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On Women and Sex Trafficking

Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution of Women and Girls in Iraq

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Iraq

Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution of Women and Girls in Iraq is particularly based on firsthand knowledge gained through a consultation process with women and women's organizations in Iraq and the neighboring region, over a period of three years. Many factors combine to promote the rise of sex trafficking and prostitution in the area:

the US-led war and the chaos it has generated; the growing insecurity and lawlessness; corruption of authorities; the upsurge in religious extremism; economic hardship; marriage pressures; gender based violence and recurrent discrimination suffered by women; kidnappings of girls and women; the impunity of perpetrators of crimes, especially those against women; and the development of new technologies associated with the globalization of the sex industry.

Organizations that have experience aiding victims of gender based violence, who are in contact with women in the brothels and in prisons, and who have done research in the field, as well as reports from international agencies and NGOs, address these factors. Not only war and economic insecurity push women and girls into prostitution but also the social situation of widows and single women who, without resources, are also without social networks and protection. Male violence, including battering of wives, incest and honor crimes are also push factors.

Women and children have been the primary victims who have suffered the consequences of both the brutal reign of Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party and the war begun in 2003. The backlash against women and women's rights and the terrorizing of women has become common place. The impotence of authorities has encouraged a culture of impunity in which crimes against women are minimized, neglected and denied.

Security is a key issue for both victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and other forms of violence against women, and for those who assist and advocate for victims. This report investigates the factors that promote trafficking in women for prostitution, identifies the obstacles in preventing sexual exploitation and in punishing perpetrators, and recommends ways of addressing violence against women and protecting victims of trafficking and prostitution in Iraq.

Due to the war in Iraq, there is widespread displacement of women, men and their families in the country. Figures quoted from the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) gives an estimate of 4.4 million Iraqis who have been forced to flee their homes. Many of these refugees fled before the 2003 war and an equal number have fled since sectarian violence escalated in 2006. UNHCR says that 2.2 million Iraqis are internally displaced, with 2.2 million having escaped to neighboring countries such as Jordan and Syria.

Refugees in these countries are experiencing seriously deteriorating economic, social and political situations, and their legal status, especially that of women and girls, is uncertain.

Participants emphasized that every year, hundreds of thousands of women and children, mostly girls, are recruited, transported, marketed and purchased for sexual exploitation by individual procurers, traffickers and buyers within their countries and/or taken across national borders. In times of disasters, political crises and instability, armed conflict and war, women and children flee from conflict-ridden areas into other countries or are internally displaced and become more vulnerable to traffickers, pimps and other procurers.

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN IRAQ PRIOR TO THE WAR OF 2003

For over 30 years under the authoritarian leadership of Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party, ethnic and religious minorities were brutally suppressed, and Iraq was the scene of several wars with foreign powers. A large number of the estimated 4 million displaced Iraqis in 2007 were displaced under Saddam, and before the US-led war began in 2003.

Additionally, the government exercised violence against opponents of all kinds, and the economic sanctions imposed by the international community severely affected Iraqi society at several levels. During those years, women and children were the primary victims who suffered from the consequences of this violence and deprivation in their daily lives.

The Highest Rate of Women's Literacy in the Arab World and its Decline

During the first years of Saddam Hussein's regime, women's education dramatically improved, and most of the restrictions on women outside the home were lifted. In 1980, women were granted the right to vote and to be elected. Before the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991, Iraq witnessed the highest rate of women's literacy and the largest number of professional women in the Arab world. Although family law continued to favor men, the "temporary" constitution of 1970 inscribed the principle of equality between men and women.

Some observers argue that women's strides during the 1980s were mainly due to the absence of able-bodied men who were mobilized for the war with Iran, which lasted for eight years.

The lack of a labor force of men in Iraqi society during these years favored the emergence of highly qualified women in formerly male-dominated positions such as engineering, science, and medicine. In the 1980s, women comprised 46 % of teachers, 29% of doctors, 46 % of dentists, 70 % of pharmacists, 15 % of factory workers and 16 % of civil servants.

