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NEWS

Albanian traffickers jailed

An Albanian man who made £4,000 a day from trafficking women into prostitution has been jailed at Cardiff Crown Court. Argan Kanani, 22, earned £110,000 by forcing vulnerable young women into prostitution after luring them to Britain by promising them jobs in restaurants and hotels.



Cardiff

Sentencing Kanani, Judge Roderick Denyer QC said the women had been controlled and degraded after Kanani spotted "a gap in the sex trade market".

Kanani and his Albanian accomplice Erjon Javori, 32, of Sheffield, were jailed for a combined total of more than 12 years for trafficking four Lithuanian women to South Wales and Birmingham.

Kanani said he had chosen South Wales because Birmingham, where he had started his business, had become "overrun with Eastern European sex workers".

Prosecutor Robert Brown said: "The women were all from poor Lithuanian families and easy targets for being tricked. In a strange country and with language problems, they submitted and were paid a pittance."

New outreach team for POPPY

The POPPY Project has launched its new outreach service, working with female victims of trafficking to provide crisis intervention, resettlement, advocacy and awareness-raising, among other services.

The team of three will also assist police and immigration services to identify and support female victims of trafficking, work with enforcement agencies in planning and carrying out enforcement operations, and will develop strategies and support for women wishing to exit prostitution. Call 020 7735 2062 for information.

Met launches Human Trafficking Team

On 7 March 2007 the Metropolitan Police launched its new human trafficking team, targeting the organised criminal networks which profit from victims of human trafficking. Part of Operation MAXIM, the unit was set up to dismantle criminal networks through a range of enforcement tactics. It will also work with a variety of charities and groups to provide an informed and appropriate response to victims of trafficking.

Head of Operation MAXIM Commander Sue Wilkinson said: "Trafficking is a global problem affecting every continent and most countries around the world. The victims can be male or female, adults or children who are trafficked for exploitative labour or forced prostitution work.

"It involves the victim being deceived or coerced to move either within a country or abroad using legal and illegal channels for the purpose of exploiting him or her once they reach their destination. Working with colleagues and international and national partners, this team will seek to disrupt significantly these criminal networks."

Life means life for murderer

Murderer and rapist John McGrady, who murdered 15-year-old Lewisham teenager Rochelle Holness in 2005, has had his appeal quashed.

The 48-year-old, who has a history of sexual assault and violent attacks, killed and dismembered Rochelle in September 2005. He received a life sentence in May 2006 but appealed, saying he was no longer a threat to women.

However, in January 2007 judges rejected his claim, adding that: "If he were truly sorry, he would have something to tell the mother, who has expressed profound concern about the

Rochelle Holness



lack of real knowledge of what happened to this precious member of the family".

Rochelle's family has issued the following statement: "...He [McGrady] has steadfastly refused to cooperate with the prosecuting authorities. He has prolonged our suffering and made our lives a living hell... We trust that in this case life does mean life and we would ask that neither the Court of Appeal nor the current or any future Home Secretary deviate from this."

What the papers are reporting...

Police officer jailed for grooming 'girl'

A police officer who became obsessed with a girl of 12 and bombarded her with indecent images has been jailed after the 'girl' turned out to be one of his colleagues, posing as a child in an undercover operation. Detective Constable Glenn Algar, 45, began grooming the 'girl' after meeting her online.

Algar admitted to trying to groom a child for sex and possessing indecent images of children. He was jailed for 18 months.

Source: *The Metro*

Councillor who sold girlfriend for sex avoids jail

A councillor in Sandwell who sold his girlfriend to 19 men to pay off his mortgage has avoided prison.

Adam Burkitt, 47, sold sex sessions with his girlfriend, who has learning disabilities, for £50 a time to pay off £1,300 in arrears on his mortgage.

Judge Andrae-Jones QC gave Burkitt a 12-month suspended sentence and ordered him to stay away from his partner. He has also been disbarred from council service.

Source: *The Mirror*

Rape issues in Parliament

In the past six months, Parliament have answered over 50 written questions about false accusations of rape.

