

Transactions

Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women
(*Stichting Religieuzen Tegen Vrouwenhandel*)

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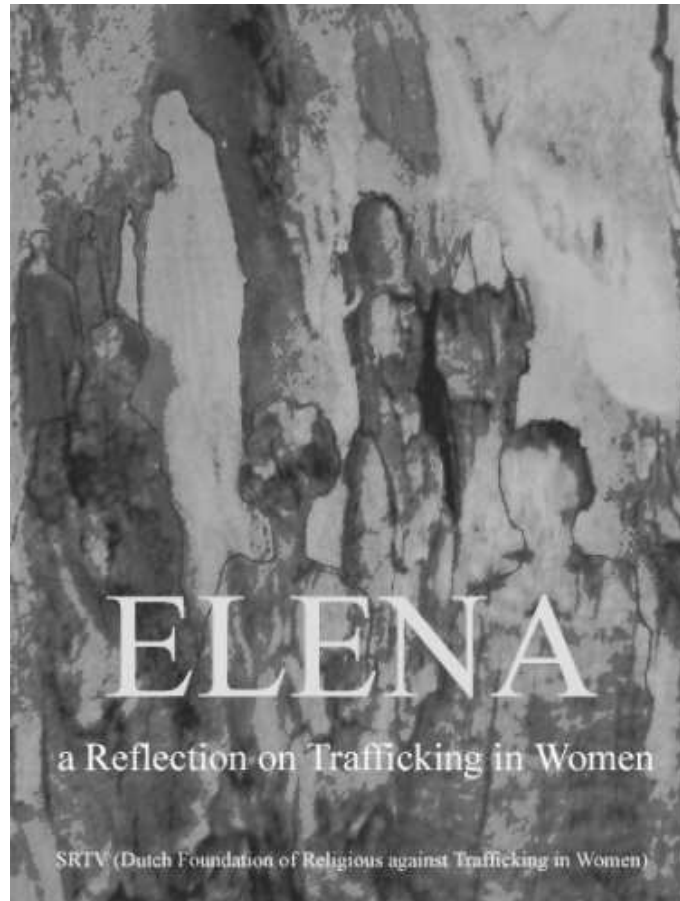
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SRTV at a Protestant Church Service

On Sunday 1st February SRTV was invited to share information about trafficking in women during the service of the protestant church in Geleen, a small city in the south of the Netherlands. I introduced the work of SRTV and Sister Mechtild Leenaerts, member of the international community of Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, spoke about the secret shelter she ran for a couple of years in the very heart of Geleen.

For everyone in the church this was completely new. A sister in charge of a shelter in their neighbourhood without anyone being aware of it? People were keen to know more about that! Sister Mechtild's story had been prepared as an interview, as she has a weak voice. One of the co-workers of the liturgy team had prepared a few questions for sister Mechtild and while the two were seated in front, photographs of sister Mechtild and her shelter were projected on screen behind them.

The story was a very moving one, but sister Mechtild told it as if it were a very normal affair. And that is indeed how she felt about her work: she did what she felt was necessary.

"I never did it alone", is her statement during all the talks she gives, "I always felt strong support from a small team of people, from the foundress of our Congregation and from God."



Sr. Mechtild in the protestant church in Geleen

Sister Mechtild's story was so impressive, that during the celebration people applauded spontaneously when she returned to her seat in church.

Ivonne van de Kar, Coordinator SRTV

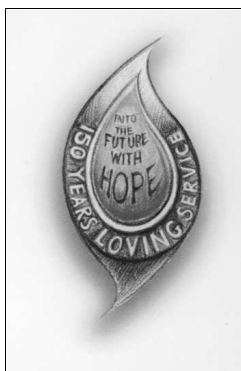
Increasing Number of Congregations Active against Human Trafficking

Last summer SRTV received a telephone call from the United Kingdom. The question asked was whether SRTV was also giving information to religious women abroad. It came from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, who have their provincial house at Mill Hill, a suburb of London.

Of course we were very willing to do that. It feels good to know that within the wider world of religious the theme of trafficking in women is attracting attention in an increasing number of areas. Thus it came about that one Friday afternoon in January this year I took the train to London where a very kind sister awaited me.

Twenty sisters from all over the world had been invited to Mill Hill, where a special gathering had been organi-

sed for sisters of Charity that are active against trafficking in their country. Sisters present had come from England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, and the United States.



On Saturday I talked about SRTV work, our long years of information-sharing with religious, youngsters, and women groups. The care of

victims, and support given by SRTV to small-scale projects, was also discussed.

It was inspiring to notice that in so many areas sisters are keen to undertake the same work, each according to their own circumstances. In the afternoon information was given by the British sr. Ann Teresa who, two years ago, founded the organisation 'Medal Trust' in order to offer relief to victims of women trafficking in the UK. Her organisation now has two relief centres with competent professional staff working very effectively. On Sunday morning I returned by train to 's Hertogenbosch. Hopefully this group of highly interested sisters will actively get going with this work.

*Ivonne van de Kar
Coordinator SRTV*

Journalists reporting on Trafficking of Women sentenced to 12 Years

On March 17th, two American journalists – Euna Lee and Laura Ling – were taken into custody by the North Korean military. The two women were reporting on the trafficking of women along the border with China.