If in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, Iraq had been considered as the best country in the Arab world in terms of education for women, illiteracy among women suddenly rose after the Iran-Iraq War, quadrupling between 1985 and 1995 from 8 % to 45 %.

Iraq was also considered to have the top health system in the region in which 97 % of the population in urban areas had access to health care. After the Gulf War and the embargo on Iraq, the health system was also severely affected, and more than half of the women in Iraq became anemic.

Discrimination and Violence against Ethnic Groups

Under the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein, many Iraqi citizens were subjected to arbitrary detention, torture, rape, religious persecution, forced relocation, and execution. Others faced systematic denial of basic individual, civil, political and workers' rights.

Discrimination against religious groups such as the Shia, and the attempted genocide of the Kurdish population through the Al-Anfal campaign, led to the racialization of discrimination in the Baathist program of "Arabization."

Ethnic minorities such as the Assyrians, Kurds and the Turkmen had to sign "national correction forms" that required them to renounce their ethnic identities and declare themselves to be Arabs. Members of the Kurdish, Turkmen, and Assyrian populations were forcibly expelled from oil-rich areas, particularly around Kirkuk and Mosul. Non-Arab Iraqi citizens were forced to adopt Arabic names, under threat of having their assets expropriated and their ration cards withdrawn. Non-Arabs were prohibited from inheriting or buying businesses or real estate, and they are routinely subject to harassment, arrest, torture and expulsion.

Shia and Kurdish women were raped by Saddam Hussein's militias and military personnel. As a result of the demolition of their homes and villages, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish women and their families were forcibly displaced. Many women were smuggled, trafficked and pimped, sometimes by their relatives, into the Islamic Republic of Iran, Egypt, Sudan or Turkey.

Women, who suffered sexual violence, could not then find security within their highly traditional communities. They were stigmatized as immoral, and might even be killed for having violated religious morality codes and the honor of their family or tribe

Islamization of the Regime

The Backlash Against Women's Rights and the Terrorizing of Women

After the invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein increasingly portrayed himself as a devout Muslim in order to gain the support of conservative religious segments of society. Elements of Sharia law were reintroduced. The ritual phrase, "God Is Great," in the dictator's own handwriting was added to the national flag. Men who committed honor crimes were given immunity in 1990. In 1998, all women secretaries working in government agencies were dismissed.

Women were also prohibited from leaving Iraq without a male relative to escort them. The burden, financial and otherwise, of having an escort made foreign travel impossible for many women. Foreign spouses of Iraqi citizens were forced to apply for naturalization as citizens, thus becoming subject to travel restrictions placed on Iraqi-born women. In 2000, Saddam Hussein passed a law barring women from working outside the home.

Rape, Kidnapping and Government-Protected Prostitution Areas
Dissident women, and women and girls whose relatives were alleged opponents of the government, were kidnapped, harassed, imprisoned, beaten, raped and tortured in other ways. The Technical Operations Directorate of Saddam's Intelligence Service, the Mukhabarat, videotaped the rape of female relatives of suspected opponents and used the tapes for blackmail or coercion. These terror tactics and violence against women were used to extract confessions from male prisoners whose female relatives were even killed in front of the prisoners.

Widows of executed prisoners were required to pay the cost of execution and bullets in order to recover the bodies of their husbands. Senior officials of the regime, with impunity, kidnapped women for sexual purposes. Some women known as "prostitutes" lived with government officials. Their names were sometimes displayed such as that of the "famous" Regina. Until today, people recall her name and her origin, an alleged Jewish woman at the service of dignitaries. For ordinary men prostitution took place in certain areas but was much more hidden.

Saddam Hussein and officials of the Baathist regime enjoyed designated sex clubs in districts called "entertainment" areas. Here, prostitution was organized into legal nightclubs, or "entertainment neighborhoods" restricted to Gypsies (Ghajar) who, in exchange for the protection of the authorities, would supply dancers, women in prostitution and alcohol.

THE SITUATION FOR WOMEN IN IRAQ AND THEIR RIGHTS SUSEQUENT TO 2003

In 2004, a survey done by Women for Women International showed that over 90 percent of women in Iraq were hopeful about their future. By 2008, this figure declined to almost 27 percent.

