

June 25, 2014

To: Amnesty International - attention Mr. Setaram

email: ssetaram@amnesty.ca

Re: Input into Amnesty International's Proposed Policy on Prostitution

We are writing to provide feedback about Amnesty International's proposed policy on prostitution. We have a particular expertise of 21 years supporting persons who have endured non-State torture. All of the over 3000 persons who have contacted us have endured non-State torture, the majority since infancy. Many have been groomed to endure torture by their parents, and other 'trusted' adults in their lives, to satisfy the sadistic pleasure of torturers who request children they can torture.

We are sure that Amnesty International is aware that torturers, whether state or non-State, have the goal to destroy their victim's sense of Self. As an infant or child victim of non-State torture develops this destruction of Self carries through into youth and adulthood. Unless a girl or woman survivor of such torture ordeals gains Self awareness making conscious informed choices about prostitution is not possible. Some women who contact us for support do not understand that they have a body, skin or even that they are persons, for example. The non-State torturers cause such devaluation of Self, dissociation, and Self-harming practices that for victimized women making choices about whether to consent to sex with another adult is an impossible expectation. Having been trafficked and pimped out by their parents, since infancy, women who endure non-State torture have tremendous survival skills and we have the utmost respect for their resilience. But it is our opinion that it is totally unjust to expect youths with histories of non-State torture to be able to keep themselves safe from the pimps who rent and sell them for profit to johns whose desire is for sexualized torturing.

To our knowledge there are scarce or no specific supportive services for survivors of non-State torture anywhere in the world. It has been our professional experience that without such services for non-State torture women tortured, since infancy or in childhood and adolescence, continue to develop into vulnerable persons to be prostituted after the age of 18 by their parents, or to be prey for pimps who lure, groom and trick such young women into a state of prostitution.

In our time of listening to women who have endured non-State torture the stories have included women who had endured non-State torture in prostitution after the age of 18. And because of the shattering of Self endured before the age of 18 it took many years into their mid and later 20's, some even into their 50's, before they gained the awareness that the state they were living in was prostitution and therefore not a conscious choice.

As human rights defenders we contact Amnesty International on behalf of the women survivors of non-State torture we have supported. For them prostitution after the age of 18 was not work. As persons living with very complex states of dissociation resulting from the non-State torture they endured during infancy, childhood and as youths they continued/continue to endure non-State torture after the age of 18 as vulnerable women who were prostituted. For them prostitution was/is not work - as torture is never work.

We ask you to keep women who have survived non-State torture by pimps and johns into consideration when evaluating Amnesty International's policy on prostitution. It seems to us as an organization known for understanding torture your organization, more than any other, would be able to conceptualize that women who are non-State torture survivors are not working when being prostituted but rather are surviving and are suffering violence against women and grave human rights violations.

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Persons Against Non-State Torture