



## THE NEW FACE OF AN OLD PHENOMENON: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TRAFFICKING

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## THE NEW FACE OF A VIEJO PHENOMENO: LOS HUMANOS RIGHTS AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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### SUMMARY

Considered a contemporary form of slavery, human trafficking is an ancient phenomenon that is being redefined by globalization. This article offers an analysis of sexual exploitation from a perspective that combines gender and human rights. The first section addresses sexual exploitation as an extreme form of gender-based violence; the context of vulnerability and the sequence of activities are described: recruitment, transfer and exploitation. The main human rights instruments on the issue are then analyzed. The conclusions highlight the patriarchal pacts that sustain and continue this serious social scourge.

**Keywords:** Vulnerability; Gender-Based Violence; Human Trafficking; Human Rights.

### ABSTRACT

Considered a contemporary form of slavery, human trafficking is an ancient phenomenon that is being redefined with globalization. The article offers an analysis of sexual exploitation, with a view that combines the gender perspective and human rights. The first section addresses sexual exploitation as an extreme form of gender-based violence; The context of vulnerability and the sequence of activities are described: recruitment, transfer and exploitation. Subsequently, the main human rights instruments on the problem are analyzed. The conclusions highlight the patriarchal pacts that sustain and continue this serious social scourge.

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### ABSTRACT

Considered a contemporary form of slavery, the treatment of people is an ancient phenomenon that is being redefined with globalization. The article offers an analysis of sexual exploitation, with a view that combines the gender perspective and human rights. The first section addresses sexual exploitation as an extreme form of gender violence; Describe the context of vulnerability and the sequence of activities: recruitment, transfer and exploitation. Subsequently, the main human rights instruments on the problem will be analyzed. The conclusions demonstrate the patriarchal pacts that sustain and continue this serious social seal.

**Keywords:** Vulnerability; Gender Violence; It deals with personas; Human rights.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is a phenomenon that has persisted throughout history, affecting millions of people around the world. Despite global efforts to combat it, this form of human rights violation humans continue to exist, adapting to contemporary social, political and technological transformations.

This work aims to analyze the new face of this old phenomenon, in particular in what

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refers to human rights. We will understand how sexual exploitation trafficking manifests itself today, exploring its dimensions and consequences for victims and society as a whole.

Sexual exploitation involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of people, through threat, use of violence, coercion, abuse of power or vulnerability, with the aim of exploiting their sexuality for commercial purposes. This form of trafficking is a violation of fundamental human rights, such as freedom, dignity, physical and psychological integrity, and gender equality.

However, trafficking for sexual exploitation goes beyond the simple commercialization of sex. It is deeply rooted in social, economic and gender inequalities, exploiting the vulnerability of people in situations of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and lack of opportunities. In addition, the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies has facilitated the emergence of new forms of sexual exploitation, such as online trafficking and the exploitation of children and adolescents through the Internet.

In this context, human rights play a fundamental role in the fight against trafficking for sexual exploitation. The principles of dignity, equality and non-discrimination are essential to ensure the protection of victims and to hold perpetrators accountable. However, the effective implementation of human rights in the fight against trafficking requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving not only public authorities, but also civil society organizations, international institutions and the awareness of the general population.

Throughout this work, we will examine the causes and consequences of trafficking for sexual exploitation, as well as the legal instruments and public policies developed to combat it. We will also address the challenges faced in preventing and protecting victims, as well as future prospects in this field.

Through this in-depth analysis, we hope to contribute to a greater understanding of the complexity of sexual exploitation trafficking and the importance of human rights in its eradication. Protecting and respecting the rights of each individual is essential to building a more just and egalitarian society, free from such serious violations.

## 2. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Contemporary societies are plagued by various inequalities – economic, social, ethnic, cultural and political – which translate into multiple forms of discrimination and can lead to violence. Discrimination against women and femininity is so deeply rooted that it often goes unnoticed, making gender-based violence, as a result, almost invisible. This section first presents the context of vulnerability that promotes human trafficking. It then analyzes each stage of the process: recruitment mechanisms, transfer and forms of sexual exploitation.

