultural lines. The societies involved suffered economic, social, and political ramifications from this centuries-long trade (Klein, 2003). The Mediterranean Slave Trade was a massive slave trade network throughout the Mediterranean Sea and neighbouring areas. The capture, transportation, and sale of people from different backgrounds merged cultures and economies in the region (Fregoso, 2019).

Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Transatlantic Slave Trade, often known as the Atlantic Slave Trade, forced African slaves across the Atlantic Ocean during the 16th and 19th centuries. It involved the capture, transport, and sale of African chattel slaves to the America, Europe, and other places, causing immense pain, death, and lasting social damage (Eitis, 2017). A large and well-organised trade network brought millions of African slaves to the America during colonial and post-colonial times. This cruel trade changed Africa and the Americas' demographics, economies, and cultures (Inikori, 1992). In the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Africans were forcibly taken, bought, and sold as slaves to the West. Economic and imperial interests drove this cycle of exploitation, dehumanisation, and cultural relocation, which had lasting effects on communities worldwide (Rediker, 2017). African slaves were transported over the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, Europe, and other places during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This commerce altered labour systems, ethnic dynamics, and social structures in the Americas and abroad for centuries (Klein, 2010).

West African governance: West African governance refers to the political and administrative authority systems, institutions, and practices in western African nations. This idea refers to how West African governments, organisations, and societies allocate power, options, and resources. Various West African countries have various governing structures. It typically includes democratic representation, traditional and cultural elements, regional economic development, social justice, and security issues. The West African government promotes stability, equity, and citizen welfare while accommodating the region's historical, cultural, and geopolitical conditions. Similarly, West African governance comprises the political, administrative, and institutional frameworks and methods employed across West African states to promote efficient governance, stability, and socioeconomic advancement. West African states employ a comprehensive framework of governance, policies, and practices to address regional and transnational concerns like economic development, security, and political cooperation (ECOWAS, 2007).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several theoretical frameworks can be applied to the study of West African governance and the 21st-century Mediterranean slave trade in order to gain insight into the complex dynamics and underlying factors involved. Here, governance theory was utilised to illuminate the subject.

Governance theory is a dynamic and varied area that explores the structures, processes, and methods by which societies structure and oversee themselves. The main advocates comprise James Buchanan (1975), William Niskanen (1971), Rod Rhodes (1996), Christopher Pollitt (2003), the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Numerous governance theories exist, but three hold significant influence: the principal-agent theory, network governance, and the good governance paradigm.

James Buchanan (1975) and William Niskanen (1971) were prominent advocates of the principal-agent theory. The idea posits that inside intricate organisations, individuals (agents) operate on behalf of others (principals), and the difficulty is in harmonising conflicting interests. Buchanan (1975) argues that effective incentive systems can resolve agency difficulties, given the divergent objectives and unequal access to information of principals and agents. Principal-agent theory is frequently utilised in the realm of governance to examine the dynamics between citizens (principals) and elected officials (agents). This theory underscores the importance of implementing measures of accountability to guarantee that elected representatives behave in the best interest of the public (Niskanen, 1971).

Rod Rhodes (1996) and Christopher Pollitt (2003) advocate for network governance. Rhodes' research on network governance became widely recognised in 1996. The concept of network governance challenges the conventional hierarchical paradigm of governance by highlighting the significance of networks and relationships among many actors, including those from the public and private sectors. As per the notion, governance entails the collaboration of multiple stakeholders in a process where decision-making is dispersed across interconnected networks rather than being centralised within a single authority (Rhodes, 1996). This theory acknowledges the intricacies of contemporary societies and argues that successful governance necessitates versatile, responsive, and all-encompassing frameworks that can negotiate the interconnectedness inherent in networked connections (Pollitt, 2003).

The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) actively support the Good Governance Paradigm. The notion of good governance became prominent in the latter part of the 20th century, with the World Bank and UNDP actively advocating for it since the 1980s. The legitimacy and efficacy of government rely on specific values, including openness, accountability, adherence to the rule of law, and public participation, which form the basis of good governance. According to the paradigm, societies that are well-

governed have a higher probability of attaining sustainable development, social justice, and economic prosperity (World Bank, 1992). This theory espouses a normative approach to governance, promoting institutions and practices that maintain democratic principles and guarantee equitable and impartial treatment of citizens (UNDP, 1997).

