



Newsletter 2/2014

Dear Readers,

At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which took place in London in June, it was brought home to me once again that sexual violence, which includes trafficking in women, is an extremely “effective” weapon of war.

Unfortunately, human trafficking follows the usual “market principles”. It primarily serves a business goal, that is, to make as much money as possible and to remain invisible. Organized crime does not only acquire considerable financial resources through human trafficking – it also builds up close contacts on all levels of society. Politics, business and organized crime work hand in hand here.

The articles from Brazil, Argentina and Sinai will inform you on what it means in concrete terms when the UN protocol against human trafficking and organized crime is not implemented. Between 700,000 and two million women and girls become victims of human traffickers every year. This was reason enough for us to focus on trafficking in women in this newsletter.

RUTH-GABY VERMOT-MANGOLD,
CO-PRESIDENT PWAG

TOPIC TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN IN BRAZIL

A dream becomes a nightmare

Combating human trafficking has been a priority on the Brazilian government’s political agenda since 2006. However, the marked economic divide in the country, along with the corruption associated with this inequality, continue to create the perfect conditions for this criminal business. Vera Vieira, a journalist and PWAG Coordinator in Brazil, has been organizing public workshops in various regions of the country for several years with the aim of combating trafficking in women and violence against women.

By Vera Vieira

above: PeaceWoman Maria Amélia de Almeida Teles, PWAG Coordinator Vera Vieira und PeaceWoman Nilza Iraci (from left to right).

People as commodities

Trade in people is commercialized all over the world. The aim is financial gain. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), human trafficking ranks third (after the drugs and arms business) as a source of revenue in organized crime, with an annual profit of 31.6 million dollars. Sexual exploitation, organ trafficking and slave labor are the most common types of trafficking of women, men and children. Since the end of the 20th century, the international community has been using the Palermo Protocol, a basic international agreement, to tackle the organized crime that conducts this human trafficking.

An almost invisible crime

Unlike the drugs business, human trafficking is by no means a priority on the political agenda in all countries. States and authorities tend to turn a blind eye, particularly when sexual exploitation is involved. Patriarchal structures and so-called “macho cultures” are the reason for this failure to act. Violence against women expresses a social construction of gender that has prevailed for centuries. It is thus not surprising that disproportionate numbers of women become victims of human trafficking worldwide.

A Brazilian study on trafficking in women, teenagers and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation (PESTRAF: Pesquisa sobre Tráfico de Mulheres, Crianças e Adolescentes para Fins de Exploração Sexual Comercial no Brasil) found that most of the women affected by trafficking come from deprived backgrounds and often have no formal training. As a result, they are not integrated into

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TOPIC **TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN IN BRAZIL**

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the regular labor market. Discrimination on the basis of color and gender often plays a role, too. The desire for a better life, nicer clothes, a small toy for their child, or a car – such dreams drive many women into the clutches of procurers, who go to deprived areas, the favelas, and make the women tempting offers: “Would you like to earn a lot of money abroad? To live in a big city and to make use of your good looks?”

With their susceptibility to big promises, the young women, most of whom are aged between 17 and 25, are easy prey for the well-organized human traffickers. This network includes club and brothel owners, as well as security forces, customs officials, police officers and politicians. In Brazil alone there are 241 human trafficking routes, 131 of which are international.

A dream becomes a nightmare

The same thing always happens when the nightmare starts. The woman becomes the property of the trafficker. When she arrives in the foreign country, she already owes him money for her travel expenses, which she repays by providing sexual services. In addition, the women’s personal documents are usually confiscated, and they have no right to a private life or free time. Once they have arrived in an unfamiliar country and culture, they are forced to live as illegal immigrants – sans papiers – with all that this status entails.

The women quickly realize that they are caught in a trap and that it will be difficult to escape. If a woman does make it back to Brazil, she has often become a perpetrator herself, and works as a procurer. But even if women manage to start a new life, they are mostly traumatized by their experiences.

What can be done?

Organized crime must be tackled efficiently on all levels of society and on all fronts. Brazil adopted its first National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking in 2006. This was the first time that the government laid down national guidelines and defined the fields of action in the fight against human trafficking.

After the combating of human trafficking in Brazil had become part of the government’s agenda, the first National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking – Plano Nacional de Enfrentamento ao Tráfico de Pessoas (PNETP) – entered into force. The second PNETP, which was drawn up by government agencies, civil society and international organizations, was published in 2013. This plan calls for institutionalized controls; the consistent promotion and integration of public institutions, networks and organizations active in combating human trafficking; training courses on combating human trafficking; and public educational and information activities.

All of these plans and measures clearly show the desire for change. “Trafficking in women is still booming in Brazil, and the country serves as a base for exporting women to Europe and North America,” says Ildo Rosa, an inspector in Brazil’s Federal Police.

above: One of the many workshops to inform and sensitize people on violence against women in Brazil comes to a successful end.



left: The journalist Meron Estefanos gives people being held in captivity in the Sinai a voice.

TOPIC **TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN IN SINAI**

Fleeing from Eritrea – a dead end

Thousands of people flee from the military dictatorship in Eritrea every year in the hope of a better life. Human trafficking rings shamelessly exploit the plight of these refugees. The Sudanese-Eritrean border region has become one of the main zones for kidnapping in recent years. People are kidnapped and abducted, then kept captive and tortured in the Sinai Desert. Women and girls are particularly affected by the brutal violence of the kidnapers.

