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## **IRELAND: International human rights group applauds Ireland for law targeting buyers of sex**

### **Survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking lead groundbreaking campaign**

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (15.02.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2lszkdo> - The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) commends the Republic of Ireland for the historic passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill, which decriminalizes prostituted people and penalizes the purchase of sex. After years of intense efforts, the bill passed Ireland's lower house, Dáil Éireann, on Feb. 7 and was approved in the upper house, Seanad Éireann, on Feb. 14.

The new Irish law will help efforts to end demand by holding sex buyers accountable and will also ensure that prostituted individuals and survivors can access comprehensive support services. In addition, it strengthens national laws against sexual grooming, child pornography and sexual harassment in the Republic of Ireland.

Rachel Moran, founder and executive director of SPACE International (Survivors of Prostitution-Abuse Calling for Enlightenment), was a key Irish abolitionist activist who advocated for the law as part of the Turn Off the Red Light campaign, a coalition of direct service providers, survivor-led groups, women's rights organizations, labor unions, medical providers and other groups in Ireland.

"It's been six years almost to the day since I first spoke publicly in Dublin about the harm and damage of prostitution and the need for our government to do something about it," said Moran, also the author of "Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution." "With great relief, our government has formally responded to the Turn Off the Red Light campaign and voted overwhelmingly to criminalize the demand for paid sexual access to human

beings. Ireland is now a hostile territory for pimps and traffickers, and a place where men can no longer legally use women's desperation to buy their way inside our bodies. This is a historic day that sends a message of hope."

The Republic of Ireland follows the example of Sweden, the first country to legally recognize prostitution as a form of violence and discrimination against women in 1999. Norway, Iceland, Canada (with exceptions), Northern Ireland and, most recently, France have also enacted demand-focused, abolitionist laws to combat the multi-billion dollar sex trade and its economic engine, sex trafficking. This legal framework is known as the Swedish or Nordic model.

In enacting the new law, the Irish government upholds its international obligations under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol). Respectively, these international conventions call on state parties to enact national legislation and policies that address the exploitation of prostitution of others and the demand that fosters the sex trade and sex trafficking, among other human rights violations.

"Passage of the Irish law is a testament to the survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking who tell us with immense courage about the unspeakable horrors they've endured at the hands of sex buyers, traffickers and pimps," said Taina Bien-Aimé, executive director of CATW. "This victory belongs to them. Millions, mostly women and girls, continue to be exploited in the sex trade worldwide with unacceptable impunity, but today we applaud Ireland for honoring the tireless campaigners and for showcasing its vision of human rights and equality for all."

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations working to end human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of women and girls worldwide. CATW engages in advocacy, education and prevention programs, and services for victims of trafficking and CSE in Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

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## **NIGERIA – ITALY: Number of Nigerian women trafficked to Italy for sex almost doubled in 2016**

***Life of forced prostitution awaits majority of the 11,009 Nigerian women who arrived on Italy's shores last year, says International Organisation for Migration***

By Anne Kelly

The Guardian (12.01.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2kVhS1W> - The number of Nigerian women travelling by boat from Libya to Italy almost doubled last year, with the vast majority of new arrivals victims of sex trafficking and exploitation, according to the International Organisation for Migration.

The IOM believes approximately 80% of the 11,009 Nigerian women registered at landing points in Sicily in 2016 were trafficked, and will go on to live a life of forced prostitution in Italy and other countries in Europe.

The figure is almost double that of 2015, when 5,600 women were registered by the IOM. The 2016 figures represent an almost eightfold increase from 2014, when 1,450 Nigerian women were registered at landing points in Sicily.

"We have seen a huge increase in the number of Nigerian women arriving last year," said Carlotta Santarossa, a counter-trafficking project manager for the IOM.

"According to our indicators we believe the majority of Nigerian women who are arriving into Italy are victims of trafficking and are likely to end up exploited in Italy or other European countries. In Italy the numbers are too high to provide all of them with the services they need."

The IOM said the increase reflected a dramatic rise in the overall numbers of Nigerian men, women and children being registered at landing points in Italy. According to the agency's latest figures, 37,500 of the 180,000 migrants arriving in Italy by sea last year were Nigerian, the first time they have eclipsed Eritreans as the largest national group. The total number for 2015 was 22,000. About 3,000 of the 37,000 Nigerian migrants were unaccompanied minors.

Alberto Mossino, director of Piam Onlus, an anti-trafficking NGO working with Nigerian migrants, said the increase in Nigerians arriving by sea is indicative of the power of the highly organised trafficking gangs operating alongside Libyan militias to control migrant flows from north Africa.

"Before, migrants could arrive alone in Libya and make their way by boat to Europe," he said. "Now, it is too dangerous: there is civil war and it is only the Nigerian and Eritrean trafficking gangs who are able to transport large numbers of people through the country, where militias are controlling the borders and ports.

"These are not smuggling gangs, their intention is to exploit and profit from the migrants they are transporting along the way, and women are the most lucrative cargo."

According to surveys conducted by the IOM at landing points last year, more than 70% of migrants travelling overland through north Africa to Europe showed indications of human trafficking, organ trafficking and exploitation along the way.

Among those questioned, 49% reported having being held in a location against their will, often for ransom. The majority of the cases occurred in Libya.

"Libya is a black hole at present, from a humanitarian point of view – all migrants arriving from Libya have faced violence and human rights violations," said Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesperson for the IOM in Italy.

Mossino said existing anti-trafficking services were at gridlock, with the Italian government providing only 1,600 places for victims of trafficking at specialist shelters.

"If there are 11,000 women arriving in one year, there is simply no way of providing them with any help or security," he said. "There is nothing we can do to help them."

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## **WORLD: Fight against human trafficking frustrated by governments, families, violence - campaigners**

By Kieran Guilbert and Anuradha Nagaraj

Reuters (29.11.2016) - <http://reut.rs/2fUT2f5> - Obstacles as formidable as government policies and as basic as family ties undermine the global fight against human trafficking, allowing millions of desperate people to be driven into slavery, leading campaigners will warn on Wednesday.

Those who aim to help trafficking victims are not safe either, according to prominent campaigners speaking at Trust Women, an annual women's rights and human trafficking conference run by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Nearly 46 million people globally live as slaves, forced to work, sold for sex, trapped in debt bondage or born into servitude, according to the 2016 Global Slavery Index by rights group Walk Free Foundation.

"Slavery is a cancer that is spreading across the world," said Mauritanian politician Biram Dah Abeid, head of the anti-slavery Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, who will speak at the opening of the two-day event.

Rigid immigration policies in Europe, closed borders in countries such as the Balkan states and anti-migrant sentiment makes people vulnerable to forced servitude, said Abeid.

"This drives desperate people, those who face persecution, natural disasters, poverty and war, to throw themselves into clandestine networks, where they risk becoming slaves," he said.

In Mauritania, some 43,000 people, or about 1 percent of the population, live as slaves, according to the slavery index. Yet other estimates put the number as high as 20 percent.

The remote Islamic republic and poor desert nation, which straddles the Arab Maghreb and black sub-Saharan Africa, was the last country to abolish slavery in 1981.

Its Haratin minority, who make up the main "slave caste", are descended from black Africans. Most do not know a life outside of servitude exists, according to Abeid.

"Mauritania has an unofficial apartheid led by the Arab-Berbers, who enforce slavery," Abeid said. "Their power is based on ethnicity ... black is a synonym for slave."

Abeid, freed this year from 18 months in jail after being arrested during an anti-slavery march in 2014, was born to slaves and should have faced a life of servitude.

But while his mother was pregnant, her master became ill and released her unborn child from slavery in an act of charity, suggested by a Koranic teacher, to gain favour with God.

### ***Refusing to give evidence***

In places such as Nepal, family loyalty thwarts the fight against trafficking when victims sold into slavery by relatives refuse to give evidence against them, according to Nepal's leading anti-trafficking judge.

Tek Narayan Kunwar said people may change their testimony to save fathers, brothers or brothers-in-law from going to prison.

"In a way they are dependent on these very people for their sustenance and worry their economic condition will further worsen if they testify against them and send them to prison," he said.

About 229,000 people are trapped in some form of slavery in Nepal, according to the index, with the film "Sold" starring actress Gillian Anderson about a Nepali girl sold into the sex trade to be shown at the conference involving 600 delegates.

Campaigners said the devastating earthquakes in Nepal last year, which killed about 9,000 people and destroyed about one million homes, left many people with no means of income and led to an increase in children and women being trafficked.

Kunwar added better cross-border cooperation is needed to tackle human trafficking, an industry now estimated to be worth about \$150 billion a year. India, for instance, is the biggest market for women being trafficked in Nepal, he said.

Progress is being made, although it is spotty, he said.

Nepal strengthened its anti-trafficking law in 2007. However its implementation remains uneven, with most victims being women and children from rural areas with limited access to resources and little knowledge of the legal process.

Mauritania passed a law last year making slavery a crime against humanity and doubling the jail term to 20 years, but it is rarely enforced and just appeases foreign aid donors, said Abeid, who ran for president in 2014 and will again in 2019.

But Kunwar said he worries for the security of those who fight trafficking, a lucrative black market industry.

"Many people working on anti-trafficking are not safe. Many complain to me that they are intimidated and that there is political interference during investigations because the perpetrators are powerful and connected," he said.

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## **USA: Human Trafficking Intervention Court has helped many prostitutes get off the streets**

WUNRN (16.11.2016) - A New York State approach of treating women – accused of prostitution-related offences – as the victims of trafficking has caused consternation as well as praise. In October, I spent a day in the Queens Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC), founded in 2004, and used as a model for a statewide 11-court program which began nine years later.

So far, over 3,000 defendants have passed through their doors. The concept behind the HTIC is to help women caught up in the sex trade, to recover from their experiences, and to exit prostitution. A defendant can be referred to drug treatment or immigrant legal services, as well as being offered general support and counselling. The HTIC is partnered with a large network of counsellors and court advocates, including two that work with the Asian women that make up the majority of the defendants in the Queens courtroom.

Laws on prostitution in the US unfavorably target those selling, rather than buying sex. A woman can be arrested on a prostitution-related charge whether or not she has been seen soliciting sex for money. Police have the right to arrest someone for waving at men, being seen in an area known for prostitution, or, until recently, carrying condoms.

Friday is the busiest day of the week for the HTIC. I am in the Queens court, observing cases and speaking with court officials, lawyers and defendants. None of the women wanted to go on record, but all were both critical of being treated as criminals, but grateful that the court at least provided support and assistance with the multitude of problems women in the sex trade face.

The Queens court piloted the HTIC approach when Judge Fernando M Camacho became dismayed at seeing the same teenage girls reappearing in his court for prostitution. The young women would be fined, and were forced to sell sex to pay the fine. Camacho wanted to break the cycle by offering them alternatives to a criminal record or jail.

The majority of the defendants in court, the day I observed, were either Latin American, and older, undocumented Chinese or other east Asian immigrants. According to statistics from the court office, Asian women make up 40% of all defendants.

Service providers available during the court mandated programmes offer yoga classes, art therapy or group therapy. Social workers help clients sort issues with immigration, housing, or child care.

When the sessions are completed, the judge then grants an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal of the charges. If the defendant is not arrested for up to six months, the record will be sealed. Records for 2013-14 show that her court has issued adjournments in more than half of all cases heard. There is no onus on the woman to self-identify as a trafficking victim or to name, or assist, with a prosecution of a pimp or other third party exploiter.

One woman has come to court to hear her criminal record for prostitution from 1990 expunged. The judge congratulates her, and her friends clap. The atmosphere is, compared to any other court room I have been in, friendly and relaxed.

The HTIC system has its critics, in the main, campaigners for blanket decriminalisation of the sex trade. NYC based writer and artist Molly Crabapple, wrote in Vice that, "To the courts, anyone who's been arrested for sex work is raw material, incapable of making his or her own choices," and described those of us who consider prostitution to be abuse as, "pious, middle-class feminis[ts], devoted to the moral uplift of the poor. By ministering to prostitutes, middle-class women got both respectable jobs and the frisson of proximity to vice."

Dorchen Leidholdt is director of the Centre of Battered Women's Legal Services at Sanctuary for Families, one of the 140 organisations that makes up the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition (NYATC). Leidholdt, is, like all those I spoke to during my observations, against the criminalisation of women for prostitution offences.

Prior to the foundation of the HTIC, the NYATC had been advocating for ambitious legislation that would strengthen New York's anti trafficking laws, by strengthening penalties against perpetrators, traffickers, pimps, and buyers, as well as measures that would help empower victims of trafficking.

"[The creation of the HITC] was about ending the victimisation and re-victimisation of people in prostitution by the criminal justice system," Leidholdt told me when we met in a Manhattan cafe. "We vehemently oppose the arrest of people in prostitution and holding to account their abusers and exploiters accountable."

The court system is powerless to stop the arrest of people for prostitution, but the NYATC is working hard to change that, and doing an enormous amount of advocacy to stop the arrests. The organisation recently submitted a White Paper to the new police commissioner, which spells out the fact that arresting the women for prostitution is re-victimising them and is often strengthening the power of their exploiters, both pimps and buyers.

"With the HTIC, it's often really the first time that anyone in our justice system has treated someone arrested for prostitution with respect, has provided assistance, has listened and has offered a way out," says Leidholdt.

The definition of sex trafficking in US federal law equates trafficking and pimping, as it describes the activities that pimps engage in. There is no requirement of force, fraud or coercion.

"We're not saying all prostitution is trafficking," says Leidholdt, "we're acknowledging that some people, a very tiny percentage, may make an affirmative choice, but usually the options are very constrained. Prostitution is invariably a condition of profound gender oppression that is deeply harmful to people in prostitution."

I met Lori Cohen, director of the anti-trafficking initiative at Sanctuary for Families (SFF), in her busy office next door to the court, and asked how SFF became involved with the HTIC. "Sanctuary was seeing a number of domestic violence victims who were also being sold for sex," said Cohen, "but the clients didn't really have the vocabulary to self-identify as trafficking survivors."

A number of SFF's clients are Mexican women who are sold by pimps for around \$30 for 15 minutes. For the pimps to make money they are sold to, on average 12-16 sex buyers per day.

"In one case I had a client who had 70 clients in a 24 hour period. So intensely painful, very brutal, very dangerous, a number of the men were drunk," said Cohen, "they would try to strangle the women, they were very violent."

Whilst the women that go through the HTIC should not be in court in the first place, at least under this system they have a chance to be heard, and for their charges to be dismissed if they take advantage of the support on offer.

"We have clients where their convictions have been vacated who feel like [the HTIC] has given them back their life," said Cohen. "Now that they can apply for a job and get housing, they could have a chance in life no-one has ever offered them before."

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## **INDIA: 'Sold like cows and goats': India's slave brides**

***Thousands of girls and women in India are sold into marriage and often face a lifetime of abuse and hardship.***

By Liz Gooch

Al Jazeera (14.11.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2ffi40M> - The first time Muklesha was sold, she was just 12 years old. Her buyer was a man in his 70s.

Marriage and a baby quickly followed. But, three years later, the man died and Muklesha was again put up for sale.

This time, her buyer was a horrific abuser.

"He didn't feed me. He'd take me to the fields and stuff my mouth with mud and then beat me," she says.

Muklesha is one of thousands of India's slave brides - girls and women sold into marriage, often destined for a lifetime of abuse and hardship, as this [101 East documentary reveals](#).

### ***A dangerous demand for brides***

In India, sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, due to a preference for male babies, has created one of the most severe gender imbalances in the world.



Now, the shortage of women is generating a dangerous demand for brides among men desperate to marry, especially in states like Haryana, which has one of the country's worst gender ratios.

Traffickers are stepping in to meet this demand, kidnapping women from other states and selling them to men in Haryana.

A survey of 10,000 households in this northern state found more than 9,000 married women had come from other states.

Al Jazeera discovered that some women living in villages in Haryana have been sold as many as three times.

The villagers call them "Paros", a derogatory term implying they've been purchased.

Sanjida was trafficked to Haryana when she was just 10 years old. She says an older girl from a village near her family's home in the north-eastern state of Assam drugged and kidnapped her.

"I was made to do field work, cut grass, feed cows, do all the work. I cried for a year. I was in captivity for four years," she says.

She says she was then sold into marriage.

"I couldn't run away or bring my life to an end. There was nobody whom I could ask for help," she says.

But Sanjida was luckier than most other Indian women sold into marriage. She says her husband has always treated her well. Sanjida now works for an NGO helping other women.

"All people in Haryana are disrespectful towards women like us. Everybody says we have no self-respect ... and that we are sold like cows and goats. We feel very bad when we hear all this because we are human beings and we belong to India, just like them," she says.

Sanjida is now helping Muklesha, the girl first sold when she was 12, after she was rescued from her abusive husband.

Muklesha now lives in a safe house with her 18-month-old daughter, but Sanjida says she's still so traumatised she hasn't been able to tell anyone where she comes from.

"Her second husband was so cruel. He beat her so badly that her mouth was damaged and she was affected mentally. She struggles to speak and to be understood," Sanjida explains.

### ***'Commodities that can be recycled and resold'***

For the brides who manage to escape their husbands, pursuing a criminal case against them can be near impossible, according to Narender Singh, a local district chief magistrate in Haryana.

"She's brought before the court to depose against the trafficker, who is a powerful person who has strong links in the community and the community is supporting him," he says. "So in these circumstances, it's very tough for that lady to stand by her statement."

He says the women have no rights, including when it comes to inheritance.

"I'm yet to see a case where they have legally inherited some land in their name. They are not accepted as a member of the family," he says.

