

## Human trafficking and the law: critical & interdisciplinary perspectives

**Supervisors:** Dr [Olga Jurasz](#), The Open University Law School and Dr [Avi Boukli](#), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

### Project Description:

Trafficking in human beings (THB) continues to be one of the gravest human rights and criminal law violations, affecting millions of victims and survivors across the globe (ILO, 2017). Attesting to the phenomenon's increasing urgency, in 2016 more victims and survivors of THB were reported to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime than at any other time since 2003 (UNODC, 2018). In relation to its global character in 2011-2016, 89 million people experienced some form of human trafficking exploitation for a period of time ranging "from a few days to the whole five years" (ILO, 2017: 5). The issue has raised serious concerns in the UK and globally, and, as a result, policy awareness has increased, new laws have been introduced, and new anti-trafficking campaigns have been addressing the rising prevalence of human trafficking (NCA, 2019; Grierson, 2020).

In England & Wales, and in Scotland, the prevention of THB and support for victims and survivors have become major public policy areas. Actions range from raising public awareness, for both vulnerable groups and the general public, to the institutional and operational reinforcement of law enforcement, prosecution, and victim & survivor support. New legislation, specifically the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 constitute important steps and "the beginning of a fightback" (Modern Slavery Unit, 2019). However, its domestic and global impact has yet to be assessed and fully understood.

At an international level, including the United Nations, trafficking in human beings has been predominantly viewed through the lens of organised crime (e.g. by the UNODC) but also human rights. The need for a human-rights based approach to THB has been emphasized by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons (UN, 2015) who also viewed it as a form of gender-based violence against women and girls. Increasingly, trafficking is also being recognised as a form of conflict-related violence against women and girls and, as acknowledged by the UN Security Council, an integral part of the peace and security agenda. However, despite the increase in recognition of the wide scale of THB, multitude of context

in which it is taking place, as well as the range of harms associated with it, remedies for victims and survivors of trafficking remain limited and are often inadequate.

### **Applicant Specification:**

We welcome PhD proposals which address the theme of this call. In particular, we welcome proposals exploring (albeit not limited to) the following perspectives:

- THB and human rights, including victims' rights
- The impact of anti-trafficking / modern slavery legislation
- Intersectionality and THB
- Feminist perspectives on THB
- THB, digital data and social media
- Corporate social responsibility and THB
- THB in conflict and post-conflict situations
- THB, security and criminalisation
- Anti-human trafficking campaigns and laws
- The concept of slavery and modern slavery in international law
- Disability and modern slavery

In line with the OU's mission ('open to methods'), we are open to receiving proposals which adopt legal methodologies but also draw on other social research methodological approaches.

### **About the Supervisors:**

**Dr Avi Boukli's** research focuses on social harm, social justice, and coloniality, informed by empirical work in the respective contexts of victim support services, human trafficking, and environmental harm. Avi was the nominated academic on the BBC and OU documentary series 'Why Slavery?' and is currently working on representations of gender and sexuality in anti-modern slavery campaigns. Their monograph explores human trafficking from a zemiological perspective, and it is due to be published by Routledge in 2021.

**Dr Olga Jurasz's** research focuses on international law, human rights, and legal responses to violence against women (including conflict-related violence), specializing in feminist perspectives on law in these areas. Her recent research (with Dr Kim Barker) explores a number of aspects of online and technologically facilitated violence against women (OAVW) as well as legal regulation of online abuse and social media.

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