

## The Role of the Indonesian Government in Mitigating Human Trafficking Cases through Social Media

Audi Aprilion<sup>1\*</sup>, Andika Drajat Murdani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of International Relations, Universitas Slamet Riyadi, Surakarta

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\* Corresponding author.

Corresponding author e-mail address: cyclopsthewizard@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This study emphasizes the crucial role of the Indonesian government in addressing the emerging issue of human trafficking (TPPO) crimes facilitated by social media, particularly in Cambodia. Due to the swift advancement of information technology, social media has emerged as a viable medium for engaging in the recruitment, promotion, and execution of human trafficking activities. The objective of this study is to enhance comprehension of the Indonesian government's involvement in eliminating TPPO in Cambodia by utilizing social media. This study aims to analyze the measures implemented by the Indonesian government to combat Trafficking in Persons and enhance international collaboration. These measures include the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indonesian and Cambodian police forces, as well as the signing of bilateral agreements during the Cambodia-Indonesia Bilateral Meetings on Immigration Matters. The analytical findings indicate that the state plays a crucial role in eliminating human trafficking. However, to accomplish the objectives of both nations, it is necessary to engage in bilateral cooperation, namely through partnership with Cambodia.*

*Keywords: Bilateral Cooperation, Cambodia, Human Trafficking, Indonesia Government, Social Media*

### Introduction

This study examines the significance of the government's involvement in addressing human trafficking using social media, given the substantial influence of the rapid advancement of information technology on transnational crime patterns. Social media has emerged as an effective tool for the recruitment, promotion, and execution of human trafficking operations. In the face of this worldwide concern, this study seeks to enhance comprehension of the Indonesian government's involvement in eliminating human trafficking through bilateral collaboration with Cambodia. This study seeks to ascertain the specific measures undertaken by Indonesia and Cambodia to initiate a bilateral relationship in addressing the issue of human trafficking, culminating in the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the Cambodia-Indonesia Bilateral Meeting on Immigration Matters. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Indonesian government's role in addressing the issue of human trafficking. It seeks to offer practical insights and highlight the commitment of both countries in tackling this problem in a systematic and long-lasting way.

In the 2022 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, Indonesia was classified at tier 2 level in its efforts to prevent human trafficking, a problem that has persisted for over a decade. Additionally, Indonesia was placed in the watch list. Therefore, countries classified in this category are deemed to have not fully satisfied the minimum criteria for safeguarding victims of human trafficking. Despite attempts to modify standards, there has been a substantial rise in both the quantity of victims and the various methods of trafficking in the last five years. The government's approach to addressing human trafficking crimes lacks seriousness, and its protection services are inadequate as they fail to cater specifically to the needs of trafficking victims. Furthermore, the government has not sufficiently prioritized the allocation of staff and funding to effectively oversee these sectors, which have long-standing and widespread issues with human trafficking. (US Department of State, 2023).

Despite the existence of Law No. 21 of 2007 on the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Human Trafficking (TPPO) in Indonesia, it has proven ineffective in addressing the rising number of human trafficking cases in the country (Hidayatullah & Melisa, 2022). Human trafficking in Indonesia has persisted throughout time, with the deceptive method evolving alongside it. Generally, this method involves providing legitimate employment opportunities abroad with legally high compensation. However, in reality, these individuals end up becoming illegal migrant laborers in foreign countries. These individuals are coerced by scammers into engaging in illegal border crossings or using counterfeit documents to cross state boundaries. They may also be compelled to overstay the expiration date of their residency permits (Sugiyono & Runturambi, 2024). The presence of these undocumented migrants serves as a conduit for human trafficking offenses due to their highly susceptible state, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation.

Over the period of the last three years, the Indonesian government has exerted significant efforts to effectively combat the issue of human trafficking occurring outside the country's borders. Between June 5 and August 14, 2023, the TPPO Task Force received a total of 757 allegations of human trafficking, which involved 2,425 victims. Additionally, they successfully arrested 901 criminals. In addition, in February 2024, law enforcement arrested a culprit who intended to transport seven undocumented laborers to Saudi Arabia (BP2MI, 2024). The performance of TPPO has risen substantially since the establishment of the Task Force on June 5, 2023, following to the commands of the Chief of the Indonesian Police (Kapolri), General Listyo Sigit Prabowo (PANRB, 2023). Subsequently, the Indonesian government has initiated a concerted effort to repatriate victims of human trafficking, including a notable case involving a Cambodian individual that has garnered public interest over the past two years.

