

Title:

Human Trafficking- A New Harrowing Reality

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Human trafficking– a new harrowing reality.

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Unfortunately, we are living in a world where human trafficking is very common, and people, especially females, are being sold for cheap labour or forced to work in the sex industry. This is a form of human slavery, and, according to the FBI, is 'believed to be the third largest criminal activity in the world'. The aim of this study is to determine whether Maltese people are aware of this reality in Malta. The study is based on 100 questionnaires distributed to a representative sample of the local population.

Even though, for many of us, human trafficking may be something we associate with films, something which exists but does not really touch our lives, it is very real and very serious. In fact, according to Wikipedia, 'Human trafficking is thought to be one of the fastest growing activities of trans-national criminal organisations.'

In fact,

'In 2012, the ILO estimates that 21 million victims are trapped in modern-day slavery. Of these 14.2 million (68%) were exploited for labour, 4.5 million (22%) were sexually exploited, and 2.2 million (10%) were exploited in state-imposed forced labour.'

Malta is also affected by this reality, and, in fact, recently is being associated with human trafficking in the media. In fact, in February 2013, the Maltese courts tried the first case of human trafficking in Malta when both the perpetrator and the victim were Maltese. That year also saw the implementation of the first Maltese action plan on combating trafficking in persons for 2013-2014 by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services. Since then, the problem has certainly escalated. In fact, as recently as the beginning of March 2018, 'the Malta police force has arrested nine people for alleged human trafficking with the victims testifying in a magisterial inquiry.' (Diacono, 2018). Moreover,

'Three months ago, the national social welfare agency Appoġġ warned its shelters are packed to the brim with 18 victims of human trafficking, who come

to Malta to work as chefs, waitresses or baby sitters but who ended up forced to work in awful conditions end with their passports seized from them to prevent their immigration. With salaries as low as €500 a month, some had no option but to work as prostitutes in massage parlours.’

(Diacono, 2018)

Many similar cases have been reported.

Our research reveals that only 28% of our respondents think that there is enough awareness about human trafficking and the need to be careful. In fact, 40% of them have no idea whether Maltese people are at risk as potential victims of human trafficking or not, though the vast majority are aware that around the world women and children are more likely to be abducted for illegal purposes than men. There is also a limited awareness as to what happens to victims of abduction and trafficking, namely that they are forced to work as prostitutes, call girls, etc (59%); to feature in illegal pornographic material (50%); to be auctioned off as white slaves (28%); for body organs to be used in illegal organ transplants (10%); to be forced to work in illegal sweat shops (8%). People seem to be especially unaware about the incidence of forced cheap labour.

Slavery and the sale of human beings go against all human rights and they have been illegal for many decades. Therefore, it is a shame that nowadays, with all the knowledge and data and resources which are available to us they are rearing their ugly heads again and on such a large scale. It seems we are still very far from achieving what the very first article of the Universal Declaration of human rights (1948) insists is the basic right of all human beings.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reasons and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

But until we do so we are at risk of losing our humanity. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness about this issue – not only so that people can try to protect themselves from it but also so that, through education, we may finally eradicate this horror.

References;

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Tim Diacono, 2nd March 2018

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