



The Committee Clerk
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT43XX.

Friday 25th October 2013

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

RE: Submission to the Northern Ireland Justice Committee on the *Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill (Further Provisions and Support for Victims)*

IMPACT trade union has been campaigning against sex trafficking, which is the most widely spread form of human exploitation in the European Union. IMPACT is the largest public sector trade union in the Republic of Ireland. We represent 60,000 workers in health, local government, education, the civil service and a range of state agencies and former state enterprises.

Because sex trafficking is such a severe and widespread form of human exploitation, in which the human rights of trafficked persons are continually violated, we are active members of the Turn Off The Red Light Campaign^[1], which aims at ending prostitution and sex trafficking in the Republic of Ireland. It is being run by an alliance of 68 civil society organisations, unions, umbrellas and services with a joint representation exceeding 1.6 million people in Ireland.

Trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation is modern slavery and a prevalent form of exploitation. We believe that the best way to combat this is to tackle the demand for prostitution by criminalising the purchase of sex, and maintaining services to those trafficked and affected by prostitution, ensuring that they are not criminalised and re-victimised.

We are deeply concerned about the spread of the prostitution industry, which exploits women and children in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and we wish to add our voice to those who are seeking to change Northern Ireland's legislation to criminalise the purchase of sexual services, while protecting the rights and dignity of those prostituted.

[1] www.turnofftheredlight.ie

We therefore readily welcome the proposed *Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill (Further Provisions and Support for Victims)*, and particularly Clause 6 of the Bill, which would specifically legislate for the criminalisation of the purchase of sex, as a measure to discourage demand that fosters sex trafficking and exploitation through prostitution. As the Republic of Ireland Government considers the introduction of similar legislation, following a unanimous recommendation of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, we would be very encouraged to see this measure come into effect in Northern Ireland.

Attacking the commercialised sex business through the introduction of penalties for the buyer has proven to be an efficient approach that best responds to the nature of a trade which thrives on threats, abuse and violence. This is an essential part of the campaign against human trafficking as the majority of human trafficking victims are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

We believe that every Government owes it to the vulnerable people and children trapped in prostitution, as well as to the society which they represent, to ensure that the demand for sexual services from exploited and trafficked individuals is effectively tackled.

IMPACT, in addition to our campaign partners, hopes that the consultation will lead to the passing of the *Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill* as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,
Niall Shanahan
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IMPACT trade union

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