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Human Trafficking in Georgia: Official Data on Human Trafficking

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One can safely say that statistics on human trafficking in Georgia do not exist. The number of cases identified and recognized by the court is insignificant compared to the mass of cases that contain clear evidence of human trafficking. According to experts, the victims of human trafficking avoid acknowledging this fact for various reasons. There are many cases when law enforcement agencies avoid or do not fight against human trafficking appropriately.¹

Thus, statistical data on human trafficking in Georgia is inconsistent and very scarce, which poorly reflects the phenomenon of human trafficking. Some of the data is provided below (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Crimes Committed under “Human Trafficking”

Crimes	2005		2006		2007	
	Total	Against Women	Total	Against Women	Total	Against Women
Registered	13	10	32	18	29	14
Disclosed	7	4	15	11	8	5

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Table 2. Crimes Committed under “Human Trafficking”

Crimes	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Registered	13	33	29	10	12	11	10	5
Disclosed	7	15	8	2	3	3	4	-

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Published on June 19th, 2013, the annual report of the US government’s department on human trafficking reflects the fact that in comparison with previous years, Georgia’s position on combating human trafficking has deteriorated. Georgia moved from the first group of countries (a total of 32) to the second group of countries (Tier 2), which indicates a weakening of the fight against human trafficking. It can be assumed that this is caused by a very tense internal political situation in the reporting period, which led to decreased attention to countering human trafficking. Currently, the leadership of relevant entities perceive human trafficking as one of their major problems and are prepared to make every effort to combat it.²

Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation

In connection with transnational migration, special attention is paid to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In this area, Georgia can be considered a sending, receiving, and transit country. According to the US State Department report, women are sent for the purpose of sexual exploitation to Turkey, the Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia, Austria, and Germany.

There are also numerous cases of transit through the territory of Georgia or women imported for the purpose of providing sexual services to clients who have come from neighboring states.

¹ TV_maestro. 20.06.2012.

² A new plan of action to combat human trafficking. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nu1ma_5swU

The increase in the number of brothels in the Adjara Tourist Region, mostly in the border zone, has been a high profile issue. Intensified actions to combat human trafficking and specific successes in this area in Turkey have led to a revitalization of sex services in the border regions of states neighboring Turkey. For instance, according to Nana Nazarova, the head of “People’s Harmonious Development Society,” there are up to 500 women employed in 27 informal brothels in one village called Gonio, which is located in the Georgian region bordering Turkey. After their “employment”, they must pay their “employer” 7,500 US dollars. A significant number are from Uzbekistan and serve clients crossing the virtually open border with Turkey. The fact that the majority of the women understand Turkish language contributes to sex services. Clients are also provided with Turkish cuisine.³

The population of Gonio is appalled by the prevalence of prostitution, which they deem unacceptable. The signatures of over 450 women protesting the transformation of their village into a sex-services zone are evidence of this. They point to the mass sexual violence observed in the village. There are cases of suicide. Women’s parents and close relations in Uzbekistan do not know about their forced participation in the sex industry and believe that they are employed as cleaners when in actuality they work as prostitutes and are primarily victims of human trafficking.

Currently, the authorities are very interested in changing the negative situation in the border regions.

Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Labor Exploitation and Combating the Negative Effects of Human Trafficking

Labor emigration from Georgia, which by our estimates comprises 350-500 thousand (10% of the population) is primarily of an illegal nature. In the labor market of Post-Soviet Georgia, a catastrophic decline in the demand for labor and a sharp depreciation of the labor force has resulted in a high intensity of labor migration of a predominantly illegal or semi-legal nature. The majority of emigrant work contains elements of various forms of coercion, which is reflected in the absence of work contracts, harsh and unhealthy working conditions, an ultra-high intensity of labor, unreasonably long working hours, the degradation of one’s professional potential, blatant discrimination with regards to pay, virtual isolation from social life, etc.

Our and other research reveals that only 8-10% of labor emigrants work in their occupational specialty.⁴ Every third respondent worked more than 10 hours per day and 41.8 % had very stressful operating conditions.⁵ Among those who returned, only 53% felt healthy whereas upon departure 87% were healthy.⁶ The average length of stay abroad does not exceed 4 years, and one of the main reasons for the sharp deterioration in health in this short period was forced labor.

A large number of factors of forced labor are contained in the stories of migrants who left Georgia for Greece.⁷ There is a need to summarize this information and draw appropriate conclusions.

There are also numerous cases of Georgian citizens who were fraudulently exported and subjected to various forms of violence, especially in Turkey. For instance in the city of Ichkireti, the Turkish

³ www.netgazeti.ge.20.06.2012

⁴ Labor Migration from Georgia/ (2003). IOM.

⁵ The Labor Market and the Reintegration of Migrants who have Returned to Georgia. Director of Research M. Tukhashvili, Tbilisi, 2011.

⁶ Tukhashvili M., Sheliya M. The Impact of Labor Emigration on Democratic Growth in Georgia in the Post-Soviet Period. <http://www.carim-east.eu/media/CARIM-East-2012-RU-11.pdf>

⁷ Features of Migration Processes from Georgia to Greece. Tbilisi, 2010.

police released 23 Georgian citizens who were locked up in the basement of one of the brothels and demanded 2000 US dollars for the release of each one of them.⁸

In Georgia, rehabilitation shelters for victims of violence have been established in the cities of Tbilisi, Batumi, and Gori. Table 3 shows data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the use of these shelters.

Table 3. Structure of Aid to Victims of Human Trafficking in Georgia in 2006-2011

Utilized Shelters	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Women	2	6	4	5	6	3
Men	1	3	2	3	3	1
Minors	X	2	2	2	1	X
Victims of Sexual Exploitation (?)	2	6	4	2	6	X
Victims of Labor Exploitation	1	6	7	6	12	3
Psychological Services	3	9	6	8	9	4
Medical Services	3	11	8	10	10	4
Compensation	X	2	5	X	3	X
Legal Aid	3	11	10	8	18	4

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

It is unfortunate that the data from the relevant departments which relates to the very critical societal issue of human trafficking does not make it possible to conduct an authoritative analysis; this must be corrected first and foremost. The absence of a statistical-analytical database should remain one of the main problems that should be resolved by the appropriate entities. Recently there has been a move to address these gaps. In February 2013, a Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking was developed, prepared as part of the Interagency Coordination Council to Combat Human Trafficking and approved by the President of Georgia on March 15, 2013.⁹

⁸ www.tabula.ge 29.06.2012

⁹ http://www.for.ge/view.php?for_id=24511&cat=3