The women were charged with 'hostile acts' and illegally entering the country, then sentenced to 12 years of 'reform through hard labor.'

We call on the Government of North Korea to release Euna and Laura on humanitarian grounds. These women are wives, mothers, daughters, sisters; they are missed by their families and friends, who would like to see them safe and back at home.

*CMAQ, Quebec Media Center,
Michael Lessard, June 9, 2009*

The Inspiration

I was a Stranger and You welcomed Me (Mt.25.35b)

Sister Juliet Mateo of the Missionaries Servants of the Holy Spirit is a Philippina born in Manila, a city with some 2 million inhabitants. The congregation was founded by Father Arnold Jansen who also founded the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the enclosed sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, contemplatives who practice perpetual adoration.



Sr. Juliet Mateo

Juliet's father was a dispensing chemist. She was the second born in a family with nine children where she enjoyed an ideal childhood. Eleven years ago Juliet came to the Netherlands. She joined a multi-cultural group of five SVD priests and four fellow sisters. The members hail from the Netherlands, India, Indonesia and the Philippines. In The Hague Juliet lives in a section of the town called the Schilderswijk, where many immigrants have settled. She is very happy there even though she sometimes feels homesick for the sunny Philippines.

The least of mine

The society to which she belongs has as its principal aim to help people who live in vulnerable conditions and are

in need of spiritual and social support, education and health-care. They work mainly in multi-cultural areas of towns, such as the Schilderswijk in The Hague. Hence the multi-cultural composition of the group.

In that quarter they run a community centre in which Juliet is a hostess. Everyone is welcome there, irrespective of origin, race, religion or nationality.

She recently came into contact with a prostitute. Now she would like to get more involved with such women in the red-light areas of The Hague. Her need for help in establishing good contact with these women – and maintaining it – brought her to the SRTV. She is less interested in attending meetings than in the actual contact with the women, in being near them.

The community also maintains contact with refugees. However, of those not many are left in the area. A number of refugees who initially frequented the community centre got their residence permits and a house, and became less dependent on their contacts with the community.

She is near to people

Residents of the Schilderswijk have gained so much confidence in Juliet that they let her know where they live. This may be due to the fact that she too is an immigrant. She finds everyone worth her time and attention. People in the area sense her friendly warmth. If e.g. a person drops an empty beverage tin in the street she asks in a friendly way if she may pick it up for them. That surprises people and they do not get annoyed, says Juliet.

"This is my place", she says. "I have been called here. I sometimes long for the Philippines, but this is my place here and now." She looks at her place and work in the Schilderswijk in this community of followers of Fr. Arnold Jansen as the fulfilment of God's will. And it is her daily prayer that she may answer God's call as well as possible.

Gijs Lieffering, co-worker SRTV

UN starts Blue Heart Campaign

The United Nations has launched a new campaign, represented by a blue heart, aimed at raising awareness about the millions of victims of human trafficking and rallying support to combat this modern form of slavery.

According to the UNODC, the blue heart represents 'the sadness of trafficking victims, the cold-heartedness of the perpetrators and the commitment of the United Nations to fight this crime.'

As part of the campaign, UNODC is encouraging members of the public to change their Facebook profile picture to a blue heart, upload the blue

heart to their web page, spread the word through Twitter and watch video about human trafficking on YouTube.



Speaking to the Women's World Congress in Vienna, Mr. Costa described human trafficking as "the worst kind of violence against women, made even more repulsive by

the fact that people make money from it."

While poverty makes people vulnerable to human trafficking, gender discrimination and sexism are also to blame. "Whether it's burkas or bikinis, the humiliation of women as property or sex objects is an affront to human dignity. It creates a market for women and girls who are traded like commodities", he said.

The UNODC chief called on everyone to join the campaign "in order to end enslavement, and achieve women's equality".

www.unodc.org, March 5, 2009

The SRTV at the European Parliament

In the Spring of 2008 the SRTV was contacted by the Dutch human rights organization, Jubilee Campaign. This organization, affiliated with the Evangelical Church, wanted to do 'something' in regards to human trafficking. The SRTV often receives such requests and we always invite the organization to see which of our activities can be undertaken jointly. In addition to the Jubilee Campaign, we invited many other Dutch organizations working against human trafficking to the first, as well as all subsequent meetings. Not a single one showed any sign of interest.

The Jubilee Campaign had requested our assistance after receiving a request by a member of the European Parliament to organize an information-morning in Brussels for members of the Parliament. The Parliamentarian Jim Allister, would take responsibility for the costs of the hall and interpreters. We would see to the content.

European subsidies

We decided that our theme would be: organizations which work at the lowest and most basic level aren't equipped to apply for European subsidies. We wanted to let the members of Parliament know about the people who work at this level. About the people in many European countries who work for small organizations, give informational talks at schools and/or run shelters. We invited speakers from four organizations from Albania, Romania, Greece and the Netherlands. All of these organizations do important work and do so with impossibly small budgets. They are very important for the success of governmental policy, including that of the European Union. But too often we hear that they have to shut down their shelters and stop giving their lessons at school because they have run out of money.



Impossible application procedures

This shortage of funds is all the sadder because large sums are made available for this cause by governments and the European Union. However, it is nearly impossible for small organizations to apply for funding for their services.

