

Press Release

The Vicious Cycle of Human Trafficking is Eternal Within Capitalism

As many as 15 residents of Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) – an archipelago province in eastern Indonesia - became victims of the crime of human trafficking (reported on 5 June 2023). They were illegally sent to work for a Malaysian company in Pekanbaru in October 2022, but the victims were not given a salary until their fifth month of work. (Detik.com). This event is merely one story among many other tragic stories from NTT. Previously there was Meriance Kabu, a woman who had worked as a non-procedural domestic worker in 2014 in Malaysia. During her eight months of work in Malaysia, Meriance was subjected to "torture resulting in injuries". Luckily, she was still able to return home alive. From 2014 to 2022, more than 700 Indonesian migrant workers from NTT have returned home in coffins. (BBC News)

The province of NTT is one of the largest pockets of human trafficking in Indonesia. Perhaps because of this, NTT was chosen as the location for the 42nd ASEAN Summit last May. The issue of human trafficking became one of the main issues highlighted, and led to a declaration of eradicating human trafficking, especially in terms of misuse of technology, because most of the crime modes take place online which became more prevalent since the Covid-19 pandemic. Indonesia is the largest country in ASEAN which has the most victims of human trafficking. Currently there are 4.4 million Indonesian migrant workers without documents abroad, the majority of whom are women. Head of BP2MI (Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency) Benny Rhamdani said human trafficking had indeed been going on for a very long time, it is as if the syndicates and mafia that take huge profits from this dirty business are not detected. He also added that especially with the help of technology, now more and more victims are from the educated people.

In this corrupt capitalist system, degrading human beings becomes easier due to the weak role of the state, poverty, slow regulation and is lubricated by materialistic lifestyles and huge economic burdens of individuals. Technology also helps facilitate the network of human trafficking syndicates to become more organized. Ironically, even though the slavery system was abolished long ago and modern human rights slogans are often echoed, the practice of human trafficking is increasing, and it feels like we're back in medieval times. Human trafficking indeed is a new style of slavery. Although the practices and methods are different, its essence is almost the same as slavery in the past, namely humans are considered as goods that can be exploited and abused at will and deprived of all rights. The presence of the ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo NTT last month was nothing more than a ceremony and proof that the rate of regulation is not as fast as the rate of human trafficking crimes. A Muslim country like Indonesia has faced the issue of migrant workers for almost 4 decades with various changes in laws and regulations. However, this epidemic has not stopped and will never stop, because human trafficking syndicates are a vicious circle that will always be a predator, preying on the poverty and unemployment cycle due to the implementation of the flawed Capitalist economic system. These syndicates have multiplied under a capitalist system which has nurtured materialistic and hedonistic mindsets, creating a ripe environment for human trafficking.

Meanwhile, Islam offers a vision of human liberation which sought to eliminate the practice of slavery, promising great rewards in the Hereafter for those who free the slave. Islamic teachings provide sublime human values because they place humans as more valuable than material things and money. This is alongside the implementation of an anti-usury, equitable, low tax and fair distribution of wealth - economic system so that a state will be free from poverty and the snares of economic oppression. Allah (swt) says: ﴿...وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ * فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ * وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ * فَكَّ رَقَبَةً...﴾ **“...and shown them the two ways of right and wrong? If only they had attempted the challenging path of goodness instead! And what will make you realize what attempting the challenging path is? It is to free a slave...”** [Al Balad: 10-13].

The Women's Section
in The Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir

