

Confronting Modern Slavery: Germany's Determined Fight against Human Trafficking

An Overview of the Obstacles, Methods, Achievements, and Goals of a Tier One Country

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“There are some groups that are saying that up to 40,000 women might end up in trafficking networks in Germany during the World Cup.... [W]hat we say, more generally, is that up to 200,000 women are trafficked yearly to Europe for sexual exploitation from Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and other parts of the world, and that, unfortunately, the World Cup is not going to stop that phenomenon.” – International Organization for Migration (IOM) spokesperson Jean Philippe Chauzy (IOM Battles)

In the year leading up to the 2006 World Cup in Germany, media outlets, NGOs, and government agencies around the world braced themselves for an unprecedented and possibly cataclysmic surge in human trafficking during the games. With 3.5 million tourists expected to arrive in the country for the month-long tournament, both the European Parliament and U.S. State Department warned Germany that such throngs of soccer fans would provide fertile grounds for a drastic increase in the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation (European Parliament, *Ahead of the World*). However, after months of bleak predictions, the IOM and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency determined that there was no evidence of a significant rise in forced prostitution or human trafficking during the World Cup (No Rise). Upon this finding, some scoffed at earlier high estimates, when instead, perhaps they ought to have commended Germany for its successful preventative measures. As described by the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. in 2006, the country took extensive steps to quell any plans traffickers may have had to capitalize on the influx of tourists, tightening the German Criminal Code to incorporate UN and EU standards for addressing the problem. The government's multifaceted approach, which included "awareness-raising, prevention, and police

crackdown," ultimately acted as a model to other countries in the process of establishing their own anti-trafficking measures, and continues to do so today (Fighting Trafficking).

The IOM states that "one of the key requirements for effective cooperation and policy-making in the area of migration management is a common level of understanding of the essential themes and issues involved." A prevalent and yet hidden form of modern-day slavery, it is essential that the rapidly growing illicit business of trafficking in persons garners recognition as a key migration issue of modernity. The International Labor Organization (ILO), a U.N. agency, estimates that at any time, 12.3 million people--men, women, and children--are in bonded labor, forced labor, or sexual servitude, while others estimate that as many as 27 million are trapped in these conditions (Office to Monitor). Germany has adopted a broad range of methods to address the scourge, and its World Cup approach provided a concentrated picture of both the dangers and possibilities that surround the issue. Human trafficking is truly a transnational problem, a product of an increasingly globalized world. The variety of nationalities represented in documented trafficking cases has widened in recent years, as traffickers have learned to exploit the potential for "vast distance and cultural and linguistic differences to increase the vulnerability of victims" (Office to Monitor). As communication and transportation technologies improve--and with freer movement between many countries--fewer logistical or economic barriers stand in the way of trafficking. As described by the IOM, migration

is one of the defining issues of the twenty-first century. It is now an essential, inevitable and potentially beneficial component of the economic and social life of every country and region. The question is no longer whether to have migration, but rather how to manage migration effectively so as to enhance its positive and reduce its negative impacts. Well-informed choices by migrants, governments, home and host communities, civil society, and the private sector can help realize the positive potential of migration in social, economic and political terms. (Facts and Figures)

Despite the daunting scope of human trafficking, it is a phenomenon that *can* be curbed with enough commitment from governments, NGOs, businesses, and citizens around the world. However, not all countries recognize the severity of human trafficking, as the executive director of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) discovered in his quest to organize an international forum aimed at spreading awareness of the issue in early 2008. Antonio Maria Costa said his organizers found that some countries appear to neglect the problem, and he called on member states to approach human trafficking with the seriousness it warrants (UN: Human Trafficking). Far from apathetic, Germany has proven itself a leader in many aspects of the fight against trafficking in persons, before, during, and after the 2006 World Cup scenario. Its ranking by the U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) as a Tier 1 country signifies Germany's compliance with the Trafficking Victims Protections Act of 2000 (TVPA), which provides criteria for evaluating a country's efforts to eliminate trafficking. With a population comprised of 12.3% international migrants, Germany has undertaken the "Three P's" described in the TIP: Prosecution, protection, and prevention, as well as the "Three R's": Rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration (Office to Monitor). The Future Group, a Canadian-based NGO dedicated to combating the child sex trade and human trafficking, states that Germany provides intercepted victims of trafficking with a four week "reflection period" and possible temporary residency, as well as twenty-five counseling centers which are funded by State governments--important provisions for the ideal victim-centered approach. Furthermore, in 2004, victims' rights were enhanced in criminal proceedings per the Victims' Rights Reform Law (Take Action). In February of 2008, a statement on behalf of Germany was presented at the U.N. Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking (UN.GIFT) forum, outlining additional signs of the country's dedication to eliminating trafficking. One important step the German government has

taken is collecting and publishing data related to trafficking cases since 1994. UNODC has repeatedly emphasized the necessity for more empirical research regarding human trafficking, as the problem cannot be effectively addressed without a firm grasp of the subject. In Germany, these findings have been used to develop policies tailored to victims' needs, and to promote more efficient law enforcement (Statement on Behalf).

While focusing on Germany's progress in creating and implementing anti-trafficking measures, it is also necessary to note that the U.S. State Department's TIP reiterates the message that "every country can do more." Similarly, IOM's Chief of Mission Maurizio Busatti admits that his staff must constantly readjust to changes in trafficking methods, and UNODC's Costa emphasizes that "modern slavery is a problem which knows no border" (Rights: New Move). Indeed, with eight bordering countries, Germany is a destination and transit country for human trafficking—primarily for sexual exploitation—with many victims coming from Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, and other areas in Eastern Europe, followed by Africa and Asia. Six hundred and forty-two victims were identified in 2005, 51 of whom were children. As a receiving country, says the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), "an international regime [must] raise the cost of trafficking in human beings"—and although Germany has signed, it has not ratified the European Trafficking Convention. Additionally, some victims' rights are dependent on their cooperation with law enforcement, a stipulation that has been called excessive by opponents. Meanwhile, the TIP advises the German government to pursue longer prison sentences for those convicted of human trafficking. It will only benefit the country to explore new and different ways to fight trafficking as time goes on.

Facing an estimated multi-billion dollar illicit industry that is often intertwined with organized crime rings, it is crucial that Germany continues on a path of progress, striving to

achieve more goals in its determined fight against human trafficking. “Migration is the key in which traffickers and traffic victims meet,” said Gary Lewis, a representative of the UNODC in South Asia. The relationship between the two must not be overlooked, and Germany’s comprehensive approach to the problem illustrates its recognition of that vital connection. The TIP notes that the transatlantic slave trade was abolished two hundred years ago; now Germany has the ability to lead the world in opposing trafficking in persons—modern-day slavery that impacts not only individuals, but the entire international community.

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