With so many questions, one would imagine that the level of false accusations is astronomically high. It's a tiny 3%, in line with other crimes. Over 60000 rapes and sexual assaults were reported last year with rape crisis services estimating that only a third of the women they support have reported the attacks against them to the police.

Home Office signs Convention



On Friday 23 March 2007 the Home Secretary John Reid signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Just prior to the signing the Home Office also launched its UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking.

While the signing is an important step forward for the UK in its recognition of trafficked people as victims and not perpetrators of crime, correct measures must be put in place for the Convention to be implemented effectively.

The POPPY Project therefore welcomes the Action Plan and urges the Government as a matter of urgency to implement the measures proposed – and to use its power to persuade other states to sign, implement and ratify the Convention also.

Minister Vernon Coaker said the signing “demonstrates the government's commitment to do more and help identify and protect the victims of this vile crime.”

Demand for strategy

Comments by ACPO representatives DCI Tony Davis (Vice) and DCC Brian Moore (Domestic Violence) have confirmed that there is a glaring absence of police strategy on the fundamental cause of sex trafficking: demand for prostitution.

While curative measures are in full swing – for example, extensive European links are evolving to tackle supply – there appears to be a lack of motivation and/or desire to take preventative action for the core issue: a steadily increasing number of UK men who seek to buy the bodies of women and children for sex.

Tories join the club

Recent weeks have seen an upsurge in Tory interest in trafficking. Proposals include an anti-trafficking manifesto, which pays meagre attention to victim protection, a concerted media drive and, of course, sustained criticism of the Government's approach. We await a concrete anti-trafficking policy with great anticipation.

Trafficking in Parliament

The bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, commemorated on 25 March, has triggered an exponential increase in parliamentary debates on slavery, both past and present. Recurring topics include:

- Legislation (Borders Bill)
- Child trafficking
- EU and trans-national cooperation
- European Convention (reflection and deportation)
- Operation Pentameter (and Pentameter 2)
- Post-Ipswich policy on prostitution
- The scale of the problem (including numbers and conviction rates)
- Victim/witness protection (CPS guidelines)
- The abolition of the slave trade
- Strategies for tackling demand

Female genital mutilation and the notion of female pain

By Cat Whitehouse

The World Health Organisation estimates that 100-140 million girls and women worldwide have undergone Female Genital Mutilation or FGM. FGM takes four different forms, with one thing in common; all cause extensive damage to a woman's body and her sexuality.

FGM is sometimes referred to as 'cutting', 'excision', or 'infibulation'. Often, the term 'female circumcision' is used, yet an equivalent operation on a male would remove around one-third of the penis.

Illegal in many countries, including the UK, FGM spans multiple continents, being practised by communities in parts of Africa, Asia and migrant communities in Europe. It is usually carried out on girls between the ages of four and 12, often without an-



Implements like these are used to carry out FGM

aesthetic. Sometimes it is seen as a rite into womanhood, or a way of protecting virginity or the honour of the family. Sometimes it is carried out in the mistaken belief that it is a religious requirement, or ironically to improve fertility, although many forms increase the risk of infant morbidity.

FGM can lead to imme-

diately or long term health implications, or even death. After cutting, women routinely suffer extreme pain and shock; some may even haemorrhage or develop infection. Other side effects include difficulties in menstruating, cysts or overdeveloped scarring, sexual dysfunction, repeated gynaecological infection, complications in pregnancy

Types of FGM

Type I - Removal of clitoral hood with or without removal of part or all of clitoris.

Type II - Removal of clitoral hood and clitoris with partial or total removal of inner lips of vagina.

Type III - Removal of part or all of external genitalia and stitching or narrowing

of vaginal opening with thorns, silk or catgut, leaving an extremely small opening for urination and menstruation. This is also referred to as infibulation.

Type IV - Any other harmful practice involving female genitals – including pricking, piercing, stretching, incision, burning or cauterisation of clitoris,

vaginal lips or surrounding tissues, scraping of the vaginal orifice, or introducing corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina or any cuts made.

