

Trafficked women in Denmark

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With the expatriation of Omo Amenagawon, the Danish legal authorities have sent a clear message: It is more important to keep foreigners out of the country than to fight human trafficking.

If you google Omo Amenagawon, there are no hits from the past four months. Last we had any news of her, she had gone into hiding – and she probably still is.

She came to Denmark from Nigeria, because a group of organised country men/women had told her that she was going to work as an au pair; but instead she was forced to sell herself at Danish brothels, and the organisers took the money. Omo turned her organisers in to the police and testified against them, after which they were sentenced to imprisonment.

Naturally, there are no exact numbers of the extent to which human trafficking takes place in Denmark, or more specifically: how many trafficked women are working as prostitutes, but, most likely, it is thousands. The customer base is present – 15 % of all Danish men do not see any problem in having sex with trafficked women, and another 15 % doubt the righteousness of it, according to [http://miliki.dk/fileadmin/ligestilling/PDF/Menneskehandel/Ramboell - Kortlaegning af prostitutionsefterspoergslen.pdf](http://miliki.dk/fileadmin/ligestilling/PDF/Menneskehandel/Ramboell_-_Kortlaegning_af_prostitutionsefterspoergslen.pdf)

No wonder if Denmark never again finds itself in a situation where a trafficked woman turns in her organisers. During the trial, Omo Amenagawon and her one year old son received death threats from the organisers' network in Nigeria. Nevertheless, Omo and her son were, subsequently, refused asylum in Denmark. Therefore, the young woman and her child have hidden in an unknown place in order to keep alive.

Once again, the public sector of Denmark has demonstrated its vehement unwillingness towards housing too many people originating from elsewhere. And the human traffickers know where to go next time – that goes for Omo's organisers as well, when they are let out of prison. Criminals do, namely, have a tendency of repeating their crimes and to cross borders without asking for permission. The next women they, and many others, will lure into coming to Denmark and force into working on brothels, are likely to accept their destinies, if they cannot expect any protection from Danish government should they choose to report the crime to the police.

Human beings are the world's third largest commodity next to weapons and drugs - the yearly worldwide turnover is estimated to be 32 billion dollars, according to http://www.emmaus-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/EN_Practical-ressource-PDF-réduit.pdf.

The purpose of human trafficking is mostly sexual services – followed by forced labour in, for instance, the cleaning industry and the construction sector. Furthermore, the purpose might also be trade of human organs. Almost 60 % of all trafficked human beings are grown women, while the rest is an even allocation between girls, men and boys.

Three quarters of the trafficked human beings cross one or several borders while being trafficked – a little more than one quarter ends up at another continent. Learn more at: http://www.emmaus-europe.org/a-traduire-en-en_us-emmaus-europe-lutte-contre-la-traite-des-etres-humains-12826.html or in Danish: www.centernodemenneskehandel.dk, www.hopenow.dk and www.provest.dk

Let us have a look at one of the countries to which we usually compare ourselves: In Belgium, trafficked people disclosing their organisers are rewarded. If the report leads to a court ruling towards the organisers, the victim is granted asylum, assured a place to live and provided with the necessary support to find a job or begin an education. In narrow-minded Denmark, we even have more than twice the space per inhabitant at our disposal than they do in Belgium.

Most European countries house from one to six private organisations fighting human trafficking – a list of such organisations can be found at: http://www.emmaus-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/EN_Practical-ressource-PDF-réduit.pdf

European-wide, the European Council has established a group of experts within human trafficking, led by Ukrainian Petya Nestorova and French Claudia Lam. The European Commission of EU has laid down a strategy for the years 2012 to 2016 and appointed Cypriote Myria Vassiliadou coordinator and Italian Alessio Lapucci her assistant. Emmaus Europe's coordinator, Gabriela Martin, feels that the fight against human trafficking thus is placed in the hands of serious, versatile and deeply engaged people.

However, the Danish legal authorities provide criminals with a strong hand by refusing to protect the trafficked women.

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Note: After the publication of the blogintervention The European Resource Center against Trafficking in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Hercegovina, has created a web-portal in English: www.eurcenter.net