On October 4, 2023, the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh brought back to their home country 28 Indonesian residents who were believed to have been subjected to human trafficking. These individuals had been exploited for labor in an internet scamming organization located in Poipet, Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia. Earlier, with close collaboration between the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh and the local police, Indonesian citizens were retrieved from an inn in Poipet on June 28, 2023. They were then transported to the Office of the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection, Phnom Penh Central Police, for further investigation. On July 14, 2023, a total of 27 Indonesian residents were relocated to temporary shelters under the management of an entity called Caritas. In addition, on September 5, 2023, the Cambodian Police successfully

saved one Indonesian person who had previously been employed at the same organization as the 27 Indonesian individuals who were previously rescued. However, this individual had been relocated to another internet scamming company inside the same province. Afterwards, the victim was relocated to Phnom Penh and promptly admitted to the Caritas facility for additional procedures alongside the remaining 27 Indonesian nationals. During their stay at the Caritas shelter, the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh offered logistical support, medication, and covered the expenses for hospital treatment for three Indonesian citizens. Furthermore, the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh consistently offered interpreter support throughout the interview procedure, both at the Police and at the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (Kemlu.go.id, 2023).

Cambodia has experienced an enormous increase in the number of Indonesian citizens involved in online scamming, with cases hopping by a factor of eight between 2021 and 2022 (Kemlu.go.id, 2023). The Indonesian government consistently emphasizes the importance of exercising caution when accepting job offers to avoid falling victim to internet scamming enterprises. Furthermore, the existence of the state as an establishment that safeguards society and promotes literacy to address issues of human trafficking in the context of employment and immigration is imperative. In August 2023, Indonesia and Cambodia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate in combating human trafficking. However, there has been a lack of substantial progress in this endeavor (Viossa, 2023). In order to enhance the trust of the general public in the government and ensure the legal handling of human trafficking, the Indonesian government extended the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by signing a bilateral cooperation framework during the Cambodia-Indonesia Bilateral Meeting on Immigration Matters forum on March 13, 2024. By implementing this approach, it is anticipated that the management of human trafficking can be improved, hence mitigating the occurrence of further victims.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **1. Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking is the organized movement, transportation, transfer, concealment, or reception of individuals. Coercive actions involving threats, assault, kidnapping, fraud, deception, or misuse of authority with the intention of exploiting someone by obtaining their agreement through the manipulation of power dynamics. The term "exploitation" mentioned here encompasses not only sexual exploitation, but also the exploitation of labor, forced services, slavery, and other acts resembling slavery, as well as the illegal removal of human organs (Rahmah et al., 2023).

The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) defines human trafficking as any activities or actions involving the recruitment, purchase, sale, transfer, sending, or receiving of individuals through deceit or coercion, which may include threats, violence, or the abuse of authority, in order to force them into undesirable employment, such as domestic or sexual exploitation. The work may not involve remuneration, but rather entails being coerced or enslaved in a deceptive or pressurized atmosphere, or subjected to debt bondage. (Wahyurudhanto et al., 2019). Human Trafficking is both a transnational crime and a severe infringement upon Human Rights. This statement is not an exaggeration. Human trafficking is synonymous with modern slavery as it involves the illegal trade of human beings as commodities.

Indonesia has rules in place to prevent human trafficking, specifically Law Number 21 of 2007, which addresses the eradication of the crime of human trafficking (TPPO). The ratification of TPPO by the Indonesian Government demonstrates their dedication to the UN Protocol, which obligates them to enter into an agreement with the international community to recognize Human Trafficking as a multifaceted offense. This requires a comprehensive strategy to safeguard victims and ensure a dignified life for those affected by this crime, particularly women and children. Hence, it is essential for the Indonesian Government to demonstrate its commitment to eliminating human trafficking within its borders. (Rahmah et al., 2023).

## 2. International Cooperation

International cooperation encompasses a framework of regulations, principles, standards, and decision-making processes that regulate the operation of the global system. Moreover, nations engaged in international collaboration share common objectives and interests. Collaboration is impossible in the absence of shared interests. K.J. Holsti states that collaboration initially arose not solely within one country, but across multiple countries, addressing national, regional, and global issues. Each nation employs distinct strategies to address issues, offering recommendations, engaging in talks, evaluating the evidence gathered to support a particular plan, and ultimately reaching an agreement that serves as a mutually beneficial solution.

According to K.J. Holsti, he defines international collaboration as a mutually beneficial connection between two or more countries with shared interests and values, working together to achieve common objectives. Cooperation is necessary among countries, organizations, or individuals due to the presence of interconnectedness and growing complexity in the worldwide society. International cooperation encompasses collaboration in the domains of politics, social affairs, military and security, culture, and economics, under the guidance of each country's foreign policy (Ikbar, 2014). Actors involved in international collaboration can include countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), people, or multinational corporations (MNCs). In the field of International Relations, the state is the primary entity that takes action. Consequently, when engaging in cooperation, the state is driven to shape its foreign policy in a manner that aligns with its desired national objectives. International collaboration is achievable due to shared fundamental interests and the idea of mutual benefit.

