



PARTNERING FOR PREVENTION

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Human Trafficking – A Canadian Perspective

Notes of a Presentation by Norrie de Valencia, CCR Anti-Trafficking Committee

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Canadian law criminalizes trafficking. Instead of protecting the rights of people who have been trafficked, in many cases it promotes their detention. Through its Trafficking Committee the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) has developed a legislative proposal to bring a permanent and fundamental change in policy so that trafficked persons in Canada are protected. The proposal can be viewed at www.trafficking.ca.

It was noted that in spite of many initiatives, meetings, resolutions and conventions, human trafficking, instead of being curbed, is on the rise.

Human Trafficking is technically defined as taking someone (by force or deception) across an international border. Published statistics, such as the following, give us an idea of the extent of the problem: the ILO reports that 12.3 million have been trafficked into forced labour; a UN report states that 1 million children have been trafficked in Asia alone; The Lancet (a respected UK medical journal) reports over 1 million children trafficked into prostitution; Kevin Bales in 'Free the Slaves' reports 27 million trafficked; Nicholas Kristof in 'Half the Sky' reports that there are three million women and children and a few boys in the world today who could be killed at any time by their owners with impunity.

In addition there are disturbing statistics about the demand that feeds trafficking. For example, 5.1 million sex tourists visit Thailand each year. In Europe, according to an ECPAT study, 500,000 men pay for sex each year. Further numerous troubling statistics document the practice of forced labour.

And cross-border statistics do not include millions of people who are 'trafficked' within their own national borders.

The first part of this presentation sought to answer the question about why efforts to combat trafficking have been largely ineffective to date. One reason given is the complexity of this sinister phenomenon. It planted the point of view that the tools to crush modern slavery exist but that political will is lacking. Victor Malarek's statement was substantiated: "We have the ingredients of the perfect crime - infinite demand, infinite supply, infinite greed".

In addressing the complexity of the problem, information touched on who the players are, - i.e. organized crime, members of the mafia, politicians, military personnel, businessmen, executives, religious leaders, bankers, police, judges, hired guns, mercenaries, and everyday men. The power that this 'shadow economy' wields and the impunity that it hides behind are formidable obstacles to tackle. Our information outlined how trafficking is promoted and replenished, the extent of the profits, and facts about money laundering. For example, it is estimated that in 2009, 1,000 trillion dollars in proceeds from crime were laundered. Trafficking in persons is one of the top three illicit 'profit makers' with the other two being drugs and arms. This is equivalent to 6% of GNP of the United States. It is documented that every major bank in the US has served as an active financial partner of organized crime. Further, the US Department of State annual TIP report documents human trafficking in 175 countries. This is an indication of the weakness (or some would say 'failing') of the global capitalist system and the huge inequality left in the trail (of debris) of the economic

regimes of the most powerful nations. Even more disturbing it reveals the normalization of human cruelty in the world today and the cultural patterns which have strengthened and allowed it.

One particularly poignant statistic involves our attempts as community workers to protect and support trafficked persons. It has been documented that when the exploited women or children are rescued, their 'owners' who have lost their slaves, reach into their webs and replenish the market with 'fresh product' – usually within 72 hours. That is, the tragedy of our rescue effort is that the 'winners' are the mafias which control the supply. I believe we have been somewhat naïve in our approach to date and need a deeper understanding of the 'bigger picture' and what is involved if we are to be effective.

But we reiterate our commitment to support and protect trafficked persons.

So, where do we go from here? - The presentation turned to exploring various suggestions.

A deeper understanding of the definition of trafficking was provided. The Delphi Indicators were outlined (see bibliography). They go far beyond the 'Palermo Protocol', the optional protocol to the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime which has been our main guideline to date for a definition of trafficking.

An example of a pocket card listing indications that a person may have been trafficked was circulated. The card has a 24-hour '1-800' phone number and should be distributed to all who might come into contact with a trafficked person and be unaware of who they are dealing with, eg. taxi drivers, hotel operators, city police.

We must promote legislation that is not merely enforcement-based but takes into account that trafficking is a migration issue, a human rights issue, and a gender issue. In this way, trafficked persons will no longer be criminalized with the traffickers and provisions will be made for their protection and support (see www.trafficking.ca for a proposal for legislative amendment - rationale).

We need to look at what men and boys can do to curb trafficking. To date most of the work has been done by women. [The Renaissance Male Project](#) makes suggestions for important participation by men and boys with one of the most important points being that we raise and mentor boys to question oppression.

Finally, the presentation ended on a note of hope through education. The short video available on you tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e8xgF0JtVg> seeks to eradicate poverty – the root cause of trafficking – through education.

Brief Bibliography

Delphi Indicators - Fact Sheet (ILO)

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/ed_norm/declaration/documents/publication/wcms_105023.pdf

The definitions of all 67 indicators are presented in a separate document that can be accessed at www.ilo.org/forcedlabour.

Imperialism: Bankers, . . . 'Mexico's Descent in the Inferno' by Prof. James Petras

19 May 2011: www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=24856 Global Research

10 Things Men and Boys Can Do to Stop Human Trafficking

<http://msmagazine.com/blog/blog/2010/08/04/10-things-men-and-boys-can-do-to-stop-human-trafficking>

Proposal for Legislative Amendment to Protect Trafficked Persons: www.trafficking.ca

UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection: www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/443b626b2.pdf

Books

HALF THE SKY, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

THE NATASHAS, and THE JOHNS, Victor Malarek

THE SICILIAN MAFIA: THE BUSINESS OF PRIVATE PROTECTION, Diego Gambetta (re: organized crime)

THE LAUNDRYMEN, Jeffrey Robinson