

THE PROBLEM



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Human trafficking is an organized criminal industry that affects every nation. While the statistics can seem overwhelming, it is important to remember that every number represents the life of a human being. The A21 Campaign has recognized a significant need and is committed to combating this injustice through rescuing one life at a time.

LIFE FOR A SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIM

After a trafficking journey that typically involves deception, rape, beatings, and constant threats, victims are often forced to live in confining and unsanitary conditions.¹ Once formally put to work, human trafficking victims can be forced to service up to 110 customers in one day.² Malnutrition, sleep deprivation, as well as emotional and physical abuse become part of their day-to-day routine.³

In addition to the abuse, forced abortions and the contraction of STDs, Hepatitis B and C, and AIDS are ever looming probabilities.⁴ Life for a victim of sex trafficking is an incomprehensible evil. This injustice is the reason The A21 Campaign exists.

THE STATISTICS

We recognize the global need for rescue, rehabilitation, and restoration. Because of this growing necessity, we founded our flagship office in Greece, and have established additional field offices, shelters, transition homes and administrative bases in Bulgaria, Ukraine, South Africa, the United States, Australia, Thailand and Great Britain. Here's why:

- Human trafficking is the second largest global organized crime today, generating approximately 39 billion USD annually.⁵
- Of the estimated 30 million people in forced labour internationally, 58% of victims are subjected to commercial sexual servitude, specifically in the Americas, Europe and Central Asia.⁶
- In recent years, the percentage of children trafficked has risen to 27%, with one out of every three victims a boy.⁷
- 75% of recorded human trafficking victims are female, 59% of which are women.⁸
- The International Organization of Labor estimates that 98% of sexual trafficking victims are female.⁹
- Globally, convictions against traffickers are few in number, and of the 132 countries monitored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 16% have not convicted a single individual for trafficking in persons.¹⁰
- Concerning the sexual exploitation of trafficked human beings, there are a growing number of male victims, although services for these victims remain inadequate globally.¹¹
- Although most individuals involved in trafficking human beings are male, an increasing amount of women have been prosecuted and convicted, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.¹²
- Women under the age of 18 are particularly vulnerable to re-trafficking, specifically during the period immediately following their escape and transition.¹³

FOCUS: EUROPE

- According to Europol's Trafficking in Human Beings Report, young women and children are the most at risk for human trafficking in the European Union.¹⁴
- Trafficking for sexual purposes is the most prevalent form of trafficking in the European Union, although an increasing number of victims are trafficked into sectors such as tourism, construction, catering, nursing and domestic service.¹⁵
- According to the United Nations, in Europe roughly 60% of trafficked victims are women.¹⁶
- Over 25% of sex trafficked victims are trafficked from Southern and Eastern Europe.¹⁷
- Tragically, only 1-2% of victims in Europe are rescued, and only 1 in 100,000 Europeans involved in trafficking are convicted.¹⁸
- Recent reports indicate an increased percentage of women trafficking persons in Europe, particularly within the sex industry.¹⁹
- Europe is a key destination for victims of human trafficking, with victims imported from all over the globe.²⁰
- In Eastern Europe, an estimated 80% of rescued women end up re-trafficked.²¹

GREECE - A PRIMARY DESTINATION

Greece, the home of our flagship office, is known as “the center of trafficking in Europe.”²² The European country is one of the leading destination and transit countries for human trafficking, and is a primary gateway for trafficked victims entering the European Union.²³

Trafficked victims are moved frequently, both internally and across borders, to evade detection. Human trafficking is therefore a hidden crime in Greece, with most citizens unaware of the gross human rights abuses occurring within their own country.

Moreover, according to the US Bureau of Diplomatic Security's 2013 Crime and Safety Report, human trafficking is currently on the rise in Greece, and the European country still does not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards.²⁴

BULGARIA - SOURCE, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION

Bulgaria is a primary source country for human trafficking victims, as well as a transit and destination location for individuals trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and, to a lesser extent, forced labor.²⁵ In particular, women and children are exploited sexually, while individuals of both genders and all ages are victims of forced labor.²⁶

It is estimated that 10,000 Bulgarian women alone are trafficked yearly, both within the country and to other destination countries.²⁷ Trafficking within the country is particularly concentrated around resort areas and border towns.²⁸

One recent study found that there is an average of 8,000-12,000 Bulgarian victims of sex trafficking abroad at any one time.²⁹ These sex slaves have an average of six clients per day, 270 working days per year, and 70 EUR paid per client, with proceeds averaging 900 million to 1.3 billion EUR per year.³⁰ Experts believe 50-80% of these profits are funneled back into Bulgaria via money laundering.³¹ In fact, Bulgaria appears to be the leading source country for victims of trafficking in Germany and Greece, and the second source for Netherlands when taking into account number of cases per capita for 2009.³²