One of President Bush's justifications for the war in Iraq was to establish democracy.

Women's rights were alleged to be a priority of the U.S. Administration. The use of women's rights discourse by the United States to legitimize the War in Iraq has led to a backlash against feminist activists and others in Iraq, accused of supporting the "American Agenda," when they advocate for women's rights. The chaos of the war in Iraq opened old and new avenues of discrimination and violence against women. Men in general became freer to abuse women with impunity. Women's bodies and women's independence became the battleground of ethnic, religious and political strife.

A report by MADRE, an international women's human rights organization, researched in cooperation with the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), confirmed that gender based violence was indeed on the rise in Iraq. Increasingly, women, and girls between the ages of 15 and 18, are arrested, charged with prostitution and jailed for up to two years, and in some cases given death sentences.

Women in the Political Sphere

Sectarian Conflict and Violence against Women

"Since 2003, we women have endured waves of gender based violence including public beatings, death threats, rapes and beheadings. In Basra, hundreds of women have been killed in a horrific manner. Their bodies were mutilated and then dumped in the garbage with notes saying that they were violating Islamic teaching.

Ethnic, religious and political conflicts took a particularly dramatic turn and attacks against minorities increased after 2004. The Shia leader, Moqtaba al-Sadr, and his militiamen, destroyed Gypsy villages such as Qawliya because of its reputation for being a district of sin and sexual activities. Local reports underline that bulldozers were used to flatten the houses. Also because of its alleged protection by Saddam Hussein, some 1,500 were killed in Qawliya. Sharia courts were installed in many cities and regions, such as Najaf or Basra.

War and urban guerrillas promoted the availability, trafficking and sale of weapons.

For many men in Iraqi tribal society, to possess a gun is an expression of masculinity and a part of male identity as the protector of the family and of the family's honor. The climate of fear pushed many girls out of school and women out of work. Sunni and Shia groups in many places launched campaigns pressuring women, through flyers and graffiti, to wear the hijab and to avoid "immoral" or "un-Islamic" behavior. Christian women have also been forced to wear headscarves in many areas, including in Baghdad. Unmarried women without head scarves are often targeted as immoral women in prostitution. There has been an increase of reported cases of women being used as bargaining tools or as gifts between tribes and as compensation in tribal disputes in rural areas. Forced marriages, kidnapping, and the selling of women and girls are also reported to be on the increase. In some areas such as Kurdistan, ancient traditional practices are on the rise, such as genital mutilation.

Honor Crimes

Women and girls are killed and subjected to violence (including mutilation) under the terminology of honor crimes. Women's alleged crimes include the act or even suspicion of adultery, sexual relations out of marriage, refusal to marry a man chosen by the family, and attempting to marry someone of whom the family does not approve. In some cases, women and girls have been used as suicide bombers to promote the honor of the family.

Some cases have been reported of girls being kidnapped, trafficked into prostitution, drugged, fitted with a suicide belt, and then sent to bomb. Knowledge of such cases is confirmed by the testimonies of women themselves who went to the police before exploding the bombs.

Survivors of so-called honor crimes are afraid to report or access medical treatment if they are victims of sexual violence. They could be blamed for the sexual violence, leading to rejection and re-victimization for shaming the family. In case of rape or kidnapping, some families negotiate with the captor to marry the victim so as to restore the honor of the family.

Marriage, Unmarried Women and Widows

"The husband of a woman who lived on my street had been killed in the war. The neighbors began to harass her. One of her male cousins who lived in another city came to visit her for some days and brought her food and presents. When the cousin left, the neighbors accused her of prostitution. She was arrested, and then disappeared. Today the neighbors have occupied her house".

With the rise of religious and traditional practices, there are increasing pressures for women to marry. Unmarried women are stigmatized and considered immoral. Since the war with Iran that resulted in one million deaths, unmarried women and widows are considered to be an increasing problem in Iraq. The situation worsened in 2003 after the collapse of Saddam's regime and the resulting sectarian violence. When the sectarian war was at its peak, 90-100 women became widows each day.

