

Trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation

Introduction

Trafficking has become a global difficulty. Slavery and exploitation aren't problems of the past; also nowadays these violations of the human rights are common practice worldwide, as well in Austria. Trafficking in human beings remains a serious crime and is an abuse of individual human rights. It is the exploitation of vulnerable individuals by criminals who deal with people as commodities to be traded for the sole purpose of financial gain. ¹ Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. It means the illegal trade of human beings for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. The victims of trafficking are especially people from Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia and South- and Middle America who are traded to Europe or the U.S..² In 2008 the United Nations estimates nearly 2.5 million people from 127 different countries are being trafficked around the world. According to the International Labor Organisation (ILO), 43% of trafficking victims are used for commercial sexual exploitation, while 32% are used for forced economic exploitation. 25% of victims are used for a combination of forced exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation or for undetermined reasons.³ Most of the trafficking victims are women and female children, because of the purpose of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, there are also many male as well as female victims of human trafficking because of exploitation of forced labor. ⁴

Sex-trafficking

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common form of trafficking. Sex trafficking is the illegal transportation of girls and women as well as boys and young men across national or international borders for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 explains commercial sexual exploitation as any sex act to the benefit of the pimp, including pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, and sex tourism. The young girls and the boys are exploited of the fraud because most of the time they are sold to the pimps. So they have no legal identification documents or bank accounts. Most of the time their families don't know where they live and how they earn money, they think, their daughters/mothers/aunts have now a better life. The sex trafficking victims experience a lot of physical and mental violence of the pimp and suitor, get punched,

treated as slaves, kept in inhumane conditions and looked up and show physical signs of abuse and torture. They haven't any self-identify and have a strong sense of distrust or are not aware that help is available. The victims look fearful. They get sold to more than ten men every night, so they work excessively long and for less money. They get promised their freedom and have to pay back their travel and visa costs only after earning - through prostitution. Moreover the victims are not allowed to go in public without a controlling person. The men constrain the girls to unprotected sexual intercourse and so they get many genital diseases.⁵

But how become these girls' victims of human traffickers? There are different reasons and many methods of the traffickers. It is important to know, that the victims come from really poor countries, without any prospects or chances for a better life. Especially the victims are young girls and boys under the age of 18 or young adults between 18 and 25 years. Poverty, Poor self-esteem, chronic depression, Immaturity, many diseases, high unemployment-rate, bad infrastructure, and low level education benefit the dream of a better life in Europe or the U.S. Also Children from at-risk families, such as low income families, problems of alcoholism, dysfunctional families and victims of domestic violence are at risk for human trafficking. The girls think that in rich countries it is easier to get a job and to earn a lot of money, so it is easy for the traffickers to convince the girls to come with them. First of all, the traffickers promise to the girls and their families a good job as au pair girl or waitress in Europe or the U.S. or propose a marriage or nice clothes, pretty jewelry, beepers and cell phones and beautiful houses. But they get kidnapped and sold into the sex trade and the traffickers use psychological and physical coercion and bondage to compliant them. Almost all of the methods used involve adult accomplices, including parents and older siblings; they help the traffickers to convince the girls to come with them because they need money.

Human trafficking in Austria

Due to the perfect position of Austria in Europe is Austria a transit and destination country for women trafficked form Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, and as well as some African countries like Nigeria" for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Some of these women are trafficked through Austria to Italy, Germany, France, and Spain. Women from Africa are trafficked through Spain and Italy to Austria for the purpose of sexual

exploitation. Authorities report a decrease in the number of children from Bulgaria and Romania trafficked to Austria for the purposes of forced petty theft and sexual exploitation.⁶

Nearly all-foreign prostitutes are illegal immigrants. In Austria prostitution is legal; however, trafficking, including for the purposes of prostitution, is illegal. The law prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons; however, persons were trafficked to, through, from, and within the country. Women were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic service, and children were trafficked for begging, stealing, and for commercial sexual exploitation. Vienna has the largest number of trafficking cases, although trafficking is also a problem in urban centers such as Graz, Linz, Salzburg, and Innsbruck. The NGO "Lateinamerikanische Frauen in Österreich–Interventionsstelle für Betroffene des Frauenhandels" (LEFOE-IBF) reported assisting 108 trafficking victims in 2006, down from 151 in 2005.⁷

Methods and Techniques of Traffickers in Austria

There is cooperation between domestic and foreign pimps for organizing the transfer of prostitutes from abroad to Austria. Women trafficked from Slovakia are mainly on the streets. They are brought to Vienna by car and live in small hotels with their pimps. Women trafficked from Hungary have been found mainly in bars. They were formerly prostitutes elsewhere before being trafficked to Austria. Women trafficked from Eastern Europe often enter Austria as tourists with valid passports.⁸ The sex industry in Austria is controlled mainly by Austrians who cooperate with partners in Eastern Europe, who provide enough women for there to be a high turnover of prostitutes.⁹ The trafficked women normally have only contact with transporters and recruiters; therefore can provide only limited information to police. Also the pimps threaten the women that their families are in danger when they go to the police. Women, aged 19-42, were susceptible to traffickers because of high debts and unemployment in their home countries. 1/3 of the women were beaten by their fathers in their homes. The majority of women were not engaged in prostitution in their own country. Nearly 1/4 of the women`s husband`s or boyfriend`s has contacts with pimps. Latin American and Eastern European women sent money transfers to their home countries regularly. Women from the Dominican Republic reported that they transferred US\$ 1,000 home to their relatives monthly.¹⁰

Law and Policy in Austria

Prostitution is legal and viewed as a taxable source of income for Austria, provided women register with authorities and undergo health checks. Foreign women are in danger of deportation if they seek to be registered as prostitutes because they do not have either an Austrian residency permit or work permit, even most of the women haven't a legal passport. There is a quota for immigrant labor which makes it nearly impossible for foreigners to obtain regular work in Austria. One exception is for artists, and this loophole fosters illegal prostitution in the form of nightclub dancing, because for most foreign women it is the only way to receive a work and residence permit. Unregistered prostitution is an offense, and grounds for expulsion from the country. Therefore, trafficked women do not report to police because they risk being deported. ¹¹

Coherence between trafficking in person, human rights and social work

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nearly all countries worldwide signed this declaration and enter the human rights in the constitution. Trafficking in person breach the human rights in following articles:

“Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”¹²

The International Federation of Social Workers defines “social work as a profession, which promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.”¹³ As you can read social workers have the responsibility to observe human rights and have to fight for their enforcement. Human trafficking is a human-rights abuse and is against social justice, because special groups of human beings become victims of human trafficking.

Requirements of social work against human trafficking

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Social work addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society. It responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems. Social work utilizes a variety of skills, techniques, and activities consistent with its holistic focus on persons and their environments.¹⁴

Action of Austrian policy against human trafficking

The Austrian government, as well as NGOs prevents trafficking through much more public awareness activities. This includes several television programs about trafficking, campaigns to educate teenagers and inform women in prostitution about their rights under national law. This is accomplished by distribution information brochures for use by police and NGOs on trafficking and by police and NGOs maintaining an active presence in well known “red light districts”. The Interior Ministry produced and distributed a folder to increase law enforcement’s awareness about human trafficking and to improve victim identification. This folders shows contact numbers for anti-trafficking NGOs and government offices responsible for victim protection. Austria also continued a campaign to encourage tourists and travel agencies to report cases of child sex tourism during the reporting period.¹⁵

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