BRIDGING THE GAP AT SEA: EVALUATING SRI LANKA'S DOMESTIC LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL NORMS ON MARITIME HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND PEOPLE SMUGGLING

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka's strategic geographic location in the Indian Ocean, at the intersection of major East-West Sea routes, has attracted both legitimate commercial traders and transnational crime syndicates seeking to do business there. Moreover, its porous maritime boundary with India, coupled with vast portions of the Central Indian Ocean being 'unpoliced', has enabled crimes such as Human Trafficking and People Smuggling to go undetected. These vulnerabilities have transformed Sri Lanka into both a source and transit hub for such crimes, thus significantly undermining its maritime security. To address these threats, it is essential to assess the adequacy of Sri Lanka's current legal safeguards against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling. While previous research focused on how Sri Lanka's geopolitical changes have significantly affected transnational crime patterns, this research offers a focused legal assessment to identify gaps and recommend reforms to enhance maritime security while ensuring compliance with international standards.

Keywords: Maritime Security Threats, Human Trafficking, People Smuggling, International law, Legal framework.

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