The nature of international collaboration typically exhibits a range of differences, including the progression from harmonization to integration. Integration cooperation is the most robust form of collaboration, arising when two objectives converge without any conflict. If there is an unavoidable discrepancy or disagreement, it can still be mitigated if both sides collaborate to address their respective interests and issues. Hocking and Smith identify three distinct tiers of international collaboration, which are:

a. *Consensus* is a state of cooperation that is marked by a lack of consideration for individual interests among the countries concerned and a low level of engagement among them.

b. *Collaboration* is a more advanced kind of cooperation than consensus. It involves a significant number of shared objectives and active cooperation amongst countries that have established cooperative relationships to accomplish their own interests.

c. *Integration* refers to a form of collaboration that is distinguished by a significant degree of closeness and harmony between the participating countries, with minimal conflicts of interest (Hocking & Smith, 2014).

## Method

According to (Creswell, 2013), this study employs a qualitative methodology, which is strong in its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of social events or issues that are human-level. The ability of qualitative methodologies to produce intricate textual descriptions of how people perceive certain study difficulties lends weight to this opinion, according to the most recent opinion. This offers insights into the "human" aspect of an issue, specifically about conduct, convictions, viewpoints, feelings, and connections that frequently clash among people (Ramdhan, 2021). Primary and secondary data are the two main groups into which the data sources used in this study are separated. While secondary data is information that has already been gathered and processed by other researchers, primary data is information that is taken directly from the source and is regarded as authentic (Fadli, 2021). The dynamics of Indonesia and Cambodia's bilateral cooperation in combating human trafficking will be observed between May 2022 and May 2024. Additionally, materials such as news articles, academic journals, speeches, and declarations by state actors pertaining to TPPO efforts will be restricted.

## Finding and Discussion

### *Human Trafficking Crime through Social Media*

Between 2021 and 2023, Indonesia saw a sharp rise in the number of human trafficking crimes, with social media being the primary source of victims for this type of trafficking. There are two ways that TPPO spreads via social media: first, through WhatsApp messages inviting victims to work overseas with large incomes and simple tasks, and second, through invitations with easy terms and conditions. The second method involves using the same enticement to advertise on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. The victim will receive free airfare for international travel after registering and fulfilling these requirements. The perpetrators of this TPPO will then utilize this free airfare to intimidate the victim via a letter of cooperation. Usually written in the native tongue of Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, or other Southeast Asian nation, this letter of cooperation also specifies the victim's forced payment of the airfare (Kurnianingrum, 2023).

The majority of victims will be compelled to perform labor that differs from what is given, such as playing games online, scamming, obtaining other TPPO victims, or even being forced to become sex workers. Victims are also assigned a daily objective that is unattainable. If the objective is not met, the victim will be denied sustenance and salary, and their superiors may also subject them to abuse. The victim's family is typically blackmailed by requesting tens of millions in order to secure the victim's release if they are unable to meet their daily objective. Nevertheless, the act of blackmail by itself is not going to result in the victim being freed in two ways—either completely or partially (Monique & Amalia Puspamawarni, 2020).

This TPPO case typically targets young Gen Z children who are proficient in technology and are susceptible to being exploited by TPPO perpetrators. In recent times, the perpetrators used the cash-on-delivery (COD) payment system to purchase and sell goods online. They

have threatened to provide the goods if the victim is invited to another spot and threatened with hostage-taking or sexual assault (Pusiknas Bareskrim Polri, 2023). The individuals who are being kept against their will are coerced into perpetrating online fraud on online gambling platforms by assuming fake identities that are appealing individuals on social media, attracting others with promises of profitable investments yielding quick profits. Once the victim is trapped, the funds will be impounded and not refunded (Daniel, 2023). The escalating prevalence of human trafficking incidents has attracted significant public scrutiny, prompting widespread questioning of the Indonesian government's efficacy. Consequently, it is imperative for the government to engage in collaborative endeavors with other nations and relevant institutions to proactively combat human trafficking (Komnas HAM RI, 2024)