Due to a fear of fraud, the application procedures are so lengthy and complicated that an organization must hire a

professional grant writer to ask for money. It's not worth the effort to even start the procedure of requesting a small amount of say, 10,000 euros. Small organizations could do many things with such an amount, but governments only want to receive requests for much larger sums of money from much larger organizations and institutions.

An additional problem is that the decision-making process in Europe is so time-consuming that approved funding doesn't get rewarded until a year or two later. A small organization can't afford to wait for large sums which may or may not come while their work continues. A third problem is the fact that every subsidy application must be innovative. The sheltering of victims and the guidance and support of these victims is not exactly innovative. This also applies to giving informational talks at schools: if you tell about trafficking at a school, you have to go back and tell the same stories again a few years later since every few year there are new students. This makes it difficult to be 'innovative'.

Proposal for change

All of these reasons result in a situation where these very hard working and important small organizations working to fight human trafficking receive no or hardly any governmental or European funding.

We wanted to address this problem in Brussels. A proposal was written in which the SRTV and the Jubilee Campaign request that Parliament simplify the subsidy application procedures.

The Result

March 3, 2009, was the great day. After extensive preparations, we found ourselves in an impressive hall in the European Parliament with beautiful chairs equipped with headphones and microphones.

The hall was amply filled with interested members of Parliament or their associates. The four organizations, including the SRTV, made their presentations, and a film was shown and discussed by attendees.

The Swedish representative, the future chair of the European Parliament, agreed that the problems we addressed were important. He promised to consider our proposal in preparations for a big European conference later in 2009 during the Swedish EU presidency.

We will keep you updated on developments of this proposal of the SRTV and Jubilee Campaign in Brussels.

Ivonne van de Kar

The text of the proposal can be sent to you by email: ask for it at srtv@srtv.info

The SRTV motto:

'It's not only the Dreams we share that are important, but especially the work we do together.'

Presentation Elena: a Reflection on Trafficking in Women

In the spring of 2008 a member of the 'Transactions' editorial staff Fr. Frans Kwik, brought a pamphlet in English to one of the meetings. It was called 'Way of the Cross' and was based on the life of a trafficked woman.

The author of the pamphlet, Theresa Helm is the director of the Chigwell Faith and Justice Centre in London. She was inspired by the suffering of Christ, and the similarities with the suffering of a victim of trafficking.

The SRTV liked her idea very much. Initially, the story was translated literally and the drawings copied from the English version. But there was a lot more to this story.

During an editorial meeting Fr. Frans Kwik explained the meaning of the Bible verse in Luke 23:28. In this verse Jesus says to the lamenting women who have lined the road on the way to Golgotha: "Do not weep for me but weep for the suffering of mankind."

His explanation gave us the idea for something more lasting with this English story.

Coincidentally, at that time Mieke Borgdorff, an artist and grail woman, had recently become involved with the SRTV. She was asked to read the story and to make a painting of each station. The SRTV wanted to use the story when providing information to different types of groups. People of various Catholic and Protestant backgrounds were asked to look critically at the text. A small editorial team then went to work. The story was transformed into a beautiful poem which still contained references to the 'Way of the Cross'.

The text and paintings were made into a booklet and presented to interested parties on the 29 January in the Sisters of JMJ convent chapel in Den Bosch.



A spirituality of risk

Professor Maaïke de Haardt, of Nijmegen University and chair of the Catharina Halkes faculty of religion and gender, was willing to speak at this presentation. As a feminist theologian she was asked to say something about

the spiritual and theological aspects of the involvement of everybody involved in the battle against trafficking in humans and in particular trafficking in women.

Her inspirational story was based on the work preformed by the SRTV; a spirituality of risk. Here are a few quotes from her speech:

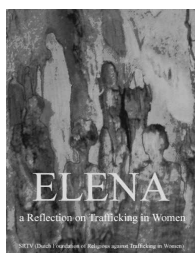
- "The problem itself, 'the trafficking of women', is not acknowledged as an urgent problem. I believe the reason for this is not so much to do with the political analysis of the problem, but with the underlying cultural, philosophical and religious ideas, moral values and prejudices."
- "A spirituality of risk is, precisely on this point, challenging the obviousness and the invisibility of the trafficking of women is one of the most important and characteristic dimensions of the work of the SRTV. And this is where the SRTV's spiritual and theological profile comes to the fore."
- "Whatever is invisible or is taken for granted is nameless, unknown, unseen and unheard. And whoever is unseen, unknown and unheard loses his or her dignity."
- "The manner in which the SRTV combats human trafficking shows that this dignity can only be realised through the eyes, the ears and the gestures of fellow human beings. That is precarious because it is going against the flow of things."
- "It's a kind of spirituality in which observance to God is expressed by seeing and hearing and in particular in giving a voice to those that have been made invisible. Elena's story lends a voice and a face to the despair and hope. Very tangibly."

After the contribution by Professor de Haardt, the film, 'Elena, a Reflection on Trafficking in Women', was screened. This is a very impressive and shocking story about the suffering of a young woman violated and forced into prostitution. Yet at the end of the film there was a sparkle of light, the essence of Christianity: death is not the end.

Touched by the story, the artwork and the beautiful accompanying music everybody was granted the opportunity to view the original works of art while enjoying a snack and a drink.