Information provided by the WHO and the Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD).

www.forwarduk.org.uk

and childbirth and vaginal fistula – a breach of the wall between the vagina and the bladder or rectum, resulting in faecal or urinary incontinence.

Despite this horrifying list, and the estimated 66,000 women living in the UK who have undergone FGM, many health professionals are not fully aware of the issues and laws around it. This ignorance can have many complications, from an inability to carry out cervical screening, to women whose vaginas are stitched shut being given unnecessary caesarean sections even though this kind of FGM can often be reversed by a simple procedure.

Comfort Momoh is a specialist midwife at Guy's and St Thomas' hospital, where she runs an African Well Women's clinic. She and non-government campaigners such as FORWARD (The Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development) have worked tirelessly to educate health professionals, statutory services and charities about FGM.

New FGM clinical group

The awareness-raising work has been highly successful, and in February the Lilith Project attended the launch of a medical training resource produced by the new FGM

National Clinical Group. There we heard that FGM awareness and reversals will now be included in the training of all undergraduate nursing professionals. Medicine is waking up to FGM and tackling it.

There is still a long way to go, however; despite longstanding legislation in the form of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (and before that the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985) there has not been a single FGM case brought to trial in the UK. Statutory services are working to improve procedures, but say



many young women at risk of FGM are not being identified and referred to them.

The Lilith Project seminar

Lilith has been working in partnership with professionals into research, medical, psychosocial, legal and asylum aspects of FGM. At the end of February the project hosted its second multi-agency FGM training event, bringing together specialists with delegates and representatives from the voluntary sector, the police and social services. It was an eye-opening day, as concerns, priorities, strategies and ideas

and hopes for future work were shared.

Although FGM may seem shocking and brutal, for many women it is normal. This does not, in any way mean it is acceptable or defensible, but it is important to recognise that it is not intended as a form of child torture or abuse.

Many communities harbour harmful cultural practices they regard to be essential. In China, foot-binding damaged women's feet for many centuries. In some countries women's movement is still restricted by placing raised squares of wood beneath the heel of the foot. The woman's weight is forced forward, causing pain and damage to the feet, knees, spine, and hip joints, and in some cases shortening the Achilles tendon permanently. It is believed to encourage good deportment and sexual attractiveness. The implements are called 'high heels' or 'stilettoes', and most women in the UK wear them.

Harmful cultural practices: hard to give up unless everyone is on board.



NGOs share expertise as UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Yakin Ertürk, visits London

By Gill Herd

In January 2007, Professor Yakin Ertürk, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, visited Amnesty International's Human Rights Action Centre in London for a three-day NGO-led regional consultation on Violence against Women. The visit followed an extensive consultation in December 2006, entitled *What Practical Steps Need To Be Implemented In Order To Achieve An Equitable World For Women And Girls?*, carried out by the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO).

The event was a huge success, with more than 300 delegates hailing from 23 European countries. It provided an excellent opportunity to share expertise and current research in the field of VAW, and to take recommendations for change to one of the most charismatic leaders working to eliminate gender-based violence at a global level. The event was also invaluable for networking, and many links were formed between those working in the field.

The first day began with an inspiring talk from Professor Ertürk about her role in tackling the issues relating to VAW. She also explained her role in devel-



oping a VAW index, by country, and highlighting State responsibility to address the violence perpetrated against women and girls within their territory. Her remit also includes using her overview of different approaches to the issue of VAW to report on best practice.

In her capacity as the UN Special Rapporteur, Professor Ertürk is also able to take up individual complaints, and then engage in constructive dialogue with the country where the violation has occurred on behalf of the complainant. She informed delegates that this facility is greatly underused and urged organisations to consider writing to her directly regarding individual violations experienced by their client group. She is also able to undertake regional consultations,

and expressed a desire for this European consultation, hosted by the UK, to become an annual event.

Round table discussions took place over the duration of the three days, including State Infrastructure, Migration/Moving women and Prevention and Media Culture, all from a UK and European perspective. Smaller discussions took place on topics such as trafficking/tackling demand and asylum issues. The final day was spent looking at key issues and recommendations for change.