### ***The Role of Indonesian Government***

The Indonesian government has taken serious attempts to repatriate victims of transnational organized crime to Indonesia in their handling of this TPPO case. According to the Indonesian official report, a total of 484 Indonesian individuals were documented as having arrived from Cambodia, with 202 of them having traveled by charter plane in August 2022. It was also documented that 23 Indonesian citizens were repatriated from Laos at the expense of the state. Hence, the aggregate amount of financial support provided by the state in 2022 was IDR 6 billion. This financing was allocated for the purpose of covering the costs of repatriation tickets, logistics, and accommodation for Indonesian citizens (Peiru & Alhakim, 2021). Furthermore, during a cabinet meeting on May 30, 2023, the President issued instructions for swift implementation of TPPO measures. This rapid action involves implementing strong legal measures and reorganizing the PP TPPO Task Force, with the Chief of Police serving as the daily chairman. This change was made because the Chief of Police possesses the necessary capabilities for both action and prevention, which were previously held by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. Presidential Regulation No. 49/2023 was enacted under the president's guidance, appointing the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs as Chairperson 1 and the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture as Second Chairperson (Putri et al., 2022). Since the appointment of the Chief of Police as the Daily Chair, a total of 935 instances involving 1045 suspects and 2797 rescued victims have been recorded between June and November 2023. The Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs successfully raised the problem of TPPO at the ASEAN level during the 42nd ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo. This led to the creation of the Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons Caused by Abuse of Technology. The ASEAN Summit conference initiated bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and other countries on TPPO, including Cambodia and other nations (Rustam et al., 2022).

West Kalimantan is home to numerous TPPO victims, making it the third largest location for TPPO cases. This is evidenced by the fact that Cambodia has 484 TPPO cases, with 70 victims (66 males and 4 women) in 2022. Managing these TPPO cases has significant challenges due to the fact that numerous victims do not perceive themselves as victims and may even feign victimhood, expressing a desire to return to Indonesia only to ultimately return overseas (Supli et al., 2022). Furthermore, the victims have a sense of humiliation that deters them from returning to Indonesia, ultimately leading to their reluctance to do so. Indeed, there exists a significant number of individuals who harbor skepticism about the

testimonies of TPPO victims, to the extent that these victims themselves become the subjects of online harassment. Hence, the issue of TPPO is a collective duty that extends beyond the government, necessitating the dissemination of awareness among the entire community. The general population must also maintain a state of constant vigilance due to the easily exploitable nature of TPPO, which allows for effortless employment opportunities abroad without any apparent drawbacks. These opportunities are often advertised through chat groups, Facebook, or other social media platforms, promising visa-free travel but requiring substantial financial investment. Consequently, it is prudent to approach such offers with skepticism, as they may appear excessively advantageous but ultimately prove to be deceptive. If you aspire to work overseas, it is advisable to pursue the Government to Government (G to G) program facilitated by BP2MI, which would thereafter grant you official status as a PMI (Indonesian Migrant Worker) abroad (Wulandari & Wicaksono, 2014).

By February 2023, Bareskrim had discovered the method by which the TPPO network operates in Cambodia. They clarified that the recruitment process consisted of two methods: in-person meetings and social media platforms. During face-to-face encounters, the suspect presented employment opportunities in the roles of manufacturing workers, telemarketers, and customer service representatives. Simultaneously, utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the perpetrator enticed potential victims by promising employment opportunities overseas as computer operators and telemarketers, with monthly salaries ranging from IDR 8-15 million. Despite being offered destinations such as South Korea, Australia, and England, they were ultimately dispatched to Cambodia to work as internet gambling operators. It was discovered that the perpetrator had been illegally recruiting migrant laborers since 2019, in order to earn profits in the tens of billions (Viossa, 2023).

### ***Indonesia and Cambodia's Bilateral Cooperation in the Eradication and Combat of Human Smuggling***

The escalating issue of TPPO (Trafficking in Persons and Property Offenses) in Cambodia has grown progressively alarming in recent years. Consequently, the Indonesian government has initiated measures to engage in bilateral collaboration aimed at eliminating human trafficking. Commencing on May 9, 2023, the Indonesian government suggested expediting discussions regarding the ASEAN Extradition Treaty during the ASEAN Political and Security Council meeting in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara. The meeting concluded with an agreement on an extradition treaty among ASEAN nations, aimed at preventing the Southeast Asian region from becoming a sanctuary for criminals. Indonesia was represented at the meeting by Mahfud MD, the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs (Menko Polhukam), and Retno LP Marsudi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The meeting was attended by Kao Kim Hourn, the Secretary General of ASEAN, and all ASEAN foreign ministers except Myanmar. At the bilateral level, Mahfud MD advocated for the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indonesian Police and the Cambodian Police. This agreement is intended to enhance police-to-police cooperation between the two countries in the management of TPPO. The Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons Caused by Abuse of Technology was implemented in August 2022 (Purnamasari, 2023).