The many positive responses and the many orders strengthened our conviction that we made the right decision by highlighting the subject of trafficking in this way.

*Ivonne van de Kar
Coordinator SRTV*



Information:

Elena: a Reflection on Trafficking in Women

Booklet published by SRTV. Booklet (only in Dutch) and DVD (in Dutch, English, French and a version with only paintings and music) can be ordered via srtv@srtv.info or +31-73-615 44 44.

*During a workshop on trafficking at the Carmelite NGO meeting in Aylesford (U.K.)
Br. Joseph Chalmers gave the following homily at Sunday mass.*

Good Shepherd and Human Trafficking

One of the best loved images of Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is often pictured with a lamb over his shoulders and a staff in his hand.

Many people now come from big cities and can very easily lose touch with the countryside. Some people only come across sheep when they tuck into lamb chops so the concept of Jesus as the Good Shepherd does not really speak to the lived experience of city dwellers. However, Jesus had a genius for speaking directly to the ordinary people of his day. He spoke about God being like a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep grazing peacefully while he goes off to search for the one which has strayed (Mt. 18, 12-14; Lk. 15, 4-7).

In chapter 10 of John's Gospel, Jesus famously declares himself to be the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and is recognised by them. Indeed he would lay down his life for his sheep (Jn. 10, 15). The people who listened to Jesus would have understood very well what he was saying. In the Scriptures the leaders of the people, both political and lay, were considered to be shepherds. However, many of these proved to be bad shepherds who used and abused the people for their own benefit (for example Is 56, 11). Through the prophets God promised to shepherd the people and provide rich pastures (Is. 40,11; Ezek. 34, 12-16) or to send a shepherd, like the famous King David, who would finally carry out the divine will (Ezek. 34, 23).

The Good Shepherd will lead people to life in abundance and that is good news but does this good news reach all people? Does it arrive at the estimated 24 million people worldwide who are enslaved and trafficked, whether for use in the sex industry, or to work for scandalously low wages to provide us with low-priced goods? Does the good news arrive at those who are in some way involved in this evil trade in human beings? They can make a lot of money out of the misery of so many people but they cannot take their loot with them when they die.



After the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the apostles proclaimed the good news to the people and some wanted to know what they must do. They were told to repent and I believe that this message holds good for us today. Presumably if you are reading this you are not actively involved in trafficking human beings but this slave trade flourishes in darkness and ignorance. Trafficked people are in our country, in our city and maybe even in our street. Before you dismiss that statement, are you sure?

Trafficked people are without a voice a live in fear. The Good Shepherd wants to search for them and lead them to life in abundance. He also wants to give life that will last to those who use other people as commodities. Perhaps we feel that we can do very little about this huge problem but we can begin by refusing to accept the trivialisation of sex for entertainment or publicity. We can also think about ethical shopping. Are we sure that the goods we buy are produced by people who are paid a living wage? Why don't you ask the shop-keeper?

The Good Shepherd wants to lead everyone to life in abundance. Let us help everyone to respond to this call.

Br. Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm

EU Picks Up on Dutch 'Bibob' Law

The previous EU president France was enthusiastic about the Dutch administrative law Bibob*. Using this law, local government authorities can tackle entrepreneurs whom they suspect of being engaged in criminal activities

The Dutch Minister for Home Affairs discussed the Bibob law with her French counterpart during EU talks in the southern French city of Cannes. They are currently looking for comparable legislation in other EU

countries. This will subsequently lead to conclusions and agreements for the entire European Union.

Conclusions

France has no 'Bibob' legislation but, like the Netherlands, it has a system of reporting unusual transactions by foreign banks. Unlike their Dutch counterparts, French local government authorities may not refuse permits or licenses based solely on a suspicion of criminal activity. The Dutch minister is an advocate of the

Bibob legislation and sees opportunities for a European variant. "In the Netherlands we are obtaining good results by using this administrative law to ensure that criminals do not invest their ill -gotten gains", she said recently.

ANP, July 7, 2008

** Bibob = a Dutch acronym meaning: Law to promote integrity assessments by the public administration.*

The USA's TIP-report 2009 was released in June

Partnering Against Trafficking

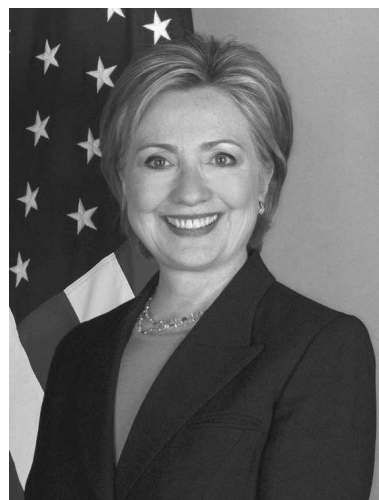
Twenty-year-old Oxana Rantchev left her home in Russia in 2001 for what she believed was a job as a translator in Cyprus. A few days later, she was found dead after attempting to escape the traffickers who tried to force her into prostitution.

Oxana's story is the story of modern slavery. Around the world, millions of people are living in bondage. They labour in fields and factories under threat of violence if they try to escape. They work in homes for families that keep them virtually imprisoned. They are forced to work as prostitutes or to beg in the streets. Women, men and children of all ages are often held far from home with no money, no connections and no way to ask for help. They discover too late that they've entered a trap of forced labour, sexual exploitation and brutal violence.