Governance theory investigates the mechanisms and processes through which societies make collective decisions and administer shared resources. This theory helps analyse the complex relationship between West African governance and the revival of the Mediterranean slave trade in the 21st-century. This theory provides a comprehensive analysis of the issue by examining historical context, socio-political dynamics, economic factors, and the effect of governance. Governance theory examines issues such as policy coherence, coordination among different stakeholders, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. Governance theory permits an evaluation of the capacity of governments, regional organisations, and other actors to address migration challenges, safeguard the rights of migrants, and facilitate orderly and secure migration (Pierre & Peters, 2000).

The aforementioned governance theories provide unique viewpoints on the characteristics and dynamics of governance. The principal-agent theory emphasises the significance of aligning interests; network governance stresses the requirement for collaborative and adaptable structures; and the good governance paradigm underscores normative requirements for efficient governance. These theories jointly contribute to a complete comprehension of governance dynamics in modern societies.

The application of the theoretical framework can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of West African governance and the Mediterranean slave trade in the twenty-first century. It provides an analytical lens for researchers and policymakers to analyse the underlying dynamics, policy responses, and repercussions for individuals, the region, and the world.

METHODOLOGY

Giving that the study is qualitative and non-experimental, a descriptive historical research design was chosen for this investigation. The qualitative method was used to generate data for this study, and the qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the collected data.

OVERVIEW OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND ITS IMPACT ON HISTORY

From the 15th to the 19th centuries, the transatlantic slave trade involved the forced transportation of millions of Africans from their homeland to the America. European powers, such as Portugal, Spain, Britain, France, and the Netherlands, established trade networks that facilitated the capture, sale, and transatlantic transport of enslaved Africans (Klein, 2010). Africans were captured by means including raids, warfare, and trade with African kingdoms. They were then transported on slave ships under inhumane circumstances, enduring the arduous Middle Passage journey. The demand for slave labour in the New World colonies, especially on plantations growing cash commodities such as sugar, tobacco, coffee, and cotton, drove the trade (Mintz & McNeil, 2019).

The transatlantic slave trade had profound repercussions. Millions of people were forcibly removed from African societies, resulting in population imbalances and the destruction of cultural continuity (Lovejoy, 2019). The slave trade also had significant economic repercussions, as it stoked conflict between African societies and hindered local economic growth by diverting resources to slave raiding and trafficking (Eltis, 2017). The transatlantic slave trade shaped the ethnic, social, and economic dynamics of the region in the

Americas (Berlin, 2003). African slaves endured inhumane treatment and exploitation while contributing to the economic development of European colonies (Rediker, 2017).

Late 18th and early 19th century abolitionist movements led to the prohibition of the transatlantic slave trade. Britain outlawed the trade in 1807, followed by the United States in 1808. Various countries in the Americas abolished slavery through legislation and social movements in the decades that followed (Drescher, 2009). The transatlantic slave trade is one of the darkest passages in human history, marked by the enslavement and suffering of millions of Africans. Its legacy continues to influence contemporary issues concerning race, inequality, and social justice.

The transatlantic slave trade had a profound and far-reaching effect on West Africa, affecting various aspects of the region's societies and economies. The vast scale of the slave trade resulted in the forcible removal of millions of Africans from West Africa, causing a demographic disruption. This resulted in substantial population losses in certain regions, upsetting the demographic equilibrium and causing social and economic instability (Inikori, 1992). The slave trade disrupted African societies by destroying family structures, communities, and cultural practises. As individuals were captured and sold into slavery, families were torn apart, resulting in the loss of social cohesion and kinship networks (Manning, 1990).

The slave trade had negative effects on the economic development of West Africa. Some African groups sought to capture and sell slaves for profit in response to the demand for captives by European slave traders, resulting in conflict and warfare. This diverted resources and attention away from agricultural and industrial development (Inikori, 2002). The slave trade resulted in the loss of a substantial portion of West Africa's population, including many accomplished individuals. This loss of human capital impeded technological progress, stifled innovation, and negatively impacted the region's economic development over the long term (Manning, 1990). The transatlantic slave trade contributed to the destruction of West African cultural heritage and knowledge systems. It disrupted the transmission of traditional practises, languages, and artistic expressions, as well as deprived the region of the potential intellectual contributions of those forcibly removed (Rodney, 1972).

