

Human trafficking in europe

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The Sex Trade of Eastern Europe “ VELESTA, Macedonia - Olga winced as she drew back the bandage on her right breast, revealing an infected puncture wound that hadn't healed since a man bit her in a fit of sexual rage. But the wound, for which the 19-year-old Moldovan lacked even basic medicine, is only a small part of Olga's daily agony. For more than a year she has been held as a sex slave in this town in western Macedonia, where human trafficking flourishes and young girls are forced to endure the sexual whims of thousands of men. ” This story, unfortunately, is reality to roughly 200, 000 women and children from Eastern Europe.

Sex trafficking simultaneously exploits both the best and the worst aspects of globalization- the champions of globalization flaunt the growing ease of conducting business across national borders. It is due to sophisticated communication tools and relaxed banking laws that it is now possible to exchange assets internationally with ease. Virtual enterprises can operate everywhere and nowhere, making themselves known only when and where they choose. “ Generating around 32 billion dollars annually, human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal activity of today. While the governments of the troubled countries as well as the European Union make laws and regulations, the perpetrators become smarter; little progress gets made in solving this problem. At the center of human trafficking is the sex trade. The growing sex trade, which is more than visible in most of Europe, plays on the notion of growth in the “ world sex-market”. This market is made possible by the globalization of consumer capitalism in which commercial sex plays a big role. There are three sides to the issue: the

victims, the perpetrators, and the governments, law makers, and groups who are trying to stop the epidemic.

Together, over time, these people have built a crime market that is becoming harder to break. Women are being smuggled under the false pretense of a better life. Perpetrators have made a powerful market which works under transnational groups who have become masters at instilling fear in young women. And countries' governments have made regulations and laws that often hurt the victims, are not successful, or they are working in conjunction with the traffickers. The problem to be solved does not lie in just one group, but it is due to the actions of all three.

It is important to see the dynamics of each group in order to understand just how powerful the sex trade is in Eastern Europe. The Woman's Role Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the Cold War, international borders are easier to cross than at any other time in world history. Also, there has been an increase in worldwide poverty, which has left women to seek the means of economic survival for themselves and their families. It is out of this dilemma that a sense of desperation comes that makes Eastern European women susceptible to the trickery of traffickers.

This has caused such an affect that women and underage girls now constitute 90 percent of Eastern and South Eastern European people trafficked into the western parts of the continent. And even though women are knowingly aware of the dangers and prominence of sex trafficking, they continue to be swayed by lies of better lives and economic success the traffickers use. This refusal to acknowledge and actively weigh the dangers

of too- good- to- be- true offers from the West is the victims' greatest contribution to the problem of sex trafficking.

Case studies on girls from the 1990's and at the present time show women's reasoning for coming over and falling victim to trafficking include economic, cultural and social-psychological " push" factors. These push factors tend to be coming from a country of low employment and pay rates, frustration at the suppression of women in their countries (often Eastern European women read Western literature which shows women in power, thriving), and also they face the difficulties of obtaining a visa. The prime age for women to be trafficked is 18-25 years old.

However, 15-30 percent of girls trafficked are under aged. An interesting place where European victims differ from Asian and African victims is in their education level. Usually, European victims have secondary education. A fair amount even have post-secondary education. These facts and statistics show that it is naivety and desperation that is putting these girls in danger, not knowledge. Studies even show that women are " generally aware" of the mishaps occurring to their compatriots and how they are occurring.

One of the reasons women are still falling victim to traffickers despite their awareness is due to many references are coming from acquaintances. These references ease the fear of the women so they become more vulnerable. And although references are being traveled by word of mouth, the source of them is usually the local newspaper. In the 1990's, Eastern European newspapers advertised jobs as babysitters, waitresses, and bar girls in the west and also showed western men looking for " nice Eastern European women" for wives

and mothers. Ten years later, the Russian and Ukrainian media largely took over the task.

Thus, a typical ad in the Kielce daily reads: ‘ Young women needed in Berlin [Helsinki, Vienna, Milan] as maids and babysitters in middle-class homes. Room and board, weekly wage (net) 150-200 Euro, one day off, healthinsurance provided. Assistance in obtaining travel documents and transportation. “ Other widespread methods used to coerce women into the system are the “ rosy boy” method where a foreign man promises marriage or a “ rosy” future and arranges her travel abroad and the usage of elderly women whose job is to offer young girls jobs in Western Europe.

Blackmail is used against the women in most cases to make them obey their owners. Once the girls are under the care and supervision of their transit leader, there is very little they can do to escape. After a woman is transited, the outcome is usually the same. The perpetrators tell them that they must pay back their travel expenses. These debts can range from 700 and 4, 000 American dollars. They are then transferred to a high surveillance boarding house where they are physically and emotionally abused into prostitution.

Women often end up working in brothels, night clubs, borderlines serving truck drivers or other passer bys, and pornographic films. “ Managers” transfer them from place to place to not get caught. When a woman becomes too old to be sold or a manager is done with them, they are often thrown on to the streets with no paperwork, money, or guidance. Trafficked women live in fear. Often, they are beaten, abused, and raped on a daily basis. Afraid of their owners, they do not ask questions as to where they are or if they will be released.

The victims often depend upon their clients for information and help. And although the predicament of these girls is beyond inhumane, it is important to remember that these girls are often times being foolish when they put a great amount of trust in strangers. Also, it is necessary to understand the sex trafficking system of operation and where the women fall in it. For like in any problem, if you do not understand the entire premise, you will not be able to solve it. The Perpetrators Organized crime is largely responsible for the spread of international human trafficking.