To some, human trafficking may seem like a problem limited to other parts of the world. In fact, it occurs in every country, and we have a responsibility to fight it just as others do. The destructive effects of trafficking have an impact on all of us. Trafficking weakens legitimate economies, breaks up families, fuels violence, threatens public health and safety, and shreds the social fabric that is necessary for progress. It undermines our long-term efforts to promote peace and prosperity worldwide. And it is an affront to our values and our commitment to human rights.

The Obama administration views the fight against human trafficking, at home and abroad, as an important priority on our foreign policy agenda. The problem is particularly urgent now, as local economies around the world reel from the global financial crisis. People are increasingly desperate for the chance to support their families, making them more susceptible to the tricks of ruthless criminals. Economic pressure means more incentive for un-

scrupulous bosses to squeeze everything they can from vulnerable workers and fewer resources for the organizations and governments trying to stop them.



Hillary Rodham Clinton

The challenge of trafficking demands a comprehensive approach that both brings down criminals and cares for victims. To our strategy of prosecution, protection and prevention, it's time to add a fourth P: partnerships.

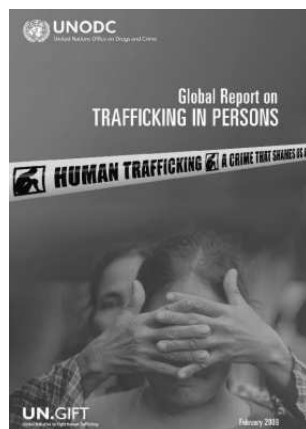
The criminal networks that enslave millions of people cross borders and span continents. Our response must do the same. Human trafficking flourishes in the shadows and demands attention, commitment and passion from all of us. Together, we must hold a light to every corner of the globe and help build a world in which no one is enslaved.

*Washington Post by Hillary Rodham Clinton
Wednesday, June 17, 2009, the writer is secretary of state,
(summarised by the editors)*

UNODC Report on Human Trafficking Exposes Modern Form of Slavery

A Global Report on Trafficking in Persons was launched in February by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provides new information on a crime that shames us all.

Based on data gathered from 155 countries, it offers the first global assessment of the scope of human trafficking and what is being done to fight it. It includes: an overview of trafficking patterns; legal steps taken in response; and country-specific information on reported cases of trafficking in persons, victims, and prosecutions.



According to the Report, the most common form of human trafficking

(79%) is sexual exploitation. The victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls. Surprisingly, in 30% of the countries which provided information on the gender of traffickers, women make up the largest proportion of traffickers. In some parts of the world, women trafficking women is the norm.

The second most common form of human trafficking is forced labour (18%), although this may be a misrepresentation because forced labour is less frequently detected and reported than trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Complete report can be downloaded at: http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf

Caritas Laments Plight of Women Refugees

Caritas is decrying the lack of protection for women and girls in conflict zones, and is calling on governments and international organizations to act against these injustices.

The aid agency stated this today in a message sent for World Refugee Day, which took place on the 20th of June.



It highlighted the plight of female refugees who are often targets of violence in war and noted a 'collective failure' to protect women and girls from rape and other forms of exploitation.

Martina Liebsch, coordinator of the migration and trafficking advocacy team, stated: "Humiliating women through violence and abuse is a common feature in armed conflicts around the world today."

"Women are often the last to leave as they stay to look after their families. This makes them vulnerable and subject to violence." The communiqué reported that in Colombia, 17.7% of women who flee their homes reported sexual violence as the cause.

Women and girls who ran from violence in Sri Lanka reported fear of violence in the overcrowded refugee

camps, and a lack of privacy which often leads to abuse. Caritas noted that in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 463 rape cases were reported in the past three months, over double the amount in that space of time last year.

Liebsch asserted that the effects of this violence are 'devastating'. She explained: "Apart from the physical and psychological damage that rape brings to the individual, there is also a grave risk of unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection. It affects families, communities and villages. Some will never totally recover from this attack to their dignity."

"Caritas says that although the international humanitarian laws are in place that guarantee the protection of civilians, women, and children, they are not being upheld," Liebsch stated.

She called for governments and international organizations to "address this failure by improving protection, medical treatment, counseling and means for rehabilitation and compensation."

"Women should be encouraged to report on the abuses they suffered to start their healing," said Liebsch. "To do justice to their suffering their perpetrators should be brought to justice."

Caritas reported the plan to make an appeal for women and children by sending representatives from 11 countries to a June 29 U.N. consultation meeting in Geneva on the topic of refugees.

Zenit, June 19, 2009, Vatican City

50 Slaves Freed from Dutch Asparagus Farm

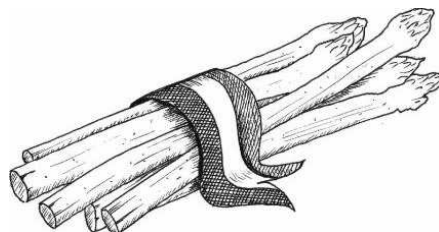
The Dutch police and the labour inspectorate have freed fifty Romanian, Polish and Portuguese 'slave workers' from an asparagus farm near the town of Someren, in the Brabant province of The Netherlands.

