

# Trafficking in Human Beings in Georgia and the CIS

GEORGI GLONTI

**E**very year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide into conditions amounting to slavery. Among them, many thousands are young women and girls lured, abducted, or sold into forced prostitution and other forms of sexual servitude. In 1997, an estimated 175,000 women and girls were trafficked from Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States, primarily to Western Europe and North America. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is so widespread that it represents a danger to all of humankind.<sup>1</sup>

Research has shown that human trafficking cases for sexual exploitation in the countries of the Central Caucasus Republic have involved more than 10,000 to 15,000 people annually. There are no accurate statistics for cases concerning other forms of exploitation of human beings (trafficking in migrants for sweatshops, domestic or agricultural labor, and other forms of involuntary servitude).<sup>2</sup>

When the Iron Curtain was lifted, barriers were removed between East and West, and the people of the USSR were freed from totalitarianism, social changes occurring in the countries of the former Soviet Union gave rise to a whole new set of difficulties: interethnic conflicts, unemployment and other economic problems, and increased illegal migration, terrorism, organized crime, and corruption. Criminal groups took advantage of the situation and became more involved in drug dealing and prostitution. Human trafficking, a new crime for the former Soviet Union, also grew into a highly attractive and lucrative criminal business. Borders were tightly controlled and movement was limited in the Soviet era; therefore human trafficking, or moving persons across borders for financial gain, simply did not occur before 1991. When the Soviet Union collapsed, law enforcement agencies and border control troops were unprepared for the massive migration flows and the rise in criminality that resulted. New criminal structures are responsible for creating the growing transnational network of prostitution and for exporting young people abroad for various forms of labor exploitation. Many international organizations, including the United Nations and the European

---

Georgi Glonti is senior researcher at the Institute of State and Law, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Union, have shown great concern for the increase in modern slavery and have taken steps to fight human trafficking. The United Nations established an international definition of human trafficking:

Trafficking in persons means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, either by the threat or use of abduction, force, fraud, deception or coercion, or by the giving or receiving of unlawful payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, with the aim of submitting them to any form of exploitation, [sexual exploitation] includes subjecting to such trafficking a child under eighteen years of age, regardless of whether that child has consented.<sup>3</sup>

Because trafficking is transnational, efforts need to be focused on international legislation to combat trafficking, and the leaders of all countries need to back the passage of such legislation.

The Soviet legal system was based on a closed totalitarian government and has never had or needed a term such as “human trafficking” because any movement through borders was strictly controlled and limited. The Criminal Code associates the term “human trafficking” with activities such as kidnapping, illegally depriving a person of their freedom, using brothels for sexual purposes, involving adolescents in prostitution, and different forms of sexual violence and seduction.

### **Defining the Problem in Georgia**

Unfortunately, the leaders of many of the CIS countries, including Georgia, have not devoted necessary attention to the problem of human trafficking. In June 1999 at a meeting with Georgia’s minister of justice, L. Chanturia, Louise Shelley and I asked about human trafficking in Georgia. The minister replied that, in his opinion, such problems did not exist because official statistics did not exist and there was no court protocol on the subject. Formally, Chanturia is correct. There are not any statistics because Georgia’s Criminal Code did not contain a definition of human trafficking until the end of 1999, and the statistical report still does not have a human trafficking section. However, having no statistics does not mean that human trafficking does not exist. The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs’ organized crime department admits that prostitution has a definite organizational form, but human trafficking from CIS countries through Georgia to Turkey acquires a transnational characteristic. According to the head of the department, the police cannot deal with this crime because it lacks legislation and adequate ties with law enforcement agencies in neighboring countries.

My research conducted in 2000–01 shows that the Caucasus, and Georgia in particular, is one of the most vulnerable areas of the former Soviet Union for trade of human beings and other criminal exploitation. Such conditions in Georgia are determined by

- difficulties of economic development of the region; Georgia is one of the poorest countries in the world;
- interethnic wars and increased levels of violence and criminality; there were three regional and more than fifteen local ethnic conflicts in Georgia in the last ten years;

- unprecedented waves of emigration that have rapidly increased during the last ten years; Georgia, with a population of five million, has lost between 650,000 and one million citizens; there are up to 250,000 refugees in Georgia;<sup>4</sup>
- lack of social institutions and low legal literacy of the population.

The government of post-Soviet Georgia has been unable to control or regulate complicated social and demographic problems. That has created the basis for the appearance of criminal syndicates, an industry of illegal emigration, trade of human beings, and pornography.

My research, and that of the Institute of Legal Reforms of Georgia, shows that the following types of criminal exploitation of human beings, which can be considered trafficking, took place in Georgia: involvement in prostitution (buying and selling young women for brothels and strip clubs) and pornographic materials; forced or fictitious “mail-order” marriages; illegal exploitation of people in forced labor and slavery-like practices; trade of human organs, biological components, and blood; illegal trade of children.