### 2.1 Social inequalities and vulnerability

Human trafficking finds fertile ground in social and economic inequalities, which have deepened in recent decades in different regions of the world and, as we will see below, are redefined by gender. While wealth is concentrated in a few hands, there is a growing mass of “losers of globalization” who fight daily for their survival. The dimensions of the economic gaps are as impressive as they are unacceptable.

The 1990s saw the economic collapse of several countries belonging to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and East Asia; in 1990, 23 million Eastern Europeans lived on less than two dollars a day; in 2001, the number had quadrupled (KARA 2009). In India, 850 million people (80% of the population) live on two dollars a day or less; in Nepal, percentage is a little higher: 82.5% (KARA, 2009).

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Although some reduction in poverty has been seen in Latin America and the Caribbean this century, the percentages remain very high, both in terms of extreme poverty and moderate poverty, as well as vulnerable populations. According to data from the World Bank (WB), one in five Latin Americans survives on less than US\$2.50 a day. This situation of chronic poverty varies significantly from one country to another. While Uruguay, Argentina and Chile have rates of around 10%, in Nicaragua the figure is 37% and in Guatemala it affects half the population. Mexico is slightly below the average for the subcontinent, with 20% (VAKIS, RIGOLINI AND LUCCHETTI, 2015).

This very general panorama allows us to affirm that the notion of a dignified life is very distant from millions of people. In addition, women are paid less and generally have less access to health, education, employment and recreation. Gender discrimination is a universal phenomenon (COOMARASWAMY, 2003). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), only six nations pay women more than 70% of what they pay men, and none of them exceeds 80%: Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (UNDP, 2011).

An extreme form of inequality is violence. If discrimination against women is naturalized, gender-based violence becomes invisible. Thus, abuse within the home, harassment in different spaces, and even rape tend to receive less attention and are generally considered less serious than other forms of violence. In recent years, research conducted in the country has revealed some important data; for example, 42% of women were beaten in childhood and 21.8% were repeatedly insulted. Almost half of homeless children ran away from home due to violence (CNDH and CEIDAS, 2009).

Poverty, marginalization and violence are factors that drive migrants away. It is almost commonplace to talk about poor countries and rich countries, and to point out that large migratory flows have a clear direction: from the global South to the global North (KARA, 2009; ASAKURA AND TORRES, 2012). In the case of female migration from Latin America, violence should be emphasized. Many women migrate in search of employment and better living conditions for themselves and their families; others also do so to escape violence.

The link between migration and human trafficking works in two ways. On the one hand, women who decide to migrate - whether due to poverty or violence - run the risk of falling into trafficking networks at some point along the way, in transit areas or in host societies. At the same time, those who suffer violence in their places of origin are vulnerable to various forms of deception, which are often used by recruiters and, as we will see in the next section, are very simple. This is precisely what makes them credible.

## 2.2 Recruitment: the edges of disappointment

Human trafficking is a criminal sequence that begins with the recruitment of victims, continues with their transfer - within or outside the country - and ends with exploitation. To understand the dynamics of this set of activities, the notion of patriarchal pacts proposed by Celia Amorós is useful. According to the Spanish philosopher, there is a set of practices - real or symbolic - that are organized around virility and that function in a speculative way. Each man acts in a certain way - depending on what authors such as Keijzer (1997) or Connell (2005) call "hegemonic masculinity" - to belong and remain in the male brotherhood. "I am a man because I am like them" indicates the referential tension towards other men. And virility, in patriarchal societies, is something valued. Therefore, when speaking of a very virile attitude, the statement is flattering. To have such attitudes, one has to be with men and reaffirm one's masculinity; It is necessary to distance oneself from women and everything that is feminine. Being a real man implies banishing any trait that could lead to error or confusion.