There were 38 Romanians and the other 12 men were Poles and Portuguese. Asparagus is a major high-cash crop in this region, and it's a very labour-intensive farm product, requiring many labourers during the spring and summer season.

Over the past month, municipal officials and labour inspectors had repeatedly warned the female owner of the farm to improve living conditions for the workers "because the fire safety provisions were not being adhered to".

When they arrived at the terrain, they found that the road access had been

blocked – and that the East Europeans working there had all been locked inside their windowless living quarters. The police forced their way onto the property however – and found "dreadfully inhumane conditions", said mayor Veltman.



Especially the Romanian workers were treated 'scandalously', the mayor told the Dutch daily. "This looked like a form of slavery. People were sleeping in filthy spaces without any windows and at night, they were locked up. They would have been

caught like trapped rats if a fire had ever broken out". They were not allowed to leave the farm and had been forced to turn in their passports and other documents. They also were forced to buy all their necessities from the farm and had to pay for food and housing. They received a weekly fifty Euros in advance, and they never received any pay at all. Their wages were 5 Euros per hour and they had to work round the clock. When they were rustled in Romania however, they had been promised 13 Euros pay an hour. Violence was used against them. The list just goes on and on. They really did 'appear to be slaves', the mayor told the newspapers.

The Romanians have now returned home with a bus chartered by the municipality.

May 17, 2009 - SOMEREN, Brabant province, the Netherlands

Religious Form Network Against Human Trafficking

Urge Christian Charity Faced to 'New Form of Poverty'

Human trafficking is a new form of poverty that requires the attention of the Church, affirmed a member of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Augustinian Father Eusebio Hernández Sola affirmed this in a press conference in the Holy See regarding an upcoming congress on the theme of 'Female Religious in Network against Trafficking in Persons.'

The gathering took place in Rome and was organized by the International Union of Superiors General and the International Organization for Migration. It aims to evaluate the content of the final declaration of the first congress, which took place in 2007, and to put together a plan of action for the future. The declaration affirmed, "We denounce human trafficking as a crime that represents a grave offence against the dignity of the person, and a serious violation of human rights."



Committed since long

The commitment to work against this crime arose in the 2001 plenary assembly of the superiors general union, which represents around a million of members of Catholic religious congregations worldwide. Father Sola affirmed that "the problem of human trafficking represents a new form of slavery of the twenty-first century, one that offends the dignity and freedom of many women and

minors, but also of youths and adult men, most of them from poor countries." "These new forms of poverty," he said, "remind us that religious life is, by vocation, called to play a prophetic role in society and the Church today." The priest stated, "A new conception of charity must carry consecrated life to the new frontiers of evangelization, and to the new forms of poverty, among the most serious of which is the loss of personal dignity."

Mandate

Salesian Sister Bernadette Sangma, one of the congress organizers, stated that the awareness of human trafficking has recently increased to such an extent that some congregations "have adopted the struggle against trafficking as part of their capitular deliberations, making it an obligatory mandate for members of their congregation." She noted that this also includes a 'number of male orders.' Sister Sangma continued: "Given the complexity of the factors involved in human trafficking, networking in this field is not an option but a necessity if we hope to make any kind of strategic commitment." "Only through a networking strategy which includes the victims' countries of origin, of transit and of destination, will it be possible to implement measures to prevent the weakest and most vulnerable people from becoming human merchandise."

Stefano Volpicelli of the migration organization reported that although there are no precise numbers, it is estimated that every year, millions of people become victims of human trafficking. He noted some 2.5 million victims in 2007, including 500,000 in Europe.

Father Sola underlined the need to work preventatively, to educate youth, "in school and in the parishes, to build in them the value of respect for persons, whose dignity can never be made a commodity". "Reprimanding and punishing will be useless", he said, "if the conscience is not educated in true human and Christian values".

Vatican City, June 12, 2009

Poland: Transit Country for Human Trafficking

Poland's accession to both the European Union (EU) and the Schengen zone has transformed it into both a transit and destination country for human trafficking, a United Nations independent expert said, noting that the Eastern European nation has made progress in fighting the scourge. The scale of trafficking was already serious in Poland, but has become aggravated in the past five years due to joining the EU and the Schengen zone, Joy Ngozi, the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, said, wrapping up a six-day visit to the country.

Ms. Ngozi said that the Government has taken steps in combating the scourge through cooperation with neighbouring countries. It has amended its Criminal Code to punish perpetrators of trafficking and has a law on domestic violence in place.

Poland has a comprehensive law on trafficking in human organs and tissue, "which is very forward-looking and has been enacted and is indeed a welcome development as we must ensure that all forms of trafficking are criminalized", she added.

But the Rapporteur, who reports to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council in an independent and unpaid capacity, noted that there are other steps the country must take to effectively address human trafficking.

Poland lacks a clear definition of trafficking in its criminal law, labour exploitation is on the rise and availability and access to help for trafficking victims is limited, she said.

*Press Release:
United Nations 31 May 2009*

Catholic Women's Movement Active in Fighting Trafficking in Women

"That has to be true, how else can so many women earn a living in this?", people whisper around me. The participants of the meeting on 'loverboys' all agree with Elma van den Nouland's hypothesis: one out of every ten men regularly visits prostitutes. "I trust my colleague, but that's about it", says one of the other speakers, just like his female colleague a police officer of the Haaglanden Police Department.