Georgia’s role in the massive exportation of women and children to the Near East, Greece, and other countries is anything but small. At the present time, legislators in many of the CIS countries, including Georgia, have begun modest attempts at realizing a legislative base with which to fight human trafficking. There are problems in Georgian legislation pertaining to the definition of human trafficking. The term “human trafficking” cannot be directly translated into Georgian; therefore, the term *adamianit vachroba* has been chosen. This term has a much broader meaning and is translated as “the selling of people.” It can mean any illegal activity connected to the buying and selling of people with the goal of obtaining a profit. It includes more than the exporting of people abroad; for example, crimes connected with kidnapping, demanding ransom for a bride, “the kidnapping of the bride,” and others. To synchronize the meaning of *adamianit vachroba* and human trafficking for the sake of international documents, it is necessary to look at the terms in a narrower legal sense.

Scholars at the Georgian Institute for State and Law Academy of Science recommended defining the term in criminal/legal practice as “the kidnapping, force or deceit of victims with the aim of exporting and selling them abroad for use of sexual services, pornography and/or for hard or dangerous labor.” This definition coincides with the accepted definition used in international practice.<sup>5</sup> In Georgia’s Criminal Code, crimes connected with human trafficking are included under the article “Involvement in Prostitution,” which includes forcing or inducing women to systematically market their bodies.

According to legislators, “human trafficking” possesses the following characteristics:

- Use of violence, blackmail, deceit, threat, or action toward the destruction or injury of property
- The physical relocation of victims beyond the borders of their country of residence, whether legally or illegally. In extreme cases, it does not have to be between separate countries, but can be within the borders of one single country (for example, between Georgia and Abkhazia or other regions)

- Human trafficking usually occurs along with other crimes: kidnapping by using such techniques as rape, intimidation, infection of venereal diseases, drugs, and hard labor

The victims of the above crimes could be any person able to work, regardless of gender, although young women and children are the most common victims.<sup>6</sup>

### **Criminal Characteristics of Human Trafficking**

The twentieth century introduced to the world newly refined forms of criminal activity and techniques of exploiting people. However, the biggest wave of crime, especially organized crime, began developing in the mid-1980s. It is difficult to measure the level of prostitution and other phenomena (homosexuality, drug use, and so forth) that took place in the USSR from the end of the 1920s to the 1980s. Statistics were either classified or not collected, and scientific research was prohibited.<sup>7</sup> However, no one in the Soviet Union, including Georgia, could have imagined ten or fifteen years ago that prostitution would become so widespread and well organized. From the 1930s to the end of the 1980s professional prostitution did not exist in Soviet countries because the totalitarian regime had strict control over people's behavior and was thorough in punishing any appearance of unacceptable sexual activities (prostitution, homosexuality, and so forth).

Small groups of prostitutes appeared in the big cities of the USSR only in the 1970s. The prostitutes were called *putani*. They worked exclusively with foreigners in hotels and resorts and as a rule were agents of the KGB. When the KGB was not satisfied with the work of the prostitutes or if they did not follow orders, they were forced to leave the city and were deprived of their passport stamp, which gave them the right to live in that specific city. In some instances, they were sent away to a medical institution for venereal diseases for a long period of time.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the number of professional prostitutes noticeably began to grow; however, this was not reflected in official statistics, which completely denied prostitution in the USSR. In 1981, at the time of the twenty-fourth convention of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, while working as a police officer I took part in an operation to restore order in the Hotel Russia in Moscow. I had the opportunity to become familiar with the files of approximately two hundred prostitutes who were registered in a special department of the police. Prostitutes were prohibited from being at the hotel during the conference. To stop prostitution during the convention, the Ministry of Internal Affairs put out secret instructions to deport the prostitutes from Moscow. Similar measures were taken in 1980 during the Moscow Olympics.

The disintegration of the USSR in 1989 was especially difficult for Georgia. In 1990, the government of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia came to power. Gamsakhurdia's nationalistic policies led Georgia to interethnic conflicts, a break in economic ties with neighboring republics, and a rise in crime. In 1991, armed paramilitary organizations led by D. Ioseliani, T. Kikovani, and T. Sigua led a *coup d'etat*, and as a result, Gamsakhurdia was overthrown. The country became totally disorganized, causing economic collapse and continued growth in crime.

After the ethnic conflicts that occurred in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the 1990–92 civil war, many refugees appeared in Georgia.<sup>8</sup> New forms of criminal activity began to spread, such as organized crime, racketeering, bank fraud, and the drug business. An increase in antisocial phenomena such as violent crimes (rape, domestic violence), kidnapping, prostitution, and other types of sexual services preceded the appearance of human trafficking.

In Georgia in 1990, kidnapping and the sale of people became an especially serious problem. According to the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, from 1991 to 1995 more than four hundred Georgian citizens and foreigners were kidnapped.<sup>9</sup> In every case the motive was monetary and resulted in extortion, debt

repayment, the exchange of hostages, or the return of a dead body. The members of a criminal gang that had control of the republic during this period were responsible for the kidnappings.

