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## Human Rights in Russia and the Former Soviet Republics: Human Trafficking

### Abstract

Human trafficking is one of the greatest, yet little known problems facing Russia and the former Soviet Republics. The most pertinent aspects of this topic include: who is trafficked, causes of trafficking, and the steps that have been and need to be taken to combat trafficking. Following coverage of the preceding aspects, this bibliography will include a brief section on prominent trafficking in specific countries.

### Keywords

Human rights, Russia, Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Human trafficking

## Human Trafficking

By Susan Freese

Human trafficking is one of the greatest, yet little known problems facing Russia and the former Soviet Republics. The most pertinent aspects of this topic include: who is trafficked, causes of trafficking, and the steps that have been and need to be taken to combat trafficking. Following coverage of the preceding aspects, this bibliography will include a brief section on prominent trafficking in specific countries.

The people most affected by trafficking in Russia and the former Soviet Republics are women and children. The current economic situation in Russia makes it difficult for women to find employment and provide for their families, putting themselves and their children at high risk for trafficking.

Trafficking is caused by a combination of factors including government corruption, poverty and economic instability, inefficient legal systems and the incentive of financial gain in the trade. Human trafficking has recently emerged in this region because of the dire economic situation in Russia and CIS countries, along with large levels of corruption. There is often little, if any, enforced punishment for traffickers. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's political system remains unstable as the mafia continues to infiltrate the government. The corruption is so deep that many law enforcement officers are involved in the trafficking industry. Often women and children have no one to turn to if they are trafficked.

Trafficking continues to be a problem mostly due to lack of action. The corruption is particularly problematic in neighboring countries with whom trade is conducted, as law enforcement and local police are often customers and reach deals with the traffickers. Another reason that trafficking continues to function with relative ease is because the legal systems in these countries are not as developed. Oftentimes offenders are not convicted and, if they are, their terms are minimal, usually less than a year.

Various NGOs provide needed assistance and aid for trafficking victims, but the high levels of corruption often limit their ability to make a large impact. Often, even if women are rescued, they remain scarred and they are not able to receive the psychological help they need. Many are dragged back into trafficking.

There are several main exporters and importers of traffickers. For the exporters, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova remain prominent. These countries are seen as easily accessible, in addition to the fact that there are few possibilities of legal ramifications in these countries. However, trafficking is found everywhere. Sweden, Finland and Israel are some of the main importers.

Human trafficking in Russia and the former Soviet Republics is a complex issue that is difficult to address. Much more needs to be done to stop human trafficking, but as long as it remains fueled by economic disparity and local corruption, it will continue.

**People Involved in Human Trafficking**

Flowers, R. Barri. 2001. "The Sex Trade Industry's Worldwide Exploitation of Children." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 575.

Annotation: The exploitation of children has exploded in the twenty-first century. This article shows how the child sex industry continues to grow at the expense of the children. These children are used for prostitution, pornography and other kinds of sexual exploitation. This study shows how these children are lured or abducted into sexual slavery and the abuse they suffer including: rape, beating, displacement, exposure to HIV/AIDS and a life with no future. This industry continues to grow, but international organizations are taking action. In particular, ECPAT is an example of an organization that remains committed to addressing some of the main issues pertaining to the prostitution and sexual exploitation of children. While this article does not focus on Russia and Eastern Europe, it is a great example of the overall exploitation that children face.

MacWilliams, Bryon. 2003. "Forced into Prostitution." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 50 (6).

Annotation: This article shows how young college age women are tricked into trafficking. They think that they will be going abroad for the summer to earn some extra money for school, but then they end up as sexual slaves in debt to their so called employers. This is terrible for these young women as they usually become stuck and do not make it back in time for school to start. Prostitution remains legal in Russia and as long as the huge profits remain, women will continue to be lured into trafficking.

Malarek, Victor. 2003. The Natashas: Inside the New Global Sex Trade. Canada: Pearson Penguin Canada, Inc.