On December 21, 2023, the Indonesian Ambassador to Cambodia, Santo Darmosumarto, met with H.E. Chou Bun Eng, the deputy chairman of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) Cambodia. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the strategy of the

NCCT for the period of 2024-2028 in order to eliminate TPPO in Cambodia. Ambassador Santo also proposed the possibility of practical collaboration between the two countries to enhance efforts in eradicating cross-border crimes. This meeting is being held to discuss the implementation of the agreement between the Indonesian National Police and the Cambodian Ministry of Home Affairs. The agreement, known as the Memorandum of Understanding, was signed in August 2022 in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. Its purpose is to enhance cooperation in dealing with crimes that occur across the borders of Indonesia and Cambodia (KBRI Phnom Penh, 2023).

In addition, a bilateral summit between Indonesia and Cambodia took place in Melbourne on March 5, 2024. The meeting was attended by President Joko Widodo and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet. The primary objective of this conference is to enhance the bilateral relations between the two countries, both of which recently marked the 65th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in 2024. During the meeting, President Joko Widodo addressed three significant matters, including the management of human trafficking. Highlighting the need of enhancing security measures and addressing criminal activities related to human trafficking between nations of origin and destination, while also executing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at eradicating transnational crime by 2023 (AntaraNews, 2024).

The first Cambodia-Indonesia Bilateral Meeting on Immigration Matters, which took place in Phnom Penh on March 13, 2024, was the pinnacle. Representatives from both countries were in attendance to deliberate on potential solutions to the current issue. The Director General of Immigration of Cambodia, Lieutenant General SOK Veasna, represented Cambodia, while Silmy Salim, the Director General of Immigration of Indonesia, represented Indonesia. The discussion primarily centered around strategies to prevent and address human trafficking crimes, international crimes, and cooperation in border management (Radar Sulbar, 2024).

The Cambodia-Indonesia Bilateral Meeting on Immigration Matters consented to collaborate in eight areas, including the following: (1) the exchange of migration information, (2) the regulation of legal and orderly movement of people, (3) the determination of migrant status, (4) the prevention of human smuggling and human trafficking, (5) the resolution of travel document fraud cases, (6) the exchange of statistical data, (7) the development of migration management institutions and policies, and (8) technical assistance training and capacity building (Tristiawati, 2024).

In the forum, Silmy highlighted that the Indonesian immigration attaché's appointment in Cambodia is intended to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the immigration sector, thereby enhancing security in both regions. One catalyst is the data provided by the Cambodian Ministry of Home Affairs, which indicates that approximately 15,000 Indonesian nationals lack valid work permits. The Indonesian government perceives that the presence of unauthorized laborers has been undermined, and it deems necessary a more stringent measure than just deportation. Hence, Indonesia should implement measures to enhance legal consciousness among individuals seeking employment overseas in order to prevent engagement in illicit activities (Purnamasari, 2023).

This bilateral cooperation is a collaborative form of international cooperation, in which both countries have shared aims and actively work together to fulfill their respective interests (Hocking & Smith, 2014). Both countries share a common issue, where Indonesia serves as an



origin country for illegal laborers, while Cambodia serves as a destination country for illegal laborers. Reports indicate that human trafficking in Southeast Asia might be compared to an iceberg, with the region being ranked second in terms of the number of human trafficking incidents. Southeast Asian countries have been deemed unsuccessful in addressing instances of human trafficking, particularly in safeguarding victims of trafficking, a majority of whom are women. These factors include the economic crisis, natural disasters, war, and political turmoil. Consequently, several individuals aspire to become migrant workers with the intention of enhancing their family's financial situation, only to end up falling prey to human trafficking and being victims of exploitation (Adellia et al., 2022). This partnership is intended to mitigate the prevalence of human trafficking in both nations and foster closer relations between them (Radar Sulbar, 2024).

## Conclusion

The Indonesian government has implemented multiple initiatives to address the TPPO situation and has successfully repatriated several TPPO victims from overseas. Moreover, the government offers numerous official initiatives to facilitate the sending of Indonesian individuals to BP2MI, which may be conveniently accessed through the official BP2MI website. In addition, the government has taken extensive preventive measures by conducting several community forums, particularly with students, and even enacting new legislation to address the TPPO problem. Additionally, there are numerous victims who are psychologically impacted, rendering them unable to contribute significantly to the resolution of TPPO cases. There are still numerous victims who require government assistance. Hence, this TPPO case will persist and will not conclude until all culprits, whether in Indonesia or outside, are apprehended.

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