---

***“The increased desire of Georgians to leave the country became the ‘gold vein’ for professional criminals and unscrupulous businessmen.”***

After 1995, President Eduard Shevardnadze strengthened government control and was able to eliminate the main

criminal gangs. This brought about a ten-fold decrease in kidnapping from 1996 to 1998. However, at the end of 1998 the number of kidnappings began to increase. According to data of Georgia’s public defender, in 1998–99 gangs from the Northern Caucasus kidnapped thirty-two Georgian citizens,<sup>10</sup> the majority of whom lived in areas of ethnic conflict: Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In 2000–01, Georgia lost control of Pankisi gorge (the territory bounded by rebellious Russian province Chechnya and settled by refugees from that region). Chechen refugees and local criminals kidnapped a Spanish businessman, an Arab businessman, a deputy of the Georgian parliament, the brother of a rich football player, and many others.

In recent years, the slave trade in Georgia has also become more widespread. Many victims of this crime in 1999 were ethnic Georgians who had returned to their homes, with permission from the local government, in the Gali region of the autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. They were arrested by Abkhazian armed gangs who forced them, using threats and fear tactics, to perform agricultural work, such as collecting fruits, nuts, and other products that had previously been confiscated.

In the early 1990s, the fall of the USSR and easing of restrictions on obtaining visas and crossing borders made it easier to commit crimes, which in turn furthered the development of prostitution and human trafficking. The level of unregulated migration from the former Soviet republics to other countries grew sharply. According to data provided by international organizations, since 1990 more than one million people have left Georgia for a variety of reasons (education, work, war). The same tendencies continue today. The difference is that before people

were immigrating to Russia, Greece, and Israel (Greeks and Jews), but now they are trying to get to the West to find work or participate in organized crime. In September 1999, the U.S. consulate in Tbilisi had 14,000 applications for visas. Because of easing of restrictions for crossing borders and corruption in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, many dangerous criminals left for Europe and the United States with false documents and never returned. Among the immigrants who left for the West were many prostitutes, drug dealers, and sexual minorities. The majority of prostitutes from Russia and CIS countries are in Europe, especially Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. Along with prostitutes, many pimps, racketeers, and other representatives of the criminal structure who are a part of transnational organized crime have left for the West. According to German police, prostitutes from the former USSR are taking business from traditional prostitutes and competition is becoming fierce.<sup>11</sup>

The increased desire of Georgians to leave the country became the “gold vein” for professional criminals and unscrupulous businessmen. They have organized fraudulent firms to provide job opportunities abroad. There are already dozens of trafficking firms, which cover their illegal activities under the names of legal organizations dealing with tourism, models, marital agencies, and others. Those organizations are recruiting or abducting young people for trafficking and exploitation in the Orient, Europe, and North America. Many of the companies are either involved in extortion and deception, or they appear to be legal *krish* (“roof”—a term that means to cover or support) for organized groups that transport and sell people. The American embassy in Tbilisi reports that Georgian trafficking rings with strong ties to Russian organized crime use employment agencies as fronts to traffic women. Some rings specialize in trafficking women for the sex industry, while others concentrate on labor exploitation.

The organized rings traffic young women between the ages of sixteen and thirty to the United States for prostitution, while older women, forty-five and above, may be trafficked for indentured servitude. The older women are aware that they will be working as maids and nannies but unaware that they will be doing it for virtually no remuneration. The traffickers often supply the victims with counterfeit documents to obtain genuine visas and arrange for their travel to the United States. Someone from the trafficking organization will meet them on arrival at a U.S. airport and confiscate their passports, leaving them stranded. The women are then placed in strip clubs, massage parlors, brothels, or households. They are expected to repay the traffickers for living expenses, transportation costs to the United States, the costs of obtaining fraudulent documents, and interest on their debt. The women become in effect indentured servants, bound to work for free until their debts to the traffickers are paid.<sup>12</sup> In the German press, there was a story about a German doctor who invited a young boy suffering from the Chernobyl disaster to Germany and made him perform homosexual acts.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the activity of such organizations is not regulated by law and mostly goes unpunished, which promotes the constant expansion of criminal businesses. Trafficking in Georgia has become a very lucrative business, involving both professional criminals and high-level state officials.

Data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs shows that criminal clans from Georgia, headed by so-called “thieves-in-law,”<sup>14</sup> are actively expanding their transnational connections and participating in trafficking in all of the former Soviet Union, especially in Russia and Ukraine.<sup>15</sup> They are striving to expand their influence to other countries, especially rich Western states. Recently, a network of criminal organizations involved in trafficking from Georgia has been developed in the United States and other countries. The network consists of new immigrants from Georgia as well as professional criminals. They interact with criminal groups from the former USSR, creating a transnational network of recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of people for material profit. According to one nongovernmental agency, more than 160 cases of sexual exploitation of Georgian women in West-

ern Europe, Israel, and the United States took place during recent years.<sup>16</sup> More than 5,000 women from Georgia have been forced into prostitution through the trafficking network. Even more people have been exploited as cheap manual labor or have become the victims of deception by criminal organizations.<sup>17</sup>

---

***“Georgian criminals take part in all groups that control human trafficking in CIS countries; however, their role is directed more toward Turkey.”***

The buying and selling of children abroad has become another widespread business. Purchasing babies in CIS countries is not very difficult and the price is not high. In Tbilisi, there was one case of a vagrant who sold her baby for \$50,<sup>18</sup> and there is proof of children being sold in maternity houses for \$1,000. In March 2001, the police arrested a Canadian, Olga Gorelik, who was involved in selling twelve newborn babies in Tbilisi.