Thus, women and everything feminine constitute a common place of reference, from which it is convenient to distance oneself and, if necessary, to subjugate and control. are the moles of misogyny. Men talk to each other because their words have a credibility that derives precisely from the gender component; Gentlemen's agreements are based on this logic of exclusion: whoever breaks the agreement is not a man. Sometimes, these pacts exclude women in a way that is not particularly repressive; they simply do not take them into account; on other occasions, women are the very object of the pact. A clear example is gang rape, in which two or more men plan and execute the carnal submission of a woman. In the criminal sequence involved in human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, there are numerous patriarchal pacts.

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The first phase is recruitment. Here recruiters use various tactics, the common denominator of which is deception. The mechanisms used range from the subtlety of a kind word and the construction of a seemingly disinterested friendship to the brutality of kidnapping. In any case, there is a transgression of the will. The following are the most frequently used forms.

## 2.3 Life change

Young people and teenagers who suffered abandonment in childhood felt discriminated against in their own Women who have had problems at school or in the community or have been victims of some form of violence inside or outside the home are particularly vulnerable to deception for a very simple reason: they are hungry for affection and desperately want their lives to improve or at least change in some way. If they have also experienced an episode of sexual violence, their vulnerability is even greater. According to the National Survey on Violence against Women (OLAIZ, RICO and DEL RÍO, 2003), more than half of the women interviewed suffered some type of abuse in childhood. A large number of girls run away from home due to violence; sometimes they can take refuge with another family member, but often they spend endless hours on the street and only return home to sleep.

It is not difficult for recruiters to identify young people with emotional disabilities. In a particularly conflictive and often lonely phase, such as adolescence, they approach them with kind words, understanding smiles and a conversation that makes them feel supported. After a variable amount of time, and with the confidence of being the first true friend, the proposal is made to visit another place, meet different people, open a business together, be part of a group in which everyone supports each other, among other plans. Any proposal can be very attractive to a person who has been or felt abandoned.

## 2.4 Job offers

False promises of employment are perhaps the most widely used and successful strategy. For young women, the prospect of a steady income that will allow them to meet their basic needs and help their families can be very tempting. If they also have children, the chances of acceptance increase significantly. These are not extraordinary offers to tempt ambition, as human trafficking prevention campaigns tend to assume, but rather simple tasks such as cleaning, caring for children, the elderly or the sick, cooking or helping out in general in the shops.

Sometimes, traffickers seek the complicity of someone in the community, to identify women who might be willing to take advantage of the opportunity to work in a new company and project an image of a growing project. The offer remains simple and credible - cleaning the house or office, preparing meals or at most some fairly simple administrative task -, plus information about schedules and travel; the family is told that there will be no news of their daughter for two or three months, but they receive an advance payment, taken from their future salary.

In this way, your tranquility, your patience, your inactivity (EZETA, 2006; TORRES, 2010). You must - It should also be said that the participation of women as recruiters is not exceptional; sometimes it reaches 40% (OAS, 2005). Some of these recruiters are victims of trafficking, who have formed an alliance with traffickers - even as a survival mechanism - and who return to their places of origin elegantly dressed, with money and accessories; they are often promised a commission for each woman recruited (KARA, 2009).

## 2.5 Seduction

Calculated courtship and the incitement of passion is a particularly cruel and perverse tactic. The hookers can invest several months in this courtship, which includes showing themselves publicly, meeting the family, inventing a past in another place that the young woman will meet at some point and, finally, getting married. The good pimp can make her fall in love, but not him, who must control his emotions at all times: "kill the feeling" (MONTIEL, 2009). With marriage, not only the now legal bond is sealed, but also the trust of the woman, the family and even the community. As a wife, the pimp husband - sometimes with the help of the mother-in-law - can exert strong manipulation to convince the newly arrived girl to practice prostitution for a time, while the couple overcomes an economic obstacle (AZAOLA, 2000; MONTIEL, 2009).

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## 2.6 Offer

The buying and selling of human beings is an ancient practice that persists in the 21st century in the most diverse latitudes of the planet. Prices vary considerably and, sometimes, are not even fixed in money,



but are exchanged for heads of cattle, cases of beer or liters of brandy (FARR, 2005; KARA, 2009; TORRES, 2010). Although these practices are harmful to human dignity and contrary to fundamental rights and legislation, they can find shelter in the customs and traditions of many communities (OAS, 2005; HUDA, 2007). The simple fact of putting a price on a person already implies their reification. The buyer feels like the owner of the acquired good and, therefore, exercises over it the rights inherent to property. Therein lies, unequivocally, the basis of slavery (WEISSBRODT, 2002).

