

Sex Trafficking

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According to the U.S. Department of State's 2009 *Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report*, there are currently around 1.39 million victims of sex trafficking around the globe. This report, published by the U.S. Department of State annually, is an attempt to protect the victims and prosecute the criminals involved in sex trafficking. Although the report has caused awareness within the government system and with the United Nations, the demand for girls in forced prostitution still exists. The trafficking of women and children for sex exists within the United States of America, but our society chooses to turn a blind eye to the victims and the criminals. The empire of the sex trade continues because of corrupt governments and the uninvolved that choose to be passive.

The recent global economy decline has contributed to the number of victims of sex trafficking. According to the 2009 TIP Report, the lack of money has caused a higher demand for cheap goods and services. Because of the increasing population, the amount of people desperate for money contributes to the willingness of many to provide labor for little pay. This willingness leads to families being easily deceived, and ultimately, victims of sex trafficking.

The lack of money is often the first step in the deception of victims. The compelling movie BAHT follows the story of a victim of sex trafficking in Thailand. Her family was in desperate need of income and was quickly excited when a woman promised a job for her in the city as a maid at a hotel. The family was easily deceived, and the young girl offered to leave with the woman. She never reached the city, and was soon sold into forced prostitution. This deception is common within poor families out of the extreme desperation for money. The sex trafficking of these individuals continues because in such poor countries, they are without birth certificates or documentation of their existence. Once taken, it is easy for them to be hidden from their families and never to be found again.

In underdeveloped countries, it is difficult to document the birth of children. UNICEF (an organization committed to helping children) estimates that around 51 million children around the world born in 2006 were not registered. This lack of registration makes it almost impossible for the families to find their children who were sold or kidnapped.

The U.S. Department of State's 2009 *TIP Report* sites the United State's Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) as a way to evaluate the level of sex trafficking and assistance in 175 countries. The countries are organized into three tiers. The first tier envelops countries that "fully comply with the minimum standards (of the TVPA)". Governments that are making progress and implementing programs to prevent sex trafficking are placed on tier two, and tier three contains governments that are not making an effort to improve preventative programs in their countries. The tier system is an effort by the U.S. government to coax nations into preventing sex trafficking by removing funding. According to the 2009 TIP report, if a country is in the third tier, the "U.S. Government may withhold nonhumanitarian, non-trade-related foreign assistance". There are currently 17 countries classified as tier three, including Cuba, Iran, and North Korea.

The corrupt governments of many countries contributes to the success of sex trafficking. According to the U.S. State Department's 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report, the government in Mongolia investigated 12 suspects involved in the organized trafficking, but none were prosecuted because of lack of evidence. Some NGO's (Non-Governmental Organization) believed that the Mongolian police were involved in the trafficking, and they believed the connection to be the reason for the innocence of the suspect. The alleged connection of police with sex trafficking is prevalent in many cases. Victims are often afraid to go to police because the police are involved, and would do nothing to help them. In a story cited by the 2009 TIP report, a man in Southeast Europe said "There I didn't have enough courage to go to the police because (the) traffickers used to say that they bought the police".

Whether police involvement is real or it is only a threat, the lack of prosecutions of suspects involved with sex trafficking is often contributed to the government and police involvement in the organized crime.

If victims do escape, they are left without shelter or a place to live. Fortunately, successful organizations exist in order to provide them a home: a place more than just a shelter. The Rapha House Freedom Foundation is an independent, Christian organization which offers victims of sex trafficking a place to live, go to school, and learn about Christ. In BAHT, the young girl that shares her story lives at the Rapha house, and it is evident how the Rapha house has helped her throughout the movie, including her recent baptism.

In order for the government to be involved in preventing sex trafficking, organizations such as the Rapha House need to be more prevalent in effected countries. While started by men and women from the United States, Rapha House is run daily by locals of the area, which contributes to its success. Once such organizations are begun, turning them over to the locals allows for a closer relationship between the victims and the volunteers, which gets the community involved and more aware of the horrors of sex trafficking.

Today in the United States, the majority of the population is unaware of the prevalence of sex trafficking. The statistics of trafficked women and young children are astounding, but still often ignored. Once many are made aware, there needs to be support and aid sent to the victims. Whether this support comes from our government, or from individuals, assisting the victims is the first step to ending the global epidemic of human sex trafficking.

Works Cited

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