

Full Decriminalisation of Prostitution is Being Considered in SA

By Tershia de Klerk

The government of South Africa is currently considering Full Decriminalisation of Prostitution. What will this mean for our country?

I am sharing with you some vital information with the hope that you will take the opportunity to share it with those in your circle of influence. I pray that this vital topic will move you to also take a stand with us... for the sake of the future of our children, our families, our communities and our country.

In a country such as South Africa, where we are fully aware of the levels of child abuse, rape, Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking, what would the country look like if brothels become legal?... Where men can purchase as they please?... What impact would this have on the current culture and attitudes towards women?

The sex trade is very lucrative. We all know the saying: "Sex sells". However, in the case of Prostitution, the person is the "commodity", and the person can be sold multiple times over.

The Joseph Movement is taking a stand, alongside other NGOs and professional individuals, against full decriminalisation, as it would mean that government would be 'normalising' brothels, pimps and sex buyers.

The sex trade will increase opportunities for more Sexual Exploitation & will increase Sex Trafficking. It will remove laws targeting sex buyers and will normalise the demand for paid sex. Not to mention the fact that it will fuel Gender-Based Violence.

Law enforcement will find it a lot more difficult to detect and investigate Sex Trafficking, and indicators of fraud, force and coercion will be concealed. It will therefore mean that minors and other Sex Trafficking victims will not be identified, as police will be very limited in entering and investigating premises that operate as a brothel.

Brothels, illicit massage parlours, escort agencies and online platforms, overlap the system of Prostitution – and Sex Trafficking occurs in all of them! Traffickers will be relieved, as it will become a more conducive "business" environment.

Many women in Prostitution suffer vulnerabilities and marginalisation. Full decriminalisation of Prostitution does not make it safe, as it creates trauma that cannot be regulated or decriminalised away, and it also causes physical and psychological harms.

Some people argue that Prostitution is necessary because it provides an income for poor and marginalised people. However, this view turns Prostitution into a fake social security system that requires Sexual Exploitation of poor and minority individuals, especially women. Governments should never reduce economically insecure people to a state of sexual servitude because they are poor, or "struggling financially", or "need to make a living". There are other options.

The harms of Prostitution rarely stops at the individual level – it also inflicts harm on communities, residents, families and businesses. Poor and minority communities typically bear the brunt of such impacts.

The law must become stricter with sex buyers. Reduction in demand is key. While many men have purchased sex, most have not. So, the buying of sex is not inevitable. The experiences of people around the world, who have managed to exit the sex trade, reveal the abuses, harms and the chronic traumatising.

The Centre Against Sexual Exploitation believes that the following just actions must be taken:

- a) only decriminalising those sold into the systems of Prostitution
- b) creating and enforcing punishments that hold accountable those who facilitate or engage in the purchase of persons for sex, and
- c) providing supportive services for those seeking an exit from Prostitution.

Not only Traffickers, but also sex buyers, should be held accountable. Many sex buyers may be unaware, or in denial, when it comes to the realities of Sex Trafficking. When Sex Trafficking is present, victims are often subjected to violence, threats, controlling behaviour, false promises, lies, and manipulation perpetrated by the Traffickers/pimps.

Popular forms of media, including books, movies and music, often glamorise the commercial sex industry, which continues to fuel the demand. Sex Traffickers respond with the so called "product", which are the people they control.

When sex buyers are penalised, consumer-level demand is constrained. This reduces the scale of the sex trade and reduces Sex Trafficking. Sex buyers do not want their behaviour found out and they use a variety of methods to ensure they remain anonymous, as well as to ensure they avoid arrest.

Sex Traffickers are difficult to deter, due to market incentives, which are created by sex buyers. The full spectrum of Sex Traffickers, including peers, family members and those in positions of power (e.g. police, clergy, institutional caregivers, etc.) are motivated by money. Every Rand and Dollar in the global sex trade originates from sex buyers!

Every victim was purchased by a sex buyer and typically multiple sex buyers per day. A very small portion of pimps and Traffickers are ever arrested. The Traffickers are likely to be replaced as long as the demand remains strong and there is profit to be made.

There are various ways in which you and I can help make a difference and take a stand. We will have a very strong and effective voice when we stand together.

Remember – “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”.

- Acknowledgement: National Center On Sexual Exploitation

With love in Christ

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