## 2.7 Ecstasy

The so-called "bride theft" is a common custom in many parts of the world (HUDA, 2007; OAS, 2005). In Mexico, it is common in many communities (D'AUBETERRE, 2000). Sometimes it is a consensual escape, which the couple chooses for various reasons, often economic; it is called "theft", but in reality it is an agreement, so there is no violence. However, on other occasions the theft is literal: many young women are kidnapped, taken to another location and raped. In this second hypothesis, it may happen that the captor later speaks to the bride's father to express his desire to marry and safeguard the young woman's honor; this makes it possible to establish a bond with the family, which, for the time being, will not look for the kidnapped daughter or report anything to the police.

When a view of women as objects and virginity as a guarantee of a good marriage persists, in the social imagination there is no distinction between elopement by mutual consent and the (literal) theft of the bride (D'Aubeterre, 2000; OAS, 2005). Recruiters can take great advantage of this ideology which, as we will see later, provides a good basis for different patriarchal pacts.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Victims of Trafficking, Sigma Huda, chose forced marriages as the topic of her 2007 report. Based on responses collected from 27 countries—including Argentina, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela—it is possible to identify several types of unions: to collect dowries, gain social status, settle debts, or compensate for a crime (rape and, of course, kidnapping or abduction). According to the author, forced marriage is a method of recruitment that, in itself, constitutes a form of sexual slavery.

In short, recruitment can be forced or carried out with varying degrees of deception (consented vices). The victims are unaware of the conditions in which they will work and most of the time debt prevails, which is the trick used by the captors to subjugate the victims. The different factors that generate the feminization of poverty (COOMARASWAMY, 2003; CNDH-CEIDAS, 2009) contribute directly to the increase in female migration and, therefore, to the growing presence of women in cross-border circuits (Sassen, 2003). With recruitment, the nightmare is only just beginning.

## 2.8 Relocation and fragmentation

Transfer, within or outside the country, is the second link in the chain. It is designed to weaken victims and break their spirit by alienating them from their family or community networks. At this stage, the initial recruiter is left behind and other people tend to intervene, so much so that it is difficult to identify faces, voices, and phenotypes. Sometimes, women have seen more than ten faces in just a few days (EZETA, 2006; OAS, 2005; IOM, 2005). Adding to the constant tension experienced on the road, the chances of filing a complaint, recognizing someone, or providing any indication for identifying a suspect are minimal.

Somewhere in the middle, the door opens to the horror of exploitation. In a place where women cannot express themselves freely - a closed room - they are told what is expected of them: to have sex with any man who requests it, until the debt incurred is fully paid off (EZETA, 2006; MONTIEL, 2009; TORRES, 2010). These are the building blocks: isolation and debt. Both

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have a real basis; both increase and are strengthened by the manipulation of drug traffickers.

The intermediate place is usually a hotel room; sometimes the victims are told that it is a first stop where other girls will also arrive, a resting place, the honeymoon location or any other variant that the imagination dictates. The immediate goal is the removal of everything that is familiar to them. If the tug's work is finished when the transfer begins, at the intermediate place the task of the transporter usually ends and the place is given to another man. The saturation of confusing experiences and a deep and frightening feeling of loneliness continues.

In this new situation of vulnerability, debt is named and defined, essential to maintain obedience.

experience and submission. New concepts are continually added, so it is always invaluable. On this intermediary site, victims are informed of what they owe for everything that was spent on them: transportation, food, documents (real or false), the advance that was given to the family or anything else that comes to mind. traffickers. It should be remembered that women are usually poorly prepared, that it never occurred to them to keep track of what was spent on them, that they trusted the recruiter's promise - a change of life, a job offer or another project - and that at that moment they are frankly scared.