Although the Bulgarian government continues to make strides against human trafficking, it still does not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards.³³

ROMA

In Bulgaria, ethnic Roma men, women, and children are particularly vulnerable to becoming trafficking victims, due to ethnic discrimination, poverty, high levels of unemployment, illegal money laundering, inadequate state care, homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse and complicity of family members trafficking their own children and family members.³⁴

Roma constitute the single largest ethnic minority group in Europe, with an estimated population of 10 to 12 million, approximately 6 million of whom live in the European Union.³⁵ Research done in 2010 indicated that Roma represent 50-80% of trafficked persons in Bulgaria, confirming that Roma individuals are trafficked for various purposes, including sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, domestic service, organ trafficking, illegal adoption and begging.³⁶

UKRAINE - SOURCE, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION

Ukraine is a source country for trafficked women, and is currently one of the largest exporters of women, not just to the European Union, but also to the Middle East and Asia.³⁷ The "exotic beauty" of Ukrainian, Russian, Moldovan and Bulgarian women has made them valuable commodities in the current international sex trade.³⁸

Ukraine is also increasingly becoming a destination country for trafficked victims, as its popularity as a sex tourism destination grows.³⁹ These victims largely originate from South East Asia, Africa, and other Eastern European states, while an increasing number of victims are domestic.⁴⁰ And, like Bulgaria, women and children are largely trafficked within the sex industry, while victims of both genders and all ages are used as forced labor, as well as organ removal.⁴¹

Although the Ukrainian government is making some progress against the trafficking of persons within its borders, it remains on the US Trafficking in Persons' watch list for abuses.⁴²

UNITED KINGDOM - DESTINATION

Although the United Kingdom is not on the US Trafficking in Persons' watch list, it is a destination for victims of human trafficking, particularly from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.⁴³ These victims are either used as forced labour, or sexually exploited.⁴⁴ In particular, immigrant children represent a large percentage of trafficked victims, while reports indicate that a significant number of British minors are subject to sexual exploitation.⁴⁵

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE IN EUROPE

While human trafficking is a global issue, the growth of trafficking of women from Eastern and Southern Europe (the former Soviet Bloc) into Western Europe over the past 20 years has been unparalleled anywhere else on the globe.⁴⁶ This trend has developed due to a specific combination of factors:

FALL OF COMMUNISM

The fall of communism had devastating effects for the nations of the former Soviet Bloc, where "widespread poverty, social inequalities, booming shadow markets, corruption, and rampant conflicts" soon became the norm.⁴⁷ Floundering economies resulted in a "devastating reduction in living standards for the majority, with poverty emerging as a widespread issue."⁴⁸ From the perspective of human traffickers, the fields became ripe for harvest.⁴⁹

IMPACT OF POVERTY ON WOMEN

A characteristic of the collapse of the Soviet Union was the return to a traditional male dominated family structure with a shortage of labor positions that unevenly affected women.⁵⁰ Unemployment rates for women soared, ranging between 70 and 80 percent in most of the former Soviet republics.⁵¹ Out of desperation to gain financial security, women have become more likely to take risky recruitment offers, leaving them susceptible to the deceptions of traffickers promising decent employment in another country.⁵² Even more concerning is that, many women have lost "all self esteem and hope for the future" and have become more likely to accept offers they know are linked with the sex industry due to the belief that "it cannot be worse than their present lives."⁵³

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

Generating billions of US dollars annually, trafficking in human beings has become the second largest global organized crime today.⁵⁴ Criminals formally involved in illegal drugs and weapons trafficking are finding profit margins in human trafficking and are now using their extensive networks and well-worn trade routes for human trafficking.⁵⁵ In the Soviet Bloc, shadow economies were relied upon under communism to supply necessary goods and services undersupplied by the state.⁵⁶ However, since the fall of communism, these shadow economies have quickly grown and mutated, absorbing desperately unemployed men and women as both traffickers and the victims of trafficking.⁵⁷ Additionally, corruption amongst border officers, police, soldiers, and government officials undergirds and sustains human trafficking.⁵⁸

FOCUS: AMERICAS

- According to the United Nations, around 50% of convicted traffickers are women in the Americas, particularly in Guatemala and Bolivia.⁵⁹
- North America reported a larger percentage of victims trafficked for the purposes of forced labor, including 70% of reported trafficked victims in the United States.⁶⁰
- Trafficking for sexual purposes is most prevalent in Central America and the Caribbean.⁶¹
- The majority of trafficking victims in the Americas are female.⁶²

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - SOURCE, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION

According to the 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report, the United States is both a source, as well as transit and destination country, for victims of human trafficking, including persons subjected to peonage, sex trafficking and forced labor.⁶³ Around 41% of recorded victims trafficked for sexual purposes were US citizens, while 20% of forced labour victims were US citizens.⁶⁴ Moreover, it is estimated that 85% of trafficked victims exploited sexually are women.⁶⁵ The full scope of the problem has yet to be determined, as the crime of human trafficking is often intertwined with drug trafficking and prostitution.