Poonam Muttreja, executive director of the Population Foundation of India, says the bride trade reflects a cultural lack of respect for women.

"It's not just about sex selection and foeticide. It's about infanticide; it's about lack of value for girls," says Muttreja, a government adviser on family issues.

"It's a continuum where girls are not valued before they're born, but the girls are not valued or treated well even after they're born."

Muttreja says a shortage of women in Haryana has meant that it has become normal for men to buy brides from other states.

"They could marry their boys to girls from other parts of the country in the normal, respectful way, but it is the extreme lack of respect for women that they do sex trafficking," she says. "It's not as though they treat them as respected married partners. They treat them as commodities that can be recycled and resold."

The Indian government is drafting the country's first comprehensive anti-trafficking laws, but some activists say this will not be enough to stop the sale of brides.

"Unless you change social norms and the way people view girls, you're not going to be able to change either the sex ratios or the lack of respect for women," says Muttreja. "Buying brides is a lack of respect for women and lack of any value that a woman has."

For Sanjida, life has become all about her four children. She is determined that in her family at least, the practice of selling girls into marriage will end with her.

"I don't expect much for myself, but I work hard to educate my daughters so that they have a better life. Whatever I went through, they should not have to suffer that."

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## **UK: Czech human-trafficking gang members sentenced to jail in Britain**

By Umberto Bacchi

Thomson Reuters Foundation (31.10.2016) - <http://tmsnrt.rs/2fHS86L> - Five members of a gang that trafficked people from eastern Europe to Britain and forced them to live in inhumane conditions while working to pay off fictional debts were sentenced by a British court on Monday.

Czech nationals Ruzena Tancosova, Petr Tancos, Nela Dzurkova, Martin Tancos and Katerina Kerujova were found guilty of human trafficking and slavery offences at Plymouth Crown Court on Oct. 24.

On Monday, a judge handed them sentences ranging from two to six-and-a-half years behind bars.

The victims lived in squalid conditions and were forced to work in a car wash and at a meat packing factory to pay off debts their traffickers claimed they owed, according to prosecutors.

Seven male victims were freed by police during a series of raids in 2014. They were forced to sleep on the floor, in garages or in a cupboard under the stairs, police said.

The sentencing came days after Britain unveiled two multi-million pound funds to tackle modern slavery overseas and at home as part of a drive to end the crime described as a "barbaric evil" by Prime Minister Theresa May.

Prosecutors said the gang targeted vulnerable people in the Czech Republic who might not immediately be noticed as missing and trafficked them to the UK.

"They were then treated as commodities to be used however the defendants saw fit," prosecutor Ann Hampshire said in a statement.

Czech and British authorities cooperated in the case, which marked the first time a Czech prisoner was transferred to the UK to give evidence.

In September, May pledged to use 33.5 million pounds (\$41 million) from the foreign aid budget to focus on combating slavery in countries that are the source of proven trafficking routes to Britain.

There are an estimated 13,000 victims of forced labor, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude in Britain.

Britain last year passed tough anti-slavery legislation introducing life sentences for traffickers and forcing companies to disclose what they are doing to make sure their supply chains are free from slavery.

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## **NEPAL: Why child trafficking has increased since the 2015 Nepal earthquake**

Stuff.co.nz (24.04.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1NLpbx5> - The border came and went before the realisation dawned.

This wasn't Kathmandu, where Phulsani Tamang thought she was coming to earn a better life. This was India and life was looking far from rosy.

The 12-year-old hadn't told her parents she was entrusting her future to a man she'd met at a village celebration. He'd promised her an office job. She just wanted to help support her family.

Instead she was beaten and made to wash dishes. She was too young for sex work - they were biding their time.

With her sweet, soft tones and pink bow hair clip you'd swear Tamang - now 19 - was a shy tween. She picks at her French polish nails as she tells of the police raid, the eight months in a transit home and the long road to refashioning her life.

For the past four years she's lived in the rehabilitation home of child protection organisation Maiti Nepal, a vast brick complex hiding behind a high wall in the Kathmandu suburbs.

Shelter supervisor Rajni Gurung has seen 11-year-olds that pass for 19, pumped with growth hormones to speed their entry into the sex business. She's seen rescued girls who can barely walk. Many, once home, are shunned by their communities as objects of shame.

Tamang was lucky - she got out before she was raped and now works as a hairdresser in an uptown salon.

Child trafficking is not a new issue - Maiti Nepal just celebrated its 24th birthday. But the devastating 2015 earthquake has deepened the problem.

Much of the worst impact was in already poor - and poorly educated - marginalised communities. Damaged rural schools were closed so parents wanted to send their children to Kathmandu for education. Families whose homes have been destroyed are desperate for cash and vulnerable children have been left alone or at risk.

Part of the problem, says Unicef's Nepal head of child protection, Virginia Perez, is that trafficking takes so many shapes. The most common is taking girls - either forcefully or on promise of good jobs - to India to work in brothels. But increasingly there's also internal trafficking for child labour to work in brick kilns or carpet factories. Some go willingly, to avoid domestic violence at home. Others are sold out by family members. A Sun newspaper investigation found Nepalese children were being sent to Britain as domestic slaves.

There's also unnecessary institutionalisation. The quake dust had barely settled before a Christian organisation sent out vans "rescuing" vulnerable children - persuading parents they would have better prospects in a dingy Kathmandu care home. When Unicef explained they could have home support instead, the parents hired a bus to reclaim them on masse.

"We tend to think that trafficking happens because families are poor, and that's definitely a factor," Perez says. "But it's not only about poverty and ignorance and being affected by an earthquake. It's all these elements put together."

Unicef has worked with the government to tighten paperwork and border controls, which have intercepted more than 1800 people - mostly women and children - since the earthquake. They're also identifying and intensively supporting vulnerable families, but that's a costly business.

The problem starts with a lack of education and awareness.

### ***Kept 'like a prisoner'***

Charimaya Tamang was neither poor nor ignorant when she was snatched from a forest 20 years ago, while collecting fodder for her cattle.

For the founder of anti-trafficking organisation Shakti Samuha the experience is so raw she still sobs every time she tells it. She was 16. There were four men. They drugged her to get her across the border then put her in a cage.

She resisted. Tried to commit suicide, but failed. She was gang raped, beaten and made to have sex with clients.

"The brothel was like prisoner life. We just have to do these physical things even though our body is not prepared for it. Always we feel like a dead body."

A 1996 mass raid on Mumbai netted 500 girls, more than half Nepalese. The doctors treated them like lepers, pulling on four pairs of gloves and refusing to look at them. Nepal didn't want them back. By the time they returned only 128 remained.

Since then Tamang has made it her life's work to prevent trafficking and help victims become advocates.

Shakti Samuha sent social workers to the worst-affected quake districts to raise awareness of trafficking risks. They spoke to girls like 14-year-old Sushmita Pulami Magar in Gorkha. Her father died eight years ago, her mother abandoned her to remarry and her 19-year-old brother is often away working for trekking companies.

"This girl often stays alone at home," says Unicef child protection worker Shyam Raj Ghimire. "She is in the most vulnerable condition. She might be trafficked. She might be put into labour. She might be abused by someone."

Sushmita would not go as she knows the risks. But plenty do.

Kathmandu's shady entertainment industry has become a trafficking transit zone, says Bijar Lama, programme co-ordinator for female workers' rights organisation Biswas Nepal. Young women get sucked into the drink, the drugs, the lifestyle and become vulnerable to then being sent overseas.

"Entertainment" encompasses dance and karaoke bars, massage parlours and cabin restaurants - rooms divided into roofless compartments where customers take their hostesses. The dance bars we visited in touristy Thamel were more tragic than explicitly sexual. But it's there for the asking - when Lama asked at a dance bar for two 16 or 17-year-old girls for an overnight stay, he was told it could be arranged.

Biswas Nepal founder Tara Bhandari became a bartender to pay for her political science studies. She didn't do sexual favours but, at 2500 rupees (\$34) a month, she did rely on tips. Customers were abusive, police beat them up in raids, but there was no comeback because the job was not recognised as respectable work. She worried her family would find out what she was doing.

"There were lots of sexual abuse incidents," Bhandari says. "Too many to count. Verbally and also physically. Mental distress. You work in fear."

There's always a demand for young blood, so more children always need to be recruited. The earthquake provided an opportunity to increase supply. But it also reduced demand. The border blockade with India, following ethnic protests about the new constitution, caused such a crippling shortage of fuel and cooking gas that many restaurants were unable to operate. Many women and children were suddenly out of work and looking for options, opening the door to international trafficking, Lama says.

But raids are no use, he says. Their families will reject them and they'll only end up back where they started. During the earthquake aftermath, a 17-year-old entertainment worker they'd been working with slit her wrists in the street. He called her parents. They said let her die.

There's general agreement that controls need to be strengthened on Nepal's 1850km of free border with India. And awareness still needs to be improved. But it's not enough to say don't be trafficked, Lama says. You have to give girls something else to do.

"Every family has to think about this," says Maiti Nepal's Rajni Gurung. "Every family has to think every girl child is my daughter."

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## **INDIA: India is working to curb trafficking of women, children**

Reuters (19.04.2016) - <http://reut.rs/1SMkMOC> - India is working to find ways to curb the widespread trafficking of women and children in the country, including those from neighbouring Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, said Maneka Gandhi, India's minister for women and children.

South Asia, with India at its centre, is the fastest-growing and second-largest region for human trafficking in the world, after East Asia, according to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime.

Speaking at a conference on child adoption in Meghalaya, Gandhi told delegates that the government was in the process of putting in place a series of policies to prevent human trafficking.

"We have discussed this issue in the cabinet. We had called a meeting with these countries last month in which all NGOs working on this and others in Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh came," she said on Monday.

"We will have another meeting next week in India. We are telling each other what we can do. This month, we are going to see that specific solutions come into being."

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there were 5,466 cases of human trafficking registered in 2014, an increase of 90 percent over the past five years.

Activists say this is a gross under-estimation of the scale of the problem, as much of the illicit organised crime is underground.

They claim thousands of people - largely poor, rural women and children - are lured to India's towns and cities each year by traffickers who promise good jobs but sell them into domestic work or sex work or to industries such as textile workshops.

In many cases, they are not paid or are held in debt bondage. Some go missing, and their families cannot trace them.

Gandhi said the remote northeastern states, which include Assam, Sikkim, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, were a key source area for trafficking and called for the appointment of a special female police officer in each village to keep a check on crimes against women and children.

"There is an enormous amount of trafficking of children going on from the northeast. We find them in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and many going to Malaysia and Thailand. It is not fair," she said.

"The job of special women police is to be vigilant in the village and see that children do not go missing, women are not beaten by husbands, girls are sent to school."

A comprehensive new anti-trafficking law is also being drafted, say government officials. This will not only unify several existing laws, but also raise penalties for offenders and provide victims with rehabilitation and compensation.

The law, which is expected to be ready by the end of the year, will also provide for the establishment of a central investigative anti-trafficking agency to coordinate and work between states and special courts to hear such cases.

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## **VIETNAM-CHINA: Vietnamese girls smuggled into China and sold as child brides**

CNN (18.04.2016) - <http://cnn.it/1qAiLLH> - "When I woke up I didn't know that I was in China."

Lan remembers the night that changed her whole life.

While preparing for university along the border in northern Vietnam, a friend she met online asked her to a group dinner. When she was tired and wanted to go home, the people asked her to stay and talk and have a drink.

Next thing she knew, she had been smuggled across the border to China.

"At that time, I wanted to leave," says Lan. "There were other girls there in the car but there was people to guard us."

The villages along the Vietnamese-Chinese border are a hunting ground for human traffickers. Girls as young as 13 say they are tricked or drugged, then spirited across the porous border by boat, motorbike or car. Young Vietnamese women are valuable commodities in China, where the one-child policy and long-standing preference for sons has heavily skewed the gender ratio.

To put it simply, Chinese men are hungry for brides.

"It costs a very huge amount of money for normal Chinese man to get married to a Chinese woman," explained Ha Thi Van Khanh, national project coordinator for the U.N.'s anti-trafficking organization in Vietnam. Traditionally, Chinese men wishing to marry local women are expected to pay for an elaborate banquet and to have purchased a new home to live in after the wedding. "This is why they try to import women from neighboring countries, including Vietnam."

Diep Vuong started the Pacific Links Foundation to combat trafficking in Vietnam. She says that Vietnamese brides can sell for upwards of \$3,000 to the end buyer and that they are often considered desirable because of cultural similarities to the Chinese.

Nguyen was just 16 when a friend's boyfriend drugged her and smuggled her into China. She tried to resist a forced marriage. For three months, she refused, even though her traffickers beat her, withheld food and threatened to kill her, she says. Finally, she relented. She says her husband was kind to her, but she never stopped missing her family in Vietnam.

"My desire to go home was indescribable," Nguyen said. "I agreed to marry the man but I could not stay with a stranger without any feelings for him."

When her mother-in-law realized Lan was never going to warm to the marriage, the family returned her to the traffickers. They got their money back, Nguyen says, after which she was forced into a second marriage.

### ***A refuge for escaped women***

The Pacific Links Foundation runs a shelter for trafficking victims in the city of Lao Cai, northern Vietnam. The young women stay for an average of two to three years. They go to school or get vocational training. They do art therapy. They learn to cook and sew and keep a big garden. Surrounded by other woman with similar experiences, the shelter helps them get back on their feet and then to find jobs to support themselves.

"Once that whole investment process can happen with these young women then it is much easier for them to have their own lives," says Diep.

Her organization also does community outreach to try and stop more girls from falling into the hands of traffickers. About once a month, a group of trafficking victims visits the market at Bac Ha, a regional hub for buying food, fabric and livestock. On this day, on a stage overlooking hundreds of shoppers, they talk about their experiences, take questions and play games with the crowd. When they ask people to share personal experiences concerning trafficking, more than 20 people come forward.

"I think awareness is the only tool," Diep says.

Ha from the U.N. agrees that the top priority is to spread awareness, especially in the poor, rural regions along the border. She also believes reducing poverty will help stop women going to China seeking work, another common way traffickers lure victims.

### ***Saved at the border***

During CNN's trip to the border, the government called and told us the police had just rescued five girls as they were about to cross the border with a trafficker. We met the girls, who are just 14 years old. They said they were promised \$600 to go to work in China by a neighbor from the same village. They didn't tell their parents they were going. The neighbor is now under arrest.

The Vietnamese police are sometimes able to rescue women even after they have crossed into China, by enlisting the help of Chinese authorities. Nguyen Tuong Long, the head of the government's social vice prevention department in Lao Cai, says last year they rescued and returned 109 Vietnamese trafficking victims.

"Because of cooperation between the Vietnamese and the Chinese police, we have found and caught trafficking rings," Nguyen says. "We've found women far inside China, at brothels where they're forced to become sex workers."

Trafficked women who aren't rescued in raids have to find ways to get out on their own.

Some of them say they were able to contact their families from China, but they couldn't get help from police because they didn't know exactly where they were.

Lan and Nguyen ended up in the same town in China. After two years, together they managed to slip out of their homes and take a taxi to a local police station. The whole time they were afraid their husbands' families would find them. The Chinese police investigated and eventually returned them to Vietnam.

The women were free of their forced marriages, but they paid a high price. Both left their babies in China.

Lan says if she saw her daughter again, she would apologize for leaving her behind. "I hope she'll have a better life there," she says.

Both Lan and Nguyen say in school their teachers had talked to them about trafficking. At the time, neither believed it could happen to them.

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## **LEBANON: Lebanese authorities break sex trafficking ring exploiting Syrian women**

***The human traffickers held hostage the Syrian refugees in prison-like hotels near the capital of the country, Beirut, and forced them into prostitution***

New Europe (13.04.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1WrzGg5> - Sex traffickers are taking advantage of the catastrophic Syrian war and exploit Syrian refugees who are desperately trying to leave their country, which has become a war arena for militants and terrorists from all around the world.

The Associated Press (AP) reported today that the Lebanese authorities broke a sex trafficking ring which exploited 75 Syrian women for almost two months. The traffickers persuaded the young women to travel to Lebanon with them, by promising to the refugees well paid jobs at restaurants and hotels in the neighbor country.

As soon as the Syrian women transferred to Lebanon, their belongings and mobile phones were taken away, and they were locked up in two prison-like hotels north of Beirut. The traffickers tortured, sexually abused and forced the women in need into prostitution. Those who refused to work as prostitutes were repeatedly raped and tortured until they submitted, Lebanese women's rights activists said.

"Some reported that they were forced to have sex with 20 clients per day," said Maya al-Ammar, an official with women's rights group Kafa, which is Arabic for "Enough."

After the women were freed, the Health Ministry sealed a clinic belonging to gynecologist Riad al-Alam, who authorities say was involved in performing abortions for trafficked Syrian women who got pregnant. Lebanese Health Minister Wael Abu Faour said the doctor "should be in prison where he should rot." Al-Alam's license has been also revoked by a medical workers' union.

The discovery of the sex trafficking ring and the rescue of the Syrian refugees deeply shocked the Mediterranean Arab nation as the majority of the Lebanese people have welcomed the people in need and more than a million Syrian refugees are now living in the country.

AP reported that the Lebanese authorities can do more to protect the Syrian women from being sexually abused. Moreover, in February, Amnesty International stressed in the report, "I want a safe place": Refugee women from Syria uprooted and unprotected in Lebanon," that shortfalls in international assistance and discriminatory policies imposed by the Lebanese authorities are creating conditions that facilitate the exploitation and abuse of women refugees in Lebanon.

