



## Trafficking of Persons: Amnesty International Fact Sheet

Human trade, slave markets, the buying and selling of people – these are words and phrases that to many people echo a brutal and distant time in our past. But to the countless women, men, and children trafficked every year these words coldly define the horror of their lives.

Trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon. Victims are trafficked into a range of hazardous labor including farm work, sweatshops, domestic servants, forced prostitution and subjected to sexual abuse and other forms of violence. Each year, an estimated 600,000-800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders according to the US Department of State.

As part of Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign, we are examining one type of human trafficking, the trafficking of women and girls into forced prostitution – one of the most widespread and pervasive forms of violence against women.

The Amnesty International report: *Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) "So does that mean I have rights?", Protecting the human rights of women and girls trafficked for forced prostitution in Kosovo* documents the widespread and systematic abuses of women and girls trafficked into and internally within Kosovo for sexual exploitation. Kosovo has become a major destination for women and girls trafficked into forced prostitution since the deployment of an international peacekeeping force and the establishment of a UN civilian administration.

*"Eventually I arrived in a bar in Kosovo, [and was] locked inside and forced into prostitution. In the bar I was never paid, I could not go out by myself, the owner became more and more violent as the weeks went by; he was beating me and raping me and the other girls. We were his 'property', he said. By buying us, he had bought the right to beat us, rape us, starve us, force us to have sex with clients."* - 21 year old Moldovan woman

### What is trafficking?

*"It's something to do with cars isn't it?"* - trafficked girl, interviewed by an NGO in Kosovo.

Trafficking is modern day slave trading. It involves transporting people away from the communities they live in by the threat or use of violence, deception or coercion so they can be exploited as forced or enslaved workers. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved: simply transporting them into exploitative conditions constitutes trafficking.

Trafficking is a fundamental abuse of human rights. It results in the abuse of the rights to:

- physical and mental integrity;
- life;
- liberty;
- security of the person;
- dignity;
- freedom from slavery, slave-like practices, torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment;
- family life;
- freedom of movement;
- privacy;
- the highest attainable standard of health; and
- safe and secure housing.

## Deception and lies

Although in some cases, women and girls are abducted or coerced by traffickers, many start their journeys from their home countries voluntarily.

They see an ad in a local paper, an employment website on the internet, or a flyer on a community billboard: each offering attractive employment as nannies, waitresses, secretaries, models or dancers. All carry the promise of desperately needed money.

*"I was desperate, and not because I was having problems with my parents as I heard from other girls, but because we were so poor... My grandmother had a very small allowance, and my mother has only the state allowance for my three brothers. I couldn't live any longer on my grandmother's pension, so I said that I'd better go somewhere else where I could work hard and earn some money to help my family and my brothers."* - Woman trafficked into Kosovo

Sometimes it's a boyfriend who promises to help them find work in the 'glittering' west. A friend who offers to help escape a desperate situation. A promise of marriage betrayed. Or a desperate economic exchange by a parent. This is how countless thousands of women and girls are trapped in the chilling world of trafficking.

## Violence and threats

For most of these women and girls, as soon as their journey begins, so does the systematic abuse of their rights, in a strategy that reduces them to dependency on their trafficker, and later their "owner". The realization grows that the work they have been offered is not what was promised; their documents are taken away from them; they may be beaten; they will - almost certainly if they start to protest - be raped.

Although some women are not aware until they reach their destination that they have been sold, other have seen money change hands, or have been raped by buyers when they "try the merchandise". Women are often sold several times before reaching their destination.

Escape is almost impossible. Without her travel documents, a woman is likely to be arrested for immigration or other offences. But probably more pertinently, trafficked women are usually trapped by threats, coercion, or literally being locked inside.

*"We worked from 9am to 11pm. After that he said, 'You do what you like', but we were locked. When we asked to go out he said no, that we had to be here. We slept in a room together, me and another girl. All the windows had bars."* - Romanian girl trafficked into Kosovo

At a trial in Gnjilane/Gjilan in 2002, a trafficked woman testified that she had been kept in a cellar, where she slept at night and serviced clients during the day. Food, drink and a bucket for use as a lavatory were brought down to her. She only left the cellar when she was driven by her trafficker to meet clients.

Trafficked women are repeatedly subjected to psychological abuse, including intimidation and threats, lies and deception, emotional manipulation and blackmail in order to keep them trapped.

*"If I refused [to have sex with clients] I was threatened. He was pointing the gun to my head, and he was saying.. 'If you don't do this in the next minute, you will be dead'. He has the gun, he was just saying do this or you will be dead."*

Many trafficked girls and women report being told that their families and their children would be harmed or murdered if they tried to escape or tell anyone. Others report being told that their families have found out what they're doing and that they don't want anything more to do with them.

## What you can do

Trafficking is a crime under international law under the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons. For more information on trafficking, the

Stop Violence Against Women campaign, or women's human rights, visit AIUSA's Stop Violence Against Women website at:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/stopviolence>

or contact Amnesty International at 5 Penn Plaza-16<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10001 or at (212) 633-4292.