Small babies have been smuggled with the use of forged documents. One Italian woman arrived in Russia with a pillow under her shirt so that the customs workers would think she was in the last stages of pregnancy. She then bought a baby in Moscow, got papers from a maternity house saying that she gave birth there, and left Russia with the baby.<sup>19</sup>

Crimes of this type recently were exposed in Georgia. With the help of corrupt policemen, women would put pictures of children in their international passports as if they were their own and then take the children to third world countries such as Turkey. In those countries, they sold the children for work or sexual purposes and then returned to Georgia. Recently, many cases of tampered Georgian international passports have been uncovered. Some years ago, old Georgian passports were changed for new ones, which the Georgian government had made in France. They were high-quality passports with one flaw: there was no protective stamp over the picture. It is a very simple task even for nonprofessionals to swap pictures without leaving a trace. The authors of a special program aired on Georgian television claimed that the use of false passports by criminals to traffic children was a large-scale business.<sup>20</sup>

Some pregnant women have been taken out of Georgia and other countries, given birth abroad, and then been separated from their babies. Some of those cases became the basis for scandals in the Georgian press; however, law enforcement agencies did not pursue them. It is obvious that this business will flourish, as there is a high demand for children in Europe and the United States where adoption is a long and difficult bureaucratic process.

### Georgia as a Transit Corridor

Georgian criminals take part in all groups that control human trafficking in CIS countries; however, their role is directed more toward Turkey. Georgia became one of the highly developed routes for human trafficking to the East because it has a border with Turkey, which has a large population of ethnic Georgians along the border.

Georgia's geographic location and its border with Turkey were deciding factors for the development in criminal business—for example, smuggling of cigarettes and food products, drug dealing, weapons trade, and human trafficking. In the early 1990s, citizens of the CIS countries started using Georgia as a corridor for a small trade business called *chelnok* (shuttle)—*chelnoki* are people who purchase goods abroad with the intention of selling them at home at a higher price—to get to Europe, Turkey, Greece, and other Eastern countries because it is a cheap route. A bus ticket from Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, to Istanbul costs only \$50, and only \$20 to the first Turkish city. Also, corrupt Georgian customs officers allow people to take anything across the border. This set in motion a flood of “shuttling” businessmen from all over the USSR.

Some regions of Turkey adjacent to Georgia began to develop and started turning out a variety of products and services. Side by side with this grew the market of illegal labor and sexual services. New hotels were being built in many Turkish cities specifically to serve businessmen from the former USSR; leather and cotton factories were working full speed. However, by 1992–93 the “shuttle” market began to decrease and profits began to disintegrate. The number of buyers from the CIS countries greatly decreased, which caused changes to the infrastructure of businesses located close to the border. Many hotels and restaurants turned into brothels in which women from all over the CIS work voluntarily or involuntarily as prostitutes. Many women who at one time worked in the “shuttle” business became prostitutes and lived in the hotels or brothels.<sup>21</sup>

However, the number of women proved to be too small to satisfy the demand from the Turkish sex market. Organized crime groups began recruiting women from all countries of the former USSR. One of the centers for human trafficking in women, especially from Russia and Ukraine, is located in Tbilisi. This is where recruiters work and where the forged documents are created. The recruiters usually offer girls jobs as waitresses or dancers and then once they are abroad they sell them. Owners of brothels buy girls at different prices depending on nationality, age, and appearance. In Turkey the price ranges from \$2,000 to \$5,000.<sup>22</sup>

Many ethnic Greeks are trafficking organizers.<sup>23</sup> They are Georgian citizens and have connections with organized crime groups in Greece and Turkey. In the



Saratovski region of Russia, a group of Georgian citizens of Greek nationality were arrested for recruiting girls and sending them to Turkey and Greece on forged documents. In the Russian city of Belgorod, a group of Greeks from the Tsalkski region in Georgia transported girls to Turkey and Greece for work.<sup>24</sup>

Transporting prostitutes abroad can take place legally or illegally. In Georgia in 1995, an organized group of criminals consisting of customs and law enforcement officers was uncovered. The members of the group spread themselves out among Russian cities and recruited girls for prostitution in Turkey. They then took them to Georgia, where they were given fake passports by Georgian citizens; they then had visa-free entry into Turkey (Russians need a special visa, whereas Georgians do not).<sup>25</sup>

---

***“The president’s program to prevent offenses among minors includes the establishment of a rehabilitation center to which underage prostitutes, in particular, will be sent.”***

