



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2004/NGO/95  
3 March 2004

ENGLISH ONLY

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixtieth session  
Item 12 of the provisional agenda

**INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE  
GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**Written statement\* submitted by Human Rights Advocates, Inc. (HRA),  
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2004]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **The Problem of the Military's Role in Creating and Perpetuating the Demand for the Trafficking of Women and Children and the Need to Create Economic Alternatives for Women at Risk of Trafficking**

1. This statement addresses the role that armed forces and U.N. peacekeeping personnel play in creating and perpetuating the demand for the trafficking of women and children. The UN for years has given priority to the issue of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. This Commission recognized the issue of demand in its 2002 resolution, however more concrete action is needed, especially regarding the military's role in trafficking. The role that microcredit plays in creating viable opportunities for women vulnerable to trafficking also warrants consideration.

### **The Problem of Demand**

2. The criminal nature of human trafficking makes it difficult to know exact numbers, however it is estimated that worldwide between 700,000 and 4 million women and children are trafficked each year into modern forms of slavery.<sup>1</sup>

3. Trafficking for sexual exploitation has been described as "driven by a demand for women and children's bodies in the sex industry, fueled by a supply of women denied equal rights and opportunities for education and economic advancement, and perpetuated by traffickers who are able to exploit human misfortune with near impunity."<sup>2</sup> Reducing demand and creating other economic opportunities is essential to any approach to reducing trafficking.

4. Trafficked women do not generally volunteer to enter the commercial sex industry. Traffickers often use coercive and fraudulent means to obtain women. Some are kidnapped. Others are lured with offers of good paying jobs. Fear among customers of infection with HIV or AIDs leads traffickers to recruit girls as young as ten to ensure their health and cleanliness. Women are subjected to cruel abuse to keep them in servitude, including beatings, rape, starvation, forced drug use and confinement.

5. Poverty and gender inequality make it easier for traffickers to obtain women to work in the commercial sex industry. Increasing economic hardship, particularly in less-industrialized and transitional countries, combined with onerous obstacles to legal migration has coincided with increases in the number of trafficking cases.<sup>3</sup> The speculative nature of the economy and

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<sup>1</sup> Heyzer, Noeleen, Executive Director (UNIFEM). *Gender and Human Rights Framework Plenary Address The Human Rights Challenge of Globalization: Asia-Pacific-US: The Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, Honolulu, Hawaii 13-15 November 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Phinney, Alison, *Trafficking of Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation in the Americas*. A paper written for the Inter-American Commission of Women (Organization of American States) and the Women, Health and Development Program (Pan American Health Organization), Washington D.C. 2001

<sup>3</sup> Elabour-Idemudia, Patience. "The African Dimension of International Sex Trafficking: The Narratives of Nigerian Women and Girls Engaged in the Industry." Available:

the impact of World Bank/IMF imposed structural adjustment programs within different countries have also contributed to the rapid growth of trafficking in persons for commercial sex exploitation.<sup>4</sup> Structural adjustment programs lead to a shrinking of the formal economy and an increase in the informal economy, which tend to facilitate criminal practices, including the trafficking in women and girls.

6. The situation is exacerbated in times of armed conflict or in heavily militarized areas. Traffickers often use routes through countries that have been engulfed by conflict, since border controls and normal policing are reduced.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Role of the Military in Creating Demand**

7. HRA has identified the military's role in perpetuating the problem of trafficking. (See E/CN.4/2002/NGO/43 and E/CN.4/2003/NGO/40). Patronization of brothels and sex clubs by military personnel has contributed not only to a demand for prostitution but to the demand for trafficked women.

8. A Korean congressional report estimates that the majority of women in the sex industry are prostitutes around U.S. military bases.<sup>6</sup> Although prostitution is against South Korean law and patronizing prostitutes is prohibited by U.S. military regulation, the brothels near the bases have long been an open secret. There are reports that more than 3000 Filipina women were being recruited as sex workers to service American troops stationed in Mindanao and South Korean military bases.<sup>7</sup> There are also large numbers of women from Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Moldova. These women served as replacements for Korean women who felt they could get better tips working in clubs for Korean customers. The Korean government provided special "entertainment visas" (E-6) for these women. Among the 4,735 foreign female workers holding E-6 visas, 4,234 were working at bars, clubs and hotels, as well as clubs reserved exclusively for U.S. servicemen.<sup>8</sup>

9. The "war on terrorism" is likely to fuel the trafficking of women and girls. President Bush's declaration that the Philippines is America's "second front" in the war against terrorism means an increase in US troops, and an increase in the sale of Filipinas. It is reported that since the deployment of US troops to the Philippines in February 2002, sex trafficking of Filipinas

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<http://www.makerere.ac.ug/womenstudies/full%20papers/Patience%20Elabor%20-%20Idemudia.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Hodgson, Douglas.. Combating the Organized Sexual Exploitation of Asian Children: Recent Developments and Prospects." *International Journal of Law and the Family*, 9(1): 23-53:1995  
Kempadoo, Kamala and Jo Doezema (eds).. *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance and Redefinition*. New York: Routledge, 1998

<sup>5</sup> Heyzer, *The Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*.