Sex trafficking - along with its correlative elements, kidnapping, rape, prostitution and physical abuse - is illegal in nearly every country in the world. However, widespread corruption and greed make it possible for sex trafficking to quickly and easily proliferate. The operation of the sex trafficking business-from location and recruitment of candidates in their home countries to transportation across borders to their exploitation in the place of destination- requires an efficient transnational organization. Within Eastern Europe, traffickers (often mafia involved) create organizations that run similarly to small businesses.

There are usually five to fifteen people per each international circuit. These “businesses” are usually made up of men who each hold a different position within the system. Typically, there is a boss in each origin and destination country. They have managers and recruiters of special travel agencies in every origin, assistants for security, transport, contacts (bribery) with authorities, and helpers along transit points during transport from the country of origin to country of destination, collect money, and there are managers of the women’s employment.

These circuits take place all over Europe and through the years the transits have been mapped out and made known to the public. Traffickers as well as government officials have divided the transits in to three main categories: long distance, mid to long distances, and short trajectory. Long distances initiate typically in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. They go through Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania and end in Poland, Slovakia, or Hungary where they stay or go to Germany, Austria or Sweden.

Mid to long distance transits begin in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania in East Eastern Europe and Albania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia in South Eastern Europe. They go through Slovenia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to Western Europe, Israel, Arab Republic and North America. The shortest transit is solely moving Eastern European women to West Europe. This is the most common and this transit has been so successful that over 90 percent of prostitutes in Western Europe are Eastern European. Smuggling women has become an enormously profitable business for these men.

For example, if a girl around 17 years old is smuggled from Albania, once she reaches Italy she is worth around 10, 000 dollars. Once she is sold, she could make upwards of 600 American dollars per night for her owner. In the UK, a woman can sell for up to 14, 000 dollars. European traffickers work on the economic principle of supply and demand. The demand comes from all over the world and since in many countries prostitution is legal, buyers have little knowledge about whether their bought partner is there willingly or is acting as a slave.

Clearly, the perpetrators are the ones doing the most harm in this three-sided relationship. What the Enforcers are Doing Since the 1990's there has

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been a considerable increase in the attention given to sex trafficking in Europe. The European Union, individual governments as well as Non Government Organizations have been working to raise awareness, educate women and arrest traffickers. Unfortunately, their attempts are not as efficient as they should be. It seems like out of the three major groups aiming to stop sex trafficking, the individualized governments are having the most unsuccessful time.

Two major problems individual governments have is corruption and getting around illegal immigrant laws when a trafficked woman is saved. It is important to remember that almost all women who are trafficked are illegal immigrants. Countries are then forced to deal with that issue once a woman is rescued. Often times they are deported. When it comes to law enforcement too often in countries like Moldova and Russia, the traffickers are part of the mafia. Because of this, they often have ties with the government or the government works closely with them.

Although the police forces in European countries have been making better strides in catching traffickers, there are also many stories of policemen who are traffickers themselves. “ And even if the traffickers are caught, often times they can pay off the judges, the politicians and the police. In the first three months of 2008 more than 50 Albanian police officers were thrown off the force for taking bribes from the mafia. ” Over the last decade both the EU and the COE have devoted considerable attention to trafficking women and the documentation on this issue is extensive. All of the recent publications stress the gross violations of human rights that trafficking involves, noting that trafficking women is a low risk, high reward, and that it is

theresponsibilityof all states to increase the risks and penalties(COE, 1994; 1996; 1997; 1998; European Commission, 1996, 1998; European Parliament, 1993; 1996; UN, 1998). Specific UN initiatives include the General Assembly's 1997 Resolution of the Elimination ofViolenceAgainst Women, and the Palermo Protocol which entered into law in 2003.

The UN General Assembly's 1997 Resolution of the Elimination of Violence Against Women specified a number of crime prevention principles in the form of model strategies and Practical Measures to be adopted by member countries. The UN General Assembly Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (or the Palermo Protocol- entered into law in 2003) is made up of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Lane, Air, and Sea. Although the UN is taking initiative, the high numbers of trafficked women prove the legislation ineffective.

This is often blamed due to the nature of anti trafficking efforts which Dr Rossanka Venelinova, executive director of the Nadjia Center in Sofia describes as, " a jungle... There is no overall strategy, only a large number of programs that are not properly coordinated. That means that there is no sustainability. " Another fact working against the EU is that only a fraction of the countries have ratified the anti-trafficking conventions and the conventions are not properly monitored or verified properly. Now, due to the pressure on international organizations and NGOs, anti-trafficking strategies take more of a human rights approach.

Shelters, psychological and medical counseling services, the re-integration of women in their home communities, the granting of temporary residency

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permits in countries of destination and awareness campaigns help trafficked victims and prevent others from becoming victims. While the NGO's are successful they are constantly fighting for funding and publicity. One of their most beneficial approaches is through education for young girls in school. It seems that “ the enforcers” are at fault due to a lack of cooperation.

If the government, UN, and NGO's gained forces (and funding), the task of eliminating trafficking wouldn't seem as impossible. However, the potential victims must also take responsibility for this crime by not submitting themselves to dangerous behavior. Is There an End? This essay addresses upon the three major players in the sex trafficking industry in Europe. It also shows the flaws in the forces combating the problem. Sex trafficking will only end once there is a solidified, enforced plan of action which uses not only the government, but the non government groups as well.

One of the most important things that must continue is the prevention education given to young girls. If they are aware of the dangers and know what to look for they are less susceptible to being abducted and held captive. It is possible for sex trafficking to be greatly diminished, but new strategies must be adopted first.