According to the report, the refusal of the Lebanese government's to renew residency permits for refugees and a shortage of international funding, leaves refugee women in a precarious position, and puts them at risk of exploitation by people in positions of power including landlords, employers and even the police.

"The combination of a significant shortage in international funding for the refugee crisis and strict restrictions imposed on refugees by the Lebanese authorities, is fueling a climate in which refugee women from Syria are at risk of harassment and exploitation and are unable to seek protection from the authorities," said Kathryn Ramsay, Gender Researcher at Amnesty International.

The fact that criminal networks and others are taking advantage of the war in Syria and exploit the people in need is not only happening in Lebanon. The British based

humanitarian organization, Save the Children, has said that it has already recorded multiple cases of sexual abuse, violence, and extortion against refugee minors in the EU.

In February, Marie Pierre Poirier, UNICEF's Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Europe said that "welfare, protection and health systems need to be strengthened at every step of the way so children and women (refugee) are not exploited or fall between cracks."

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## **FRANCE: France prostitution: MPs outlaw paying for sex**

***French MPs have passed a law that makes it illegal to pay for sex and imposes fines of up to €3,750 (£3,027, \$4,274) for those buying sexual acts.***

BBC (07.04.2016) - <http://bbc.in/1oDbZ6x> - Those convicted would also have to attend classes to learn about the conditions faced by prostitutes.

It has taken more than two years to pass the controversial legislation because of differences between the two houses of parliament over the issue.

Some sex workers protested against the law during the final debate.

The demonstrators outside parliament in Paris, numbering about 60, carried banners and placards one of which read: "Don't liberate me, I'll take care of myself".

Members of the Strass sex workers' union say the law will affect the livelihoods of France's sex workers, estimated to number between 30,000 and 40,000.

Sweden was the first country to criminalise those who pay for sex rather than the prostitutes, introducing the law in 1999. Other countries have since adopted the so-called "Nordic model": Norway in 2008, Iceland in 2009, and Northern Ireland in 2014. Earlier this year, the European parliament approved a resolution calling for the law to be adopted throughout the continent.

But many advocacy groups warn the model makes sex work more dangerous.

Catherine Stephens, an activist with the UK-based International Union of Sex Workers, and a sex worker herself, says criminalisation makes those in the industry "much more likely to have to accept clients who are obscuring their identity, which benefits people who want to perpetrate violence".

Ms Stephens told the BBC that criminalising those who wish to purchase sex makes them less likely to report concerns about a sex worker's wellbeing.

"We have had cases where clients have helped people escape from situations of coercion ... Criminalising the client actively works against that, discouraging them from coming forward. We need to create a situation in which it is easy to report harm, violence and coercion. Blanket criminalisation of premises, brothels, or clients absolutely works against that."

Amnesty International says that laws against buying sex "mean that sex workers have to take more risks to protect buyers from detection by the police". The charity says sex workers have reported being asked to visit customers' homes to help them avoid police, instead of meeting them in safer environments.

Supporters of the law argue that it increases safety. Anne-Cecile Mailfert, the president of the Women's Foundation in France, which provides support to women's rights organisations, says sex workers are better able to seek police protection if they need it.

She told the BBC: "We are giving to the prostituted person a new tool to defend themselves and protect themselves. If they don't want to do that then actually they just don't have to call the police. But if anything happens, if the client is violent, if anything wrong happens, then now they have the law on their side."

The legislation will also make it easier for foreign prostitutes to get a temporary residence permit in France if they agree to find jobs outside prostitution, says Socialist MP Maud Olivier, who sponsored the legislation.

He told the Associated Press: "The most important aspect of this law is to accompany prostitutes and give them identity papers, because we know that 85% of prostitutes here are victims of trafficking."

The law was passed in the final vote on the bill in the lower house of parliament by 64 to 12 with 11 abstentions. It supersedes legislation from 2003 that penalised sex workers for soliciting.

Prostitution itself is not a crime in France, but pimping, human trafficking, brothels and buying sex from a minor are all already against the law.

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## **FRANCE: Prostitutes divided as France bans paying for sex**

***French MPs on Tuesday approved a new law that proponents say will protect sex workers by shifting the burden of the offense onto clients, but some prostitutes are crying foul.***

France 24 (06.04.2016) - <http://f24.my/1MSK6mD> - The French union of sex workers (Strass, its acronym in France) called on members and supporters to protest the "repressive" bill outside the National Assembly, where lawmakers adopted the reform into law.

The legislation outlaws paying for sex, imposes fines for clients and overturns the existing ban on solicitation. In an unprecedented move, the bill also makes available €4.8 million per year to help sex workers quit the trade.

The comprehensive approach, which envisions an eventual eradication of prostitution, has earned support among other French organisations that assist and defend sex workers.

The law comes after more than two years of political wrangling, spurring heated debates – even among prostitutes – on the controversial topic.

### ***'Change mentalities'***

The bill was authored by Socialist MP Maud Olivier - who represents the Essone department near Paris - who has made the fight against prostitution her personal crusade.

"Prostitution is violence", the lawmaker states on her website, adding: "This poorly-understood violence is alone in not being recognised as such in law".

Olivier says the law will help authorities tackle pimping and human trafficking, protect victims and help them escape the sex trade. It will also help better educate young people and clients of the harm caused by prostitution.

"The goal is to diminish [prostitution], protect prostitutes who want to quit, and change mentalities" she told France's Le Monde newspaper on Tuesday.

### ***Underfunded***

Strass and other French advocacy groups disagree. This week the sex workers union accused Olivier and other lawmakers of upholding an "essentially repressive" reform.

The new law does nothing to help sex workers – of whom there are around 30,000 in France, according to official estimates – and even makes them more vulnerable, according to Strass.

Around a dozen organisations, which included Strass, but also Doctors of the World and France's leading AIDS advocacy group, further argued that the measures to help sex workers transition to a new life was misguided and underfunded.

The law stipulates people have to stop prostituting themselves in order to qualify for cash stipends and other aid. "How can someone stop sex work without residency papers [which allows someone to legally live in France], long-term housing, or sufficient cash allocations?" the group asked in a statement, highlighting the fact that up to 80% of prostitutes in France are foreigners.

### ***'Real alternatives'***

The law nevertheless represents a historic leap forward, according to other rights groups.

Le Mouvement du Nid (Movement of the Nest), a group that advocates for the abolition of prostitution, but also helps sex workers access medical attention, legal counsel and defends them from harassment, has mounted a detailed and impassioned defence of the legislation.

It has hailed France for joining other European countries that have shifted the criminal burden from prostitutes to clients.

"Sweden, Norway and Iceland have already ended this historic injustice, which consists of punishing the victims of the system, while defending the impunity of those who impose sex through economic power", le Mouvement du Nid said in a statement.

The group said the law was unprecedented in its "ambition to offer real alternatives to people who are looking to leave prostitution behind".

### ***Free to work the street***

The only thing supporters and detractors seem to agree on is that the law could fundamentally impact the way prostitutes work.

The change will come at a time when traditional prostitutes are already struggling to adapt to the new Internet-based business models, and facing new forms of exploitation.

As the industry moves onto the Internet, a growing number of people are offering to work as intermediaries between prostitutes and clients on the web, according to observers.

Critics of the law say it will push prostitution further toward the Internet business model, making it harder to police.

"Prostitution on the street is already starting to disappear because of the Internet", Mylene Juste, a Paris prostitute lamented in a recent interview with FRANCE 24.

She is among the sex workers who have rallied in the French capital in recent months to protest the new law. "This is the way I want to live my life. I want to be free to work as a prostitute, even on the street. I don't want to be on the Internet", she said.

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## **ALBANIA: Fighting Human Trafficking in Albania**

The World Post (04.04.2016) - <http://huff.to/1NWedos> - Linda\* was 16 years old when her neighbor lured her away from her tiny impoverished village in southern Albania. For years, she had yearned for the opportunity to escape her violent father's wrath and to help her younger siblings financially.

She trusted her neighbor, who had watched her grow up and witnessed her struggling to survive after her mother died. Linda never anticipated that her neighbor would thrust her into a vicious cycle of abuse and exploitation. The teen soon found herself confined to a hotel room where she was repeatedly sexually abused for six months. The perpetrators had prepared her a fake passport so she could be moved further. Then police busted the trafficking ring during a routine street patrol.

Linda found refuge at a national shelter before being transferred to 'Different and Equal', a UN Women-supported civil society organization that works with Albanian trafficking survivors.

In 2015, a group of NGOs, the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS) reported 85 cases involving trafficking in Albania, although the numbers are estimated to be much higher. Reports reveal that many are manipulated and recruited through false marriages and false employment opportunities. Poverty-stricken women and girls are especially vulnerable, as traffickers promise to cover living expenses. Scarce economic opportunities in Albania, especially in rural areas, are the major root cause of trafficking.

To support women and girl survivors of trafficking, UN Women in Albania has been supporting service-providers in shelters with capacity-building and salary subsidies under the project "Preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in Albania", implemented by UN Women with funding from the European Union.

As part of this project, a national public awareness campaign against the trafficking of women and girls was launched, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It featured a powerful 45-second video that was aired on three national public television channels free of cost for two weeks during national anti-trafficking month in October 2015, additionally reaching over 172,000 views on social media platforms.

Efforts have also involved training journalists to report more accurately and effectively on human trafficking. UN Women formed an Advisory Media Forum with 30 members, a platform that has already helped to reduce poor reporting and increase the number of professional and ethical reporting which preserves the victims' privacy, dignity, and identity in most cases. It has also supported the production of a Manual to improve reporting on trafficking for journalists and journalism students and two media monitoring reports for 2014 and 2015, on print and electronic media.

Erjola Mano\*, a case manager for 'Different and Equal', recalls the first time she met Linda two years ago, at the age of 17. "She was traumatized, in need of care and affection that she had missed during her childhood. She was extremely anxious and concerned about her younger brothers and sisters. But most importantly, she needed the motivation to start her life differently this time," Ms. Mano said.

Linda enrolled in a cooking course, facilitated by 'Different and Equal'. Although she could hardly read and write, she was determined to learn and took part in a professional training program, supported by UN Women's project. The program set her up with an internship as an assistant chef in a private business, covering her salary for the first six months. Currently, three months after the trial, Linda is employed on a normal contract in the same business.

Six women survivors have benefited from the salary subsidy program so far and today they are transitioning back into society.

"Employment is a key component for a successful reintegration, for the growth and empowerment of women and girl survivors of trafficking," Ms. Mano said. "Linda's transformation cannot be described with words. Through her decisions, one can easily understand that this job has changed her life; it is her life."

The project has equally enhanced national capacities to adequately address and respond to trafficking. A referral mechanism for survivors of both domestic violence and trafficking has been established; service-providers within shelters have been trained to deliver economic empowerment services for survivors of trafficking; and 26 national actors from the government and civil society have been trained on economic reintegration for trafficking survivors.

Matilda Nonaj, who is in charge of coordinating Albania's anti-trafficking efforts at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, notes that the trainings taught her new potential approaches to fill the existing gap in reintegrating trafficking survivors.

"Providing soft loans to women to set up small businesses is a great idea that can be applied," said Ms. Nonaj. "International best practices that we were introduced to have since been incorporated in the Action Plan for the Socio-economic Reintegration of Girls and Women Victims of Trafficking, which the Council of Ministers approved."

Linda has been living independently for almost eight months now. She has a job that she loves and is able to generate an income to support her siblings. Linda's goal is to eventually open up her own restaurant. She has already thought of a name and a menu.

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## **USA – INDONESIA: Shandra Woworuntu: My life as a sex-trafficking victim**

*Shandra Woworuntu arrived in the US hoping to start a new career in the hotel industry. Instead, she found she had been trafficked into a world of prostitution and sexual slavery, forced drug-taking and violence. It was months before she was able to turn the tables on her persecutors. Some readers may find her account of the ordeal upsetting.*

BBC (30.03.2016) - <http://bbc.in/1TiEqUm> - I arrived in the United States in the first week of June, 2001. To me, America was a place of promise and opportunity. As I moved through immigration I felt excited to be in a new country, albeit one that felt strangely familiar from movies and TV.

In the arrivals hall I heard my name, and turned to see a man holding a sign with my picture. It wasn't a photo I cared for very much. The recruitment agency in Indonesia had dressed me up in a revealing tank top. But the man holding it smiled at me warmly. His name was Johnny, and I was expecting him to drive me to the hotel I would be working in.

The fact that this hotel was in Chicago, and I had arrived at JFK airport in New York nearly 800 miles away, shows how naive I was. I was 24 and had no idea what I was getting into.

After graduating with a degree in finance, I had worked for an international bank in Indonesia as an analyst and trader. But in 1998, Indonesia was hit by the Asian financial crisis, and the following year the country was thrown into political turmoil. I lost my job.

So to support my three-year-old daughter I started to look for work overseas. That was when I saw an ad in a newspaper for work in the hospitality industry in big hotels in the US, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. I picked the US, and applied.

The requirement was that I could speak a little English and pay a fee of 30m Indonesian rupiahs (in 2001, about \$2,700). There was a lengthy recruitment process, with lots of interviews. Among other things they asked me to walk up and down and smile. "Customer service is the key to this job," I was told.

I passed all the tests and took the job. The plan was that my mother and sister would look after my little girl while I worked abroad for six months, earning \$5,000 a month. Then I would come home to raise my daughter.

I arrived at JFK with four other women and a man, and we were divided into two groups. Johnny took all my documents, including my passport, and led me to his car with two of the other women.

That was when things started to get strange.

A driver took us a short way, to Flushing in Queens, before he pulled into a car park and stopped the car. Johnny told the three of us to get out and get into a different car with a different driver. We did as we were told, and I watched through the window as the new driver gave Johnny some money. I thought, "Something here is not right," but I told myself not to worry, that it must be part of the way the hotel chain did business with the company they used to pick people up from the airport.

But the new driver didn't take us very far either. He parked outside a diner, and again we had to get out of the car and get into another one, as money changed hands. Then a third driver took us to a house, and we were exchanged again.

The fourth driver had a gun. He forced us to get in his car and took us to a house in Brooklyn, then rapped on the door, calling "Mama-san! New girl!"

By this time I was freaking out, because I knew "Mama-san" meant the madam of a brothel. But by this time, because of the gun, there was no escape.

The door swung open and I saw a little girl, perhaps 12 or 13, lying on the ground screaming as a group of men took turns to kick her. Blood poured from her nose and she was howling, screaming in pain. One of the men grinned and started fooling around with a baseball bat in front of me, as if in warning.

And just a few hours after my arrival in the US, I was forced to have sex.

I was terrified, but something in my head clicked into place - some kind of survival instinct. I learned from witnessing that first act of violence to do what I was told.

The following day, Johnny appeared and apologised at length for everything that had happened to us after we had parted company. He said there must have been a terrible mistake. That day we would get our pictures taken for our ID cards, and we would be taken to buy uniforms, and then we would go to the hotel in Chicago to start our jobs.

"We'll be OK," he said, rubbing my back. "It won't happen again." I trusted him. After the bad things I had just endured he was like an angel. "OK," I thought. "The nightmare is over. Now I'll go to Chicago to start my job."

A man came and took us to a photo studio, where we had our pictures taken, and then he drove us to a store to buy uniforms. But it was a lingerie store, full of skimpy, frilly things, the like of which I had never seen before. They were not "uniforms".

It's kind of funny, to look back on that moment. I knew I was being lied to and that my situation was perilous. I remember looking around that shop, wondering if I could somehow slip away, disappear. But I was scared and I didn't know anyone in America, so I was reluctant to leave the other two Indonesian girls. I turned, and saw that they were enjoying the shopping trip.

Then I looked at my escort and saw he was concealing a gun, and he was watching me. He made a gesture that told me not to try anything.

Later that day our group was split up and I was to see little of those two women again. I was taken away by car, not to Chicago, but to a place where my traffickers forced me to perform sex acts.

The traffickers were Indonesian, Taiwanese, Malaysian Chinese and American. Only two of them spoke English - mostly, they would just use body language, shoves, and crude words. One thing that especially confused and terrified me that night, and that continued to weigh on me in the weeks that followed, was that one of the men had a police badge. To this day I don't know if he was a real policeman.

They told me I owed them \$30,000 and I would pay off the debt \$100 at a time by serving men. Over the following weeks and months, I was taken up and down Interstate 95, to different brothels, apartment buildings, hotels and casinos on the East Coast. I was rarely two days in the same place, and I never knew where I was or where I was going.

These brothels were like normal houses on the outside and discos on the inside, with flashing lights and loud music. Cocaine, crystal meth and weed were laid out on the tables. The traffickers made me take drugs at gunpoint, and maybe it helped make it all bearable. Day and night, I just drank beer and whisky because that's all that was on offer. I had no idea that you could drink the tap water in America.

Twenty-four hours a day, we girls would sit around, completely naked, waiting for customers to come in. If no-one came then we might sleep a little, though never in a bed. But the quiet times were also when the traffickers themselves would rape us. So we had to stay alert. Nothing was predictable.

Despite this vigilance, it was like I was numb, unable to cry. Overwhelmed with sadness, anger, disappointment, I just went through the motions, doing what I was told and trying hard to survive. I remembered the sight of that small girl being beaten, and I saw the traffickers hurt other women too if they made trouble or refused sex. The gun, the knife and the baseball bat were fixtures in a shifting and unstable world.



They gave me the nickname "Candy". All the trafficked women were Asian - besides us Indonesians, there were girls from Thailand, China and Malaysia. There were also women who were not sex slaves. They were prostitutes who earned money and seemed free to come and go.