Within the four walls that separate them from the outside world, women are told that they must return everything they spend. The deception is exposed and, in its place, mockery arises. Women offer to do any other work, protest in every possible tone, cry, beg, kick, protest again and finally understand that it is all useless. The way to silence their moans is sexual violence (EZETA, 2006; FARR, 2005). Some women have revealed that they have been raped by several men, filmed or photographed, and even tortured (FARR, 2005; TORRES, 2010). This episode, the most violent that the women have suffered in their lives, is only the gateway, a sample of what will be the daily life that they are about to experience.

Traffickers who capture victims through seduction may leave them in a hotel so that a new member of the criminal network can arrive and continue the subjugation. On other occasions, the husband is also the pimp, who in the intermediary role strengthens the victim's emotional dependence and convinces her to prostitute herself "just for a while." Some men seduce and manipulate so skillfully that women directly offer to help them overcome economic hardships by renting out their bodies (MON-TIEL, 2009).

Sometimes there is no middle ground and victims are taken directly to the place where the exploitation begins. This often happens with migrant women who are already far from their families or local networks, or in cases where the victims were recruited with extreme violence (sale or kidnapping). It also occurs when there is a mistake about the activity they are to perform, but the migration takes place legally (IOM, 2005). In short, the aim of the middle ground is to reinforce the subjugation of the victims, to make it clear that there is a debt and to indicate the only way in which they can pay it.

## 2.9 The horror of exploitation

As they progress through the criminal activity chain of human trafficking, victims find themselves increasingly isolated and alone. In fact, exploitation begins from the moment women are recruited. During the transfer, in the so-called intermediate place, they are raped, tortured, humiliated and drugged. The aim is to break their integrity and psychological integrity (FARR, 2005; KARA, 2009). Sometimes, several stops are made - even in different countries - before reaching their destination. Defined as bodies and only bodies, victims can be placed in different markets: pornography, work as dancers or waitresses in nightclubs, services in massage parlors and explicit sex trade in various locations, including on the street (EZETA, 2006; IOM, 2005).

The production of pornographic material is a widespread activity, precisely because it can be done increasingly easily and relatively cheaply. Young people, teenagers and even babies are often used to produce images, videos or video clips for the Internet. It is hardly possible to speak of a consensual activity; the protagonists are forced to perform different actions that include dancing, touching, sexual activity with one or more people, bestiality and various forms of torture.

In many cities there are so-called "red zones", where society places what it is ashamed of or wants to hide. In these areas, usually located on the outskirts, there are numerous nightclubs, establishments that sell alcohol and, in some cases, also drugs, table dancing and various forms of explicit sex trade. In nightclubs, women often work as waitresses.

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or dancers; they accompany customers with the task of pressuring them to consume alcoholic beverages, or they dance on the stage, on the poles and on the tables. In some of these places, sexual activity is offered in exchange for money.

In the third phase of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, one of the most important actors appears, that -paradoxically- has received little attention: the client. Men who frequent nightclubs, brothels, table dances, massage parlors or simply buy sexual services contribute to the success of the business. What's more: without them it would not exist. In some contemporary contexts, few men admit to being consumers of commercial sex and tend to reproduce some commonplaces (FERNÁNDEZ and VARGAS, 2012).

The use of women's bodies for male pleasure is as widespread as it is naturalized. As the trafficking process progresses, victims become increasingly trapped and at the mercy of their exploiters. Some of them dream of paying off their debts and being free; others realize that there is a scam going on but are unable to uncover it. Those who try to escape run the risk of paying with their lives or physical integrity.

How can a person withstand twenty rapes a day? And then another twenty the next day? The victims' accounts indicate that they resort to a kind of dissociation. Some do it consciously, because they are certain that it is rape, and they stay away from their bodies until the man is finished; only later do they try to get it back. Other women do not have the same clarity, but they manage to separate bodily sensations from feelings. The vast majority consume large quantities of alcohol daily and many use drugs.

From the moment they are recruited, victims often have low self-esteem, the result of a history of discrimination and contempt. The subsequent violence increases feelings of helplessness and shame. Sexual exploitation is experienced with deep pain, resentment and great helplessness. Added to all this are offensive comments from the exploiters and sometimes also from the clients, beatings and rape.

Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is a very complex phenomenon. To combat and eradicate it, it is necessary to understand even the most perverse details, however surprising and frightening they may be. In the field of human rights, important steps have been taken that require continuation. We will dedicate the following section to analyzing them.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At the end of the war, the United Nations was integrated and the discourse on human rights gained new strength with the 1948 declaration, which for the first time assumed a universal character. A year later, the new international body opened the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others for signature. The document established measures to protect victims (especially migrants) and cooperation between the various countries. At the same time, it initiated two important debates: the role played in sexual exploitation by each of the actors involved - recruiters, pimps, authorities, clients - and the distinction between forced prostitution and voluntary prostitution.

The 1949 Convention had important successes. By defining sexual exploitation as "a form of slavery," it sought to protect victims and condemn exploiters. While prostituted women had always been stigmatized, the agreement attempted to shift the focus of attention to pimps, who were the direct beneficiaries of "other people's prostitution." It emphasized prevention and the prohibition of any system of registration or surveillance, which was considered a form of violence.

The Convention paid special attention to the migrant population and established ways of repatriating victims. It addresses extradition and letters rogatory, whether between judicial authorities, ministries of justice or diplomatic corps. Once women are safe, they can bring legal recourse against their exploiters. Finally, it promotes research into the problem and the creation of specific systems to centralize information.

In short, this agreement offers broad guidelines to advance the fight against human trafficking for sexual exploitation. On the other hand, it also presents some weak points: the invisibility of the client and the absence of a supervisory body to monitor compliance with the Convention by the signatory countries.

In December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly opened for signature the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

As we have seen, human trafficking is a process that involves different criminal activities. Recruitment usually takes place in the victims' place of residence, which is often also their place of origin. In Mexico, this phenomenon occurs in both urban and rural areas. Some cities identified as prone to recruitment are Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez, two border points with the United States; Tapachula, border with Guatemala; Acapulco and Cancún, tourist ports; and Guadalajara (AZAOLA, 2000). Furthermore, on the southern border - often described as porous - recruitment sites have been identified in Soconusco, Tulum, Uman, La Mesilla, Ciudad Hidalgo and Puerto Madero (CASILLAS, 2006). In fact, there are victims throughout the country, but in some places they are more visible.

The next step is the transfer. Hookers use commercial buses to give an air of normality to their activities. In addition, the young people pass through several places before arriving at a final location, from which they also usually leave after a while. In the international context, it is common for

Victims visit three or four countries before reaching their destination. On the way, they may have their passports taken away. If they do not know the language and cannot speak it at home, their vulnerability is multiplied. Finally, the reception or welcome takes place at the destination. By the time they reach this point, victims have already interacted with many individuals and have already suffered a great deal of violence. Recruiters, transporters, exploiters and others involved are part of highly organized criminal networks; victims see many faces, hear different voices and are raped by different men. All of this weakens them and makes it difficult to identify the perpetrators later.

Human trafficking is a crime that always involves a great deal of violence. The Protocol addresses physical violence: use of force, kidnapping; psychological violence: threats, coercion, deception; social violence: abuse of power, situations of vulnerability; and economic violence, in one of its oldest and most frequent forms: fraud or the granting of payments to obtain consent. Violence overrides the will of the victim, forcing them to do something they do not want to do. In other words: the use of force, coercion, fraud, threats, abuse of power and deception are absolutely incompatible with consent.

This aspect, related to the victims' will, continues to be a point of debate when it comes to sexual exploitation, and specifically when it comes to adult women; since there is still a lot of reluctance to identify the relationship of inequality - and therefore the propensity for violence - implicit in renting a body. Even pimps are unaware or pretend not to know that sexual exploitation is a form of gender violence; they think they need to be very good lovers to make them addicted to sex (MONTIEL, 2009).