There have been cases in Georgia where girls were kidnapped and sold to brothels in Turkey. The kidnappers usually lie to their victims, offering to take them on vacation or to work legally, but once they cross the border they sell them as prostitutes. The press described one such case where a thirty-five-year-old woman sold her eighteen-year-old neighbor at the Trabzona hotel in Turkey for \$5,000. The girl was held for eight months and made to serve several men each day before she was able to escape to the police, and the kidnappers and owners of the hotel were convicted. The conditions under which girls live in at the brothels in Turkey are awful. They are subjected to beatings, mass rape, and infection by venereal diseases.<sup>26</sup>

Independent researchers working for the media in the northern regions of Turkey, especially in the cities of Trabzon and Samsun, have found that many groups of prostitutes from Georgia are called *gyudzhi khatum* (Georgian beauty). Basically, this is a low class of prostitutes who often work independently without pimps. They earn approximately \$10 to \$30 for their services, which they use to support their families back in Georgia. They compete with prostitutes from Russia, Ukraine, and other CIS countries, which Turks call *Natasha* (Russian name). There are also prostitutes from Azerbaijan and the republics of Central Asia who speak Turkish and are often able to find legal work.<sup>27</sup>

According to Interpol data, ninety-eight Georgian citizens have been arrested for prostitution by the Turkish police, and four by the Greek police. Taking into consideration that prostitution is hard to prove, and that only 1 to 5 percent of prostitutes are arrested, it follows that there are approximately 5,000 Georgian citizens taking part in this trade.<sup>28</sup>

In Georgia, especially Tbilisi and the cities along the border with Turkey, prostitution is seen as a form of organized crime. The number of brothels has grown, as has the number of street prostitutes. Data from the Georgian Ministry of Internal

Affairs shows that there are many teenagers and adolescents among the prostitutes. Under existing legislation, prostitution is not considered a criminal offense. At the same time, the keeping of brothels, the enticement of women into depravity, and the procurement of them are subject to punishment of varying severity. In 1997, ten incidents involving such offenses were registered and criminal proceedings were instituted. In the area around the central train station in Tbilisi police often arrest teenagers who are stealing, begging, drinking, and prostituting themselves. However, after they are questioned and identified they are released because they cannot be prosecuted for criminal acts. Also in 1997, fifty underage girls found guilty of prostitution were registered with internal affairs agencies. The president's program to prevent offenses among minors includes the establishment of a rehabilitation center to which underage prostitutes, in particular, will be sent.<sup>29</sup>

Statistics illustrate the prevalence of venereal diseases, which increased approximately five times between 1990 and 1997.

Since April 1997, the Georgian Ministry of Health has been carrying out a State program to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Research conducted under the program has shown that mainly prostitutes spread sexually transmitted diseases. About half of the prostitutes sent by internal affairs agencies to the relevant medical institutions had syphilis, every fifth woman had gonorrhea, and so on. In 1997, 1,842 syphilis patients, 756 of whom were women, and 940 cases of gonorrhea (194 women) were registered.<sup>30</sup>

### Trafficking in Human Beings in Georgia

The appearance of professional prostitutes and the development of human trafficking in Georgia at the end of the twentieth century contradict the customs and the family traditions of the people. In Georgian history and culture, women have traditionally been considered homemakers and keepers of community and social values. A particularly respectful attitude toward women developed in Georgia, as is reflected in historical monuments and works of art created throughout Georgian history. In such works, women are depicted as the active subject of social relations: women politicians, women warriors, and so on. (Queen Tamara, one of the most well known heroes, reigned over and unified Georgia in the twelfth century.) At the same time, Georgian society has developed a cult not so much of women as such, but of women as mothers, which is reflected in Georgian vocabulary: the words "earth" (*dedamitsa*), "essence" (*deda azri*), "native language" (*deda ena*), and other words contain the root *deda* (mother). The women's holiday observed in Georgia on 3 March is called Mother's Day.

At the end of the 1980s, the social status of women in Georgia decreased sharply, and there was an equally large increase in the level of violence against women, prostitution, and human trafficking. This was caused by the following factors:

*Loss of ethics and morality in society.* For more than seventy years, the communist system had control over Georgians, including their spiritual values, which were based on the principles of absolute submission to the government and the

ideology of militant atheism. That brought about the degradation of family values, traditions, and morality in society. The economic difficulties over the past years and the disorganization of government has rooted in the people both nihilism and a loss of confidence in the future. Every day turned into a fight for existence. The difficult political situation, the socioeconomic and psychological atmosphere, growing unemployment, and the forced displacement of some part of the population have resulted in the collapse of historically established social relationships. The results of a popular poll conducted among young people in the USSR at the end of the 1980s showed that the most prestigious and profitable careers were "currency prostitutes" (those paid in dollars instead of rubles) and contract killers. Research conducted in Georgia in 1997 shows that more than 20 percent of those polled consider prostitution normal; almost 30 percent do not condemn women who are forced to sell their bodies as a way of making money; almost 15 percent did not wish to give their opinion on the subject; and only 35 percent viewed prostitution negatively.