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SLAVE TRADE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Mediterranean slave trade is the trafficking of migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean Sea, which frequently involves exploitation and violations of human rights. The resurgence of the Mediterranean slave trade in the twenty-first century can be attributed to a number of factors, including political instability, economic disparity, and the collapse of state authority in several West African nations. Political upheavals, such as the civil war in Libya and the Arab Spring, have unleashed disorder and created favourable conditions for the growth of criminal networks. In exchange for exorbitant fees, these networks took advantage of the desperation of migrants by promising them passage to Europe.

In addition, economic disparities within and between West African nations have contributed significantly to the slave trade. In search of a better existence, many individuals have embarked on perilous journeys due to high unemployment rates, inadequate access to education and healthcare, and limited economic opportunities. However, the absence of legal migration routes have forced them into the hands of smugglers and traffickers, who exploit their vulnerabilities and subject them to slavery, forced labour, and other forms of exploitation.

In addition, the historical context of West African governance offers essential insights into the factors that have facilitated the revival of the Mediterranean slave trade. The

transatlantic slave trade, which occurred between the 16th and 19th centuries, had a significant impact on West Africa, leading to the depopulation of communities and the disruption of societal structures. Even though slavery was officially abolished in the nineteenth century, its enduring legacy and the subsequent struggle for self-determination and stability have influenced the region's governance and socioeconomic dynamics. West African nations, contending with the legacies of colonialism and slavery, have encountered numerous obstacles in establishing stable governance structures and nurturing economic growth. Historical factors, including exploitative colonial rule, artificial borders, and ethnic divisions, have contributed to the development of feeble state institutions, corruption, and social disparities. These conditions have created fertile ground for illegal activities, including human trafficking, which exploits the vulnerabilities of individuals in search of improved economic prospects.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CONTEMPORARY MEDITERRANEAN SLAVE TRADE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Various socio-political factors influence the vulnerability of individuals in West African nations in relation to West African governance and the contemporary Mediterranean slave trade. These factors are the result of historical legacies of colonisation, inadequate governance structures, political instability, economic disparities, and the absence of social protection mechanisms. These variables influenced the susceptibility of individuals in West African nations to this abhorrent crime.

Historical Consequences of Colonialism: The negative effects of colonisation have had an enduring impact on the governance structures and socioeconomic development of West African nations. Colonial powers exploited the region's resources, shattered the region's traditional systems of governance, and exacerbated ethnic and cultural divisions. This legacy has resulted in ongoing political instability, feeble state institutions, and social fragmentation, thereby fostering an exploitable environment. Numerous West African nations struggle with governance structures that are characterised by corruption, inefficiency, and a limited rule of law. Corruption on a large scale undermines the efficacy of state institutions, erodes public trust, and facilitates criminal activities such as human trafficking. Inadequate law enforcement and judicial systems exacerbate vulnerabilities, as traffickers frequently operate without consequence.

Instability and Conflict in Politics: The vulnerability of individuals in West African countries has been exacerbated by political instability and protracted conflict. Disrupted governance, the collapse of law and order, and population displacement provide a fertile environment for criminal networks to exploit vulnerable individuals by making false promises of safety and opportunity abroad. The Libyan civil war and the repercussions of the Arab Spring have had a significant impact on the slave trade in the Mediterranean, as lawlessness and anarchy provide opportunities for traffickers to operate.

Limited Social Security Protection: In West African nations, inadequate social protection mechanisms exacerbate the vulnerability of individuals. Individuals who lack comprehensive social safety nets, healthcare systems, and educational opportunities are more vulnerable to exploitation. The difficulties faced by those ensnared in trafficking networks are exacerbated by a lack of understanding of human trafficking and inadequate assistance for victims. Economic factors have a significant impact on the vulnerability of people in West African countries. These economic determinants include poverty, unemployment, economic disparities, and restricted socioeconomic mobility opportunities.

Economic Disparities and Lack of Opportunities: Due to the economic disparities within and between West African nations, a large number of individuals leave the continent in search of improved economic opportunities. High unemployment rates, a lack of access to

education and healthcare, and limited opportunities for socioeconomic mobility motivate individuals to embark on perilous migration journeys. They are susceptible to exploitation by traffickers who guarantee them passage to Europe but subject them to slavery and forced labour due to the lack of legal migration routes.