Some cases have been reported of widows whose neighbors accuse them of prostitution in order to have them arrested (or killed) and then take possession of their apartments. Although polygamy was allowed under certain conditions during Saddam's reign, it was not considered a common practice. Today, it is becoming an increasing phenomenon throughout the country, as well as in Kurdistan where there is a

strong backlash against women. Religious affiliation of women is becoming essential, and interfaith marriages are on the decline.

THE PROSTITUTION SYSTEM AND THE RISE OF SEX TRAFFICKING IN IRAQ SINCE 2003

Iraqi law defines prostitution, adultery and sodomy as similar offenses. The way in which these offenses are defined reflect norms that govern the status and representation of women in Iraqi society, relationships between women and men, and ideas about and practices of sexuality.

In a society where women who are raped are charged with adultery, or where women who engage in sex outside of marriage are accused of being in prostitution, then not only men but women internalize these norms. When women are interviewed about sex trafficking and prostitution, some use certain words that reflect these cultural assumptions about prostitution and the women in prostitution.

For example, victims of prostitution interviewed often internalize the legal and cultural representation of themselves as immoral and lost women. Also, they use terms such as "improper sex" (anal, fellatio) or "proper sex" (traditional intercourse) to describe the acts they are subjected to in prostitution. "To turn a girl into a woman" - means to have sex with a virgin.

As reported by the Khanzad Organization, taking a woman or girl's virginity in Iraqi Kurdistan is considered a conquest and an act of pride for a man.

Iraq is a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in persons, including trafficking for sexual purposes, bride trafficking, fraudulent marriages and labor trafficking.

Reports underline that corruption is a major part of the trafficking process.

Women in Iraq are trafficked within Iraq and to neighboring countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, the Emirates and Jordan. Women's organizations in the region emphasize that domestic trafficking takes place in all regions inside Iraq. It is important to investigate and address internal trafficking because government and NGOs sometimes limit trafficking to that which crosses borders. Internal sex trafficking is included within the scope of trafficking contained in the 2000 Palermo Protocol and the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others, both ratified by Iraq.

Many factors combine to promote the rise of sex trafficking and prostitution in the region: the US-led 2003 war and the chaos it has generated; the growing insecurity in areas of lawlessness; corruption of authorities; the upsurge in religious extremism; economic hardship; marriage pressures; gender based violence and recurrent discrimination suffered by women; kidnappings of girls and women; the impunity of perpetrators of crimes, especially those against women; and the development of new technologies associated with the globalization of the sex industry.

The Women Victims of Trafficking

Women and girls are trafficked from all regions within and out of Iraq. Within Iraq, Kurdish women are trafficked into Baghdad or Basra in the south. Southern women may be trafficked northwards to Sulaymaniyah or other cities in Kurdistan. Iraqi women who are refugees and living outside the country often end up in the sex industries of Syria and also are trafficked directly from Iraq to Syria and Jordan. Iraqi women are also found in the brothels of Iran and Turkey (mainly Kurdish women). Vulnerable women and girls are trafficked to Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and possibly Yemen.

Within Iraq, private houses or apartments known as brothels or houses of "customers", restaurants, massage parlors, and places of entertainment are used for prostitution. Since January 2009, night clubs are legal in Baghdad and prostitution may take place there.

Outside Iraq, sexual exploitation transpires in similar venues in Syria and Jordan, as well as in hotels in Turkey and Iraq, and clubs in the Emirates.

Women from other countries are also trafficked into and through Iraq. From the Philippines and China, women are trafficked into Baghdad. Women from Iran are trafficked through Kurdistan and Basra, sometimes spending time in Baghdad. From Basra, they may be re-trafficked to the Emirates. Ethiopian women are initially trafficked for domestic servitude and often end up being sexually exploited as well.