A report of the event is currently being compiled by NAWO, along with recommendations for Professor Ertürk to take forward.

FORCED MARRIAGE (CIVIL PROTECTION) BILL: A COMPLICATED ISSUE

By Helen Atkins

The House of Lords sat for the second reading of Lord Lester's private member's bill on Forced Marriage in January 2007 after a string of consultations seeking to address concerns over the anticipated applicability of the proposed Act.

A Forced Marriage Unit (run by the Home Office and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office) was established in recent years and deals with around 300 cases annually. The public, the media, activists and academics are displaying increasing interest in the subject. The desire to tackle forced marriage is burgeoning; as are the differences in opinion surrounding legislation of the issue.

Attempts to regulate forced marriage have been plagued by controversy. Last year the Government was forced to withdraw its proposal for a criminal law against forced marriage, due to widespread opposition. This year, two NGOs who work with victims of forced marriage - Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and Imkaan - released statements detailing arguments both for and against the revised Bill.

SUPPORTING THE BILL: SOUTHALL BLACK SISTERS

SBS supports the civil Bill, believing that the criminalisation of forced marriage is unworkable, and should instead be governed by Family Law Act (FLA) provisions along with civil remedies to be enshrined in the proposed Bill.

Reasons:

1. It is necessary to have a law which states clearly that forced marriage is unlawful
2. The Bill will strengthen the civil remedies available
3. The Bill will add to the current armoury of tools available to victims of forced marriage
4. Empowerment of victims/victim-led proceedings are contained within the Bill
5. The Bill will enable legal aid to be granted more readily
6. The Bill will increase awareness about forced marriage within the community and in society generally

What do you think?

Email your thoughts to anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk

OPPOSING THE BILL: IMKAAN

Imkaan counters that although "defining forced marriages as an illegal act has a deterrent value and will work as a preventive measure," a separate law is unnecessary and will cause confusion. A specific law dealing with all gender-based violence may be justifiable in the future, but forced marriage can currently be dealt with by revising the FLA and Protection from Harassment Act, as well as domestic violence legislation.

Reasons:

1. The current narrow definition of forced marriage needs widening
2. The provision covering injunctions duplicates FLA
3. Evidential issues require clarification, especially pertaining to the victim
4. BME refugees must be widely consulted through an open debate
5. Third party intervention needs to be clarified – eg victim consent
6. Funding, training and monitoring of service providers/officials is essential



Women and sexual bondage: similar story, different times

As public awareness of trafficking grows, much of Britain will focus on modern-day slavery to commemorate this bicentenary year. But what of the women and girls who lived more than 200 years ago, before this pernicious trade in human lives was ended? Heather Vacciana looks at sexual slavery over the years

Throughout 2007, events will take place across the UK to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of Britain's role in the slave trade. The transatlantic slave trade lasted for over 300 years (1500s-1800s) and involved the forced transportation of 24 million Africans, 11 million of whom were taken to the Americas. In the British colonies Africans were treated like chattel; they were bought and sold at slave markets and branded by the plantation owners, and they were forced to labour under harsh and inhuman conditions, growing and harvesting crops such as tobacco, coffee, cotton and sugarcane.

Throughout the entire period of slavery the enslaved Africans mounted numerous rebellions and insurrections, which for Haitians resulted in emancipation from their French slavers to become the first independ-

ent black state in the New World in 1791. With ever frequent uprisings in the Caribbean and a significant anti-slavery movement developing amongst the masses in the UK in the 18th century, attempts were made to end the slave trade via an Act of Parliament. Eventually, on 25 March 1807 the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act became part of English law.

Traffickers over the years

In commemorating the bicentenary, many commentators have linked this degrading system with the current trade in human trafficking, which is considered to be a form of modern-day slavery. Both operate on a global scale and involve the acquisition of incalculable wealth; the plantation system enriched the merchants as well as laying the foundation for the industrialisation of Britain, as Britain was the world's foremost slave-

trader. Recently, the Council of Europe estimated that the annual global market for trafficking is worth £22 billion, and London has become Europe's biggest market for the sex slave trade.