*Poor economic conditions.* During the transition period, the level of male employment compared with female employment has been stable, since women have found it harder to adapt to the new economic conditions. In the sphere of production, there are 292,400 unemployed women. UN data on Georgia shows that the average yearly income decreased from \$2,250 in 1990 to \$370 in 1995. The high level of unemployment among female production workers can be explained in part by the closure of enterprises of the light, food, and chemical industries, which are traditionally "women's" branches of production. Many women have lost their jobs as a result of reforms in the areas of health and education. Unemployment studies conducted by sociologists have revealed an extremely low level of female participation in entrepreneurial activities.<sup>31</sup>

*Unsolved interethnic conflict and the large number of refugees from those regions.* Refugees are a very vulnerable part of a population: many do not have permanent housing, many have lost family members, and many are unemployed and live on government aid of \$15 per month. Many refugees are forced to sell goods on the streets or take part in other business, a large portion of which are run by organized crime groups (drugs, fraud, theft, and so forth). Refugee women were hit especially hard. Many lost husbands and still have to maintain their families. Many of them are forced to go abroad and end up doing hard labor or becoming prostitutes.

*Child neglect and homelessness.* Children have turned out to be the main victims. Many become street children, earning money mainly through begging and stealing. Although the exact number of street children is not known, studies carried out to register them in Tbilisi put it at 1,100 to 1,200 children.<sup>32</sup>

A private voluntary organization, Child and Environment, noted a dramatic rise in homeless children following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It estimates that there are now more than 2,500 street children in Tbilisi due to the inability

of orphanages and the government to provide support.<sup>33</sup> Many homeless children become victims of sexual violence and take part in prostitution. In Georgia there are no organizations that take moral and material responsibility for the fates of thousands of homeless children. The majority of juvenile delinquents continue to lead an antisocial life in spite of arrests and warnings and end up becoming criminals and bums.

*Inability of the justice system to defend women and children from sexual violence.* Georgia does not have a law against human trafficking. Criminal, criminal-procedural, civil, and administrative codes lack articles for preventing and prosecuting the selling of people. Legislation on immigration control is also needed. Georgian consulate services abroad should have instructions and methods for providing help to victims of human trafficking. Through mass media and lectures, Georgian law enforcement agencies should take a proactive approach toward protecting potential victims, as well as systematically take part in fighting prostitution and vagrants in the republic.

The results of a poll of prostitutes conducted by the Independent Institute on Legal Reform indicated that they entered the profession for the following reasons:

- being forced by criminals and being tricked into the brothels—44 percent
- financial problems and the necessity to feed a family—36 percent
- curiosity and desire to take control of their fate and marry abroad (modern-day Cinderella syndrome)—6 percent
- need to buy drugs or alcohol—4 percent
- the desire to have many men and spend time in restaurants and on cruises—3 percent
- need to pay off personal or family debts—2 percent
- desire to save money or organize own business—3 percent<sup>34</sup>

Among the reasons leading women to prostitution the most often cited were “being forced by criminals” or “financial problems,” which together account for 80 percent. Those results correspond with research in other countries of the CIS. According to the data of Nina Karpacheva, deputy head of the Ukrainian parliament’s Commission on Human Rights, up to 85 percent of Ukrainian women involved in prostitution abroad are forced into it against their will. She said that thousands of Ukrainian women have been turned into “white slaves” in many countries, particularly Greece, Turkey, the United States, Israel, Germany, and the Netherlands.<sup>35</sup>

Usually prostitutes decline to give interviews or fail to give truthful answers. A portion of prostitutes are ashamed of their profession and try to get away from the circle; however, many claim that prostitution pulls in good money and it is a good way to spend their time.

Despite the large number of prostitutes in Turkey and other countries, those who run the business are constantly looking for new employees. Prostitutes do not usually last more than ten years in the business and many do not make it even five years; many turn into drug users, alcoholics, and physically and psycholog-

ically deformed people. Girls who were forced into prostitution change especially quickly.

### **Criminal Organizations and Prostitution**

Despite the fact that prostitution is not itself a criminal act, it is seen as an element of the criminal environment. Usually prostitutes of different levels form closed groups. Each member of the group relates to the others in a strict system of business and economics, as to the so-called base company (hotels, restaurants, tourist agencies, and so forth). In this type of environment, a system of technological service is established. Nonprostitutes are placed in narrow specializations, for example, as pimps, security from the competition, or as a group to deal with law enforcement problems. Fifty percent of the prostitutes' profits go to these groups.

Research shows several forms of criminal business organizations:

*Independent prostitutes.* Women who, either alone or in a group, travel to other countries and independently take up prostitution or other services along those lines.

*Independent criminal groups.* Usually people who organize small-scale trafficking. Often they are new immigrants from the USSR who are now citizens of Israel, Greece, Germany, and other countries. They form ties with brothels, hotels, or restaurants in their new countries and lure women from the CIS for prostitution and other such work.