There are many factors facilitating the trafficking and prostitution of women and girls. Organizations that have experience aiding victims of gender based violence, those who are in contact with women in the brothels and in prisons, and those who have done research in the field, as well as reports from international agencies, address these factors. Not only war and economic insecurity push women and girls into prostitution but also the social situation of widows and single women who, without resources, are also without social networks and protection. Male violence, including battering of wives, incest and

honor crimes are also push factors. According to a 2009 report by the International Organization for Migration - IOM, on trafficking, the majority of women and girls interviewed who were victims of internal trafficking in Iraq had received limited or no education and came from poor and abusive backgrounds.

As outlined already, the Iraqi wars, the rise of ethnic and religious conflicts, religious extremist pressures and terrorizing of women, combined with the impotence of authorities, have encouraged a male culture of impunity in which crimes against women are minimized, neglected and denied. In 2007, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) documented that of the 4,000 women who have disappeared since March 2003, 20 percent were younger than 18.

Methods of Recruitment

There are multiple methods used by a variety of perpetrators in the region to recruit women and girls for sexual exploitation and the sex industry. Taxi drivers may serve as recruiters for pimps and lure vulnerable women and girls with offers of help. Often women who are involved in the sex industry are used as intermediaries who pretend to offer assistance, such as bringing the girls to shelters when, in fact, they bring them to brothels. Recruiters prey on girls who have left their families because of violence, abuse, forced marriage or threat of honor crimes and who often go to transportation centers, hoping to escape. Some of them have heard of shelters in Kurdistan and try to reach them. The following excerpt from a victim's testimony quoted in the Khanzad Report illustrates these patterns of recruitment and exploitation.

"I am 14, originally from Baghdad. I finished 6th year class primary school. My father is a teacher. My mother is a housewife. We are 5 children at home (3 girls and 2 boys)...I am the youngest among them. My father was beating me all the time. I escaped from his hands and went to the terminal to go to Sulaymaniyah City.

I met a woman who told me "you can work with me. I will make you my daughter." I was very happy to hear that...when the woman was counting money (US \$1200-1500)

I asked her "what is this money?" She replied "They are paying me back for all the money I spent on you". We went to the market. They bought me everything (pants, jeans, shoes, bag, makeup, underwear, perfume, a watch. During the evening, there were many guests coming and leaving, mostly men. They asked me to have a shower. The woman came and prepared me. She asked me to shave the sensitive places of my body. I had my entire body shaved. "

Hair salons are another place of recruiting girls for the sex industry. Poor girls who want to buy cosmetics or go to hair dressers but cannot afford them are recruited in these venues by women who propose an advance of money or goods in exchange for services. The Khanzad Organization interviewed a female pimp in a Sulaymaniyah prison. She stated:

I am sometimes in one of the goldsmith's shops. I see a customer and suddenly know she is fit for our business. Or you just sit in a coiffeur's shop and in half an hour, you will find who is fit for this business.

These girls are then trapped in the prostitution industry and find themselves raped and abused by buyers and pimps. The pimps often film their rapes in order to blackmail them.

Prison is a recruiting ground for bringing women into the sex industry. It is both a trap and a punishment for prostitution, or acts that are alleged to be acts of prostitution. In a Sulaymaniyah prison in 2007, 39 percent of the women had been charged for acts of prostitution and 49 percent for adultery.

Wandering girls who beg are often arrested and put in prison. There they meet women intermediaries who themselves are detained for pimping and who offer to protect and free them. The bail is paid by a male partner of the female recruiter who remains free on the outside. Having been befriended in prison, the girls go with the female recruiter called a madam. However, once the girls and the madam are released, she becomes threatening, demands reimbursement for the bail and other expenses and forces the girls into providing sexual acts.

The system of polygamy functions as a system of recruitment that allows pimps to marry several women, sell them into prostitution and marry new ones.

Although Article 188 of the Iraqi family code stipulates that the courts must judge whether a man has the means to take several wives and obtain the consent of the first wife, the reality of obtaining court authorization remains purely formal. Most often, judges give authorization to any man who asks to marry several wives without conducting any real investigation or imposing any conditions. Repudiation of wives, after being sold into prostitution, is enshrined in the system of polygamy.

