

COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN

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Centuries passed from the moment of the formation of slave-owning system but up to the present human trafficking hasn't been rooted out and is still one of the most fairly lucrative criminal industry. Moreover human trafficking is the product of the globalization and closely connected with economic and social instability. Human trafficking is a booming international trade, making billions of dollars at the expense of millions of victims, many of them children, who are robbed of their dignity and freedom. Although most of us have never witnessed this crime, it happens every day all around the world. Over the past decade, trafficking in human beings has reached epidemic proportions. No country is immune. While there is no reliable data on the number of citizens of Belarus who are being trafficked abroad, assessments vary between tens and thousands of people a year.

The UN describes trafficking as a form of «slavery». «Trafficking in human» shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion.

Women, who form over 80% of trafficking victims, are particularly at risk to become involved in sex trafficking. Men are also at risk of being trafficked for unskilled work predominantly involving hard labour. For children, exploitation may also include forced prostitution, illicit international adoption, trafficking for early marriage and etc. The age of victims varies widely, but we emphasize that most are between 18 and 24. Victims are sometimes tricked and lured by false promises or physically forced. Some traffickers use coercive and manipulative tactics including deception, intimidation, feigned love, isolation, threat and use of physical force, debt bondage, other abuse, or even force-feeding with drugs to control their victims.

Trafficked people are usually the most vulnerable and powerless minorities in a region. They often come from the poorer areas where opportunities are limited, they often are ethnic minorities, and they often are displaced persons such as runaways or refugees. But victim may come from any social background, class or race.

International public is seriously worried about such horrible breach of human rights and that's why it takes decisive actions which include development of prevention strategy through the creation of a database, the establishment of a hotline and a series of public awareness initiatives as well as rendering help to protect victims of human trafficking through the construction of shelter facilities. Foreign experts notice, that Belarus among the post-soviet countries strongly keeps the leadership in the effective decision making of such acute problems as counteraction of illegal migration and human trafficking.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has declared: «Certainly, there are serious factors pushing to the prosperity of illegal migration and human trafficking such as political instability, poverty, social and economic deprivations. They go hand in hand with attracting factors - prospering life in rich countries and also demand». He has added that «while these two categories of factors and problems will not be fully realized and resolved, many of today's victims of dealers will continue to search for the best life and still will be caught in net criminals».

Unemployment among youth is an acute problem in the Republic of Belarus and is №1. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of RB, in Belarus nowadays there are about 30 000 girls at the age from 16 till 25 years who don't study and don't work anywhere. Such girls dream to find highly paid work abroad. And criminals use their intentions in their own interests. Unfortunately, employment abroad is often connected with risk. Groups of the Belarusian women are taken out to the Russian Federation, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Israel and other countries. Many victims of human trafficking don't apply to the law enforcement bodies as they are afraid of publicity of activities to which they were forced and prosecutions from recruiters and souteneurs.

Human trafficking is an international problem. So only the international partnership - pledge of successful struggle against criminality. Positive side is that prevention and suppression of human trafficking efforts of Belarus are highly

appreciated by the international community. Many international organizations (MOM, OSCE, UNICEF), and the national governments (the countries of the EU, the USA, CIS) positively respond to the measures undertaken by the government of Belarus.

Several specialized crisis centers, public organizations and different social shelters work for socially-psychological help. Belarus objectively cannot stand aside of the world processes, including negative, and should take necessary measures to protect state interests, to provide safety of the citizens. The Government program for 2008-2010 of counteraction to human trafficking, illegal migration and the illegal acts connected with them was confirmed in 2007.

Alexander Lukashenko has noted that «There is a necessity of well prepared experts and constant interaction of law enforcement bodies, and also the non-governmental organizations of the various countries and continents for effective struggle against this phenomenon». One of the concrete steps in the realization of introduced initiatives is the International educational centre opening for preparation, improvement of professional skills and personnel retraining in the sphere of migration and counteraction to human trafficking in Belarus under the International organization on migration which is based on the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

There is a specialized crisis center in Brest region with Red Cross representatives in Pinsk who are engaged in rendering psychological help to victims of human trafficking. But the main idea here is that you are able to help yourself by being informed and keeping all precautionary measures. The second step is to inform and warn the others.

«That is a problem that deserves further attention. The tip of the iceberg is in front of our eyes: how much of it is submerged? It is too easy to blind ourselves to the suffering of fellow creatures, so long as our own comfort and security are not threatened. We have a moral duty and a legal obligation to fight human trafficking. It is time to unite and to act. This is a global problem that requires a global solution.» - Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director, UNODC.