Most nights, at around midnight, one of the traffickers would drive me to a casino. They would dress me up to look like a princess. My trafficker would wear a black suit and shiny black shoes, and walk silently alongside me like he was my bodyguard, all the time holding a gun to my back. We didn't go through the lobby, but through the staff entrance and up the laundry lift.

I remember the first time I was ushered into a casino hotel room, I thought perhaps I would be able to make a run for it when I came out. But my trafficker was waiting for me in the corridor. He showed me into the next room. And the next one. Forty-five minutes in each room, night after night after night, the trafficker always waiting on the other side of the door.

Because I was compliant, I was not beaten by my traffickers, but the customers were very violent. Some of them looked like they were members of the Asian mafia, but there were also white guys, black guys, and Hispanic guys. There were old men and young university students. I was their property for 45 minutes and I had to do what they said or they hurt me.

What I endured was difficult and painful. Physically, I was weak. The traffickers only fed me plain rice soup with a few pickles, and I was often high on drugs. The constant threat of violence, and the need to stay on high alert, was also very exhausting.

My only possession - apart from my "uniform" - was a pocketbook [a small handbag], and the things it contained. I had a dictionary, a small Bible, and some pens and books of matches I pilfered from hotel rooms, with the names of the casinos on them.

I also kept a diary, something I had done since I was little. Writing in a mix of Indonesian, English, Japanese and symbols, I tried to record what I did, where I went and how many people were with me. I kept track of dates too, as best as I could. It was difficult because inside the brothels, there was no way for me to know if it was day or night.

My mind was always thinking about escape, but the opportunities were so rare.

One night I was locked in an attic in a brothel in Connecticut. The room had a window that I found I could open, so I roped the bed sheets and my clothes together and tied them to the window frame, then clambered out. But I got to the end of my makeshift rope and saw I was still a long, long way from the ground. There was nothing for it but to climb back up.

Then, one day, I was taken to the brothel in Brooklyn where I had arrived on my first day in the US. I was with a 15-year-old Indonesian girl I'll call Nina, who had become a friend. She was a sweet, beautiful girl. And she was spirited - on one occasion she refused to do as she was told, and a trafficker roughly twisted her hand, causing her to scream.

We were talking with another woman who was in the brothel, who was the "bottom bitch", which means she was sort of in charge of us. She was being nice, saying that if we ever got out I should call this guy who would give us a proper job, and we would be able to save up some money to go home. I wrote his number in small piece of paper and I kept it safe.

And it was while she was talking about our debt - the \$30,000 the traffickers said we had to pay back - that I just started to freak out. I felt sure I would die before I ever served 300 men. I closed my eyes and prayed for some kind of help.

Not long afterwards, I went to the bathroom and saw a small window. It was screwed shut, but Nina and I turned all the taps on loud, and, my hands shaking, I used a spoon to unscrew the bracket as quickly as I could. Then we climbed through the window and jumped down on the other side.

We called the number we had been given and an Indonesian man answered. Just like the bottom bitch had said, he promised to help us. We were so excited. He met us and checked us into a hotel, and told us to wait there until he could find us jobs.

He looked after us, bought us food and clothes and so on. But after a few weeks he tried to get us to sleep with men in the hotel. When we refused, he phoned Johnny to come and pick us up. It turned out he was just another trafficker, and he, the bottom bitch, and everybody else were all working together.

This is when I finally had a stroke of luck.

Near the hotel, before Johnny arrived, I managed to escape from my new trafficker and I took off down the street, wearing only slippers and carrying nothing but my pocketbook. I turned, and shouted at Nina to follow me, but the trafficker held on to her tightly.

I found a police station and told an officer my whole story. He didn't believe me and turned me away. It was perfectly safe for me, he said, to go back on the streets with no money or documents. Desperate for help, I approached two other police officers on the street and got the same response.

So I went to the Indonesian consulate, to seek help getting documents such as a passport, and some support. I knew that they had a room that people could sleep in in an emergency. But they didn't help me either.

I was angry and upset. I didn't know what to do. I had come to the US in the summer, but it was getting towards winter now and I was cold. I slept on the Staten Island Ferry, the NYC subway and in Times Square. I begged for food from strangers, and whenever I could get them to listen, I told them my story, and I told them that there was a house nearby where women were imprisoned, and that they needed help.

One day, in Grand Ferry Park in Williamsburg, a man called Eddy bought me some food. He was from Ohio, a sailor on holiday. "Come back tomorrow at noon," he said, after I had gone through my tale.

I was so happy I didn't stop to ask him what "noon" meant. I knew from school that "afternoon" meant PM, so my best guess was that "noon" was another word for "morning". So early the next day I went to the same place in the park, and waited hours for Eddy to return.

When he finally came, he told me he had made some calls on my behalf. He had spoken to the FBI, and the FBI had phoned the police precinct. We were to go that minute to the station, where the officers would try to help me.

So Eddy drove me there, and two detectives questioned me at length. I showed them my diary with details of the location of the brothels, and the books of matches from the casinos where I had been forced to work. They phoned the airline and immigration, and they found that my story checked out.

"OK," they said in the end. "Are you ready to go?"

"Go where?" I asked.

"To pick up your friends," they replied.

So I got in a police car and we drove to the brothel in Brooklyn. To my relief I was able to find it again.

It was just like a scene from a movie, except instead of watching it on TV I was looking out of the window of a parked car. Outside the brothel, there were undercover police pretending to be homeless people - I remember one of them pushing a shopping trolley. Then there were detectives, armed police and a Swat team with sniper rifles lurking nearby.

I can enjoy it now, but at the time I was very tense, and worried that the police would enter the building and find that nothing was happening there that night. Would they think I was lying? Would I go to jail, instead of my persecutors?

A police officer dressed as a customer pressed the buzzer to the brothel. I saw Johnny appear in the doorway, and, after a brief discussion, swing open the metal grille. He was instantly forced back into the blackness. Within seconds, the whole team of police had swept up the steps and into the building. Not a single shot was fired.

An hour passed. Then I was told I could get out of the car and approach the building. They had covered one of the windows with paper and cut a hole in it for me to look through. In this way, I identified Johnny and the girls working in the brothel without being seen. There were three women there, Nina among them.

Let me tell you that when I saw those women emerge from the building, naked except for towels wrapped around them, it was the greatest moment of my life. Giving birth is a miracle, yes, but nothing compares to the emotions I experienced as my friends gained their freedom. In the flashing blue and red lights of the police cars, we were dancing, yelling, screaming for joy!

Johnny was charged and eventually convicted, as were two other men who were caught in the following days. I still needed support, though, and an opportunity to heal.

The FBI connected me with Safe Horizon, an organisation in New York that helps victims of crime and abuse, including survivors of human trafficking. They helped me to stay in the United States legally, provided me with shelter and connected me with resources to get a job.

I could have returned to my family in Indonesia, but the FBI needed my testimony to make their case against the traffickers, and I really wanted them to go to jail. The whole process took years.

In Indonesia, the traffickers came looking for me at my mother's house, and she and my daughter had to go into hiding. Those men were looking for me for a long time. So great was the danger to my daughter that eventually the US government and Safe Horizon made it possible for her to join me in America. We were finally reunited in 2004.

In return for helping the government, I was granted permanent residency in 2010. At that point, they told me I could choose a new name, for my own safety. But I decided to stick with good old Shandra Woworuntu. It is, after all, my name. The traffickers took so much - why should I give them that too?

A couple of years after my escape, I began getting severe pain and numbness in my joints. I developed skin problems and found I was suffering from terrible migraines.

After many tests, the doctors put it all down to the psychological toll of what I had been through.

It's been 15 years now, but I still have sleepless nights. My relationships with men are still far from normal. I still see a therapist every week, and I still go, once a fortnight, to a psychiatrist to pick up a prescription for anti-depressants.

I still get flashbacks, all the time. The smell of whisky makes me retch and if I hear certain ringtones - the ones my traffickers had - my body stiffens with fear. Faces in a crowd terrify me - they jump out, familiar for an instant, and I go to pieces.

Spend any time with me and you will see me fiddling nervously with the ring on my finger to calm myself down. I used to wear an elastic band on my arm, that I would snap continuously, and a scarf that I would twist about.

So happiness eludes me, and perhaps it always will. But I have got better at dealing with my flashbacks. I love to sing in a choir, and I have found raising my children to be very healing. My little girl is a big girl now - a teenager! - and I have a nine-year-old son too.

I have decided to do everything I can to help other victims of trafficking. I started an organisation, Mentari, which helps survivors reintegrate into community, and connects them to the job market.

At the same time, we are trying to raise awareness of the risks of coming to the US among people who still see this country as some kind of dream land. Every year, 17,000 to 19,000 people are brought to the US to be trafficked. Last year, we helped publish an educational comic book on the issue in Indonesian. We also provide chickens and seed so that the poorest can raise the chickens to sell and eat, and don't feel they have to sell their children to traffickers.

Not all victims of trafficking are poor, though. Some, like me, have college degrees. I have helped a doctor and a teacher from the Philippines. I have also helped men who were trafficked, not only women, and one person who was 65 years old.

I have spoken about my experiences at church halls, schools, universities and government institutions.

After I first started to tell my story, the Indonesian consulate approached me, not with an apology but a request for me to retract my statements about their refusal to help. Sorry, too late - it's out there. I can't pretend what you did didn't happen. Even after my case made the news, the Indonesian government didn't bother to get in touch to check if I was OK, or needed help.

As well as working with community groups, I have also addressed the Mexican government and last year I testified before the US Senate.

I asked the senators to introduce legislation to ensure that workers recruited overseas know their rights, are not charged fees, and are told the truth about the salary and living conditions they can expect in the US. I'm happy to say that since then the law has been changed and overseas recruitment agencies have to register with the Department of Labour before they can operate.

I was also lobbying the Senate, on behalf of the National Survivor Network, to place victims of human trafficking in roles where we can have a direct impact on policy.

The Survivors of Human Trafficking Empowerment Act has done exactly that. I'm honoured to say that in December 2015 I was asked to join a new advisory council, and we met for the first time in January, at the White House.

We urgently need to educate Americans about this subject. Looking back on my own experiences, I think all those casino and hotel workers must have known what was going on. And that brothel in Brooklyn was in a residential area - did the neighbours never stop to ask why an endless stream of men came to the house, night and day?

The problem is that people see trafficked women as prostitutes, and they see prostitutes not as victims, but criminals. And in cities, people turn a blind eye to all sorts of criminality.

We might start by putting men who pay for sex in jail. After that brothel in Brooklyn was raided many sex buyers were interviewed, but all were later released.

Nowadays, men who are caught in the act are sent to a one-day session called John School. It's not really punishment, but it teaches them how to identify children in brothels, and women being coerced into sex work. Good - but not good enough. I think men who pay for sex with trafficked women or men should have their names put on a public list, just like they do for child abusers and sexual predators.

I am still close friends with Nina, who recently turned 30. And for years, I had a phone number for Eddy, the man who spoke to the FBI on my behalf, when I was desperate.

In 2014, around Christmas, I dialled the number. I was going to tell him about everything that had happened to me, but he cut me off, saying, "I know it all. I followed the news. I am so glad for you, that you have made a life for yourself."

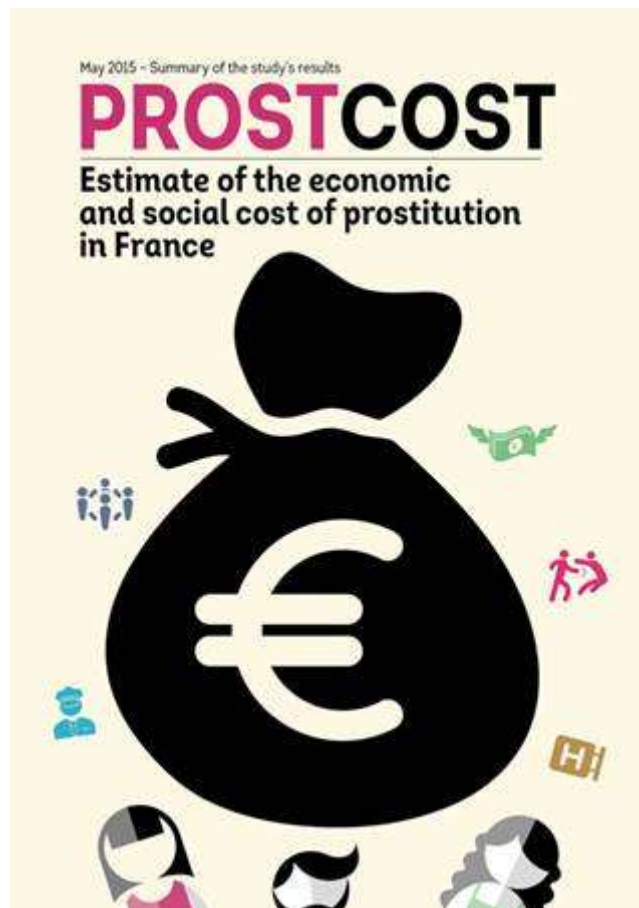
Then he said, "Don't even think about saying thank you to me - you have done it all yourself."

But I would like to thank you, Eddy, for listening to my story that day in the park, and helping me start my life again.

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## **FRANCE: Prostitution – estimate of the economic & social cost of prostitution in France 2015 – Study**

WUNRN (15.02.2016) –



### Summary of the study's results

In 2014, the European Commission offered for the Member States of the European Union to increase their "national wealth" by including the turnover from prostitution in the calculation of their GDP. In France, INSEE refused to implement the European request and explained, rightly so, that prostitution was not so much a "provision of freely consented services" as an exploitation of people in the most precarious of situations.

ProstCost, a previously unpublished study carried out by the Mouvement du Nid – France and Psytel, questions this myth of prostitution as a vector of growth and provides **an estimate of the twofold economic and social burden which the prostitutorial system imposes on its victims and on society as a whole.**

After 18 months of research, both entities are pleased to present the results in this summary. Our calculation of the economic and social cost of prostitution in France is based on two estimates:

- **An estimate of the number of prostitutes in France**

Recent studies and parliamentary reports have all highlighted the difficulty in estimating the number of prostitutes in France. Our research has enabled us to put forward a documented estimate of **37,000 prostitutes**, with a low hypothesis of 30,000 and a high hypothesis of 44,000 prostitutes.

- **The identification of 29 « cost items » and an estimate of their value, the total figure equalling 1.6 billion Euro**

**Download the data and spreadsheets for each item on:**

<http://www.psytel.eu/PSP/index.php>

Password : mdnpsp

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## **ALBANIA: Albanian women trafficked in EU: abused, rejected, abandoned**

EU Observer (25.01.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1lMaqBV> - Abused by gangsters, disowned by their families, and let down by the state, Albanian women who were trafficked as sex slaves face an uphill battle to build new lives.

The area around the Place de l'Yser in Brussels is the Albanian sex workers' patch. Their territory is just a couple of kilometres from the city's central square, the Grand Place, where thousands of tourists flock every day, and from the EU institutions.

After a coffee at a corner cafe around midday, the women wait for clients on the streets. Ten minutes of sex costs no more than €50.

Voluptuous, with long curly hair and big black eyes, 31-year old Eva speaks without embarrassment about the clients she goes with, how much she charges, sexual positions and even the fights among the women who share the street.

"I first came here with my fiance 14 years ago," recalls Eva (a pseudonym, like the names of all current or former sex workers in this story). The man she had fallen for told her she needed to make a "sacrifice for the sake of our love" - to have sex with other men to earn some money for them as a couple.

Without realising, at first, what was happening, Eva had become a victim of sex trafficking - or, as it is more formally known, trafficking in women for sexual exploitation.

There may be as many as 140,000 sex-trafficking victims in Europe and around a third come from the Balkans, according to a [UN report from 2010](#).

Thousands of women and girls have been trafficked from Albania alone to western Europe as sex slaves in the last two decades. Well-organised criminal gangs control the trafficking, sometimes with the complicity of the victims' own family members, and launder profits by buying property back in Albania, police and experts say.

Efforts to crack down on the gangs face serious obstacles. Complex international investigations are required and it is widely accepted that criminals can buy influence in the justice system of Albania, one of Europe's poorest countries.

"Corruption and high rates of turnover within the police force inhibit law enforcement action to address trafficking. Official complicity in trafficking crimes remains a significant concern," says the section on Albania in the US State Department's 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report.

It also notes that when the report was published, in July, "a sitting member of [the Albanian] parliament had prior convictions for trafficking-related crimes".

Meanwhile, many victims who escape from the gangs end up back in the sex trade after being shunned by their own families and communities and after receiving only modest help from the Albanian state to build a new life.

## ***Abused by their families***

A previously unpublished Albanian police report from 2007, obtained by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, BIRN, says at least 5,162 women and girls were trafficked to be exploited as sex workers between 1992 and 2005.

Some 22% were minors when they were trafficked, 7% of all victims were kidnapped, raped, or had their families threatened, 4% were sold into forced prostitution by their own families.

Since the period covered by the report, around 1,000 more trafficking victims have been identified, according to annual crime reports issued by the Albanian state prosecutor.

Sobering as they are, the statistics tell only a small fraction of a bigger story. The true number of victims is likely to be much higher, as the official figures only include women known to authorities.

The numbers, in any case, hardly convey what each individual woman has suffered.

Interviews with trafficked women reveal that, in some cases, they were subjected to violence and sexual abuse by members of their own families.

"One night my dad drank a lot and sometime after two o'clock I found myself naked and he was over me," recalls Vera, a 27-year old woman at the Different & Equal charity centre in Tirana, which offers help to trafficking victims.