Teenage boys or older men recruit teenage girls, rape them, film the sexual acts and blackmail them into the sex industry. Since sexuality outside marriage is forbidden, some young people contract temporary marriages and have sex in specific places where the boyfriend uses his cell phone to film the sexual act and blackmail them into brothels. Places where couples are temporarily married are used as brothels.

Temporary marriage is used as a euphemism for prostitution. In 2007, OWFI estimated that a large number of widows were drawn into these marriages in order to be able to feed their children. Many found they had no choice but to enter temporary or so-called marriages for pleasure, which can last between one hour and one year and are mainly practiced in Shia communities. But it seems that more and more Sunnis in Iraq today resort to temporary marriages as well.

Perpetrators of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Women who have survived a number of years in prostitution often themselves become recruiters and enforcers and exploiters of girls and young women in the sex industry. For many, this is a way out of the daily exploitation and years of providing sex and sexual services in the sex industry for men. These women may operate in beauty parlors and in central bus stations where girls who may be orphans, fleeing from abusive men, or threatened with honor killings, roam alone.

Female intermediaries also recruit in prisons where they pay the bail for girls taken under their protection.

Female intermediaries are always placed in the front line of recruiting and pimping, whereas male pimps, traffickers and managers of prostitution venues remain invisible. Often brothels are known by women's names. However, female intermediaries themselves cannot operate without the protection of male controllers, nor engage in the negotiations and deals needed to set up prostitution venues such as brothels and sex clubs. For example, a single woman cannot rent an apartment alone. All brothels in houses or apartments that seem headed by women are actually rented on behalf of a man who may be a husband or close relative to whom the woman hands over or shares the proceeds.

More and more young Iraqi girls and women are sold by their parents or relatives to other relatives or acquaintances for alleged marriages or for prostitution. As an example, the Khanzad organization reported that one father sold his virgin daughter to pimps for US \$2,000.

Unscrupulous fathers seeking gain also force their daughters to marry men they know are pimps. Abusive husbands and mothers-in-law also pimp wives/daughters-in-law into prostitution. Girls who are "adopted" by families have been turned out for prostitution when they reach puberty and sold to pimps and traffickers who market them as virgins to wealthy men.

Some families are also traffickers. For example, the family can use the visit of an alleged cousin who spends the night as a disguise to cover the act of trafficking young female relatives out of the family

house into another country. There have been numerous cases of trafficking by families in cities close to the borders such as Basra.

Drug traffickers using the Saudi border also engage in trafficking for sexual purposes. From the port of Al Faw, traffickers use the maritime channels of oil smugglers and also operate with fishing boats. The corpses of women who die during the crossing are thrown into the water.

Traffickers have the support of corrupt police inside and outside the country, as well as of authorities in neighboring countries.

Many recruiting companies engage in trafficking or in abetting trafficking in persons for labor. The worker receives no contract and documents are routinely withheld by the company of destination. Women who work in these companies are often retained for sexual services. Young women who use hymen surgery to recover virginity may be pushed into prostitution or sexually exploited by abusive surgeons, especially if they cannot pay for the surgery. Unmarried young women or girls who become pregnant and cannot afford abortions are also exploited by doctors who abort them in exchange for sexual services.

A variety of other persons, groups and businesses function to recruit women into prostitution: hairdressers, cosmetic entrepreneurs and jewelers when young women cannot pay; fruit vendors on the streets who use this trade as a cover for selling young women who work with them into prostitution; and persons who furnish girls to officials in exchange for needed documents to start businesses or other services.

Another assumption is that women who work inside the Green and international zones may be both recruiters of women for foreign personnel and themselves be in prostitution.

There are reports that Chinese restaurants, which also function as massage parlors especially in the Green Zone of Baghdad, are façades for procuring women for foreign contractors and/or military personnel. In one publicized case, the attention generated by the publicity in foreign newspapers impelled the authorities to close down the restaurant/massage parlor. Some sources point to organized Chinese involvement in the Iraqi sex trade in citing the example of Chinese gangs who have organized prostitution venues for foreign buyers in other conflict contexts, such as in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Men Who Buy Women for Sex in the Sex Industry

As in other countries, internet sex sites, such as the "International Sex Guide," have been instrumental in recruiting men to places of prostitution.