Annotation: This book provides a good overview of human trafficking focusing on trafficking from Eastern Europe. The author, Victor Malarek, is a journalist who uses mostly interviews and personal experiences for his research. In *The Natashas*, we learn that we are now in the fourth wave of trafficking. People are lured into prostitution from answering a job ad in the newspaper, being recruited following living in an orphanage, despite choosing to do so. The women trafficked are often destitute, trying to raise money for their families. While anti-trafficking laws have been passed, it remains the third most profitable enterprise following drugs and narcotics. This practice continues and is fueled by corruption. Often local police are visitors to the brothels. Also if women speak out, they will be deported. Another problem faced by trafficking is prosecution. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to prosecute people involved in the trafficking industry. If the girls do go on trial and testify against their trafficker, they do not have witness protection. Often if they speak, then their families are at risk. Malarek argues that these people need to be held accountable for their actions.

Stephenson, S.A. 2002. "Children of the Streets and Shadow Communities of the City." *Russian Education and Society* 44 (6).

Annotation: This article shows the large increase in street children in Russia over the span of the 1990s. These children are either orphans or do not have parental supervision and wander around the streets looking for both work and amusement. Often these children, if they are lucky, end up in children's homes. But many of these children end up on the streets again. These street children are forced to fend for themselves because they have no means of support. Often these children are either abandoned, or they escape to the streets from abusive families. Other street children are migrants and refugees mostly from Central Asia. This article conducts a survey and interviews the children. They find that most of the street children come from poor families who are burdened by alcoholism and violence and many come from families living in dire poverty. These children try to work during the day for needed money. Most of these children are also involved in crime, drugs and gangs. The article argues that this problem of poverty needs to be addressed to help these displaced children.

Waters, Elizabeth. 1989. "Restructuring the 'Woman Question': Perestroika and Prostitution." *Feminist Review* 33.

Annotation: This article, written in 1989, looks at the changes that were already occurring within the Soviet Union. Waters shows the direct link between increased economic openness and prostitution. However, at the same time she also mentions instances of prostitution in the Soviet Union. Usually prostitution would occur during difficult times including wartime. The main difference during the Soviet time was the fact that prostitution was never mentioned. It existed, but minimally and was not talked about. Also there was a lot of shame connected to prostitution. It is still looked down upon, but during the Soviet period, as it was argued that prostitution should be a criminal offence. This is an interesting article showing the restructuring and the beginning of the openness and end of the Soviet Union with its focus on prostitution in Russia.

### **Causes of Human Trafficking**

Abdullin, M., Persidskaia, N., Rogacheva, V., Kozlova, T., and Volkov, V. 2002. "The 'Pepsi Generation.'" *Russian Education and Society* 44 (2).

Annotation: This article shows the new generation of consumerism in Russia, following the Soviet Union. Children are growing up in broken homes, as 96 out of 100 marriages end in divorce in Russia. These children are growing up without any direction or any role models. This has led to riskier behavior. Both boys and girls report engaging in premarital sex. Sex is taken lightly in this new generation where most people find sex with multiple partners to be normal. This, combined with the 80% of young people surveyed who claim to feel only emptiness, has led to the rise in prostitution and narcotic abuse.

Alexander, James. 1998. "Uncertain Conditions in the Russian Transition: The Popular Drive Towards Stability in a 'Stateless' Environment." *Europe-Asia Studies* 50(3).

Annotation: The author, a professor at Northeastern State University, uses data from personal interviews that he conducted in the Russia cities of Syktyvkar and Kirovto. It shows the increasing instability that has emerged in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its current economic transition. The article finds that Russians today are most concerned with the economic and social conditions over their political concerns. Russians no longer have their survival guaranteed by the government, and as a result, are struggling to meet their basic needs. Children are growing up in an environment of increasing instability. As a result of these unstable conditions, human trafficking has emerged and is likely to continue.

Allred, Keith J. 2006. "Peacekeepers and Prostitutes: How Deployed Forces Fuel and Demand for Trafficked Women and New Hope for Stopping It." *Armed Forces & Society* 33 (1).