*Organized crime.* The main network for recruiting, preparing documents, transporting, placing abroad, and exploiting people for sexual service and manual labor. Organized crime has connections with corrupt officials working in law enforcement and customs agencies in different countries. They also possess large finances and have a complete conspiracy system.<sup>36</sup> Organized crime quickly establishes a monopoly on the sexual services market and puts pressure on unorganized groups and individuals. Along with the creation of a transnational structure in human trafficking, organized crime associates itself with the exploitation of women and children, which is widespread in Georgia and other CIS countries.

*Organization and development of prostitution on a local level.* This sphere develops quickly and brings high profits in Georgia as a whole, but especially in Tbilisi where the demand for sexual services and goods has grown. The increase was caused by the opening of restaurants and casinos, which launder dirty money from local criminals, as well as from Turkey, Azerbaijan, and other countries. In Islamic countries, gambling is prohibited; therefore, many people come from those countries to the casinos in Georgia. In Tbilisi over the past two years about thirty casinos have opened, as well as many nightclubs, restaurants, hotels, banyas, and other places where prostitutes work.

*Organization and development of the network for distribution of drugs.* In Georgia the number of women drug distributors and street dealers has grown consid-

erably. According to information provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in recent years there has been a trend toward involving women in narcotics. In 1996, fifty-four women were found to be involved in illicit drug trafficking; in 1997, the number of women engaged in such activities rose to 111. Most of the women were involved in contraband and the production of narcotics. Three female residents of Georgia were arrested in Turkey for drug addiction.<sup>37</sup>

*Creation of an elite export business for bribing government officials and for discrediting and blackmailing political and state workers and businessmen.* Professional prostitutes were used to discredit many officials. This was used against the famous Russian minister of justice V. Kovalev and Russian general prosecutor U. Skuratov. There is information that the chairman of Georgia's Central Bank was forced to resign because of compromising connections with such girls.

*Creation of a special network of prostitutes that are used as "biological weapons."* Such examples were found in Kaliningrad, Russia, where organized clans started using prostitutes known to be infected with AIDS to infect, put psychological pressure on, or discredit their competitors. After sexual contact the person was informed of possible infection and was shown medical documents showing that the prostitute with whom he had sex was infected. This proved to be effective in eliminating the competition.<sup>38</sup>

### **Methods of Preventing Human Trafficking**

About 154 countries have laws against human trafficking.<sup>39</sup> However, if universal, international legislation is not adopted even the most complete laws cannot stop the export of people across state borders or the slave labor trade. Legislation is necessary to look at the criminal responsibility of the people in charge, the middlemen, in some cases the people who are using these sexual services and who are spreading pornographic literature. It is also necessary to establish organizations to provide judicial and material support and rehabilitation for the victims of the slave trade. A special portion of legislation should contain measures for cooperation among law enforcement agencies in different countries for locating and shutting down brothels, distribution networks, and organized crime groups that take part in transporting the victims. Unfortunately, adoption of such complicated legislation demands large finances and the good will of most countries in the world.

Nevertheless, there are simple measures that would be effective in fighting human trafficking, especially when there is a physical location where human trafficking takes place and women are lured into prostitution through lies, blackmail, and intimidation. Those measures could evolve into an international network of centers for the protection of women and children from slavery. The mechanics of such a network are simple and can be located in countries where there are "consumers" of sexual goods and services, as well as in countries that export people for such purposes.

In "receiving" countries a network of centers should be created that would function as a 911 service. Those centers should have free telephone services and

operators with knowledge of the national languages of the countries where the victims are located. For example, in CIS countries it would be enough to have Russian speakers. Every center would register the victims' telephone messages and hand them over to law enforcement agencies and doctors in the receiving countries. They would also connect with representatives in the victims' home countries and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that work for the protection of women's rights. Where necessary, representatives would volunteer as translators and legal advisors.

In the "supply" or "source" countries there should be constant work toward disseminating information about the danger of trafficking and the methods used by criminals to attract victims. When receiving international passports and visas all citizens should receive free instructions and telephone numbers of centers in the "receiving" countries to which a victim can report violence, lies, force, or destruction of documents.

The center's workers would keep records of information on cases of "human trafficking" for analytical purposes and make the records available to interested organizations. They would publish annual reports.

The centers, working with NGOs, would find sponsors and volunteers to provide support for victims of crimes.

This organizational model of centers would not require large expenses and could prove very effective in the fight against human trafficking. The support of international and state structures is necessary for the realization of the project, as well as the active participation of NGOs. In Georgia there are almost sixty independent women's organizations. Through international support over the past few years the organizations have grown and made themselves known. Those NGOs can play a vital role in the centers' activities and fight against human trafficking.

### **Conclusion**

The market for trading and exploiting persons will continue to grow, as it is a relatively safe way for criminal organizations to make large profits. The majority of victims do not report crimes to the police and lack proof against the criminals. In the economically poor countries of the CIS most girls, homeless children, and refugees will agree to any work, which contributes to the growth of the business. The variety of sexual goods and services will continue to grow with the help of the Internet, as will child pornography, which adds to the demand for victims and widens the range of human trafficking.

