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Human Rights Index

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HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX

*Prepared by the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR)**

Human trafficking—sometimes called “modern day slavery” and defined by the United Nations as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion . . . for the purpose of exploitation”—is currently tied with illegal arms sales, after illicit drug trading, as the second largest criminal industry in the world. Involving mostly women and children, and including, at a minimum, sexual exploitation, forced labor, and the removal and sale of human organs, human trafficking is also the fastest growing criminal industry worldwide. Despite formal recognition and protection of the human rights of trafficked persons, as evidenced in several UN conventions, protocols, and other instruments, remedial action against traffickers is severely lacking. In part this is a result of its secretive nature and, consequently, the difficulty of securing accurate data upon which effective enforcement depends. It is also a result of powerful special interests—cultural and political as well as pecuniary—that are served not by the elimination of human trafficking but by its perpetuation.

- o: Number of shelters in the United States for trafficking victims who, commonly aliens without English language proficiency, are misled to relocate by false promises of lucrative new jobs, only to find themselves having to repay travel expense and work permit indebtedness, typically as low-skilled workers in slavery-like circumstances (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2000)
- 75: Percentage of all human trafficking dedicated to sexual exploitation, the victims commonly being forbidden to refuse “customers” on pain of punishment by their “employers” for resisting, even when they are sexually or otherwise physically abused—a circumstance of especial vulnerability for trafficked persons, who, as “illegal immigrants,” tend not to report their abuse for fear of prosecution and/or deportation and potential further victimization upon their return home (U.S. Department of State, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2001)
- 227: Minimum number of nightclubs engaged in the forced prostitution of trafficked women and girls in Bosnia—victimized females who, upon arrival at their first destination, usually are initiated into their new life by gang rape, as illustrated by a 14-year-old girl raped by seven men her first night, whose mouth was taped shut to silence her screaming

- upon the request of her first “customer,” who paid extra to rape a virgin (Community Action Publishers, 2002; BreakPoint, 2004)
- 2,700:** Minimum number of mail-order bride agencies worldwide, approximately 500 in the United States, with American mail-order customers being generally white, older, and prone to patriarchal values that cause their usually foreign, non-white, younger brides to be made economically dependent and put at risk of physical abuse—a condition that is facilitated by U.S. immigration policy which gives to the husbands virtual total control over their foreign wives’ immigration status, including their eligibility for “conditional resident status” (Perspective, 2002)
- 14,500:** Minimum number of foreign women and children annually trafficked into the United States (different sources estimating as high as 50,000), with U.S. citizens making up the rest of the U.S. forced labor work, much of it hidden but nevertheless reported in as many as 90 U.S. cities from which, according to one estimate, some 200,000 American children are at high risk of being trafficked into the sex industry each year (Human Rights Watch, 2001; UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005)
- 600,000:** Minimum number of persons annually trafficked across international borders and thereafter commonly trapped into bonded labor or debt bondage (where they must work to “repay” loans about which they are unaware or misinformed) or forced labor (where they work under threat of violence), half of these victims being children under age 13, 43% of them from East Asia and the Pacific (U.S. Department of State, 2005; International Commission for Women of African Descent, 2004)
- 2,000,000:** Minimum number of persons annually trafficked within their own country (different sources estimating as high as 7 million) and subjected to the same mistreatment and rights violations that are suffered by foreign trafficked laborers (International Commission for Women of African Descent, 2004)
- 9,000,000,000:** Minimum estimated U.S. dollar profits resulting annually from human trafficking (different sources estimating as high as \$32 billion), increasingly at the hands of organized crime due to the high profits and the fewer risks compared to arms or drug trafficking, thus making human trafficking the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world at this time (U.S. Department of State, 2005; Public Health Association of Australia)

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