Annotation: This article examines the offenses committed by U.N. peacekeepers. A large number of human trafficking violations have been committed by the peacekeepers, as they entice desperate women and children to engage in sexual acts while they are on their peacekeeping missions. It is very difficult to bring justice on these offenders because they threaten possible whistleblowers who are not protected and at the same time, U.N. investigations are not conducted fairly. Often the in the U.N. investigations, witnesses are either paid off or threatened to not identify suspects. This article uses the example of violations committed by the U.S. Army and NATO to show how to combat this problem. It argues that the U.S. and NATO have taken significant steps to limit trafficking by enacting new policies, which are intended to remove their troops from the demand for women. The U.N. should follow these examples to address its trafficking problem.

Hughes, Donna M. 2004. "The Role Of 'Marriage Agencies' In the Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Women from the Former Soviet Union." *International Review of Victimology* 11.

Annotation: This article examines human trafficking in the form of marriage agencies. It shows how thousands of desperate women in Russia and Eastern Europe will do anything to overcome their poverty. Once they decide that the answer to the problem lies in going abroad, they will work with any agency necessary and do not mind entering countries illegally. Many of these women who end up marrying met through a marriage agency end up being beaten, trafficked, or even killed. This article focuses on the role of marriage agencies in recruiting women from the former Soviet Union countries. It examines Internet-based marriage agencies and compares countries from which women are trafficked with countries with marriage agencies. It includes helpful maps, as well as good charts and statistics of the numbers of women recruited by marriage agencies in the former Soviet Republics.

Klebnikov, Paul. 1993. "Joe Stalin's Heirs." *Forbes* 152 (7).

Annotation: This article, written by Paul Klebnikov, explains why and how Russian business is so corrupt. Klebnikov explains that the rise in murders and criminal activity in Russia, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, was not a byproduct of capitalism, but came about because of the crime that ruled during the Soviet period. Now, it is quite common for former KGB and former Olympic athletes to participate in this kind of crime. One of the main reasons it persists is because of the lack of legal enforcement. There are not enough laws or enforcement to limit this activity. This relates to trafficking because we see the increase in corruption corresponding with the increase in human trafficking from Russia.

Kranz, Patricia and Coker, Margaret. 1999. "The Tidal Wave of Cash Gushing out of Russia." *Business Week* (3646).

Annotation: This article brings to light the state of the Russian economy and its level of corruption. It shows how the Russian mafia has even used the Bank of New York to smuggle money. Russia is still going through a lot of change following the end of the Soviet Union, and it is during this time that the rich and corrupt are taking advantage of Russia and are exploiting its resources to get rich. This includes any money making venture, including narcotics trafficking and prostitution. While this article does not mention trafficking specifically, it shows the corruption in Russia and how effective the mafia is at driving this corruption with little or no political or law enforcement to stop it.

MacWilliams, Bryan. 2002. "Turning Tricks for Tuition." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 49 (11).

Annotation: This article shows how university students are working as prostitutes to help pay their college tuition. These girls either work in night clubs or carry on relationships with so-called "sponsors." This is the only way that they can afford to go to college. The article explains that so many women are involved in college prostitution that it functions as an organized business where the women and their services are advertised on websites. Out of the 2,000 rubles that can be charged, the women only retain 300 with the remainder going to one of the "madams" who dominate the sex business. Aside from working as prostitutes, this article suggests that these women lead fairly normal lives.

Miller, John R. 2006. "Slave Trade: Combating Human Trafficking." *Harvard Law Review* 27 (4).

Annotation: This article provides an overview of human trafficking including countries from around the world. It shows the direct link between the underground market and human trafficking. It is a good article overall because it examines the causes of trafficking and shows the individual effects. By providing personalized stories of victims, it also includes a personalized account of human trafficking. Human trafficking is driven by extreme poverty and it will continue as long as the demand continues. It gives an example of a success story in Sweden

where new laws and increased prosecution of customers, pimps, and brothel owners have led to a 50% decrease in female prostitutes and a 75% decrease in men buying sex.

Sandul, Irina. 2004. "Russia: Taking It Off in Moscow." *Transitions Online*. <http://www.tol.cz/>.

