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UN Experts Urge Russia to Tackle Forced Labor of Migrant Women

By AFP

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United Nations experts on Monday called on Russia to take urgent action to end the trafficking and forced labor of migrant women, warning that many victims are effectively trapped in modern-day slavery.

In a joint statement, four UN special rapporteurs said they had received reports of "dozens of women" being lured to Russia with promises of legitimate jobs, only to have their documents confiscated and be forced to work in inhumane conditions, sometimes for up to 20 hours a day without pay.

"Victims were reportedly subjected to torture, sexual violence and forced abortions, and their children were abducted," the rapporteurs said.

The statement described the system as a "deeply entrenched" network of exploitation and

violence that has persisted for decades, with most victims coming from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

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Despite repeated complaints from victims and civil society organizations since the 1990s, the experts said Russian authorities have failed to conduct effective investigations. In some cases, they said, officials refused to register complaints or closed cases prematurely despite "compelling evidence of coercion and abuse."

"The facts described reveal deeply disturbing patterns of trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, enabled by systemic failures in the Russian legal and institutional framework," the rapporteurs said.

They also criticized Russia's lack of a comprehensive anti-trafficking law and its criminalization of aid to undocumented migrants, factors they say discourage victims from seeking help.

"The lack of effective and timely investigations and the fact that perpetrators are not held accountable fuels impunity, which is unacceptable," the statement said.

The experts called on Russian authorities to immediately launch a full investigation, cooperate with Uzbek and Kazakh officials and ensure justice and reparations for survivors.

The rapporteurs, who monitor human rights in Russia, trafficking, migrant rights and contemporary forms of slavery, are independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but do not speak on behalf of the United Nations.

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