



**STOP**

**SEX TRAFFICKING  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



# SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN GREECE

## What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

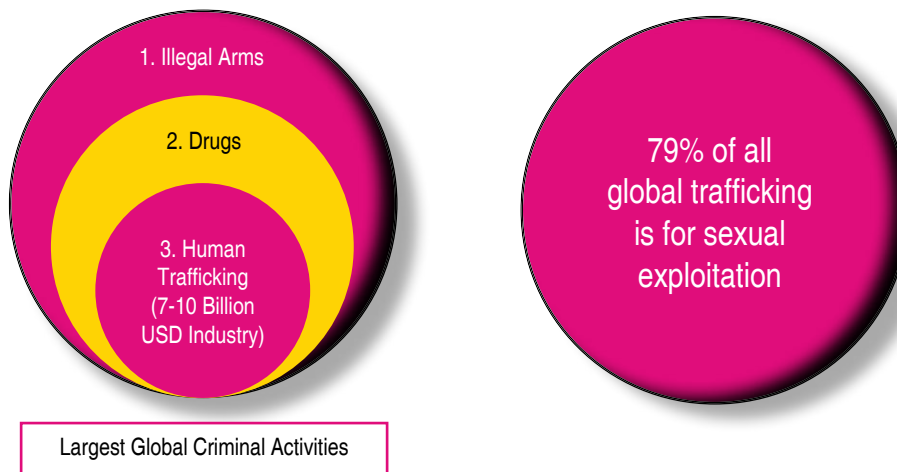
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

## What's the problem?

### GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fuelled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking, the third largest international crime, following illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine percent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.<sup>2</sup>



### CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN GREECE

According to one estimate, approximately 40,000 women and children, mostly between 12 and 25 years of age, are trafficked into Greece each year for prostitution.<sup>3</sup> However, official statistics quoted by Amnesty International show that only about 100 to 200 women and children are identified each year as trafficked victims.<sup>4</sup> It is believed that trafficking for forced prostitution

in Greece has increased tenfold in the last decade, but only recently has the Government started to offer assistance and protection to trafficked victims.<sup>5</sup>

Between 2003 and 2007, about 1,101 persons were arrested for human trafficking in the country, with about 24 child victims identified over the same period.<sup>6</sup> It was not mentioned how many of the identified children were victims of trafficking for sexual purposes.

## Who gets trafficked?

The Ministries of Public Order and Foreign Affairs reveal that the majority of children trafficked into Greece are from Albania and Romania.<sup>7</sup> Other sources also mentioned a large number coming from other countries in the Balkans, former members of the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup> and Africa.<sup>9</sup> Albanian children are trafficked into Greece by foot across the mountains or across the border using false documentation.<sup>10</sup>

According to a child protection project in Albania, economic deprivation is the main factor causing parents to send their children to Greece. They are usually approached by organised trafficking networks who offer them large sums of money, promising overseas opportunities for their children. Many trafficked children end up in the sex trade.<sup>11</sup>

Children sometimes arrive in Greece as tourists or illegal immigrants and are lured into prostitution by club owners who threaten them with deportation. Some are abducted by Greek traffickers, smuggled into the country and sold to local procurers. They are usually held captive in apartments, hotels and clubs and have their passports taken away from them. NGO observers reported that traffickers control approximately 80 percent of the illegal prostitutes in Greece. They also mentioned police involvement in trafficking businesses run by organised criminal networks.<sup>12</sup>

One NGO reported that child victims of trafficking are treated as criminals for entering the country illegally.<sup>13</sup> If they want to be protected by the Greek authorities, they are required to testify against their traffickers and risk reprisals. However, the level of protection they receive is minimal.<sup>14</sup>

The demand for sex drives child sex trafficking globally, while poverty, domestic violence and abuse, discrimination and the desire for a better life makes children vulnerable. Children are especially vulnerable to being trafficked because they are often uneducated, easy to overpower and easy to persuade. Children may also be in a position where they believe they must help to support their families and may be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and do not have someone to look out for them, are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered:

- ‘Sending’ or ‘origin’ – from where children are sent;
- ‘Transit’ - where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination; and
- ‘Receiving’ or ‘destination’ - where the children finally end up.