The more than fifty attendees at the meeting got a peek at the world of human trafficking, known by the detectives as the worst form of crime that exists. The meeting was opened by the chair of the International Commission of the Union of Dutch Catholic Women's Movements (Unie-NKV), Marie-Louise van Wijck-van de Ven.

After her introduction, Elma van den Nouland of the SRTV presented more information. The first report of women trafficking dates from 1890. In those days it concerned young German girls who worked in beer and coffee houses. In the 1980s victims came from as far away as Latin America, the Philippines and Thailand.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in the late 80s, there was an influx of Eastern European women. Since the 1990s

there are more African women. The number of prostitutes that work in the Netherlands, either forced or of their own free-will, is estimated at 25,000.

The worldwide definition of human trafficking includes exploitation, force and violence.

The two police detectives in attendance gave a very clear picture of the problem with their PowerPoint presentation. Some of the images were shocking. Elma from the SRTV then gave more information about her organization and the projects in which they are involved.

All participants were then divided into smaller groups to discuss the theme of the afternoon.

A student who is attending because she is doing a project about human trafficking, points out the importance of well-prepared projects with shocking images and stories at the high school level. A few of the attendees would like to organize lectures for their grassroots organizations. An investigation is proposed which would be based on interviews. How do these girls find the help they need? How do you empower them?

Mrs. Eveline Blom, the vice-chair of the UnieNKV, closed the day and promised that their organisation would also undertake political action. But she also said: "Don't turn away, ask yourself what you have done and if it has worked. If it doesn't work, look for another way." In closing she noted that the religious women who established the SRTV were also members of the UnieNKV. "No matter how grey their heads get, they're still alive and kicking when it comes to aiding those in need."

Joanne Seldenrath

(summarized by the editors of Transactions)

Women often Perpetrators

On February 9th 2009 the United Nations presented a report about the fight against human trafficking between 2003 and 2007.

Trends:

- Specifically in South East Asia and West-Africa there is much attention on forced labour. Europe now is concerned about one third of the cases of exploitation outside the area of sex. According to the United Nations this is an underestimate, as few countries watch this sufficiently sharply.
- Eighty percent of the 155 countries examined thus far has legislation against traffic in humans, whereas in 2003 this was only thirty percent. The number of court

cases steadily rises, the number of sentences steadily increases, and reporting improves all the time.

- Most victims are adult women, but in South East Asia and West Africa many children also are victims.
- Women are twice or three times more often condemned for this crime than for other crimes. According to UN researcher Fabrizio Sarrica this might, amongst other reasons, be partly due to many women trying to free themselves out of their role of victim by bringing in candidates for prostitution themselves. Also, gangs will relatively frequently utilise women during transport, a risky phase

during which many perpetrators are caught.

- Most traffic occurs within regions (like Europe, Africa, South Asia). Long distance transport often starts in East Asia (China, Thailand, Philippines).
- The official figures are so unreliable that the 22,000 victims counted by the United Nations in 2006 are only 'the tip of the iceberg' according to Sarrica. Trafficking within countries is so little recognised worldwide that nobody has a true idea about its scale.

*Complete document on Internet:
[www.unocd.org/documents/
Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf](http://www.unocd.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf)*

Survivors of Trafficking in Women

Nigerian women who escape prostitution often end up living illegally in Europe

Amsterdam/Antwerp/Benin City

Where have they gone? The hundreds of Nigerian women who were illegally transported via Amsterdam airport in order to come to work as prostitutes in Europe. What has happened to them? Women are dropped at Dutch shelters by human traffickers. From there they quickly disappear. 'Has Left With Unknown Destination' is the jargon used to describe their situation.



Happy (23) started working for herself, after she finally managed to pay back her 35,000 euro debt to the traffickers. She currently works from Cafe Keteltje in Antwerp's shipping district. She sends 150-200 euros per month to her parents in Benin City via Moneygram. They think she's a nurse.

Daisy (21) lives with seven other illegal immigrants in an apartment in Amsterdam. Three years ago she escaped from an apartment only a few kilometres away where she was being held prisoner by her traffickers, awaiting further transport. She earns 650 euros per month as a cleaner, arranged by the church. She doesn't like to go outside, since she always fears the traffickers will find her again.

Endurance (20) has a temporary residence permit because she testified against human traffickers. Via the Dutch aid organization, BlinN, she was able to follow the course 'Living in the Netherlands'. She knows now that she must offer a strong handshake and make eye contact. She knows which subjects she can talk about with the Dutch. "Do you have pets?" She wants to be a caregiver to the elderly.

Most of these women stay in Europe. They build up an identity within their illegal status. They get pregnant.

They find partners. But these relationships are seldom evenly matched. They often wind up with men who abuse them, almost as if on purpose. No one wants to go back to Nigeria willingly, even if IOM pays for their ticket. Nigeria is teeming with human trafficking aid organizations, financed by Western funds. No one wants to return as a pauper. You can't face your family that way. All you would be is yet another mouth that needs to be fed.

Rachel (28) didn't have a choice. She was picked up in Naples during a raid and was immediately put on a plane back to Nigeria. She had worked as a prostitute for 9 years in Italy. What bothered her most was that she didn't have anything to show for it, apart from the Gsus jeans skirt that she happened to be wearing at the time of the raid. For the last seven months she has been working as an intern in a sewing workshop in Benin City, thanks to the intervention of one of the aid organizations. Only after she finds a job with a pay check will she go and visit her family.