Georgia and the other countries of the CIS are not able to solve this problem, as they do not have proper control over migration in the republics. The fight against these crimes can be effective only at an international level and through international legislation adopted by UN countries. Also, police organizations need to be established to liquidate the brothels in the countries of the primary "consumers" of the services. Special agencies dedicated to humanitarian and legal assistance need to be established in the countries where persons are exploited, to help with returning victims to their native countries.

## NOTES

1. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "Trafficking in Human Beings: Implications for the OSCE," Review Conference, September 1999.
2. Materials of the International Conference on "Organized Crime and Corruption in Georgia," June 1999.
3. UN. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Palermo, Italy, 12-15 December 2000.
4. Georgi Glonti, "The Prostitution and Human Trafficking in Georgia and the CIS, 2000," *Legal Reform* 2 (2000).
5. Georgi Glonti, *Organized Crime as One of the Main Reasons for Inter-ethnic Conflict in Georgia* (Tbilisi: Azri, 1998).
6. *The Criminal Code of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1999.
7. In the USSR criminal statistics were classified, criminological research was prohibited from 1930 to 1960, criminology was declared a pseudo-science and criminologists and cyberneticists were repressed. After 1960, research in the area of criminology was resumed; however, it was strictly limited to censorship. In particular, the study of organized crime, drugs and prostitution was not allowed because they did not correspond with the ideological dogma of the socialist system, they only appeared in capitalist societies.
8. United Nations annual Human Rights Report, 1993.
9. Interview with Georgian minister of internal affairs, Tbilisi, Georgia, 1998.
10. Interview with Georgia's public defender, D. Salaridze, Tbilisi, Georgia, April 1999.
11. B. C. Ovchinsky and B. E. Eminov, *Theoretical Bases in the Fight against Organized Crime*, monograph, Moscow 1996, 39.
12. Amy O'Neill Richard "International Trafficking in Women to the US: A Contemporary Manifestation of Slavery and Organized Crime.," monograph, 1999. 69
13. ElikoTsiklauri, "The Criminological Characteristics of Organized Crime," dissertation, Tbilisi State University, 22.
14. For additional information, see James O. Finckenaer and Eline J. Waring, *Russian Mafia in America: Immigration, Culture and Crime* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 107-10; Joseph D. Serio and Vyacheslav S. Radzinkin "Thieves Professing the Code: The Traditional Role of Vory v Zakone in Russia's Criminal World and Adaptations in New Social Reality," *CJ Europe Online*, <www.acsp.uic.edu>.
15. Georgi Glonti, "Problems Associated with Organized Crime in Georgia," research project, Tbilisi, 2000.
16. Vachtang Sulashvili, Materials of the International Conference, April 2001.
17. Irina Tchovrebashbili, Research Proposal 2000, The Institute of Legal Reform of Georgia.
18. Board of Advisers of Parliament of Georgia, "Digest of the Russian Press," 1997.
19. "Courier," Television channels Rustavi-2, 1998.
20. "Courier," Television channels Rustavi-2, 1999.
21. Glonti, *Organized Crime*, 124.
22. Ovchinsky and Eminov, *Theoretical Bases in the Fight against Organized Crime*, 237.
23. In Georgia there is a very large diaspora of Greeks—more than 200,000. Since 1990, many Greeks have immigrated back to their homeland.
24. Materials from the conference "Problems with the fight against organized crime and corruption in Georgia," Institute of Legal Reform of Georgia, 15-16 June 1999, Tbilisi.
25. Ovchinsky and Eminov, *Theoretical Bases in the Fight against Organized Crime*, 238.
26. "Argumenti I Fakti" 211 (April 1997).
27. Glonti, *Organized Crime*; television channel Rustavi-2. "Alia," 1998.
28. UN Report, Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Georgia, 1998,44.
29. Ibid., 56.



30. Ibid., 71.

31. Ibid., 55.

32. Approximately 70 percent are inhabitants of Tbilisi, 18 percent came from different regions and 12 percent are children of refugees. The average age is thirteen. Eighty-seven percent of the children completely or partially give their income to their families. Fifty-four percent of the children are of school age but cannot read or write; 22 percent do not study, but work; 42 percent have health difficulties, 24 percent smoke, 2 percent are prone to alcoholism, 2 percent have inclinations towards narcotics. In general, 234 children are beggars. The average age is ten; 140 are boys and 94 are girls.

33. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *Georgia: Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, 26 February 1999.

34. Analysis of the Georgian mass media conducted in 1999 that included the period between 1998 and June 1999, experts at the Institute of Legal Reform.

35. Zalisko Walter, "Trafficking in Women and Government's Response." *Russian Organized Crime* <[www.policeconsultant.com](http://www.policeconsultant.com)>.

36. Glonti, Georgi. "Types of Organized Crime Activites in Georgia." Lecture at the conference "Improving Georgian Legislation," May 1998.

37. UN Report Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 68.

38. *Russian Press Digest*, 1999.

39. Testimony of Laura J. Lederer, "The Sex Trade: Trafficking of Women and Children in Europe and the United States." Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 28 June 1999, 20.