

The Ugly Face of Human Trafficking



Global

"I am 21 years old from Moldova; I have a son, 4 years old. His father left us when he was born, and my family cannot support us. The job I had was not paying for our basic needs. My salary was approximately 25 DM per month (approximately US\$15), and lately salaries were not paid at all. Many young women from my town were travelling abroad for work, and I thought working abroad was also my chance to earn some money.

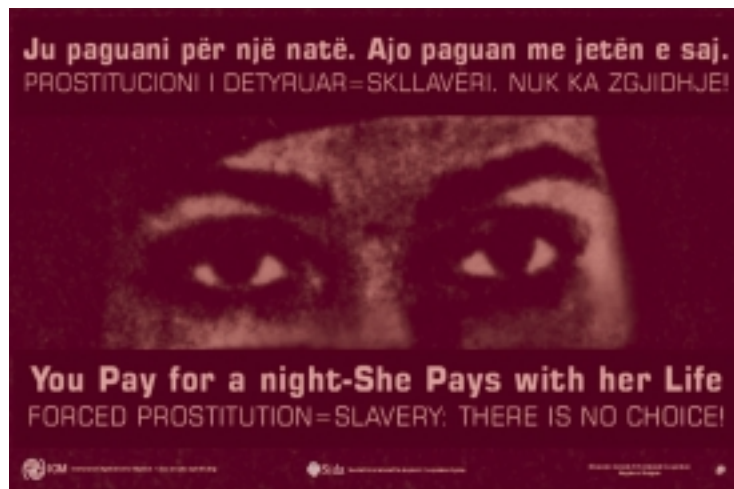
"A woman I know from town was organizing these trips, so I asked her to help me and she promised she would. She swore on her children's life I would work as a cleaner or a waitress but not as a prostitute, and she helped me to get a passport. She introduced me to a man and said he would take me to Italy. After we passed the border in Romania, he told me he had bought me from her. I was shocked and scared. From that moment on, I was passed from hand to hand; men bought and sold me, moving me from apartments to houses, crossing borders illegally.

*"Eventually I arrived in a bar in Kosovo, and was locked inside and forced into prostitution. My passport had been taken away long before, and the traffickers passed it from one to the other each time I was sold. In the bar I was never paid, I could not go out by myself, and the owner became more and more violent as the weeks went by. He was beating and raping me and the other girls. We were his 'property', he said; by buying us he bought the right to beat us, rape us, starve us, force us to have sex with clients..." **

Human trafficking is a global problem which demands a truly global response. As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, "The trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, for forced and exploitative labour, including for sexual exploitation, is one of the most egregious violations of human rights which the United Nations now confronts."

The overwhelming majority of trafficking victims are women and children, who are auctioned for prostitution, domestic services, begging, and work in factories, mines and plantations. Victims are often sexually abused, exposed to hazardous working conditions, confined to their workplace, and denied basic

health care, adequate nutrition and the safety and support of their families and communities. Many trafficking victims are exposed to HIV/AIDS or suffer from forced drug addiction.



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Trafficking

Faces

*Adapted from Situation Report - February 2000 to September 2002, Kosovo Counter-Trafficking Unit, International Organization for Migration.

Often human trafficking is supported by organized crime and by those in a position to manipulate post-conflict vulnerabilities for revenue. In post-conflict situations where the United Nations deploys peacekeepers, the UN works to prevent them from becoming a source of demand that traffickers may target.

Severe punishment of peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and other UN personnel involved in human trafficking and related abuses is essential. However, this can be a complex issue: in the case of peacekeeping troops, responsibility for criminal prosecution lies with the national governments that contribute them. The UN has undertaken special efforts to work with troop contributing countries on acknowledging and addressing this issue. And although UN personnel in the field are entitled to certain legal immunities, the Secretary-General will waive those immunities for staff members suspected of crime, so that they may face prosecution in the host country.

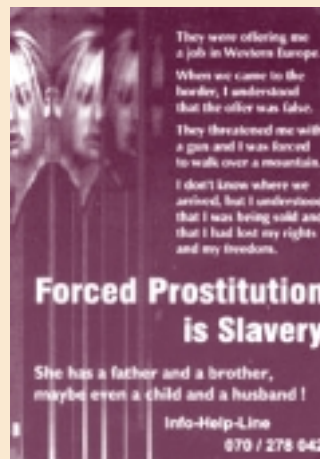
Prevention efforts include the development of training materials which focus on the specific roles and responsibilities of peacekeepers as well as key individuals, such as senior managers, police and contingent commanders, from the outset of a mission. Tools to support the efforts of peacekeeping operations are also being created, such as guidance for detecting trafficking activities in post-conflict zones, and model

legislation and institutional arrangements for national plans of action to combat trafficking.

The International Organization for Migration is an active partner in the fight against human trafficking, providing legal and medical counseling and other welfare services for victims, as well as assistance for their safe and dignified voluntary return and reintegration.

The transnational nature of trafficking requires States to coordinate efforts for prevention and punishment. The international legal framework now includes a Protocol* which aims to prevent trafficking, to protect and assist victims and to promote international cooperation on the issue. The Protocol, which came into force in December 2003, combines human rights measures to protect victims with effective law enforcement mechanisms in order to apprehend and prosecute traffickers.

Many challenges still remain in fighting this terrible crime. The fact that the problem of human trafficking is now acknowledged and is being seriously dealt with is a positive step towards a global solution. It is hoped that through the work of all actors, women like the 21-year-old mother from Moldova will no longer be hidden victims of this ugly crime.



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

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