"I felt totally numb ... and left home with the first man who promised to marry me and who, the moment we arrived on the outskirts of Tirana, forced me to have sex with other men for money," she says.

She adds, between sobs, that her father raped her so often that she does not remember how many times he did it.

Vera's mother took her own life in 2009. Police believe she committed suicide after discovering her husband was sexually abusing their daughter.

Maria, from the Malesia e Madhe region in northern Albania, was only 16 when her father married her to an older man. Her new husband forced her into prostitution in Greece.

"Every night, it was like I was being raped," she recalls in another centre for trafficking victims, in the city of Elbasan. "When I told my mum, she would scream that I couldn't go back home, telling me that I had walked out of that door for good."

Elsa, from the northern town of Kukës, became a target of her father's rage after her mother died when she was six.

"When he would return home, he would beat me with a water hose just because I existed," she says in a low voice, as if still gripped by fear.

After being raped by her brother at the age of 13, she ran away and was forced to work as a prostitute, first in Tirana and later in Kosovo.

"No one understands the pain of passing through the hands of many people, of going through these things in your family, of losing your innocence without knowing why," she says at a centre for trafficking victims in the town of Vlora.



"No one taught me what love is, what right and wrong are. I've been stigmatised since I was a child and as far as everyone's concerned I'll always be a whore."

### **Low conviction rates**

In their 2007 report, Albanian police identified more than 2,000 people suspected of trafficking over the past decade and a half. But only 23% of them were in prison, in Albania, or abroad, for trafficking or other crimes.

Tougher sentences for human trafficking of between 10 and 15 years in jail were introduced in Albania in 2013 but the number of convictions has been small. Albania convicted nine people of trafficking in 2014 and three people the previous year, according to the US State Department.

Some convicted traffickers manage to avoid jail by pursuing appeals.

Hysni Sokolaj, a 43-year old man from the town of Tropoje, was found guilty in absentia in 2011 of human trafficking and prostitution. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. His conviction was upheld by a higher court, but later overturned by the Supreme Court.

Sokolaj was accused of deceiving an 18-year old woman with false promises of love and marriage, and then of trafficking her and forcing her into prostitution in Belgium and in the UK, according to a copy of his case file obtained by BIRN.

In 2006, after he was deported from Britain as an illegal alien, the woman returned to Albania, found refuge at the centre for trafficking victims in Vlora and filed charges against him.

"When she came she was traumatised, fearing her pimp, who had threatened to kill her brothers," recalls Enkelejda Abdylaj, a coordinator at the centre.

"She was ashamed to say what had happened to her and felt guilty for running away from home with him [Sokolaj]."

The case against Sokolaj was first registered in the prosecutor's office in Fier, which refused to start criminal proceedings against him, saying it could not collect any evidence. Following protests from victims' support groups, the case was transferred to the Serious Crimes Prosecutor's Office in Tirana.

The office brought charges against Sokolaj, who was believed to have returned to Britain, and an international warrant was issued for his arrest. In 2012, British police declared Sokolaj one of the most wanted foreign nationals in the country.

But in December the same year, the Supreme Court overturned his conviction, saying the lower courts had deliberately misinterpreted the law.

Sokolaj's lawyer, Ferit Muca, says his client, who does not live in Albania any more, has always maintained he is not guilty.

"The Supreme Court delivered justice because my client was innocent," he says.

"He lived with the accuser and didn't traffic her. The charges against him were filed on the basis of manipulations by prosecutors. The girl was unstable."

### **Family business**

One recent case investigated by serious crimes prosecutors in Tirana involves two brothers, Bledar and Shyqeri Stafuga, aged 33 and 24, respectively.

Two courts found them guilty of being part of a criminal gang which trafficked at least six young women into sexual slavery. The Supreme Court is considering an appeal against their conviction.

One woman testified that she was only 16 years old when Shyqeri Stafuga trafficked her to Switzerland and Germany and forced her to have sex with 10 men every day.

"He put a knife to my throat; he would stub out his cigarette on my body ... He would threaten to kill my family if I didn't make 1,000 [Swiss] francs every night," she said.

In November 2014, Bledar and Shyqeri Stafuga were convicted of human trafficking and trafficking of minors by the Court of Serious Crimes in Tirana and sentenced to 12 and a half and 12 years in prison, respectively.

Anila Trimi, an anti-trafficking expert with the Albanian state police, tells BIRN the brothers were part of a larger, well-structured criminal organisation and investigations continue into other possible members of the group.

Dolores Musabelliu, a prosecutor in the Serious Crimes Prosecutor's Office, says human trafficking and prostitution cases are difficult to prove in court.

"The reasons behind the failure of many cases is that prosecutors base their charges only on the testimony of the victim," she says.

However, victims often decide not to testify or withdraw testimony because they cannot face a drawn-out court case and fear vengeance from the traffickers.

"So I denounced him and what did I gain?," asks Lola, a 21-year old woman from a small village north of Tirana, who filed criminal charges against her pimp in late 2014 and who lives in Albania's only state-run shelter for trafficking victims.

"He knows where I live, knows everything about me and is still free," she says.

### **Asset unfreeze**

The Albanian government's national anti-trafficking strategy, approved in November 2014, named Belgium as one of the main destinations in Western Europe for Albanian women trafficked for prostitution.

In Brussels, Didier Dochain, the deputy head of the federal police's anti-trafficking unit, told BIRN the Belgian authorities are focusing increasingly on trying to seize the assets of foreign traffickers.

"This is the motivation, of course, of all these criminal activities - it's to gain illegal profit and so if we can cut, seize, confiscate ... this profit, then it's a good thing," Dochain said.

But, he added, traffickers generally send their profits back to their home countries so Belgian police needed cooperation from authorities there.

"They invest in land, houses, expensive cars and things like that and they live a good life back in their own country," he says. "They can live as barons or princes because they make a big profit and big money but the problem is first of all to trace this illegal money flow."

Unfortunately, Dochain says, the response from foreign authorities in many cases is that they cannot find the money. Often this is because financial transactions were not

recorded as thoroughly as they are in Belgium, he explains, but he cannot rule out that corruption also plays a role.

Back in Tirana, Dolores Musabelliu at the prosecutor's office says Albanian authorities face their own problems getting information from foreign countries for complex investigations.

"Investigating these cases depends on legal assistance requests, to which the responses are often late, and this is often the reason cases are dismissed," she says.

While some officials and MPs work to counter sex trafficking, two Albanian politicians have been accused of active involvement in it.

Belgian prosecutors have accused Mark Frroku, a lawmaker from the Christian Democratic Party, of murdering another Albanian in Brussels in 1999. The victim was allegedly blackmailing a woman who was exploited by a prostitution ring run by a brother of Frroku.

An Albanian court is considering a Belgian request for Frroku's extradition. Frroku has denied any wrongdoing and described the charges against him as politically motivated.

Arben Ndoka, who served as a member of parliament from the ruling Socialist Party, has admitted he was convicted by an Italian court in the 1990s for running prostitutes and kidnapping.

Ndoka made the admission last year after his criminal record was exposed by the opposition. But he maintained that he was innocent of the charges and stayed on in parliament, before eventually resigning in September 2015.

### ***Shunned by society***

Even though they are victims, many women who have been trafficked and forced into prostitution are disowned by their own families and stigmatised by society.

The mother of the woman who was allegedly being blackmailed in the Frroku case lives in the small town of Puka in mountainous northern Albania.

Her home is a ground floor flat in an old apartment block. She is 63 years old, but looks much older, with dark rings around her eyes. For her, any connection with the sex trade is a source of shame. As far as she is concerned, she no longer has a daughter.

"I don't know what happened to her," she says, standing on her doorstep. "All I know is what I've heard in the news."

Over the past 25 years, 83 young women and girls from Puka have been trafficked into prostitution, according to local police. Their stories are still the talk of a town of just 3,600 inhabitants.

Zajmira Laci, a local doctor and women's rights activist, says that, just like the woman in the Frroku case, many trafficking victims have never returned to Puka.

"Because of the shame, their families don't accept them," Laci says. "Girls also haven't returned because they fear everyone will be pointing fingers at them."

### ***Road to rehabilitation***

Many Western countries now have well-resourced programmes to help victims of trafficking make a fresh start.

In the Belgian city of Antwerp, Patsy Sorensen, the director of Payoke, a charity that helps trafficking victims, can point to dozens of examples of women reintegrating into Belgian society.

The women can request a work permit and can attend education and training courses free of charge, Sorensen explains. They also receive a basic income of around €800/month even if they are not working.

"They have a lot of possibilities to rebuild their lives and most of them like to work as quickly as possible," Sorensen says.

Women she knows have found work as cleaners and shop assistants. Others have started nail studios, Sorensen says. Others yet, including some Albanian women, have gone to university.

However, Sorensen admits, there are cases where women have ended up being trafficked again.

In Albania, after women are identified as trafficking victims, they are generally referred to the state-run shelter or one of three rehabilitation centres.

The shelter in the village of Linze, near Tirana, houses victims awaiting the results of preliminary investigations. The centres in Tirana, Elbasan and Vlora are run by non-profit organisations and offer courses in skills such as cookery and hairdressing with the aim of helping women find employment.

The US State Department's 2015 human trafficking report says psychological, medical, and reintegration services at the shelter are inadequate and the government has not given enough money - even though it could have used a special crime prevention fund which held at least 25 million lek (about €180,000).

But even after going through rehabilitation programmes, trafficking victims struggle to find work.

"We've had only one case of employment in a state institution and this was due to our mediation," says Enkelejda Avdylaj, the coordinator at the Vatra centre in Vlora.

"We talk to businesses, but when we tell them the profile of the employee they refuse to hire them."

If trafficking victims are able to find a job, even a poorly paid one, they still suffer the stigma attached to their former lives.

Diana Kaso, executive director of the Another Vision centre in Elbasan, says that 80% of the women who go through its rehabilitation programmes aim to rebuild their lives away from their home towns.

Maria, the woman who was forced into prostitution in Greece, is following that path.

She lives in a city far from her birthplace with her 12-year-old son, whom she says is the only source of joy in her life.

After a rehabilitation programme, she worked for years as a cleaning lady in bars and is now a pastry chef on a monthly salary of about €110, half of which goes on rent.

"Many people have tried to exploit my misfortune rather than help," she says. When she goes to a government office to claim a small payment for trafficking victims, officials ask for sex, Maria says. "It's scary to enter an office."

Kaso says that few women have the strength Maria has shown to build a new life.

Of all the cases she has handled, about 100 women have ended up back in prostitution.

"Sometimes they don't have the necessary support or they think that because of the stigma they have no other options," Kaso explains.

At the Place de l'Yser in Brussels, Eva is one of those women who reached that conclusion. She first lived in Belgium for five years with her fiance-cum-pimp, until he disappeared with all their money.

Eva returned to Albania for a while but decided to go back to Belgium and work again in the sex trade. This allows her to send money back to her family, who think she is a care worker for an elderly couple.

"In Albania, there was no job for me," Eva says. "The only job that I know how to do is this one. And here I can earn much more."

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## **BANGLADESH: Human traffickers find new route for victims from Bangladesh**

The Jakarta Post (07.11.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1iJ9UDf> - When Mamun-ur-Rashid landed in Istanbul in an early May afternoon, he thought his dream of a better life in Europe was just steps away.

"My heart thudded for a minute there," he says.

But all his excitement soon dissipated when he was taken from the airport to a private confinement where he found more than 70 Bangladeshis. All of them were told that they would be sent to developed countries. Most of them had already spent weeks like this.

Mamun realized he was actually being trafficked and that too with an official passport of the Bangladesh government that people smugglers obtained using forged papers.

They all were at the mercy of an organized syndicate that uses Turkey as a new hub of human trafficking.

Such syndicates, according to some victims and government officials, have agents in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Turkey, Libya and some other countries. Exploiting the desperation of the low-income people, these traffickers smuggle them into different European, Latin American and Middle-Eastern countries.

Following massive crackdowns on human trafficking from Bangladesh through sea recently, they now first take the victims to neighboring India or Nepal through land routes and then fly them to Turkey. From there, they are sent to different destinations through illegal and often hazardous ways, officials said.

Born in a low-income family in Parbatipur of Dinajpur, Mamun was working as a salesman at a private company back home before a local manpower broker in mid-March lured him with promises of a concierge's job in Sicily, Italy, through legal channels.

The broker, Sazzadul Islam Musa of Dinajpur's Phulbari upazila, demanded Tk 7 lakh in exchange. Mamun agreed.

"I paid the money in installments. I had to sell a piece of land and take loans from others to arrange the money," he says. "Musa also took my hand-written private citizen passport, saying he needed it for visa processing."

The syndicate members in collusion with corrupt officials at the Agargaon passport office in Dhaka obtained an official passport in which Mamun was shown as a senior accounts officer of the National University. This was done without his knowledge, he claimed.

In the first week of April, Mamun along with Taufiqul Islam Jewel, another fortune-seeker from Dinajpur, came to Dhaka. Thus began their journey into a nightmare.

The traffickers had told them they would be boarding a plane to Italy in a few days. They were first kept at a flat in Mohammadpur for 20 days before being taken to a dingy hotel in Fakirapool.

Two days later, a man named Mahbub came to them with bus tickets and told him that they would take the land route to India first.

"Initially, I refused. But when I thought of the money I had already spent, I agreed," said Mamun.

They were taken to Kolkata and then to Mumbai from where they were flown to Istanbul towards the end of April.

All the way, they were guided by a trafficker named Al Amin who kept their passports and other documents with him.

Inside the confinement in Istanbul, Mamun spent weeks waiting for his plane ticket to Italy. Every time he asked someone from the syndicate about the ticket, he received the same answer: The journey was being delayed due to a problem in flight schedule.

Tired of waiting, the 32-year old at one stage insisted that he wanted to talk to his family. The traffickers allowed him to call the family, but it had to be in their presence so that Mamun could not reveal the truth.

"After about two weeks, somebody named Nazrul came and told me to start working at a nearby rod factory."

Mamun, a postgraduate, refused to work in Turkey. But many others, he said, had no alternatives.

Just when Mamun was on the verge of giving up all hopes, a syndicate member, to his surprise, returned him both the passports -- the original one and the official one obtained through fake documents. Jewel too got his passports back.

The two immediately went to the Bangladesh Embassy in Istanbul and told their stories to the officials, who seized their passports and sent them home with travel permits in mid-July.

Though Mamun and Jewel were saved from being trafficked, several hundred Bangladeshis, according to an investigation of the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP), had already been smuggled to different countries, including Brazil, via Turkey with official passports.

Shahidul of Comilla is one of them. He was sent to Dubai in May, also using an official passport issued against forged papers, the DIP probe in July found.

Investigators said the syndicate that tried to traffic Mamun and Jewel had been active for years and had members, including some women, in 18 countries.

"The syndicate members work in small groups. They lure people, obtain fake passports and forge visas to traffic people," said Lt Col Khandaker Golam Sarwar, commanding officer of Rapid Action Battalion-3. His unit is probing several trafficking cases.

A large gang comprising passport officials and staffs, brokers and travel agents has so far had at least 2,000 official passports issued against fake documents, the DIP investigation revealed.

The syndicate usually takes Tk 7-10 lakh for each passport, according to a DIP official.

An official and three staffs of the passport office were suspended in May for forging official passports and assisting human traffickers.

Rab-3 officials recently said at least 43 women and seven men were trafficked to war-ravaged Syria in the past few months. The women were supposed to be sent to Lebanon as domestic workers. It is not clear whether they were sent on forged passports.

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## **IRELAND: First arrest made under Northern Ireland's new offence of paying for sex**

***Chief constable reveals man and three women have been arrested in brothel raid as sex worker steps up legal fight to overturn controversial law***

The Guardian (05.11.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1RI1zvJ> - A man in Northern Ireland has become the first person in the UK arrested for purchasing sex. The chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, George Hamilton, said detectives had detained the man during a raid on a brothel.

Speaking to the policing board in Belfast, Hamilton said: "Detectives from our human trafficking team conducted a brothel search and arrested a man for paying for sexual services, the first such arrest under section 15 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act 2015. Three females were also arrested and interviewed for keeping a brothel." Hamilton declined to say where the arrest took place or name the man or three women detained.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where people can be convicted of paying for sex. The law, which was championed by Democratic Unionist peer and Stormont assembly member Lord Morrow, came into effect on 1 June this year. It had been opposed by the region's justice minister, David Ford, as well as an alliance of sex workers.

The Dublin-born law graduate and sex worker Laura Lee has launched an unprecedented challenge against the law that could go all the way to the European court of human rights in Strasbourg. She has started a crowdfunding campaign to help pay for the challenge with the backing of the charity Ugly Mugs, which helps sex workers obtain access to justice.

Lee, who lives in Edinburgh but travels to Belfast and Dublin to see clients, said her legal team would reference several articles of the European convention on human rights to challenge and overturn Morrow's law. "First of all, we will need to exhaust domestic remedies starting in the Belfast high court, possibly going to the supreme court, the House of Lords and eventually the European court of human rights.

"There are several articles that we can look at, starting with article 8 that governs the right to privacy. We will also focus on article 2 that concerns the right to life and we will argue that this law puts sex workers' safety at risk by the fact the legislation will drive the trade further and further underground.

"And then article 3 is about protection from degrading treatment, which is very relevant because in Scotland police have been subjecting sex workers to terrible things, such as strip-searching women working in Edinburgh saunas. Our legal team will also refer to the right to earn a living enshrined in the European social charter."

A parallel campaign is ongoing in the Irish Republic to introduce a similar bill to Morrow's, which would outlaw the purchase of sex south of the border.