Economic Factors: The majority of the population in West African countries lives below the poverty line. Poverty restricts individuals' access to essentials such as food, shelter, education, and healthcare, thereby increasing their susceptibility to exploitation. A small minority controls a disproportionate share of wealth and resources, leaving many without viable economic opportunities due to economic inequality. High unemployment rates, especially among young people, contribute to the vulnerability of people in West Africa. Individuals with limited employment opportunities are compelled to pursue alternative means of supporting themselves and their families. They are susceptible to recruitment by human traffickers who exploit their desperation and offer false promises of improved economic prospects abroad because they lack access to formal employment opportunities.

Informal Economy and Lack of Regulation: Many West African nations have sizable informal economies devoid of formal regulations and worker protections. Individuals operating in the informal economy are more susceptible to exploitation in the absence of robust labour laws and enforcement mechanisms. Utilising this vulnerability, traffickers coerce individuals into coerced labour or subject them to debt bondage. Access to Quality Education and Skill Development is restricted. In West African nations, limited access to quality education and skill development programmes impedes socioeconomic mobility. Individuals have fewer opportunities to secure formal employment or engage in income-generating activities if they lack adequate education and training. This lack of economic empowerment makes them more susceptible to traffickers who entice them with the promise of improved opportunities through irregular migration.

Lack of Economic Diversification and Dependence: Many West African nations rely significantly on a few key industries for economic growth, such as agriculture or extractive industries. This lack of economic diversification heightens vulnerability, as disruptions to these industries, such as climate change, can cause economic instability and job losses. In such circumstances, individuals may resort to irregular migration, exposing themselves unknowingly to the dangers of human trafficking (International Organisation for Migration, 2017).

THE ROLE OF WEST AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS IN COMBATING THE CONTEMPORARY MEDITERRANEAN SLAVE TRADE

An Evaluation of West African Governance in West Africa is essential to combating the contemporary Mediterranean slave trade because it provides the groundwork for effective policies, institutions, and law enforcement mechanisms to combat human trafficking and protect vulnerable individuals. West African countries can make significant progress in preventing and eradicating this form of modern slavery by addressing governance challenges and implementing comprehensive strategies.

Legislative Reforms: Governments have passed or strengthened laws criminalising human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In 2015, Nigeria, for instance, enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, which provides a legal framework for prosecuting traffickers.

Regional Cooperation: West African governments work together through regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) to improve information sharing, harmonise policies, and coordinate efforts to combat human trafficking and irregular migration (ECOWAS, 2015).

International Partnerships: West African governments collaborate with international partners, such as the European Union and United Nations agencies, to obtain technical assistance, capacity development, and financial support for border control, law enforcement, and victim protection initiatives. Strong governance requires the enactment and enforcement of legislation that specifically targets human trafficking and provides a comprehensive legal framework for combating the Mediterranean slave trade. This includes criminalising trafficking offences, defining punishments, and protecting victims' rights. Effective legal frameworks allow law enforcement to investigate and prosecute human traffickers (International Organisation for Migration, 2017). To address the transnational nature of the Mediterranean slave trade, governance initiatives prioritise regional and international cooperation. West African nations, transit nations, and destination nations must work together to share intelligence, coordinate operations, and disrupt trafficking networks (ECOWAS, 2015).

Law Enforcement and Capacity Development: Governance initiatives concentrate on bolstering law enforcement agencies by providing training, resources, and specialised units to combat human trafficking. Enhancing the capacity of law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, and judges enables effective investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of cases involving human trafficking (UNODC, 2018).

Civil Society Participation: The West African government recognises the significance of collaborating with civil society organisations to combat the slave trade in the Mediterranean. Collaboration with non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, and grassroots movements serves to raise awareness, provide support services to victims, and facilitate community engagement in prevention efforts (AUC, 2018).

CASE STUDIES: WEST AFRICAN NATIONS AND THE SLAVE TRAFFIC IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The contemporary slave trade in the Mediterranean has had a significant impact on a number of West African countries, and numerous cases have highlighted the gravity of the situation. The following case studies illustrate the effects of the contemporary Mediterranean slave trade on these nations.