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries might only be sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. Greece is a destination and transit country for women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation.<sup>15</sup>

For child trafficking, **Greece** is primarily considered as a:

- origin country
- ✓ transit country
- ✓ destination country
- internal/domestic country



## CASE STUDIES

- Margarita, an Albanian girl, was sold into sex slavery by her mother and step-father at the age of 13. She was taken across the border to Greece by foot. Soon after her arrival in the country, her mother took her to a hotel in central Athens and abandoned her. There she was brutally abused, forced into sexual servitude and eventually arrested during a police raid. She was pregnant, had no documentation and had been serving time in prison for months when the NGO Médecins sans Frontières rescued her. She was then put into a shelter for trafficked victims run by the NGO in Athens and lived there until it closed down due to a lack of State funding. Later, Margarita was placed under the care of an Afghan immigrant who used to work at the shelter and she received schooling.<sup>16</sup>
- Alicia is 16 years old and comes from Africa. Her parents used to have a small family business, while her older brother was unemployed and her younger sister was in school. She came to Greece with the help of her father’s friend in order to solve a serious health problem she was having. As soon as she arrived in the north, the man took her ID card and passport and locked her in an apartment which belonged to an African woman. When Alicia complained about having terrible pains and wanted to visit a hospital, the woman physically abused her. She also informed her that she had been sold for 45,000 Euros and that she was obliged to work as a prostitute in order to pay back her debt. One day, the apartment door was left unlocked and she managed to escape and went to the nearest police station. From there she was driven to a hospital where she had a surgical operation. Alicia stayed in Storgi shelter for more than one year during which she learned to speak Greek, became a legal citizen and found a job. Today, she is still working and has her own place to live.<sup>17</sup>

## Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all types of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions.

## Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organised criminal network that ‘recruits’ children and supplies them with fake identification. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

The Human Trafficking division of the Greek Police Department reported a new trend of traffickers applying psychological pressure rather than physical torture to ignite fear as a means of making their victims submissive and enslaving them.<sup>18</sup> According to Grigoris Lazos, a criminology professor and leading expert on trafficking in Greece, trafficking networks have made about six billion Euros from their operations since 1990.<sup>19</sup>

### CASE STUDY

In February 2004, the Razgrad District Court in Bulgaria sentenced a trafficker supplying the Greek market – R. Pavlov, 36 years old, from the town of Levski - to seven years in prison. Pavlov was charged with abducting six girls on separate occasions from the Pario Disco in the village of Zavet. He hid the victims in a flat in the Razgrad residential area Orel, where he raped and abused them. Then he took them to Petrich and the border village of Katounitsa, where he sold them in Greece. One of the girls managed to escape and turned Pavlov over to the police. In Greece, Bulgarian girls involved in prostitution are mainly exploited in the area of Thessaloniki. The Bulgarian special services have a long list of establishments reportedly offering sex services from Bulgarian women.<sup>20</sup>

## How can we stop the trafficking of children?

### LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- The Government of Greece needs to accelerate its ratification of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* and the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* and to ensure that national trafficking legislation fully complies with the definition of and provisions on trafficking in international laws.
- The Government must strictly investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence law enforcement officials for trafficking complicity. The same applies to all parties involved in the trafficking process.

- Develop a registration and database system of human traffickers to record their convictions. The database should be systematically established and shared with other countries with bi-lateral or multilateral agreements and with Interpol, to strengthen effective cooperation against human trafficking.
- Cooperate with neighbouring countries to reinforce stricter border control, particularly around well-known trafficking routes.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Greece	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Greece
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1993	Initial Report – 2000 Second Report due in 2000, but not yet submitted	The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Undertake a comprehensive research on the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children, including by gathering reliable data on their incidence; (b) Develop a national plan of action to address the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children covering all aspects of assistance to child victims, and ensure that the plan is implemented throughout the nation as well as prosecute criminals who have committed such acts; (c) Ensure that any cross-border efforts to address trafficking incorporate the best interests of the children; (d) Strengthen its efforts to identify and report on practices of child sexual exploitation and strengthen cooperation with NGOs working in this field; (e) Strengthen its actions to assist child victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking by providing counselling, health and social services.
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	2008	N/A	N/A
The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children	Signed in 2000 but not yet ratified	N/A	N/A
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	2001		
Council of Europe Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings	Signed in November 2005 but not yet ratified	N/A	N/A

## PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- The Greek Government must reinforce cooperation with non-governmental organisations and urgently develop a standard identification, referral and protection system for victims of trafficking. The Government must also ensure that all victims, regardless of their nationalities, adequately and equitably have access to care and support services which should include psychosocial consultation, rehabilitation and reintegration.
- The Government needs to push further efforts in developing inter-ministerial cooperation to combat trafficking, particularly with bordering and source/destination countries of trafficking in persons to and from Greece, such as awareness raising programmes on child trafficking to Greece in countries of origin, capacity building and resource exchange programmes for law enforcement officials and joint operations to track down trafficking networks.
- Develop a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary task force to combat trafficking. The task force should provide operational guidance, training, and a standard framework on anti-trafficking activities to organisations working to combat trafficking throughout the nation, to ensure that their activities are being implemented collectively in the same direction.
- Trafficked children should be granted stay permits for humanitarian reasons regardless of their collaboration with law enforcement, while identifying a durable solution in the best interest of the child. Ensure that child victims and witnesses of human trafficking incidents who are willing to testify are protected throughout the judicial process by putting security issues and the child's best interests as priorities.

## TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

- **National Centre for Emergency Social Assistance (E.K.A.K.B).** Operating under the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Centre has six offices throughout Athens. It provides medical advice and psychological support via counselling to victims of trafficking and ensures that trafficked victims are referred to appropriate institutions for legal advice or to health centres for medical care. The Centre also enables trafficked victims to file complaints about their detention.

SOS toll-free hotline: 197; tel: 213-203-9706 (main office in Athens)

- **The Smile of the Child** is an association for children in Greece and Cyprus that works to protect and provide psychological support to child victims of abuse and neglect, economic exploitation and trafficking; children who experience social and family problems; parents who have problems with their children; and children with severe health problems. The Smile of the Child's international partners include International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Missing Children Europe, Child Helpline International, and Amber Alert. The helpline operates 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Tel.: +30 210 330 6140, +30 210 760 9550 (Social Service), SOS helpline: 1056 (only for local calls); fax: +30 210 384 3038; e-mail: info hamogelo.gr, sos1056 hamogelo.gr, costas.yannopoulos hamogelo.gr; website: <http://www.hamogelo.gr/>

- **Stop Trafficking of People Now (STOPNOW)** is a project established in December 2001 to prevent and combat human trafficking, particularly of women and children for sexual and economic exploitation. It provides assistance to victims of trafficking to facilitate their social reintegration and advocates voluntary repatriation of trafficked victims. It is involved in anti-trafficking activities in Greece, Albania, Ukraine and Georgia. STOPNOW receives financial support

from the International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation (YDAS-Hellenic Aid) - General Secretariat of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Tel.: (+30) 210-77.57.121; fax: (+30) 210-77.51.170; e-mail: [info@stop-trafficking.org](mailto:info@stop-trafficking.org) or [legal@stop-trafficking.org](mailto:legal@stop-trafficking.org) for legal advice

- **“STORGI” home for abused women and children** is a shelter co-founded by the NGO “Solidarity” and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Development Cooperation Department in October 2006, to provide care to refugees and offers psychological support, medical treatment, legal advice and reintegration services to victims of human trafficking and domestic violence.

Toll Free Hotline: 800 11 3 7777

### MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT International: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : [www.thebodyshop.com/stop](http://www.thebodyshop.com/stop)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>5</sup> Amnesty International USA. *Greece: Uphold the rights of women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation*. USA. Accessed on 9 April 2009 from: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGEUR250022007>
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- <sup>10</sup> Limanowska, Barbara. *Trafficking in human beings in Southeastern Europe*. Belgrade: UNICEF. 2002.
- <sup>11</sup> "Child trafficking: A thriving, \$10 billion per year industry". *Voice of America*, 25 May 2005. Accessed on 8 April 2009 from: <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2005-05/2005-05-25-voa60.cfm>
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- <sup>16</sup> Pirovolakis, Christine. Greece: sex trafficking thrives. *Aljazeera.net*, 6 June 2006. Accessed on 4 April 2009 from: <http://www.stopdemand.org/afawcs0112878/ID=172/newsdetails.html>
- <sup>17</sup> Case study provided by Maria Tsiliakou, lawyer, OBRELA.
- <sup>18</sup> Pirovolakis, Christine. "Greece: sex trafficking thrives". *Aljazeera.net*, 6 June 2006. Accessed on 4 April 2009 from: <http://www.stopdemand.org/afawcs0112878/ID=172/newsdetails.html>
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