Political agitation to outlaw human trafficking has taken a similar turn to the abolitionist movement 200 years ago, with campaigners urging the government to implement legislation to prohibit this activity. Interestingly, the current debates on historical and contemporary slavery seem to have overlooked a key link between the treatment of African women in the transatlantic slave trade and women trafficked into the UK today; that of sexual exploitation by men.

Sexual slavery

British colonies in the Caribbean treated African women in much the same way as they treated African men - as commodities, and



subjected women to the same levels of brutal punishment when they sought to resist.

However, women had the additional trauma of sexual slavery through debasing acts of rape and sexual exploitation perpetrated by the planters. This was systemic torture and in some instances part of a wider programme of forced impregnation, to guarantee a continuous population of enslaved workers.

Women trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation have faced parallel experiences; forced migration, often through a number of 'transit' countries; forced imprisonment; repeated rapes at the hands of their traffickers, and forced prostitution. The psychological, emotional and

physical impact of this abuse is profound.

Eliminating the trade in the trafficking of women

In the era of the transatlantic slave trade, African women were not afforded legislative protection recognising that their experiences constituted gross human rights violations. Indeed, the UK government has yet to offer an apology for its role in this 'African Holocaust', the repercussions of which are still felt today. So while it is laudable to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British colonies, the government and society need to acknowledge the extent of the damage inflicted by the slave trade on the survivors and their descendants.

Greater awareness of contemporary forms of slavery will ensure that trafficked women are afforded effective legislative protection and holistic service provision. This will hopefully reduce the prevalence of trafficking for some of the most vulnerable women in society, and assist them in overcoming what has finally been recognised as one of the most serious challenges facing human rights.

For further information of events marking the bicentenary of the abolition of Britain's role in the transatlantic slave trade, go to: www.direct.gov.uk/slavery/DG_065921



Oprah Winfrey

Actor, author, presenter, producer
and supporter of today's children

By Heather Vacciana

“The key to any country's future is in educating its youth”, remarked Nelson Mandela to an international audience at the opening ceremony for the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. The school, which opened on 2 January 2007 in Henley-on-Klip, South Africa, is an independent institution for disadvantaged South African girls. To qualify, the girls have to demonstrate leadership and academic ability and come from households with an income of less than £400 per month.

Henley-on-Klip is located just outside Johannesburg, and the Academy, which Winfrey spent \$40m developing, has live-in accommodation for 152 pupils. Her vision for the school is based on a holistic approach to students' development; as well as computer and science suites, the school has a theatre, library, gym, sports fields and health centre.

Parallel lives

On a personal level, the socio-economic and po-



Oprah Winfrey and students at the new school in Henley-on-Klip, South Africa

litical environment of these young women resonates strongly with that of Winfrey's childhood. She too experienced the institutional racism and poverty that was perpetrated against the indigenous peoples of South Africa.

Winfrey was born in 1954 in Mississippi, in an era where a system of segregation akin to apartheid was still deeply rooted in American society. To be an African-American growing up in rural poverty in the Deep South, where segregation was at its most ferocious, was to grow up in de facto enslavement.

Winfrey has spoken publicly about her experiences of childhood sexual abuse from the age of nine until her early teens. Despite the sexual violence, poverty and racism, she has become one of the most iconic global figures of our time, and her thirst for education and knowledge has played a central role in her achievements.

Star quality

Winfrey's huge achievements as an author, actress, presenter and producer made her the first black billionaire and one of *Time* magazine's 100 most

They will excel and pass their excellence on to their families, their nation and our world. I wanted to give this opportunity to girls who had a light so bright that not even poverty could dim it.

Oprah Winfrey

influential people of the 20th century.

However, it is Winfrey's charitable work that places her in a league of her own. She ensures that her prominent position empowers and educates women and children living on the margins of society across the globe, through her private charity The Oprah Winfrey Foundation, and public charity Oprah's Angel Network. In doing so she has maintained the link between her personal experiences of violence, exclusion and discrimination with those of the young women in post-apartheid South Africa. With the creation of the Academy, Oprah finally affords these students the opportunity to excel, just as she did.