On these sites, men pay to participate in discussion forums and exchange information online about prostituted women and prostitution venues. Pimps make use of cell phones to access buyers and send photos of the women. Buyers then "order" the kind of women of their choice. Buyers often know the locations of brothels, which are identified and publicized by other buyers and taxi drivers. If buyers solicit women or pimps directly, coded language is used. Some examples are: "can you invite us in," or the phrase, "can you wash dishes" is used to question if the girl or women has ever engaged in sex.

Pornography is used to train women for the buyers. The satellite pornography channels play an important role in shaping the male demand for sex. Young women and girls in the brothels are obliged to watch pornographic videos and channels and "learn" how to act sexually with buyers.

Wealthy buyers can demand virgins. Virgins who are worth more on the sex market are sodomized and subjected to oral sex by pimps. Pimps also subject young girls and women to multiple hymen surgeries in order to be sold as often as possible to buyers who want virgins.

Rape and gang rape by pimps and customers are also used to "train" girls and women for commercial sex.

Buyers come from all socio-cultural backgrounds and include government officials, police, businessmen, intellectuals, students, laborers, farmers, and tribal men. Most of them are married and go to brothels during the day. Men with more money can pay for spending the night with the women or girls that they buy.

In a report, OWFI stated that 65 percent of females purchased by men were under 18 years old.

The going rate for 2 nights with a young girl is US \$1,000. In some brothels of Sulaymaniyah, men pay US \$200-500 "to turn a girl into a woman." When a teenage girl is trafficked to a sheik in a country outside Iraq, the price is US \$10,000-20,000. The girl often remains with the sheik from one month to one year before she is returned to the trafficker who brings her back into a local sex industry.

An excerpt from the Khanzad Report documenting an interview with a young victim of trafficking, testifies to the role of a wealthy buyer who, as the girl testifies, was likely a governmental official :

"The man took all my clothes off and practiced improper sex with me. They moved me to another house. I know it was an important person in the government because there were guards in front of his house. No one was there except him and another person. During that night, the man practiced sex with me for more than twenty times, he and another person who was younger."

Protection of Victims of Sex Trafficking and Prostitution

The insecurity generated by war and sectarian conflicts, the stigma faced by women in prostitution, and the threat to activists and women's organizations who assist victims make it extremely difficult to reintegrate victims into their communities. Religious authorities have no history of protecting women, even driving out female beggars from the mosques. The police do not protect women in prostitution and instead remain silent often in exchange for free sexual services.

It is a cruel irony that, in some cases, prison becomes the only place where women feel secure. The Khanzad organization states that prostituted women in prison say that life in the brothels is worse than life in jail. Women in brothels are subjected to multiple forms of violence from both pimps and buyers who humiliate them, burn them with cigarettes, batter and torture them. In Basra, women arrested on charges of prostitution and/or adultery have remained in prison after the end of their sentences to be protected from honor crimes.

There are almost no shelters for women in Iraq, and among them are very few that are open to women and girls victimized in sex trafficking and prostitution. The first shelters for women in Iraq were established at the end of the 1990s in Kurdistan. But few of them accept prostituted women and girls because they consider that prostitution is a sin. Among those assisting victims is the NGO ASUDA for Combating Violence against Women in Sulaymaniyah, which rescues women and girls who have been sexually exploited. And in Baghdad, OWFI the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq provides shelter, counseling and other assistance to victims of trafficking and prostitution.

As in Iraq, there are few shelters for women who have been victimized in the sex industries of other countries in the region. In Abu Dhabi, one shelter called Ewa has existed since January, 2009, and another will be established in the region in 2010. In Syria, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Damascus who work with supporting refugee women from Iraq provide shelter and counseling to women who have been trafficked. The Sisters work in cooperation with a network of embassies in Syria and with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which has developed strong programs to help Iraqi refugees in the region. In February, 2009, the International Organization of Migration (IOM), in collaboration with a Syrian NGO, the Association for Women's Role Development, opened a shelter in Damascus for victims of human trafficking. Other shelters have been developed in Lebanon and Jordan with the support of the government.