**Table 1- Authors' Table**

Author	Area of Expertise
Siddharth Kara	Human trafficking, sexual exploitation.
Donna M. Hughes	Sex trafficking, human rights.
Janie A. Chuang	Human rights, human trafficking.
Jo Doezema	Sex industry, sexual exploitation.
Julia O'Connell Davidson	Human trafficking, sexual exploitation.
Janie L. Leatherman	Human trafficking, women's rights.
Anne Gallagher	International criminal law, human trafficking.

These authors are important references in the field of trafficking, sexual exploitation and human rights. Their contributions help to understand the various aspects of this phenomenon, from its causes and consequences to strategies for combating and protecting it. It is recommended that you explore the works of these authors to obtain a comprehensive and well-founded perspective on the subject.

The Palermo Protocol offers a universally accepted definition; it emphasizes the prevention and fight against crime, the protection and assistance of victims, as well as cooperation between States. The magnitude of the phenomenon is recognized and an attempt is made to offer a global response. In the area of concrete actions, and specifically measures to assist victims, there are some problems that should be highlighted. Although there is consensus on the need to offer support and protection to victims, the mechanisms are not always clear. A key point is not to criminalize them; often, exploiters threaten them by reporting the irregularity of their migratory status and, in fact, women are treated as illegal immigrants due to lack of documents and not as victims of sexual exploitation. Sometimes, they are considered only as people who have valuable information that can be used to catch criminals, but not as victims of sexual exploitation. Even worse is the lack of credibility in their words. If the stigma continues to be placed on prostituted women, their statement is worthless. These are just some of the ways in which women are revictimized.

The possibility of repatriation deserves a separate comment. If it were to occur immediately, it could be counterproductive both for the safety of the victims and for the prosecution of the crime. Women are vulnerable at their destination, but probably also at their place of origin; they sometimes have no place to live and their family or community networks could be seriously damaged. Therefore, once the victim has been identified, it is important to contact the family and assess the conditions for a possible repatriation. In any case, it is essential to respect the victim's wishes. The best thing to do is to open a period of reflection during which they receive emotional support and offer temporary residence until a decision can be made. Another possibility is to offer them asylum under the refugee protocol.

There has undoubtedly been substantial progress in the field of human rights. Some tasks remain to be



The main objectives are to give visibility to the demand for prostitution, to deepen the debate on sexual exploitation and to revive the recommendations of the 1949 Convention on the dangers of its legalization. Of all that remains to be done, the most important is to incorporate a gender perspective into the analysis of the problem, as well as into the design and implementation of public policies for its prevention, combat, sanction and eradication. This point of view places at the center of the debate the social inequalities that perpetuate patterns of domination over women, disregard everything that is feminine and violate the human rights of half of the population. The notion of equality, a normative principle of the theory and practice of human rights, must be applied with all rigor to gender relations; otherwise, the solutions will always be partial and will continue to naturalize a pattern of discrimination and violence.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is a complex and disturbing phenomenon that continues to challenge human rights around the world. This paper explored the new face of this old phenomenon, highlighting the importance of human rights in combating trafficking and protecting victims.

Throughout this study, we were able to examine different theoretical perspectives and expert analyses, which contributed to a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of trafficking for sexual exploitation. It became clear that this phenomenon is rooted in structural inequalities, poverty, gender discrimination and social vulnerability.

Human rights play a fundamental role in the fight against trafficking for sexual exploitation. It is essential to recognize the dignity and autonomy of victims, ensuring them access to justice, protection and adequate assistance. In addition, international cooperation, strengthening of laws and public awareness are key components in preventing and combating this phenomenon.

However, despite significant efforts in many countries, trafficking for sexual exploitation continues to exist and evolve, adapting to new technologies and exploitation strategies. Therefore, a continued and comprehensive commitment is needed to effectively address this problem.

Ultimately, eradicating trafficking for sexual exploitation requires a holistic, human rights-based approach that emphasizes prevention, victim protection, and accountability for perpetrators. Only through joint efforts involving governments, civil society organizations, communities, and individuals can we hope to achieve a future in which sexual exploitation is a bygone era. It is our collective duty to fight for justice and dignity for all people, promoting a society where human rights are respected and protected at all levels.

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