The Northern Ireland assembly passed Morrow's law by 81 to 10 votes last year. Sex workers argue that the legislation will drive sex work further underground and further endanger the lives of prostitutes.

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## **SAUDI ARABIA: 900 Mauritanian women trafficked into Saudi Arabia**

A call from the ITUC (22.09.2015) –

Dear Friend,

We have just been notified by our Mauritanian trade unions that up to 900 Mauritanian women have been trafficked to work in Saudi Arabia. Many are subject to abuse with no way out.

**[Can you join us right now in calling on the government of Mauritania to take immediate action to bring home women who are trapped and reform their migrant labour programme?](#)**

Mauritania was the world's last country to ban slavery only in 1981, and today it tops the Global Slavery Index with the highest prevalence of slavery. But while Mauritania still has difficulty coming to terms with traditional slavery, contemporary forms of slavery such as human trafficking are also on the rise.

ITUC affiliated trade unions in Mauritania are receiving complaints of trafficked women workers who have returned from Saudi Arabia on a daily basis. All of them report how they were promised decent wages and jobs in Saudi Arabia as nurses and teachers, only to find themselves employed as domestic workers, working for a few dollars a day.

Many have their passports confiscated, and cannot leave the house without permission from the employer. Some have suffered sexual harassment, and report being beaten and locked in a room without food or water. Others were threatened with rape for complaining about working conditions. When they asked to return home to Mauritania, their employers refused.



The families have asked assistance from the Mauritanian Foreign Ministry to no avail. Mauritanian trade unions and the family members have demonstrated in front of the Saudi Embassy in Nouakchott, but their voices were ignored.

The workers in this case are clearly victims of trafficking for forced labour. Despite cries for help, the Mauritanian government is turning a blind eye.

Unless the migrant labour programme is revised to install safeguards against forced labour in the management system, more abuses will follow.

[Please, click here to send a message now to the Mauritanian Government calling for safe repatriation and a revision of the migrant labour programme with Saudi Arabia.](#)

Thank you for all you do,

Sharan Burrow  
General Secretary, ITUC

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## **EU: New project recommends doctors play a bigger role in combating human trafficking**

By Elisa Van Ruiten, HRWF (10.09.2015) - Doctors are not often thought of as major players in the fight against trafficking in human beings (THB). This is bound to change according to a recent initiative and research, carried out by the NGO Payoke and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of the University of Antwerp, which advocates that doctors become major players in combating THB, as they are frequently the first to come into contact with victims even if they have not been aware of it up to this point.

The 'EU Guidelines' ISEC Project and its results were presented at the conference, 'Combating Trafficking in Human Beings through the Medical Field', hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Justice and organised by Payoke and the University of Antwerp on Tuesday, 8 September 2015. The results highlighted the valuable role that doctors can play in helping to identify victims of trafficking, getting them the medical attention they need, while also aiding authorities in collecting data that may be beneficial for later prosecution efforts.

The study used the Delphi method to collect a consensus from doctors across Europe (each EU member state was represented) on their experience with victims of human trafficking. They found that 82% of doctors claim they have never been in contact with a victim of human trafficking, however 66% are not actually familiar with complaints related to THB. Therefore, doctors may not know they have a trafficked person in front of them because they are unaware of what to look for.

The crime of trafficking is a phenomenon that still remains much hidden and appears in many different forms; from forced labour and prostitution to child and forced marriage to begging and debt bondage. Trafficking victims are exposed to physical violence, sexual exploitation, psychologic abuse, poor living conditions and a wide range of diseases. Common symptoms of trafficking include headaches, dizzy spells, sexual health problems, difficulty with memory, back pain and fatigue. Although the likelihood of a trafficked person being able to readily seek out treatment in a doctor's office is low, the bottom line for traffickers is money. Therefore, if a trafficker has someone on their hands who is sick and cannot work, they will weigh the financial viability of the situation. If the person must go to the doctor they may be allowed to go to the general practitioner's office that is well subsidized and therefore less expensive, or they may be dropped in

front of an emergency room where they can enter a fake address and never be responsible for the bill.

Thus, doctors come across men, women, or children who have been trafficked and are in the unique position to see them while they are still in captivity. As first point of contact, they have the opportunity to attempt the difficult task of establishing a relationship of trust with the person, collect evidence and data, and refer them on for further emotional, legal, or physical help. Therefore, it is crucial that doctors be able to identify their patients as victims of human trafficking in these situations.

Closing this gap between the possibility of detection and lack of know-how from doctors is what the project's partners are hoping address. Doctors already see many patients from vulnerable situations and are already on the lookout for child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault. Adding victims of human trafficking to the list is not a big leap. By implementing education and training for doctors and medical students on signs of trafficking and establishing a focal point for doctors to contact with clear protocol when they suspect their patient is a trafficked person, the project organizers hope to promote a sense of duty in doctors to play a greater role in combating THB.

More information on this project may be found [here](#).

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## **USA: City of Colorado Springs – Publicity of Identities of Men Who Solicit Prostitutes Effective in Reducing Demand for Commercial Sex**

KOAA (06.04.2015) <http://www.koaa.com/story/28730632/cspd-starts-releasing-mugshots-of-johns#.VTUQGVss-HI.gmail> - Anyone convicted of soliciting sex from a prostitute will now have their name and photo publicly released. Kicking off their new policy, the Colorado Springs Police Department has announced the conviction of six men on charges of solicitation of prostitution.

- Gunnar Burton, 50 years old, of Pueblo, CO, arrested 01/15/2015
- Andrew S. Gieck, 33 years old, of Colorado Springs, CO, arrested 01/30/2015
- Randell H. Chappell, 39 years old, Colorado Springs, CO, arrested 01/30/2015
- Corey A. Marette, 37 years old, Colorado Springs, CO, arrested 01/30/2015
- Cameron J. Jones, 26 years old, Colorado Springs, CO, arrested 01/30/2015
- Terry N. Talbot, 47 years old, Pueblo West, CO, arrested 01/30/2015

The Colorado Springs Police Department's human trafficking division says that research shows that publicizing the identities of the men who solicit prostitutes has proven to be effective in reducing the demand for commercialized sex.

"Money is the driving force to human trafficking," said Betty Edwards of the non-profit Human Trafficking Task Force of Southern Colorado. She praised the police department's decision saying it makes business sense.

"For years now we've been going after the awareness and going after the pimps and we've been going after all of these things but no one has gotten to who is buying the product." Edwards said.

She said data on the sex trade shows human trafficking is the second fastest growing crime in the world, with estimated \$32 billion trading hands each year.

The release of names and booking photos of convicted Johns comes on the heels of several high profile raids at local massage parlors last summer and fall when numerous pimping and prostitution arrests were made.

A first time offense for soliciting a prostitute in Colorado Springs is generally a Class 3 misdemeanor punishable by a \$50-750 fine and up to six months in jail.

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## **NORTHERN IRELAND: Sex worker to launch legal challenge against NI prostitution ban**

***Laura Lee says new legislation that criminalises the payment of sex among consenting adults is a breach of European human rights law***

The Guardian (22.03.2015) <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/22/sex-worker-to-launch-legal-challenge-against-ni-prostitution-ban> - A sex worker is using European human rights legislation to try to overturn a new law in [Northern Ireland](#) that makes it illegal to pay for prostitutes.

Dublin-born law graduate Laura Lee is launching an unprecedented legal challenge that could go all the way to Strasbourg, against a human trafficking bill which includes banning the payment for sex among consenting adults.

The region is the only part of the UK where people can be convicted of paying for sex. The law, which was championed by Democratic Unionist peer and Stormont assembly member Lord Morrow, comes into effect on 1 June.

Lee told the Guardian she will launch her case at the high court in Belfast in the same month as the law comes into effect.

The justice minister, David Ford, has already warned that the Police Service of Northern Ireland may not be able to convict men contacting prostitutes for sex because intercept evidence from clients' mobile phones would be inadmissible in the courts.

Lee, 37, said: "I am doing this because I believe that when two consenting adults have sex behind closed doors and if money changes hands then that is none of the state's business. The law they have introduced has nothing to do with people being trafficked but simply on their, the DUP's, moral abhorrence of paid sex.

"I believe that after June 1st, sex workers' lives in Northern Ireland will actually be harder and the industry will be pushed underground."

Lee, who lives in Edinburgh but travels to Belfast and Dublin to see clients, said her legal team would be referencing several articles of the European convention on human rights to challenge and overturn Morrow's law.

"First of all we will need to exhaust domestic remedies starting in the Belfast high court, possibly going to the supreme court, the House of Lords and eventually the European court of human rights.

Advertisement

"There are several articles that we can look starting with article 8 that governs the right to privacy. We will also focus on article 2 that concerns the right to life and we will argue that this law puts sex workers' safety by the fact the legislation will drive the trade further and further underground.

"And then article 3 is about protection from degrading treatment, which is very relevant because in Scotland police have been subjecting sex workers to terrible things such as strip searching on women working in Edinburgh saunas. Our legal team will also refer to the right to earn a living enshrined in the European social charter."

Lee said she will fund the case partly via crowdfunding on social media networks and from sex worker campaign groups across the world.

Lee, an Irish psychology graduate whose range of services include S&M and bondage, said she was also taking the legal challenge to thwart an attempt to introduce a similar law criminalising the consumers of sex in the Irish Republic.

An alliance of radical feminist groups and a number of nuns from Catholic religious orders are lobbying southern Irish political parties to pass a Nordic-style law outlawing the purchase of sex.

"This case hopefully will put a big dent in the campaign to bring in this law across the border in the Republic. There is a massive propaganda campaign to claim that north and south in Ireland sex workers are women who are trafficked into the country. This is total nonsense. In 2014 there wasn't a single arrest in connection with sex trafficking in Northern Ireland. The majority of sex workers like myself are independent and 70% are single mothers trying to earn a living in these hard times. No one has the right to take that option away from them," she said.

Morrow defended his bill and criticised any move via the courts to overturn the legislation.

"If [Europe](#) or any other court did this they would be ignoring the will of the people and the overwhelming majority of those in the Northern Ireland Assembly," he said.

In October the Stormont assembly voted by 81 votes to 10 which in article 6 of Morrow's anti-trafficking bill banned payment for sex.

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## **REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Cabinet approves law to criminalise purchase of sex**

### ***Irish Government to make purchase of sex illegal, without criminalising sellers***

Irish Times (25.11.2014) <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/cabinet-approves-law-to-criminalise-purchase-of-sex-1.2014422#.VHS5EGBm1nM.email> - The Irish Cabinet today agreed to proceed with legislation to criminalise the purchase of sex.

The new sexual offences legislation will also strengthen laws on grooming, child pornography and harassment.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill is due to be published later this week.

On the age of consent issue, Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald abandoned moves by her predecessor Alan Shatter to lower the age of sexual consent from 17 to 16.

Ms Fitzgerald brought a memo to Cabinet on the issue seeking approval to prepare legislation to criminalise the purchase of sexual services without criminalising the sellers of the services on Tuesday.

Her aim is to put the burden of the legal system on those who avail of prostitution.

The detailed legislation, containing 70 sections, will include measures to broaden the definitions of some sexual offences and strengthen measures so that offences will be easier to prosecute.

The Oireachtas justice committee has previously recommended that the purchase of sex be criminalised.

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## **NORTH IRELAND: The Northern Ireland Assembly has voted in favour of making it a crime to pay for sex**

BBC news (21.10.2014) - MLAs also backed a proposal to remove the ban on prostitutes soliciting in the street.

The measures form part of Lord Morrow's private member's bill on human trafficking and exploitation.

The ban on paying for sex was opposed by Justice Minister David Ford.

Mr Ford said his objection was "not based on an ideological view of prostitution", but was informed by research he had commissioned, which showed criminalisation could put sex workers "at greater risk".

He said the survey also showed that only 16% of those who paid for sex said a change of the law would deter them.

Justice Committee chairman, the DUP's Paul Givan, said the so-called Swedish model reinforced the argument for criminalisation as "an effective, tried and tested model" for addressing prostitution and the trafficking of people for sexual exploitation".

But Mr Ford said it relied on the widespread use of wire taps and "we simply cannot rely on telephone taps", as a police superintendent did not have the powers to order wire taps.

Sinn Fein's Catriona Ruane, speaking in favour of clause six, called on members to "support our amendment that doesn't criminalise women".

"I don't believe any woman chooses prostitution, and I don't believe that prostitution is not harmful to women," she said.

SDLP's Alban Maginness said the central issue remained the exploitation of a woman by a man, "it's that simple".

He said "criminalisation will have a profound effect, and has done in other jurisdictions".

Ulster Unionist Tom Elliott said that if the bill was passed, it could spur the Justice Department to come up with new legislation, which "will have been worth it".

Stewart Dickson of Alliance, said the question of prostitution "should be the subject of a separate bill, which can deal in detail with the complexities of the subject".

He warned that criminalising the purchase of sexual services could result in prostitutes "moving to the so-called 'dark net', to paramilitaries and to drug dealers".

The proposal was passed by 81 votes to 10.

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## **CANADA: Controversial prostitution bill passes - criminalizes purchase of sex, not sale**

Sun News Network (07.10.2014)

<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/sunnews/politics/archives/2014/10/20141007-131257.html> - The Canadian government's controversial prostitution bill passed in the House of Commons Monday night by a 156-124 vote.

The Supreme Court last December ruled Canada's existing laws on the world's oldest profession were unconstitutional and ordered Parliament to come up with new legislation within a year.

Justice Minister Peter MacKay was behind the new legislation, Bill C-36, and took the approach that it would criminalize the purchase of sex, but not its sale.

MacKay called his legislation a "made in Canada" approach and the best way to eliminate prostitution altogether.

By allowing prostitutes to sell sexual services without fear of criminalization, the law won't prevent them from implementing safety measures such as bodyguards, MacKay has said.

Under the previous law, prostitutes were effectively prohibited from hiring bodyguards because nobody was allowed to live "off the avails of prostitution."

"The objective is to (lower) the demand and make prostitution illegal," MacKay said last month to a committee of senators.

He said the prostitution bill represents a "paradigm shift" in Canada because it deals with sex workers as victims who need help, rather than criminals who deserve punishment.

See <http://openparliament.ca/bills/41-2/C-36/>

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## **NORWAY: Closely watched prostitution ban works, study finds**

Reuters (11.08.2014) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/11/us-norway-prostitution-idUSKBN0GB1BL20140811> - Norway's ban on buying sex has reduced

human trafficking and has not increased violence against women, as some had feared, a study commissioned by the government said.

Following the example of its neighbor Sweden, Norway criminalized buying sex in 2009, but critics said the law would push prostitution underground, making women more vulnerable and increasing the likelihood of violence against them.

Nations like Finland, France and England have adapted a partial ban, making it illegal to buy sex from a person who was trafficked or pimped. Foreign governments have been carefully watching the effectiveness of the more comprehensive Norwegian and Swedish approach, which punishes buying but not selling.

"This report does not find any evidence of more violence against prostitutes after the ban on buying sex entered into force," said the report, which was published on Monday.

"The enforcement of the law, in combination with the laws against trafficking and pimping, makes Norway a less attractive country for prostitution-based trafficking than what would have been the case if the law had not been adopted," it said.

However, the lower demand has resulted in lower prices, a problem for prostitutes who often come from poor countries and have few other options to earn a living, the report said.

The nearly 200-page report is based on six months of research, including interviews with male and female prostitutes, police and support organizations.

The Norwegian law applies to all its citizens anywhere, making it illegal for Norwegians to buy sex even in countries where the activity is accepted.

Penalties for breaking the law are set by local municipalities. In Oslo, Norway's largest city, convicted sex buyers face a 25,000 crown (\$4,000) fine.

Norway's ruling parties have favored relaxing the law, but said any proposal to change it would be dependent on this study, which would form the backbone of the government's planned white paper, a precursor to any change in the legislation.

"This report shows that the law clearly has contributed to a reduction of demand and volume of prostitution in Norway, which is what it was intended to do," said Steinar Stroem, a professor at the University of Oslo and one of the study's authors.

Street prostitution in Oslo, the country's biggest city, is down between 35 to 60 percent from before the ban, while the indoor market has shrunk by 10 to 20 percent, the report said.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/WorldDayAgainstTrafficking.aspx>

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## **UN: Human trafficking: A multi-billion dollar global business**

UN OHCHR (30.07.2014) - Describing the trade and exploitation of human beings through trafficking as one of the gravest and most comprehensive violations of human dignity, UN Human Rights Chief Navi Pillay marked the first-ever World Day Against

Trafficking in Persons, by urging all governments to act: "Every government has a responsibility to fight it, both directly—through investigations and prosecutions – and in the deeper sense of serious and sustained efforts at prevention."

From the young women who have been enslaved as prostitutes or abused as unpaid domestic workers to the men who have been trapped in everlasting servitude, victims of trafficking have frequently been made vulnerable by structural discrimination and inequalities, Pillay said at a special event held in Geneva to observe the Day.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), about 21 million men, women and children today are coerced into various forms of forced labour, generating as much as US\$ 150 billion in illegal profits per year.

"The scale and diverse nature of the problem calls for comprehensive solutions" ,Kari Tapiola, the ILO Special Advisor to the Director General, said in his address. Those who benefit from exploitation must be punished, Tapiola said, and equally there must be strong preventative measures and improved support and compensation for victims.

During the event, Mike Dottridge, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the UN Voluntary Fund for Contemporary Forms of Slavery, said that the international community has invested more than 1.2 billion US dollars to combat human trafficking.

"However, over the past decade there have been countless horrendous cases of trafficked adults and children going unassisted or receiving far too little help to enable them to exit the vicious cycle of exploitation," he said.