Joyce (28) is in a psychiatric hospital in Geneva suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. She sees rapists everywhere. She hurts herself. She screams in her sleep. The only words she can utter are, "I want to go home. I want to go home."

Sister Florence of the aid organization Cusodow is about to tell her parents that their daughter Joyce is coming home soon. They live in a house in Benin City that has been built with money that Joyce had sent home. "Joyce is not doing well," says Sister Florence. "She's been staying in a psychiatric institute." The parents are hostile. They scream and shout. "Let her stay in Switzerland. We don't want her." "Your daughter needs you." Sister Florence subtly pushes an empty gin bottle with her foot under the couch. "I beg you. Welcome her home." The mother answers by exiting to the kitchen. She returns with an empty pan that she drops to the ground. "We don't even have a wok, not even meat or fish to put in the soup." Later, after Joyce is admitted to the hospital, her father goes to visit her, to ask if she has any money to give to her parents.

The other women have disappeared. Who knows where they could be.

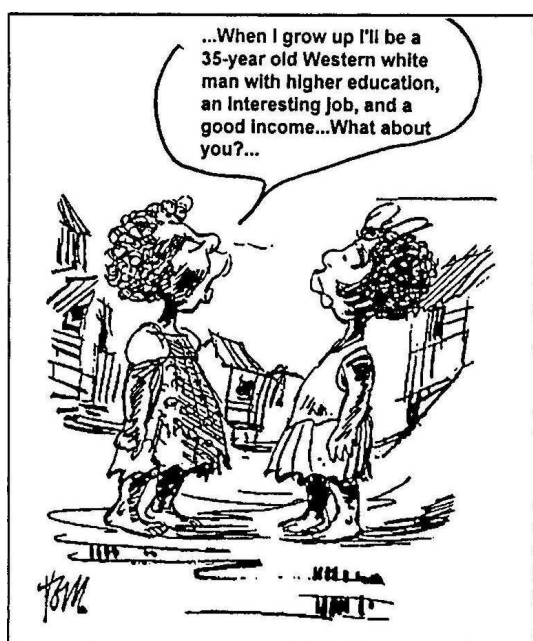
*Dutch Newspaper NRC, March 20, 2009
Sheila Kamerman en Dick Wittenberg*



Obama, John Lennon – and Women

Suddenly there was no escaping him: Barack Obama, conquering the world with his unbridled optimism and powerfully expressed vision of hope. Obama and his wife Michelle opened up unexpected possibilities: you see, it is possible. An American citizen, with his roots in the country's black history, had been elected president.

During Obama's inauguration, Reverend Joseph Lowry endorsed the vision of 'everything different and better' with a passionate prayer. He begged for God's help in achieving a society with equal opportunities for everyone: black, brown, yellow, red – it doesn't matter. It was a poetic reference to the blues number 'black, brown and whi-



te' by Big Bill Broonzy. I, like many others who recognised the text, was touched by the spirit of this song from 1951. So hopeless, because whatever you undertake and whatever the circumstances, you are doomed to fail because you are not white: "If you is white, you'd be alright, but if you's black, oh brother, get back, get back, get back". Always, the push to put you back in your place, the kick to keep you down.

Replace black with women and the lyrics are also correct. For a woman there are less opportunities in life, often lower wages, no equal rights. She is a helpless exchange object, experiences humiliation and abuse. I found it all while rummaging around in my old record collection. The desperate love for 'my man', expressed by the great blues women in the twenties, 'I want somebody of my own' (Ethel Waters' 1924) 'You're mistreatin' me all the time' (Ida Cox 1927) and also 'You never meant me no good'. On the sleeve, such songs are officially listed as 'Misery Blues' and 'Mistreatin'man blues'. These lyrics didn't just appear from nowhere, you can taste the misery and sorrow behind them.

Then – but also now, look at 'Only women bleed' by Alice Cooper. This is from 2008! Look on the internet and you'll be amazed about the fierce indignation in many comments about the wrong interpretation of the lyrics regarding bleeding. No, this is not about menstruation, oh no, here is a song about the sadness of women, the pain in the heart, pain that affects their whole being: 'heart and soul'.

Is the woman 'the nigger of the world'? Yes, she is, says John Lennon. But listen carefully, he doesn't only state this but continues singing: "Yes she is. – Think about it. – Do something about it".

Mrs. Coks van Eysden
Columnist SRTV

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Address of Account Holder:
*Sint Janssingel 92,
NL 5211 DA Den Bosch
The Netherlands*

Colofon

Editors

Ms. Ivonne van de Kar
Mr. Gijs Lieffering
Mrs. Tonny Verhoeven
Fr. Frans Kwik
Mrs. Berti Oprins
Mrs. Wil van der Leeuw

Editorial Address

SRTV
Sint Janssingel 92
NL 5211 DA Den Bosch
The Netherlands
Tel: +31-73-6154444
e-mail : srtv@srtv.info
Internet: www.srtv.info

Translations

Mr. David Sloan
Mrs. Michelle van der Pijl
Fr. Wim van den Hurk
Sr. Dominica Dogge



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