There is very limited freedom of speech, press and religion in Eritrea and the human rights situation is desolate in the country. Under the military dictatorship, Eritreans – both women and men – have to do unlimited military service. This fact, along with the search for work, forces many people to leave the country. Although the state's surveillance methods are becoming increasingly brutal, hundreds of people flee across the border to the Sudan each month.¹ Human Rights Watch reports that there have been over 200 000 refugees since 2004.² Once they have fled, men, women and children face many dangers, including an increasing number of kidnappings in recent years. The Eritrean refugees are sold to Bedouin from the Sinai region at the Sudanese-Egyptian border.

Violence is used against the captives to force them to reveal their relatives' telephone numbers. As soon as a connection has been made, the torture starts again. This forces the families to pay high ransoms. But even if a ransom is paid, the prisoners have hardly

any chance of escape. Those who can pay the demanded ransom are set free in the desert and run the risk of being kidnapped again or shot at the border to Israel or Egypt. Those who cannot pay are likely to be killed or sold on to other gangs.

Women and girls are subjected to sexual violence and appalling abuse in captivity. Kidnapped women say that there are mass rapes, including rapes of minors. This often leads to unwanted pregnancies among the women and girls, who continue to be abused by their kidnapers. A pregnant 21-year-old Eritrean reported about the brutal methods used by her kidnapers, who apparently exploit pregnancies for their own ends, demanding an additional ransom for the baby. They stand on pregnant women's stomachs to enforce their demands.³

Human smuggling in the Sinai presents great challenges to the international community. PeaceWomen Across the Globe and the Swiss Observatory for asylum and foreigners law (Schweizerische Beobachtungsstelle für Asyl- und Ausländerrecht) are organizing an evening event in Bern on the topic of trafficking in women in the Sinai. Meron Estefanos, a human rights activist and journalist from Eritrea, will speak at this event about the kidnapping of Eritrean refugees. Her program on the international Eritrean radio station, Radio Erena, gives the victims of kidnapping a voice and provides them with moral and financial support.

Further information is available in our events listing.

¹ For information on the situation in Eritrea, please see

<http://www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch/herkunftslander/africa/eritrea> (September 8, 2014).

² Human traffickers in the Sudan und Egypt:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/11/egyptsudan-traffickers-who-torture> (September 8, 2014).

³ For further information, please see M. Estefanos / C. Rijken / M. van Reisen, Human Trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees between Life and Death, Brussels 2012.



Apropos

News

Focus on gender perspectives and human trafficking

Our coordinators from Brazil, Argentina and Indonesia attended their annual interregional meeting as part of the programme to combat violence against women. The public event in the Chamber of Deputies in Buenos Aires was a special highlight this year.

The topics of gender and human trafficking were explored from a wide range of angles over the course of the two-day gathering. Speakers from politics and civil society played an important role in making the event such a success. Our PeaceWomen and experts on this field – Mirta Clara from Argentina and María Amélia de Almeida Teles and Nilza Iraci from Brazil – also made a vital contribution. The seminar showed the importance of a gender perspective, particularly as regards human trafficking. The women also examined the human trafficking situation in Latin America, one of the regions most affected by human trafficking.

“Democratic countries’ greatest duty is to find the disappeared women who have become victims of human trafficking. Truth, justice and compensation are vital in the fight against this crime,” said one of the seminar participants.

The event showed María Julia Moreyra, PWAG Coordinator in Argentina, even more clearly that she wants to continue informing and sensitizing people on this topic. She is already planning her next workshops and seminars.

Awards to PeaceWomen

Our PeaceWoman from Honduras, **Itsmania Palero**, was included in the list of 100 information heroes published by Reporters Without Borders for World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2014.

Miriam Coronel Ferrer received this year’s N-Peace Award in the category “Campaigning for Action – Women and Men Mobilizing for Peace”.

Events

October 30, 2014, 7 – 9:30 p.m., Hotel Bern, Bern
«**Trafficking in women in the Sinai**» PWAG and Swiss Observatory for asylum and foreigners law (SBAA) will give a presentation on the kidnapping of Eritrean refugees in the Sinai, with a focus on women. The human rights activist and journalist Meron Estefanos will be the main speaker.

November 21, 2014, 7 – 9 p.m., Käfigturm, Bern
Violence against women by the IS terrorist group Women from the Kurdish territories face massive threats from the IS terrorist group in Syria and Iraq. PWAG has invited the international representation of the Kurdish women’s movement to report on the situation.

November 28, 2014, 8 – 9:30 p.m., Impact Hub Garage, Zürich
«**Zivilcourage 2.0.: Mehr Sicherheit für Frauen?**» (Civil courage 2.0.: More Security for Women?) PeaceWomen Across the Globe and Crowdguard will hold an evening discussion event as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign.

above: PeaceWoman Mirta Clara and Dr. Nancy Teresa Anzoategui from Argentina with the book on 1 000 PeaceWomen in the Chamber of Deputies in Buenos Aires.

Solidarity

Peace needs us – and we need you! Please support our work by making a donation or by buying a “peace share” for PeaceWomen Across the Globe.

Many thanks!

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You will find further information on our events and activities on our website, where we also present each PeaceWoman of the Month.
www.1000peacewomen.org



Our **Blog** provides information on the work of our global network:
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