- a. **Nigeria:** Nigeria is a major supply country for human trafficking in West Africa, and the Mediterranean slave trade has disproportionately harmed its citizens. Along migration routes, many Nigerians, particularly women and girls, are subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation. The Nigerian government has taken steps to combat human trafficking, including establishing the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), increasing law enforcement efforts, and providing victim support services. Nonetheless, the problem persists due to the intricate network of human traffickers and the socioeconomic vulnerability of many Nigerians (United States Department of State, 2021).
- b. **Senegal:** The slave trade in the Mediterranean also had a significant impact on Senegal. The country functions as a point of origin and transit for many migrants attempting to reach Europe, including victims of human trafficking. Economic factors such as unemployment and destitution motivate individuals to undertake perilous migration journeys, leaving them susceptible to exploitation. The government of Senegal has taken numerous steps to combat human trafficking, including enhancing law enforcement, elevating public awareness, and enhancing border controls. In addition, civil society organisations play an essential role in providing assistance and protection to victims (International Organisation for Migration, 2020).
- c. **Guinea:** A significant number of its citizens have fallen victim to the Mediterranean slave trade. Due to poverty and a lack of opportunities, many Guineans undertake

perilous journeys along irregular migration routes, only to be exploited and abused by traffickers. The Guinean government has taken steps to combat human trafficking by strengthening legislation, increasing public awareness, and enhancing coordination with international and regional organisations. However, obstacles persist, such as limited resources and the inability to effectively address the issue (UNODC, 2018).

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REGION AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The Mediterranean slave trade of the twenty-first century has grievous consequences for both West Africa and the global community. It perpetuates a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, instability, and violence in West African nations. The outflow of youthful and able-bodied individuals depletes the region's human capital, exacerbates existing economic disparities, and erodes social structures. The ensuing social unrest, political instability, and loss of confidence in government undermine the likelihood of sustainable development. The Mediterranean slave trade demonstrates the failure of international efforts to combat human trafficking and safeguard the rights of vulnerable individuals on a global scale. The transnational nature of the implicated trafficking networks necessitates a coordinated response from the countries of origin, transit, and destination. To effectively combat this modern slave trade, the global community must enhance cooperation, strengthen law enforcement efforts, and address the fundamental causes of migration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance governance in West Africa and effectively combat the slave trade in the Mediterranean, the following policy recommendations can be considered:

- a. Governments should enact and enforce comprehensive legislation that targets human trafficking specifically, including provisions for prevention, prosecution, and victim protection. The legislation should conform to international standards, such as the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons.
- b. Significant investments should be made in the training, resources, and instruments of law enforcement agencies so that they can effectively investigate and dismantle trafficking networks. Trafficking cases should be handled by specialised divisions, and collaboration between law enforcement agencies should be encouraged at the national, regional, and international levels. There should be concerted efforts to improve border management and enhance cooperation among West African countries, transit countries, and destination countries in order to impede the movement of traffickers and victims. This includes the exchange of information, the conduct of collaborative investigations, and the establishment of coordinated action mechanisms.
- c. Efforts should be focused on fostering genuine collaboration between West African nations, regional organisations, and international entities in order to combat the Mediterranean slave trade comprehensively. Cooperation may involve the sharing of best practises, the exchange of intelligence, the provision of technical assistance, and the assistance of joint operations against trafficking networks.
- d. As a matter of obligation, governments should invest heavily in victim-centred approaches, offering comprehensive support services to survivors of human trafficking, such as shelter, healthcare, psychological assistance, and legal representation. Ensure a holistic approach to victim protection and reintegration by enhancing collaboration with civil society organisations and international partners.
- e. Governments in West Africa should implement policies that target the core causes of human trafficking vulnerability, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and social services. Reduce the factors that push individuals into the clutches

of traffickers by promoting inclusive economic growth, investing in education and skills training programmes, and creating employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, the Mediterranean slave traffic poses a significant challenge to the governance of West Africa. Various socio-political and economic variables influence the susceptibility of individuals in West African nations to this abhorrent crime. To effectively combat the slave trade in the Mediterranean, governance in West Africa must play a central role in implementing comprehensive strategies and enhancing institutional capacities. West African nations can improve their capacity to identify, investigate, and prosecute traffickers by focusing on strengthening the rule of law, enhancing law enforcement efforts, and establishing specialised divisions. Transnational cooperation and collaboration with civil society organisations and international entities are essential for disrupting networks of human trafficking and providing assistance to victims. In addition, addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability, such as poverty and lack of opportunity, through inclusive economic growth and social programmes can contribute to long-term prevention efforts.

To achieve enduring change and prevent the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, however, ongoing efforts, strengthened governance structures, and the commitment of all stakeholders are required. We can create a future in which the slave trade in the Mediterranean is a thing of the past and every individual is protected from this grievous violation of human rights by working together.

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