Since its establishment in 1991, the UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, managed by the UN Human Rights Office, has awarded several million US dollars in project grants. More than 400 organizations world-wide have used the funds to provide humanitarian, legal, psychological and social assistance to victims of modern slavery. Well over half the grants go to survivors of trafficking.

July 30, the World Day against Trafficking in Persons is the day on which the UN Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons was adopted in 2010, the first-ever universal document directed at combatting human trafficking.

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## **Canada: Canada unveils new prostitution law**

Yahoo News (05.06.2014) / <http://news.yahoo.com/canada-unveils-prostitution-law-223846399.html> - Canada's attorney general unveiled a law Wednesday that makes it legal to sell sex to individuals but illegal to buy it, after the high court struck down an anti-prostitution law.

The new law switches the focus of criminal charges from sellers of sex to potential buyers, and prohibits advertising sexual services.

"We're targeting Johns and pimps, those that treat sexual services as a commodity," Justice Minister and Attorney General Peter MacKay.

He said the measure will endeavor to protect communities as well as vulnerable people, "and recognizes the inherent dangers associated with prostitution."

Under the law, penalties will range from a \$1,000 fine to 14 years in prison.



The Supreme Court in December struck down key provisions of the original law that effectively criminalized prostitution, saying that they endangered prostitutes.

But the high court stayed its unanimous decision for one year to allow Parliament to consider whether or not to impose other limits on where and how prostitution may be conducted.

The legal challenge was brought by three sex workers who argued that Canada's restrictions on prostitution -- criminalizing keeping a brothel, living off prostitution or soliciting sex in public -- put their safety at risk.

The three Toronto women -- Terri-Jean Bedford, Amy Lebovitch and Valerie Scott -- argued that prohibiting brothels, for example, endangered prostitutes by forcing them to seek customers on street corners.

The law, they said, had also prevented them from taking safety measures such as hiring security guards or screening potential clients in an effort to protect themselves from violence.

They called for the right to open brothels to provide a safer environment for prostitutes.

A lower court found the measures, aimed largely at curbing nuisance crimes linked to prostitution, to be "arbitrary, overbroad or grossly disproportionate," and indeed put sex workers at risk.

The top court agreed, saying the curbs infringe on prostitutes' "constitutional right to security of the person."

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## **EU: Resolution on the "Swedish Model" adopted in EU Parliament**

La Strada International Newsletter (03.2014) - On 26 February 2014 the European Parliament adopted a non-binding resolution by 343 votes to 139, with 105 abstentions (See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0071+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en>), calling on EU Member States to reduce the demand for prostitution by criminalising the act of buying sexual services, in line with the so-called 'Nordic' or 'Swedish' Model. The resolution stresses that prostitution violates human dignity and human rights, whether it is forced or voluntary, and calls on Member States to find exit strategies and alternative sources of income for women who want to leave prostitution or are faced with a lack of other options. An alternative resolution presented by Members of Parliament of a range of political groups, calling for the differentiation between voluntary and forced prostitution was rejected.

The Resolution is based on the report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality by Social Democrat MEP Mary Honeyball (UK).

See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A7-2014-0071+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

The report was much contested in a statement by a large coalition of over 560 civil society organisations working on sex workers and women's rights, LGBT rights, human trafficking, health and HIV, development etc., including La Strada International. See <http://www.sexworkeurope.org/nl/news/general-news/560-ngos-and-94-researchers-demand-members-european-parliament-reject-ms-honeyball>

Also a large group of 94 academics and researchers (See <http://www.sexworkeurope.org/campaigns/tell-european-parliament-vote-against-criminalisation-clients/critique-report-prostitution>) protested in a letter to MEPs and issued a counter report analysing the lack and misrepresentation of evidence in Mary Honeyball's report. In addition, La Strada International issued a statement on behalf of the LSI NGO Platform, warning that the conflation between prostitution and human trafficking leads to inadequate counter-trafficking policies and to counter-productive prostitution policies.

See <http://lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/STATEMENT%20-%20FEMM%20report.pdf>

Although the Resolution is non-binding, it will influence the already heated debate in Europe on prostitution and trafficking in human beings. It will not force countries to change their policies, but it will pressure them to revisit those policies and will give pro-criminalisation groups much more leverage with politicians in their countries.

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## **WORLD: Does Amnesty International want legal prostitution?**

By Robin Morgan

Editor's note: Robin Morgan, activist and *author of 22 books, hosts the radio show/podcast "Women's Media Center Live with Robin Morgan": [WMCLive.com](http://WMCLive.com) and iTunes.*

CNN (08.03.2014) / <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/07/opinion/morgan-amnesty-prostitution/> What if the world's most distinguished human rights organization decided to condone pimping? Unthinkable, right? But that's what happened when Amnesty International put forth a document calling for the legalization of prostitution.

For 50 years, the global women's movement has been fighting the selling and buying of human beings, which has a name: slavery. For decades, feminists called for criminalizing the buyers while decriminalizing the women they buy; offering women support services ranging from safe harbor through drug rehabilitation to education and skills training; and enforcing laws that criminalize pimps, traffickers and brothel owners.

The response was that it would never work (and feminists were crazy, sex-hating Puritans).

The sex industry fought back, both openly -- It's the "oldest profession, always been with us"; it represents "sexual liberation" -- and covertly, through funding happy-hooker-type groups, rebranding prostitution as "sex work," and praising it as a career choice indistinguishable from any other. Have you ever met an 8-year-old who said, "Ooh, I wanna grow up to be a hooker"?

The numbers of prostituted women who suffer post-traumatic stress disorder are in the same range as combat veterans and refugees from state sponsored torture. They are also disproportionately survivors of child sexual and physical abuse, rape and battery, kidnapping, assault with a deadly weapon, and addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.

Vednita Carter, a survivor activist, has noted that every prostituted woman *has* been forced, whether or not she seems to "choose willingly." Racism, violence and poverty are ever present forms of coercion in the sex industry; consequently, poor women and women of color have a disproportionately large presence. And we're only now discovering the enormous impact of prostitution on women in native communities.

As the survivors succinctly depict it: \$ Does Not = Consent.

There is, as Kathleen Barry pointed out in her classic, "The Prostitution of Sexuality," a single interrelated mega-enterprise of sexual exploitation.

We know the trajectory of, say, a young runaway from an abusive home: First, the offer of work in "films." Then, the "temporary" turning of a trick or two, which becomes a permanent deployment in prostitution. Finally, she finds herself being moved around as a trafficked commodity.

Despite this reality, the phrase "sex work" became fashionable among some well-meaning people who assumed that this term meant respect for the women involved -- when actually it signifies approval for the context in which such women were trying to stay barely alive, or from which they were trying to escape.

Nevertheless, progress seemed possible. Sweden, Norway, and Iceland passed legislation holding customers responsible for buying human beings for sex, criminalizing the buyers and offering the women support programs.

This is known as the Nordic Model. [The French parliament voted last December](#) to follow Sweden's model; similar laws are pending in the parliaments of Belgium, Ireland, Scotland and Canada, and the [European Parliament favored it](#) with a strongly affirmative vote on February 24, 2014.

See, the model works. Since Sweden began enforcement, [street prostitution has been reduced almost by half](#) and trafficking has declined. This unglues the arguments of those who treat trafficking as a separate issue from "sex work." Is it less enslaving to be bought in your own country rather than another? Contrarily, countries with legalized prostitution have greater inflows of human trafficking, according to a [study published in ScienceDirect](#).

Then, just when it seemed sanity was winning, the respected human rights organization Amnesty International appears to have come out on the side of the sex industry.

An Amnesty International document, "[Decriminalization of Sex Work](#)," argues that pimps and johns should be "free from government interference" and allowed to "exercise their autonomy."

It says governments have an obligation to establish an environment where pimps can operate freely to engage prostituted people; to do otherwise "threatens the rights to health, nondiscrimination, equality, privacy, and security of persons." The document also insults the disability community by claiming that men with disabilities require access to prostituted women to further their sense of "life enjoyment and dignity."

Amnesty International has argued that the document is a draft and is in the discussion stage. But Amnesty International representatives appeared at the Northern Ireland Assembly in January, lobbying to strike down [proposed legislation](#) that would criminalize customers for buying prostituted women.

What's even more stunning is that a former member of Amnesty, is proudly [claiming credit for having first raised the issue of legalizing pimps and brothel owners at the organization](#), which he says resulted in the policy recommendation. A campaigner for the International Union of Sex Workers who and calls himself a "sex worker", he and his partner run a major escort service. Amnesty, however, denies his involvement in the draft document, saying he had "zero input." Amnesty came to this on its own, then? Hard to know which is worse.

It took decades for the global women's movement to convince Amnesty that human rights were not reserved for male people. Now, Amnesty International London has set things back by considering a shocking violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But this time, the "crazy, puritanical feminists" can't be dismissed; we're backed by national governments who've proved our point—and saved women's lives. This time survivors must be heard.

On March 8, a mass protest will be held at Amnesty International's London headquarters, and a worldwide virtual protest is building online. [A global petition](#) to Amnesty and a Facebook page called [Virtual Protest of Amnesty International](#) has full information. We hope Amnesty will regain its soul -- and realize that survivors' rights are women's rights are human rights.

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## **EUROPE: Council of Europe: PACE Report on prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe**

La Strada International Newsletter (03.2014) - Also the Parliament of the Council of Europe (PACE) has issued a report on prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe (See <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?fileid=20559&lang=EN&search=RG9jLiAxMzQ0Ng==>).

The rapporteur, the Portuguese Assembly Member José Mendes Bota has visited countries that have regulated the sex industry (Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands) as well as countries where the purchases of sexual services is criminalised (Sweden). Mr Mendes Bota concludes that in all countries the lack of reliable and comparable data on prostitution and trafficking in Europe is a major barrier to making and implementing effective policies against trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. Although the report does allow space for different voices, it is clear that the author favours the so called "Swedish Model". He did talk to sex workers rights organisation and he believes them when they say that sex work is often done out of choice, he however remains convinced that voluntary prostitution is only a myth. It is therefore not a surprise that the report has the following conclusion. "While each system presents advantages and disadvantages, policies prohibiting the purchase of sexual services are those that are more likely to have a positive impact on reducing trafficking in human beings."

The Resolution of the report therefore calls upon States to consider the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will vote on the Resolution that derives from the report on 8 April 2014.

The report and resolution are comparable to the report of the European Parliament and indicate the shift in the discussion on prostitution in the last years. In 2007, PACE

launched a report called *Prostitution, what stance to take?* This report urges Council of Europe member states to formulate an explicit policy on voluntary adult prostitution that avoids policies which force prostitutes underground or into the arms of pimps, thereby making prostitutes more vulnerable, and it urges Member States to instead follow empowerment strategies. PACE also believed that, as an organisation based on human rights and respect for human dignity, the Council of Europe should take a stance on prostitution which reflects its core mission.

Basing one's judgment on respect for human dignity does not mean taking a moralistic approach, however. It means respecting people's decisions and choices as long as they harm no-one else.

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## **EU: Multidisciplinary approach is key to combat trafficking**

**by Vicki McKenna, Human Rights Without Frontiers**

HRWF (17.03.2014) - Medical personnel have a vital role to play in the identification process of trafficked persons and evaluating their ability to testify, speakers underlined at the conference *'Towards New European and International Partnership and Cooperation in Protecting Victims, Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings.'* The event took place on 6<sup>th</sup> March at the Egmont Palace in Brussels and was organised by Payoke Belgium in cooperation with the Centre for European and International Policy Action (CEIPA).

Such evaluations can substantiate compensation claims, since a good diagnosis can lead to greater proof of how damaging the effects of trafficking have been on the victim. Keynote speakers stressed the need for cooperation between the medical profession and police to ensure the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Taking place within the framework provided by the European Commission's Directorate General Home Affairs ISEC Programme on Prevention of and Fight against Crime, this conference addressed findings of a joint project between police and health authorities in EU member states and third countries to combat human trafficking. The importance of victim identification was seen as key to providing better protection and assistance. Such international cooperation can help bridge the gap between institutions and professions, said Dr Gudrun Biffel of Danube University Krems in Austria. Education and training measures on trafficking are vital to ensure the security and medical wellbeing of victims, she emphasised.

'Healthcare professionals engage as first responders with victims of trafficking. They are presented with a wealth of information which can be passed on to authorities and prevent further exploitation,' noted Steve Harvey, a UK forensic expert.

A multidisciplinary approach was further presented as critical to addressing the problem of trafficking. International cooperation between all levels of society, including civil society, NGOs and authorities, can help with the identification process and facilitate access to care, speakers noted.

'EU legislation is characterised by a human rights and gender specific approach which focuses equally on protection of victims, prevention of trafficking and prosecution of trafficking and also building partnerships,' said Katarzyna Cuadrat-Grzybowska of DG Home Affairs.

Ms. Cuadrat-Grzybowska recalled that the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking of Human Beings is a victim-centred approach. The plan is the first legal instrument since the Lisbon Treaty which attempts to harmonise criminal sanctions and penalties. The European Commission has also launched a civil society platform against trafficking, which includes 110 organisations from the EU and as well as from third countries.

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## **EU: 177 sex trafficking survivors support Mary Honeyball's Report**

### ***Submission in support of Mary Honeyball's Report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality.***

STSU (02.2014) - Sex Trafficking Survivors United (STSU) is a survivor-led and survivor-founded international organization. Our 177 members include sex trafficked women and men who have escaped their traffickers, often with no assistance, and who have banded together to raise awareness and assist those hurt by commercial sexual exploitation, which is often called prostitution. We support Mary Honeyball's Report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact. We know that men's demand to buy sex hurts people in prostitution. Indigenous peoples and people of color are disproportionately exploited in prostitution as a result of racism and colonialism.

As survivors we know that for the vast majority, commercial sexual exploitation includes force, fraud and coercion like sex trafficking. It is simply not credible to suggest prostitution can exist independently of sex trafficking, racism and brutal abuse. All the sex trafficked are trafficked in prostitution. Statistics reveal that legalizing brothels and pimping in Germany and Amsterdam has only strengthened organized crime's hold on the exploited and increased its power in vulnerable communities.

We know emphasizing distinctions between sex trafficking and prostitution allows the perpetuation of a system known to be extremely violent and damaging while continuing to stigmatize and blame most of its victims. This empowers the punters, pimps and madams who exploit our most vulnerable.

As the Native Women's Association of Canada says: *"It is not helpful to divide women in prostitution into those who "choose" and those who are "forced" into prostitution. In most cases, Aboriginal women are recruited for prostitution as girls and/or feel they have no other option due to poverty and abuse. It is the sex industry that encourages women to view prostitution as their chosen identity."*

We urge European Parliament to take a stand against the exploitation of the young, poor, and vulnerable by the richer, older and more powerful. As all survivors know, the vast majority of people end up in prostitution because they have no other choices, and/or are the victims of coercion, fraud, abuse and violence. The untruth that "prostitution is a choice" only serves to stigmatize and further trap most of the sexually exploited. This empowers their traffickers and abusers, while erasing the truth that the exploited are the victims of multiple crimes

STSU's members include executive directors of survivor-led organizations providing direct services to minor and adult victims, medical doctors and other health professionals, social workers and family therapists, crime victim advocates and college professors. Not only have we experienced and escaped the complex world of sex trafficking and healed,

many of us have earned college degrees, founded small businesses, established nonprofit victim services organizations, and earned other professional credentials.

We thank Mary Honeyball for her efforts and wholeheartedly support her report. As you consider submissions, please exercise due diligence. It is imperative that those who sexually exploit others not be allowed to speak for the exploited. Unfortunately this is a common phenomenon

(See [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Official-Reports/Justice/2013-2014/140109\\_HumanTraffickingetcBill\(InternationalUnionofSexWorkers\).pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Official-Reports/Justice/2013-2014/140109_HumanTraffickingetcBill(InternationalUnionofSexWorkers).pdf)).

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## **EU: Submission in support of Mary Honeyball's Report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality**

(24.02.2014) - We write as a global network of researchers in support of Mary Honeyball's motion for a resolution on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality (2013/2103(INI)).

We do this on the basis of deep and systematic expertise in researching the dynamics of prostitution and the sex industry, trafficking and violence against women. Our research draws on contemporary evidence, on historical and philosophical inquiry, and importantly on the testimony of survivors of the prostitution system. Many of us have worked directly with prostituted women. We have individual and collective links with a wide variety of organisations working for the abolition of prostitution as an institution of gender inequality and exploitation. We draw on both our practice-based evidence and our academic studies to strongly endorse the Honeyball report and its recommendation to adopt 'the Nordic model' as a pan-European approach to prostitution.

We believe it is important to signal that our position on prostitution is not grounded in a moralistic approach, or in any kind of hostility to women in the prostitution system. Nor is our position linked to considerations about maintaining 'public order'. Our concern is centrally with the human rights of women in protecting the dignity of all women equally, and with an end to all forms of the subordination and degradation of women.

The Honeyball Report calls attention to a number of key issues:

the gender asymmetry of the sex industry, that is, men are overwhelmingly the majority of those who buy sexual acts, and women and girls those whose bodies are bought; countries where buying sexual acts has been criminalised have seen sex markets shrink, and trafficking reduced. This is a success for these countries as nation states, and the European Parliament adoption of the Nordic model offers the potential to replicate this progress across Europe;

attitudes shift where the purchase of sexual acts is criminalised, with surveys in Sweden for example consistently showing that a large majority now think the purchase of sexual acts is unacceptable.<sup>1</sup> Law is a powerful tool in defining and changing what is, and is not, socially acceptable behaviour.