Annotation: This article, written by Irina Sandul, a freelance journalist in Moscow, shows three girls working in dance clubs in Moscow. It is a different take on prostitution from what is normally seen. These girls choose to dance and along with their job go to school. This article shows a more positive side of prostitution. The girls appear to be happy and normal despite choosing to be prostitutes at nights. They took the dancing jobs as a way to make money and to move to Moscow from their small town. Another interesting point in the article is that most of the girls working in the strip club are not from Moscow. These women are paid for their work and their boss seems to treat them well.

### Steps Being Taken/ Need to Be Taken

2006. The Angel Coalition. *The Anti-Trafficking Coalition of Russia and CIS*. <http://www.angelcoalition.org>.

Annotation: This is an NGO that helps to combat trafficking in Russia and the former Soviet republics. They are mentioned in several of the other articles listed. They provide reports, history and trends in trafficking and also have a hotline number that trafficking victims can call to receive help.

2006. Trafficking in Persons Report. *The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons: U.S. Department of State*. <http://www.state.gov>.

Annotation: Each year, the State Department releases a Trafficking in Persons Report in which it ranks countries based on their trafficking violations. It ranks the country according to a three tier ranking system. If a country is on tier 3, then it has committed the worst violations and that status could lead to the withholding of non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance from the U.S. to that country. In 2006, Russia was placed on the Tier 2 Watch List. The State Department claimed that Russia has made some progress in improving its law enforcement of trafficking, but does not provide adequate protection to victims of trafficking.

2006. (UNODC), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*. [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking\\_persons\\_report\\_2006-04.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_persons_report_2006-04.html).

Annotation: This report includes an in-depth look at human trafficking. In particular, it includes a section examining the role of organized crime involvement in human trafficking that is relevant to Russia and the former Soviet republics. It also has specific sections for countries,



including one for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Eastern Europe. It is a good overall reference tool.

Haynes, Dina Francesca. 2004. "Used, Abused, Arrested and Deported: Extending Immigration Benefits to Protect the Victims of Trafficking and to Secure the Prosecution of Traffickers." *Human Rights Quarterly* 26.

Annotation: Organized crime rings exploit anywhere between 1 million to 4 million new victims of human trafficking each year; often the women are lured across borders where they become more vulnerable to abuse. Trafficking in Southeastern Europe is a relatively new phenomenon that is fueled by the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, as well as the presence of international peacekeepers who are often offenders themselves. The current two main anti-trafficking models emphasize the prosecution of the trafficker or the protection of the victim, but neither adequately addresses immigration options that could serve to protect the victim and provide better evidence with which to prosecute the traffickers for their crimes. This article examines the idea of extending immigration benefits to protect victims of trafficking.

Ontiveros, Maria. 2005. "Panel One: Women and Children First? New Strategies in Anti-Trafficking Initiatives." *Georgetown Journal of Gender & the Law* 6 (2).

Annotation: This article presents information on human trafficking including: a discussion on anti-trafficking initiatives, a focus on the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in the U.S., a description of battered women's shelters, an exploration of rape crisis centers. It focuses on federal and state laws that have engaged policy making in the struggle against violence against women. While this article focuses on the U.S., these initiatives and methods of helping victims can and should also be applied to Russia and Eastern Europe.

Orlova, Alexandra V. 2005. "Trafficking of Women and Children for Exploitation in the Commercial Sex Trade: The Case of the Russian Federation." *Georgetown Journal of Gender & the Law* 6 (2).

Annotation: This article focuses on the trafficking of women and children in Russia. It mentions earlier waves of trafficking, but its main focus is on Russia. It also explains some of the difficulties that exist in dealing with the problem of trafficking. It also explains how various governmental and non-governmental agencies are dealing with trafficking.

Parfitt, Tom. 2004. "Anti-Trafficking Law Stalls in Russian Parliament: Draft Legislation Stumbles as State Bodies Argue over Who Will Lead the Anti-Trafficking Effort." *The Lancet* 363.