<sup>6</sup> Enriquez, Jean, *Filipinas in Prostitution Around U.S. Military Bases in Korea: A Recruiting Nightmare*, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific, p.3, Nov. 1999.

<sup>7</sup> "Filipino Women Hired to Provide Sex for US Troops". *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 4, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Kwak, Young-sup, "Government to Tighten Rules on Entertainment Visa Applicants," *Korea Herald*, 21 October, 2002.

has increased to 600%. During the first Gulf War, there were reports of "rest and recreation" ships, each with 50 Filipinas for the use of US troops who could not enter Islamic countries.<sup>9</sup>

10. Armed conflict in many African countries has had a devastating effect on women and girls. Uganda is a source country, primarily for women and children trafficked to Sudan. Over the past 15 years, a rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), has abducted tens of thousands of adults and children and forced them to carry stolen goods, cook, serve as sex slaves, and become rebel soldiers.<sup>10</sup> There are reports that Rwandan-backed Congolese militias operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo abducted men, women, and children for forced labor and sexual exploitation and to serve as combatants in 2002.<sup>11</sup>

11. In Myanmar, military soldiers are known to rape and traffic Burmese women into prostitution in neighboring Thailand.<sup>12</sup>

12. UN Peacekeepers have also contributed to the demand for prostitution. During UN mission to Cambodia, the number of prostitutes more than tripled. According to the Cambodian Women's Development Association, the number of prostitutes rose from 6,000 in 1992 to a high of 25,000. During the UNTAC mission, sex houses and Thai-style massage parlors proliferated. There was also a rise in child prostitution, as growing infection rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases among Cambodian prostitutes increased the demand for "clean young girls".<sup>13</sup>

13. Between the 1992 Peace Accords and 1994 elections in Mozambique, UN peacekeeping troops encouraged prostitution by buying sex from girls as young as 12.

14. According to experts of NGOs and the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), trafficking in Bosnia first began to appear in 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. Experts from the U.N. mission's Special Trafficking Operations Program stated in a 2001 press conference that approximately 25 percent of the women and girls working in nightclubs and bars were trafficked. NGO experts working to end trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina estimated that as many as 2,000 women and girls from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have found themselves trapped in Bosnian brothels. The IOM, which arranged for temporary shelter and voluntary repatriation of 498 trafficking victims from Bosnia and Herzegovina between August 1999 and October 2002, reported girls as young as thirteen.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gabriela Network, Statement on War on Iraq, 23 March 2003. Available: <http://www.gabnet.org/statements.htm>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2003: Uganda*, Available: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21277.htm>

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2003: Rwanda*, Available: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21277.htm>

<sup>12</sup> VOA News, *Burmese Soldiers Accused of Raping Ethnic Minority Woman* (2003).

<sup>13</sup> Talleyrand, Isabelle, *Military Prostitution: How the Authorities Worldwide Aid and Abet International Trafficking in Women*, 27 *Syracuse J Int'l L. & Com.* 151 (2000).

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Hopes Betrayed: Trafficking of Women and Girls to Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina for Forced Prostitution*, Available: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/bosnia/>

15. Following these reports, the Security Council passed Resolution 1325 which recognized the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. Pursuant to a request in Resolution 1325, the Secretary General submitted a report on October 16, 2002 which emphasized the necessity of measures to prevent trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women in the context of peacekeeping operations. The report stated that all missions had clear instructions to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation or assault by peacekeeping personnel and to ensure that offenders are duly disciplined. The Secretary also called on troop-contributing States to enhance their own efforts to ensure that such violations do not occur.<sup>15</sup> Reports of trafficking and sexual abuse within the context of peacekeeping operations have subsequently ceased. This illustrates the significant impact that even minimal action can have.

### **The Need for Economic Opportunities**

16. Lack of economic opportunities for women creates, or at least exacerbates, the problem of trafficking.

17. Economic gain is said to be the primary motivation for the women and girls who often are led to believe that they are being taken to Europe for employment as domestics. Many women work in the sex industry to send money back home. Some claim that international trafficking of Nigerian girls is an economic pipeline that provides hard currency that supports families back in Nigeria.<sup>16</sup>

18. Microcredit programs throughout the world play a significant role in the promotion of women's self-employment and income generation, especially in poor households. They also promote social development goals like gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Supporting local women's groups who offer microcredit and job training programs can help create a viable alternative for women vulnerable to trafficking.

### **Recommendations**

19. HRA urges the Commission to request that the Secretary General and national governments consider methods for reducing the impact of the military demand on trafficking, including military codes of conduct. It is essential that a mechanism be created, such as a special rapporteur, to enforce codes and follow up on violations.

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<sup>15</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, S/2002/1154.

<sup>16</sup> Elabor-Idemudia, "The African Dimension of International Sex Trafficking: The Narratives of Nigerian Women and Girls Engaged in the Industry".

20. HRA urges governments to:

- a) ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
- b) research and report methods to reduce the role the military and armed conflict play in creating the demand for commercial sex.

21. HRA urges UN bodies and governments to support local women's groups that provide microcredit job training programs for women vulnerable to the commercial sex trade.

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