



Isha L'Isha—Haifa Feminist Center Fighting Against Trafficking in Women for the Sex Industry

Situation Report 2008 - 2009

Isha L'Isha has been on the forefront in the fight against trafficking in women since 2002, and has gained extensive professional expertise in the field. The **ultimate aim** of the ***Fighting Against Trafficking in Women in Israel*** project is to end trafficking in women for the sex industry. The project employs multiple strategies for this end: comprehensive **education and awareness-raising campaigns** for sex consumers, potential sex consumers and the wider public, **advocacy work** in order to secure social, medical and human rights of trafficking victims—both foreign and Israeli citizens, **consultation** for victims, a **support hotline**, and close **networking and coalition-building** with other NGOs working in the field, both local as well as international.

While continuing our work fighting against trafficking of foreign women into Israel—and due to changes in trafficking trends—a large part of our activities in 2008 focused on working with Israeli women who have fallen victims to sexual exploitation and on changing social perceptions of the phenomenon.

In 2008, we were invited to provide consultation in designing and planning two governmental projects for helping women in prostitution in Haifa and in Tel Aviv. We have been working in full cooperation with the center established in Haifa, and conduct joint tours of sex-industry areas in the city in order to map the needs and to create personal and unmediated contact between project volunteers and women in prostitution. Along with other NGOs, we were also involved in phrasing a legislation proposal for incriminating sex costumers. The proposed legislation requests to lay criminal responsibility on sex costumers by imposing fines and implementing a model of a school for sex costumers—concentrated workshops for sex costumers, during which they will be exposed to the world of women in prostitution.

Despite the decrease in the number of women trafficked into Israel, there is a need to work with these women. Our work in this field in 2008 focused on helping trafficking victims who are trying to establish a new family in Israel, but are facing great difficulties in obtaining a civil status from the Ministry of Interior. The absence

of any kind of status prevents from these women an access to sources of governmental aid such as health services, welfare and employment.

Locating women entitled to compensation: the project has become unique in that it identifies trafficked women who have returned to their country of origin in the FSU and are entitled to compensation money. These are compensations set by courts of law in a criminal procedure against traffickers. The identification of these women is a complex task and requires a network of contacts with different bodies in the FSU. The compensation money is important for these women, as it helps them in rehabilitating and reintegrating into the community. Consultation: We provided consultation to ten new projects this year, and we continue to cooperate with a number of NGOs in the struggle against trafficking and prostitution of women. Raising awareness: We held 30 workshops and lectures for various groups, such as girls, teachers, professionals, police, advocates, government officials, representatives of local authorities and more. In these lectures and workshops, different stereotypes about women in prostitution were discussed.

During 2008, the project achieved the following:

- Met with 35 trafficking and prostitution victims
- Provided in-depth assistance to 50 trafficked women in the framework of the “Choosing Freedom” project
- Received 420 calls on our anti-trafficking hotline
- Helped 15 trafficking survivors receive court-ordered financial compensation
- Assisted 10 women from the FSU who turned to us for help
- Helped 3 women to safely return to their countries of origin (in coordination with organizations located in source countries)
- Accompanied 43 women to courts of law and other institutions
- Filed 250 complaints and requests to the police and to other governmental bodies
- 37 media items were published in various media channels.

Highlights from 2009:

As women around the world celebrated their freedom on **International Women's Day**, many other women are still situated in the worst kind of slavery, forced to sexual exploitation. We at Isha L'Isha keep fighting trafficking and prostitution in women for the sex industry, educating the public on the abuses entailed in this phenomenon. During the month of March, Rita Chaikin, the project coordinator, was invited to a number of events in the aim of raising awareness of new trafficking trends.

In March, the Tel-Aviv central police unit uncovered a major case of trafficking in women, and our organization took an active part in accompanying the victims and helping them emotionally. The case received wide media coverage. Read the full articles at <http://haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1069472.html> and <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1069755.html>



As part of our efforts to educate professionals and provide them skills in identifying and helping victims of trafficking, a lecture was held by Rita Chaikin at the Police Academy near Haifa. The Police Academy recognizes the importance of NGO field work, and the cooperation between NGOs and police in the fight against trafficking in women. Rita is invited to lecture at every course. In these lectures, she discusses the psychological

aspects of trafficking victims and provides a non-governmental field perspective of the phenomenon.



In March, Rita was invited by the French Embassy to participate in a special panel on violence against women. The panel was moderated by the French Ambassador, and Rita participated in it along with **Zehava Galon**, former member of Knesset, **Anat Gur**, working with women in prostitution, and **Ruth Reznik**, director of a shelter for battered women. Rita

discussed the trafficking phenomenon in Israel, new trafficking trends, and difficulties in the field.



On March 24th, Rita participated in a conference on **Trafficking in Women: Coping with the Phenomenon**, held in Zefat Academic College. More than 250 people attended the conference, among them law and criminology students, lecturers, and the

wider public. Rita participated in a panel along with **Rachel Gershuni**, National Coordinator of the Battle Against Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Justice. Rita spoke about services available today for trafficking victims and the problematic elements of these services. She also presented data from the field and discussed new trafficking trends. In addition, Rita also discussed prostitution in women. A discussion with the conference participants followed her presentation.

Education and Awareness-Raising Workshops and Lectures

Since the beginning of 2009, ten education and awareness-raising workshops and lectures were held to 810 participants. Groups included: police officers, university students, social workers, and the general public.

Statistics for January – April 2009

No. of trafficking victims assisted	50
No. of calls to hotline	165
No. of compensation payments made	11
No. of requests from NGOs in FSU	8
No. of safe returns home	2
No. of runaways helped	21
No. of victims we helped give testimony	7
No. of complaints to police	45
No. of media items published	8
No. of coalition meetings attended	4
No. of Parliamentary committee meetings attended	2

Plans for Future Activities

In the coming months, we will hold three empowerment courses for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. The goal of these courses is the **Empowerment, Rehabilitation and Reintegration** of victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation into the community. Courses to be held:

- (a) **Personal empowerment** workshops. In these workshops, survivors of sexual exploitation will acquire the necessary tools to regain self-confidence, belief in themselves, and control over their lives. This constitutes the first step towards empowerment, beginning a new life and reintegrating into the community. The course contents are designed specifically for this target group, as these women have unique needs.
- (b) **Empowerment workshops for mothers who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.** These workshops will provide mothers with tools to deal with daily tasks of caring for their children. The workshops will provide mothers with tools to create a warm, supportive environment for the sound development of the child, listening to the child, feelings of belonging to a family, encouraging the child's self-expression, and more. These courses are especially important for victims of sexual exploitation, as many of these women suffered from a difficult and abusive childhood without positive parental role models. Thus, they are unable to give their children the love and support they themselves did not receive. It is important to relate to these difficulties so each woman can find the power in herself to provide this support to her own child.
- (c) **Economic empowerment** workshops which will provide survivors of trafficking and sexual exploitation with basic financial skills. Participating women will learn how to prepare and manage their household budgets, consolidate debts, and other basic financial skills. These skills will enable these women to gain control over their finances in order to build a better life for themselves and their children.

Isha L' Isha thanks its supports who have generously contributed to the project.

Your support has enabled us to implement the activities in a timely manner