Annotation: This article examines a law in Russia to combat human trafficking. At the time of writing, the law had not been passed due to a disagreement between the ministry and state agencies over which one of them would lead the anti trafficking effort. The article states that it is

important that the law is passed so that the status of the trafficking victims and the Russian government's responsibility towards them is clarified. It also mentions the services provided by the Angel Coalition NGO.

Pickup, Francine. 1998. "More Words but No Action?: Forced Migration and Trafficking of Women." *Gender and Development* 6 (1).

Annotation: This article reports about a Moscow conference on human trafficking that was held in November 1997. It shows that confusion and stigma regarding human trafficking. Human trafficking was defined, but the article explained that the stigma from prostitution continues to impede progress. Also, it is difficult for progress to be made in Russia because women are held in subservient roles. Pickup recommends that a viable solution to the problem of trafficking is that women need to be empowered. They need more opportunities to help themselves, in particular, economically.

2006. "Remedying the Injustices of Human Trafficking through Tort Law." *Harvard Law Review* 119 (8).

Annotation: This article examines human trafficking occurring in the United States. It looks in particular at trafficking in California and what is being done to combat trafficking. Congress has already enacted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which seeks to combat trafficking through the prosecution of traffickers, protection and support for victims, and prevention of trafficking on a global level. Unfortunately, the current legislative framework does not do enough to protect the victims. This article takes a closer look at the legal framework and addresses the need for providing the trafficking victims with greater protection to testify against their offenders.

Schuckman, Emily E. 2006. "Antitrafficking Policies in Asia and the Russian Far East: A Comparative Perspective." *Demokratizatsiya* 14 (1).

Annotation: This article examines trafficking in Russia, particularly in the far east. It looks at how trafficking emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union and how now Russia is the largest source country for women trafficked. Most of these women are desperate for work and become lured by job ads to work abroad. The article also focuses on the role of women's organizations in anti-trafficking efforts. These organizations are located in Russia, but also in China, Japan and South Korea. In particular, the author shows how grassroots organizations addressing the social and economic factors behind trafficking have been successful. The article concludes by emphasizing the need for funding women's organizations and encouraging civil soviet developments to combat trafficking.

Stoecker, Sally. 2000. "The Rise in Human Trafficking and the Role of Organized Crime." *Demokratizatsiya* 8 (1).

Annotation: This article examines the rise in human trafficking in Russia with a special focus on the role of organized crime. It shows how the problems in Russia are part of a larger global trend in human trafficking. Human trafficking is also a highly attractive business for criminal groups because it is low in risk and high in payoffs. This article claims that human trafficking is a major branch of organized crime and shows how the market drives the demand. At the moment, the market for Slavic women and children is in the developed countries of North America, Europe, and North Asia. Some of the causes for this rise in crime and increase in trafficking are the increasing number of street children. This adds to both the number of younger criminals and to children who are trafficked. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, half of Russian adults are out of work and only one quarter of those employed are getting paid on a regular basis. This is part of the problem, as the women and the children they support are the most affected by the trends. Along with examining these causes, this article also mentions possible solutions. Stoecker argues that in order to combat trafficking effectively, a comprehensive, transnational strategy must be developed. Women and children need to be protected and warned about this criminal activity. Also the feature of internet monitoring should be increased. New legislation on trafficking in Russia needs to include violations that occur abroad.

Wolfe, Leslie R. 2005. "Fighting the War on Trafficking of Women and Girls: The Role of State Legislatures." *Georgetown Journal of Gender & the Law* 6 (2).

Annotation: This article focuses on trafficking of women and girls for exploitation in the commercial sex trade. It shows how women are easily trafficked across international borders and demonstrates the enormous profits that this trade can generate. It mentions women who are trafficked into the U.S.. Most of these women are trafficked because they are facing severe economic hardship. This article suggests that the problem of trafficking lies in the problems within our society.

### **Trade Partners**

2004. Israel a Human Trafficking Haven Tel Aviv: Fox News Network,  
[http://www.foxnews.com/printer\\_friendly\\_story/0,3566,120157,00.html](http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,120157,00.html).