Iraq is in the process of drafting a new law against trafficking in women. However, the network of women's organizations who participated in the process of our report, who have members in all the major cities

of Iraq, and who are informed about the situation of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in Iraq, have thus far not been asked to participate in the drafting or finalizing of this law. This is unfortunate because these women's organizations can contribute much to the sections relating especially to protection and reintegration of victims and the prevention of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Countries that have ratified the 1949 convention, including Iraq, are obligated to do several things: prohibit brothels, punish procurers and other perpetrators of prostitution; "repeal or abolish any existing law, regulation or administrative provision" used to register women in prostitution and treat the women in prostitution as victims, not as criminals. Most important, the Convention states that the consent of the victims is irrelevant and is thereby not a defense for perpetrators. Countries cannot make distinctions between "forced" and "free" prostitution because all prostitution is viewed as exploitation. Countries are also obligated to encourage and provide services for the social, economic and personal reintegration of victims of prostitution. Clearly, this does not mean that prostituted and trafficked women should be thrown into jail with the justification of "protecting them."

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW) is another important tool that NGOs can use to address the failure of governments to comply with their obligations to prevent and prosecute discrimination against women. Governments who have ratified the CEDAW Convention, including Iraq, have to make reports to the UN CEDAW committee every 4 years and document how they are complying with their obligations. Art. 6 of the CEDAW Convention stipulates that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women."

Iraq has reserved on Art. 2 f and g of CEDAW stipulating that countries "take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;" and "repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women." Iraq has also reserved on Art. 16 providing for equality in marriage.

Iraqi and international NGOs can submit their own reports, both in writing and in oral testimony to the CEDAW committee. These reports

are most often critical of the governmental reports and are called "shadow reports." They have been very effective in embarrassing governments into changing some of their policies and procedures, especially when these shadow reports are mentioned by the international media.

The Palermo Protocol reinforces many of the provisions in the 1949 Convention. It expands the definition of trafficking to include the means under which persons are trafficked, including not only force, coercion, fraud, abduction and deception, but also abuse of a victim's vulnerability. Given the use of any of these means of trafficking, the definition stipulates that the consent of the victim is irrelevant.

As the first UN instrument to address the demand which results in especially women and children being trafficked, the Palermo Protocol calls upon countries to take or strengthen legislative and other measures to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation. The Protocol also lists important protection measures for victims, including legal information, appropriate housing, medical, psychological and material assistance, and employment, educational and training opportunities.

Iraq has also signed the Arab Charter on Human Rights of 2004 stating that "All forms of slavery and trafficking in human beings are prohibited and are punishable by law. No one shall be held in slavery and servitude under any circumstances." Forced labor, trafficking for purposes of prostitution or sexual exploitation, or any other form of trafficking are prohibited.

The Arab Charter was drafted in accordance with Islamic standards and, thus, sex trafficking and sexual exploitation must be interpreted in the light of Islamic principles for the prohibition of slavery and the decriminalization of victims.

Art. 37 of the new Iraqi constitution prohibit the "trade in women and children." It is the first Arab country that explicitly states this important provision. Although Iraq has taken some steps to address the equality of women, this report illustrates that much remains to be done as Iraq goes forward in the aftermath of the war of 2003 and drafts its new legislation. Importantly, it must bring its national legislation on violence against women, including its legislation on trafficking and prostitution, into conformity with its international and regional obligations.

Repressive laws, policies and traditions weigh heavily on women. The impact of the war, discrimination in many spheres such as inequality in marriage, polygamy, rape, domestic violence, sex trafficking and prostitution, and the sexual autonomy of women, must be addressed together.

This report documents and demonstrates the important grassroots work on women's rights that women's organizations in Iraq are undertaking.

Women's NGOs are a vital part of Iraq's future with the potential to help the new Iraq move in the direction of a gender equal society. Women's organizations have a key role to play in the political construction of their country. Their vision of a democratic region without trafficking, prostitution and violence against women should be supported by international, regional and national institutions.

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