Trafficking in the U.S. often occurs through street prostitution, massage parlors, brothels, and for labor in domestic service, agriculture, manufacturing, janitorial services, hospitality industries, construction, health and elder care, and strip club dancing.⁶⁶ U.S. citizen child victims are often runaways, troubled, and homeless youth, and Polaris estimates that 74% of recorded child trafficking cases involved sex trafficking.⁶⁷ Foreign victims, on the other hand, are more often found in labor trafficking than sex trafficking.⁶⁸ The top countries of origin for foreign victims in the fiscal year of 2012 were Thailand, Mexico, Philippines, Indonesia, Honduras, and Guatemala.⁶⁹

FOCUS: ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

- In the subregion of South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific human trafficked victims are mainly intraregional, with most countries acting as both sources and destinations for trafficked persons.⁷⁰
- Around 44% of recorded trafficked victims were sexually exploited.⁷¹
- According to the UN, most trafficked victims within this subregion are female, while the percentage of female traffickers is high.⁷²
- Internationally, East Asia is a major source of human trafficking victims.⁷³
- Apart from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Taiwan, most countries in this region do not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards, many are on the US Trafficking in Persons Report's watch list for human trafficking offenses, although they are taking significant measures against human trafficking.⁷⁴
- China, North Korea and Papua New Guinea do not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards, and are not making notable efforts to combat the trafficking of persons within their borders.⁷⁵

THAILAND - SOURCE, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION

According to the Strategic Information Response Network (SIREN), most victims of human trafficking in Thailand are migrants exploited for sexual and labor purposes, and are largely from the neighboring regions of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.⁷⁶ Thailand is also a major source of human trafficked victims internationally.⁷⁷ In general, traffickers in Thailand are not part of an organized crime syndicate, and, based on statistics, there is a large percentage of both male and female traffickers.⁷⁸

Child prostitution is, tragically, a major problem in Thailand, with conservative estimates placing the number of child victims in the ten thousands.⁷⁹ Forced labour, however, is also prominent, with many victims trafficked into the fishing industry.⁸⁰

Although the Thai government does not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards, it is taking significant measures against human trafficking.⁸¹

AUSTRALIA - DESTINATION

Australia is largely a destination for victims of sex trafficking, although there is a growing criminal market in forced labour, with many victims trafficked from the surrounding countries.⁸² What is more, according to the 2013 US Trafficking in Persons Report, minors exploited sexually are both Australian citizens and foreigners.⁸³ However, like the United Kingdom and the United States, Australia has met the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards, while it continues to make strides against human trafficking.⁸⁴

FOCUS: AFRICA

- According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 68% of trafficked victims recorded in Africa were children.⁸⁵
- Apart from the island country of Mauritius, most prosecuted and convicted traffickers in Africa were male.⁸⁶
- Children are largely trafficked for military purposes, with child soldiers most prominent in sub-Saharan Africa.⁸⁷ According to the US Trafficking in Persons Report, African countries with the greatest percentage of child soldiers are the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.⁸⁸
- Globally, African victims were largely trafficked to Europe: between 2007 and 2010 the UN recorded 3000 trafficked victims from Africa in Western and Central Europe.⁸⁹
- All participating African countries do not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards.⁹⁰
- Africa has the greatest number of countries with no or very limited legislation against human trafficking.⁹¹

SOUTH AFRICA - SOURCE, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION

According to the 2013 US Trafficking in Persons Report, South Africa is not only a source of human trafficked victims, but also a transit and destination country, for both South Africa nationals and foreigners.⁹² Regional children from poorer communities in South Africa are particularly at risk, since their parents or relatives often send them to urban centers like Cape Town and Johannesburg to find work.⁹³ By and large, young girls are subjected to sexual exploitation, although more and more males are becoming victims of sex trafficking.⁹⁴ In addition, young girls are often compelled into arranged marriages due the traditional practice of ukuthwala.⁹⁵

In urban centers, such as Johannesburg, Nigerian organized crime groups account for a large percentage of human trafficking crimes, while local criminal syndicates are more responsible for the trafficking of children.⁹⁶ In addition, European and Asian criminal gangs are also involved in the trafficking of human beings in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape.⁹⁷

Although the South African government continues to implement significant measures against human trafficking, it still does not meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards.⁹⁸

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