Annotation: This article examines human trafficking in Israel and reports that it is turning into a real problem. It shows that the Israeli police are also involved in trafficking. Some of the facts mentioned include the fact that traffickers spend about \$21 million a year to get the girls into Israel and that each prostitute can earn them \$200,000 annually. One year of smuggled women is about \$62 million. Israel was just promoted to Tier 2 by the State Department, but much more still needs to be done to combat human trafficking in Israel.

Alalehto, Tage. 2002. "Eastern Prostitution from Russia to Sweden and Finland." *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 3.

Annotation: This article examines the role of trafficking and its spread to Sweden and Finland; it focuses in particular on Russian-organized prostitution in the Tornio Valley (the border between northern Finland and northern Sweden). The author examines the deposit-sites in Finland and conducts interviews with the authorities concerned, including: police, customs agents and social services. This article describes this phenomenon, rather than explaining its particular causes. The conclusion does not directly link this particular trafficking center to organized crime, but it does claim that there is an organized trade in women in the Tornio Valley.

Bell, Bethany. 2003. Europe's Human Trafficking Hub BBC News. Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/2931646.stm>.

Annotation: In this article, the BBC reports on human trafficking in Moldova. This is one of the major export countries for trafficking. In fact, the report states that in 2001, Moldova was the largest supplier state in all of Europe. This is mostly due to the high levels of poverty in Moldova. Many are desperate to improve their conditions and as a result respond to job adds for work abroad where they become trapped working as sex slaves.

Hughes, Donna M. 2000. "The 'Natasha' Trade: The Transnational Shadow Market of Trafficking in Women." *Journal of International Affairs* 53 (2).

Annotation: This article provides an overall assessment of human trafficking with a focus on Eastern Europe, in particular on Ukraine. It shows how the trafficking of women from Eastern Europe has greatly increased following the collapse of the Soviet Union. An important focus of this article is on the transnational crime networks involved in the trafficking of women and how the slave trade continues because the traffickers are protected by their local officials, who also participate in the crime. It provides an in-depth overview of the trafficking process including how the women are recruited from their individual hometowns. The conclusion blames the increased number of women trafficked on the economic conditions in Eastern Europe, along with the fact that prostitution remains legal in many of these countries.

Pyshchulina, Olga. 2003. "An Evaluation of Ukrainian Legislation to Counter and Criminalize Human Trafficking." *Demokratyzatsiya* 11 (3).

Annotation: This article examines legislation used in Ukraine to counter and criminalize human trafficking. It explains how human trafficking continues to be a serious problem for Ukraine, but the government has taken some action. In 1998, the Ukrainian legislature adopted a criminal law against trafficking in people, making Ukraine one of the first countries in Europe to formally criminalize this offense. However, as people are increasingly desperate to seek an escape from poverty, trafficking continues to occur in large numbers in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government continues to respond to this problem. In 2001, a new criminal code was introduced that states

that a person who is found guilty of involvement in, direct or indirect, open or hidden, trafficking in human beings with the intent to sell them for sexual exploitation will face criminal charges and will be punished by imprisonment for a period of three to eight years, with the consequence of confiscation of property. It is important that Ukraine is adopting these measures to prosecute traffickers, but it is still difficult for trafficking cases to be proven due to the lack of witness protection. Many women are afraid and refuse to testify in court against their offender. The Ukrainian government continues to fight human trafficking, but more measures still need to be done to encourage victims to act as witnesses.

Vandenberg, Anya Stone and Martina. 1999. "How the Sex Trade Becomes a Slave Trade: The Trafficking of Women to Israel." *Middle East Report 211 Trafficking and Transiting: New Perspectives on Labor Migration*.

Annotation: This article examines Israel's role as an importer of women from Russia and the former Soviet Union. These women are lured into trafficking by employment agencies or recruiters with false advertisements. In the case of Israel, its law is not equipped to confront the most serious aspects of the trafficking problem, in particular those relating to violations of women's human rights. There is currently no law against the sale of persons, nor are there any laws prohibiting the trafficking of women into Israel. This may explain, in part, why so many women from Russia and the former Soviet Union are trafficked into Israel.