While we recognise that some women say they find selling sexual acts to be personally and economically empowering, these individual stories are not testament to the legitimacy of prostitution as a social institution. The prostitution system is a reminder of

continuing inequalities between women and men: the gender pay gap; the sexualisation of female bodies in popular culture; histories of violence and abuse in both childhood and adulthood that underpin many women's entry into the sex industry. The persistence of these economic and social inequalities in every European country (and globally) is well documented in a wealth of academic research. Together these layers of disadvantage experienced by women mean that so-called 'free' choices are actually decisions made in conditions of already existing inequality and discrimination. Women's choices should not be measured simply by where they end up (in prostitution), but by the circumstances in which these choices must be made. Choices made in conditions of being unequal cannot be considered 'free'.

The Honeyball Report is a landmark because it shifts focus to the choices that men make to purchase sexual acts. Systematic research from Finland<sup>2</sup> and the UK<sup>3</sup> in particular reveals that men who pay for sexual acts do so because they believe that biological urges lead them to 'need' sex from a variety of different women. Some men explicitly report that they buy sexual acts because it is a context where they do not have to think about women as equal human beings with their own feelings, wishes and desires. Men's own experiences of prostitution, as collated on sites such as The Invisible Men,<sup>4</sup> provide a chilling picture of the reality of prostitution for women: of violence, desperation, subordination and despair.

This is why the Honeyball Report is clear that the idea and the reality that women's bodies can be bought – and sold – by men, to men, both creates and perpetuates relations between women and men as a hierarchy.

Prostitution is, as the Honeyball Report states, a form and a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. Achieving gender equality means taking steps towards a world where progress goes beyond improving the status of individual women in conditions of discrimination, but addresses those conditions. Criminalising the purchase of sexual acts, decriminalising those who sell, and providing specialist support to women to be able to leave prostitution, are measures that directly address gender inequalities.

The decision for your vote this week is whether or not to challenge the fiction that it is natural and inevitable for men to buy access to women's bodies for sexual release, and whether or not to challenge this as a deeply-rooted form of gender inequality.

The European Parliament has an historic opportunity to act as a global beacon on gender equality, following the pioneering example set by the Nordic countries. We urge you and your party members not to waste it, and to vote for the Honeyball motion.

24th February 2014

1. Dr Maddy Coy, Reader in Sexual Exploitation and Gender Equality, London Metropolitan University
2. Dr Helen Pringle, Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales, Australia
3. Dr Esohe Aghatise, Visiting Lecturer, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Turin and Faculty of Law, University of Turin (Master of Laws in International Crime and Justice Programme), Italy
4. Professor Ivana Bacik, Law School, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
5. Professor Kathleen Barry, PhD, Professor Emerita, Penn State University, US
6. Dr Karen Bell, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, University of Bristol, UK
7. Janine Benedet, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia, Canada
8. Ciaran Benson, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, University College Dublin, Ireland
9. Dr Oona Brooks, Lecturer in Criminology, The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, University of Glasgow, UK



10. Thema Bryant-Davis, Associate Professor of Psychology, Pepperdine University, US
11. Lisa Carson, doctoral researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia
12. Heather Cole, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
13. Dr Emma Dalton, Lecturer, Japanese Studies Research Institute, Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan
14. Professor Michelle M. Dempsey, Professor of Law, Villanova University School of Law, US
15. Dr Gail Dines, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies, Wheelock College, Boston, US
16. David Duriesmith, doctoral researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia
17. Helen Easton, Senior Lecturer and PhD candidate in Criminology, London South Bank University, UK
18. Gunilla S. Ekberg, international human rights lawyer, PhD in Law candidate, University of Glasgow, UK
19. Fiona Elvines, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
20. Professor Maria Eriksson, Professor of Social Work, School for Health, Care, and Social Welfare, Mälardalen University, Sweden
21. Dr Elizabeth Evans, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, University of Bristol, UK
22. Dr Karen Evans, Senior Lecturer, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, University of Liverpool, UK
23. Dr Matthew Ezzell, Assistant Professor in Sociology, James Madison University, US
24. Kate Farhall, doctoral researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia
25. Dr Melissa Farley, Prostitution Research and Education, US
26. Maria Garner, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
27. Professor Gene Feder, Professor of primary health care, School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, UK
28. Dr Aisha K. Gill, Reader in Criminology, University of Roehampton, UK
29. Professor Victor Goode, Professor in Law, CUNY Law School, US
30. Dr Kieran McGrath, Visiting Research Associate, Dept of Social Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
31. Professor Marianne Hester, Chair in Gender, Violence and International Policy, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK
32. Dr Miranda Horvath, Reader in Forensic Psychology, Middlesex University, UK
33. Donna M. Hughes, Professor & Eleanor M. and Oscar M. Carlson Endowed Chair, Gender and Women's Studies Program, University of Rhode Island, US
34. Professor Sheila Jeffreys, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Australia
35. Dr Robert Jensen, Professor, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, US
36. Helen Johnson, Doctoral Candidate in Criminology, University of Kent, UK
37. Patricia Kelleher, PhD, Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Social Exclusion, University of Limerick, Ireland
38. Professor Liz Kelly, Director, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University, UK
39. Dr Christopher Kendall, Barrister, John Toohey Chambers, Honorary Research Fellow, Law School, The University of Western Australia
40. Dr Mark P. Lagon, Professor in the Practice of International Affairs, Georgetown University, and Former U.S. Ambassador at Large to Combat Trafficking in Persons, US
41. Dr Ronit Lentin, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
42. Dr Nancy Lombard, Lecturer of Sociology and Social Policy, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK
43. Dr Julia Long, Lecturer in Sociology, Anglia Ruskin University, UK
44. Jo Lovett, Senior Research Fellow, London Metropolitan University, UK
45. Professor Kathleen Lynch, UCD Professor of Equality Studies, Head of the UCD School of Social Justice, University College Dublin, Ireland
46. Dr Finn Mackay, Centre for Gender & Violence Research, University of Bristol, UK

47. Catharine A. MacKinnon, Elizabeth A. Long Professor of Law, University of Michigan, James Barr Ames Visiting Professor of Law (long term), Harvard Law School, Special Gender Adviser to the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court, 2008-2012 (affiliations for identification only)
48. Professor Jeffrey Masson, New Zealand
49. Kristina Massey, Lecturer in Criminal Psychology, Canterbury Christchurch University, UK
50. Professor Roger Matthews, Professor of Criminology, University of Kent, UK
51. Dr Melanie McCarry, Guild Research Fellow, School of Social Work, University of Central Lancashire
52. Professor Hiroshi Nakasatomi, University of Tokushima, Japan
53. Dr Izabela Naydenova, Lecturer, School of Physics, College of Sciences and Health, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland
54. Dr Caroline Norma, Lecturer in Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Australia
55. Dr Monica O'Connor, Independent Researcher, Ireland
56. Ruth Phillips, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
57. Dr Jane Pillinger, Independent Researcher and Policy Advisor, Ireland
58. Professor Keith Pringle, Professor in Sociology with a specialism in social work, Uppsala University, Sweden; Adjunct Professor, Aalborg University, Denmark; and Honorary Professor, University of Warwick, UK
59. Dr Kaye Quek, Lecturer in Political Science, University of Melbourne and RMIT University, Australia
60. Jody Raphael, Visiting Professor of Law, De Paul University College of Law, US
61. Professor Janice G. Raymond, Professor Emerita, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, US
62. Dr Emma Rush, Lecturer in Ethics and Philosophy, Charles Sturt University, Australia
63. Nicola Sharp, Research Fellow, London Metropolitan University, UK
64. Professor Helena Sheehan, Professor Emerita, Dublin City University, Ireland
65. Dr Olivia Smith, Lecturer in Criminology, Anglia Ruskin University, UK
66. Dr Mary Sullivan, Independent Researcher, Australia
67. Dr Jackie Turner, Research Fellow, London Metropolitan University, UK
68. Dr Meagan Tyler, Lecturer in Sociology, Victoria University, Australia
69. Dr Bridget Vincent, McKenzie Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, Australia
70. Max Waltman, PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden
71. Professor Nicole Westmarland, Co-Director, Centre for Research on Violence and Abuse, Durham University, UK
72. Dr Rebecca Whisnant, Associate Professor in Philosophy and Director of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Dayton, US
73. Dr Emma Williamson, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Gender and Violence Research, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK
74. Nusha Yonkova, doctoral researcher, School of Social Justice, University College Dublin, Ireland
75. Dr Eileen Zurbriggen, Professor of Psychology, University of California, Santa Cruz, US

[Please note: The institutional affiliations of the signatories are provided for identification purposes. The views, opinions and positions expressed by the signatories do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or positions of those institutions.

1 See data and analysis in Max Waltman (2011) Sweden's Prohibition of Purchase of Sex: The Law's Reasons,

Impact, and Potential Women's Studies International Forum 34: 459-460.

2 Marttila, A.-M. (2008) Desiring the 'Other': Prostitution Clients on a Transnational Red-Light District in the Border

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Area of Finland, Estonia and Russia Gender, Technology and Development 12: 31-51.  
3 See for example: Coy, M, Horvath, M.A.H., Kelly, L. (2007) 'It's just like going to the supermarket': Men buying sex in East London, London: Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, available at [www.cwasu.org](http://www.cwasu.org); Farley, M., Macleod, J., Anderson, L., & Golding, J.M. (2011) Attitudes and Social Characteristics of Men Who Buy Sex in Scotland, Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy 3(4): 369-383.  
4 <http://the-invisible-men.tumblr.com/>.

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## **CANADA: Punish the clients, not the prostitutes, says Tory MP Joy Smith**

### ***Nordic model prostitution laws create basis for proposed Canadian legislation***

By Derek Spalding

Ottawa Citizen (13.02.2014) - The Conservative government's loudest advocate for making the purchase of sex illegal in Canada has outlined her vision for redrafting the country's prostitution laws.

MP Joy Smith of Kildonan-St. Paul riding in Winnipeg was expected to release a report, titled the Tipping Point, on Thursday for legislation that would criminalize people who buy sex, not the people who sell it.

The 16-page document, released early to the Citizen, outlines in detail how a model similar to the one used in several European countries would target johns and pimps instead of prostitutes.

Smith's proposal also calls for resources for anyone wanting out of the sex trade industry, plus a national awareness campaign that emphasizes how prostitution is harmful to women and the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Her proposal, similar to the Nordic model used in several European countries, comes slightly more than a month after the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the country's prostitution laws. The court ruled the laws unconstitutional in December and gave government one year to rewrite them.

"I am pleased that there are many MPs that support the Nordic model for Canada," Smith said. "Once you understand the options, the Nordic model is clearly the only approach that effectively addresses the harm and inequality produced by prostitution and targets the buyers of sex."

Her proposal suggests johns be given fines when caught paying a prostitute for sex.

Those fines would increase for repeat offenders and eventually escalate to jail time.

Smith also calls for mandatory minimum sentences for anyone convicted of human trafficking, and she wants restrictions on bawdy houses without criminalizing prostituted women.

No woman would be punished under legislation proposed by Smith. In her report she outlines how most "women involved in prostitution are controlled by violent pimps and

traffickers." She also explains that people who claim to be in the sex trade by choice often use prostitution as a means of "survival or to maintain an addiction."

"Canadian legislation should not criminalize these women," she concludes.

Critics of the Nordic model say the new laws would not improve the safety of prostitutes and could actually make them worse by forcing women and traffickers to operate in even more secrecy.

But Smith has garnered widespread support for her proposal. Her report lists 16 organizations that endorse her approach, including the Native Women's Association of Canada, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Walk With Me, a group that provides support for survivors of human trafficking.

The verdict is still out on the Nordic model for Christina Harrison Baird, an international human rights lawyer in Ottawa. She said she has the "greatest respect" for Smith and her years of work fighting human trafficking but said questions remain about how criminalizing johns would affect sex workers.

She said she worries there will be increased risk of violence against prostitutes because the men still paying for sex will be the more violent offenders. Harrison Baird also wanted to know the extent of the public education campaign that she says would be essential to adopting such a model.

"Sweden spent years and millions of dollars on public awareness and education campaigns to shift attitudes toward gender in order to lay the ground work for criminal law," she said. "You can't just transplant something without the ground work being laid first."

Groups such as the Ottawa Coalition to End Human Trafficking support Smith's proposal because it targets johns and traffickers.

"Once there's penalties and deterrents, men would be more reluctant to buy sex," said Helen Roos of the coalition.

She too insists that a public education campaign, plus resources to help survivors of trafficking would be absolutely essential for the new laws to work.

"We need to talk about those programs, not just new punishments, and we need to make sure the money is there to pay for them," she said.

[dspalding@ottawacitizen.com](mailto:dspalding@ottawacitizen.com)

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## **EU: European Parliament women's rights committee votes for penalising prostitute clients in "Nordic model"**

International Business Times (23.01.2014) - The European Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee has voted through a report that recommends the adoption of the 'Nordic Model' of prostitution laws.

Put forward by Mary Honeyball, Labour MEP for London, the report recommends the EU takes on the Swedish model of prostitution laws, which punishes the clients of prostitutes, rather than the sex workers themselves.

The model was recently voted through in the French parliament. Led by Women's Rights Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, the bill means anyone found paying for sex will be fined €1,500 (£1,250) for a first offence. If caught a second time, the fine would be increased to €3,000.

Fourteen of the European Parliament committee members voted in favour of the Swedish model, with two against and six abstentions.

The passing of the vote sends a strong signal in regards to Europe's position on prostitution laws. The report can also now be put forward to the full European Parliament to vote on.

This will take place at one of the Strasbourg plenary sessions in February, most likely during the week starting the 24th.

The Nordic model has proved highly successful in Scandinavia, where countries generally have a high level of gender equality and acknowledge the problems of exploitation within the sex industry. The laws have also been supported by survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking.

Commenting on the vote, Honeyball said: "This is a fantastic outcome. It will form a key part of the sea-change taking place in the way we view prostitution across Europe. We are now a step closer to an approach which recognises the fundamental injustice that takes place when a man buys a women's body.

"The majority of prostituted women in the UK are foreign. They are overwhelmingly from poorer countries and in many cases trafficked. Rather than continuing to pretend that buying sex is something that happens between consenting equals, we need to look at the coercive and often exploitative realities of the global sex trade.

"With France and Ireland switching the focus onto the men who purchase sex, and Germany re-thinking its laissez-faire system, the wind is clearly blowing in the direction of the Swedish Model. I hope that the European Parliament will be able to lead from the front in making this shift more widespread.

"As a British MEP I am particularly keen to see the UK Government come down off the fence and take a clear stance on the issue."

Brendan Wynne, spokesman for Equality Now, also welcomed the vote: "It is vital that survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are listened to when recommending policy on prostitution.

"Global networks such as 'Sex Trafficking Survivors United' suggest that we need to target the demand which fuels the inherently violent sex industry. This is what Mary Honeyball MEP's FEMM Committee report proposes and we fully agree. The report recommends adopting the 'Nordic Model', which criminalises pimping, brothel keeping and buying sex, decriminalises people in prostitution and provides exiting services and support.

"This has already been effective in countries with higher levels of gender equality, such as Sweden, while countries which have legalised prostitution, such as the Netherlands and Germany, are increasingly realising that they got it wrong."

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## **LITHUANIA: Lithuania adopts Nordic model on criminal liability for purchase of sexual services – after Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Ireland, Canada, France and EU**

Resolution on criminal liability for the purchase of sexual services (16.12.2014) No XII-1464 – Vilnius, Lithuania - <http://on.fb.me/1LqHx8y> -

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,

Having regard to: Articles 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania;

Articles 4 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

The United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others;

Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;

Strategic Objective D.3 of the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration;

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;

Articles 2 and 13 of the Treaty on European Union;

Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA of 19 July 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings;

European Parliament resolution of 2014 on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality;

Reports of the Lithuanian and foreign experts on 19 June 2014 at the international Stop Traffick! Conference 'Deconstructing the Demand for Sexual Services: Prevention of Exploitation through Prostitution and Sex Trafficking';

Having examined the proposals of non-governmental organizations working in the field of combating trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation for prostitution and the use of violence against a person, and the conclusions of the round-table discussion 'Ways to Reduce Demand for Sexual Services', held on 19-20 June 2014;

Having regard to the fact that the use of prostitution services is related to sexual objectification of a person, commodification of the person's body as well as his stigmatisation and traumatisation;

Being aware that the states, which support the purchase of sexual services, prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation or organization of criminal activities, encounter the violation of human rights and the increase in crime and social exclusion;

Taking into consideration the experience of applying the Nordic Model and criminalizing the purchase of sexual services in France;

Taking into account the fact that more and more young people, among whom alarmingly many are minors, as well as persons with mental disability, dependent on narcotic and psychotropic substances and alcohol are forced into prostitution and that their mortality rate is higher than that of an average population;

Evaluating the fact that the media create a negative portrait of women selling sex, maintaining stereotyped gendered thinking, sexist attitude towards the role of women in society, which contributes greatly to sustaining violence against women and forming a varied approach to prostitution,

Proposes to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania:

- 1) To submit to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania for ratification the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others;
- 2) To submit amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania criminalizing the purchase of services of prostitution, pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation;
- 3) To submit amendments to Article 1821 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania regarding the abolishment of administrative liability for engagement in prostitution;
- 4) To create an interdepartmental working group to prepare a program for re-socialization, rehabilitation and reintegration of sex workers.

Speaker of the Seimas  
Loreta Graužinienė

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