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Human trafficking in Belarus

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Human trafficking is still a pressing issue for Belarus, despite its efforts to prevent it and the country's accession to international conventions. Belarus was, in fact, the first among CIS countries to start an active combat against human trafficking. In the human trafficking context it can be regarded as a donor for many countries, and Russia is a leader among them.

The Ministry of Interior is the main source of information about human exploitation offenses, hence available statistics mostly represent the results of criminal investigations.

We have assessed the situation focusing on the following aspects:

- Crimes against personal freedom
- Human-trafficking victims
- Exploitation channels

Crimes against personal freedom

All offenses can be divided into two main groups:

1. Offenses associated with labor exploitation;
2. Offenses associated with sexual exploitation.

Under the Belarusian Criminal Code, **human exploitation** is understood as the illegal coercion of a person to perform work or render services, if this person for reasons beyond his or her control cannot refuse to perform work (render services). This definition includes slavery or practices similar to slavery. **Sexual exploitation** is understood as profiting from actions of sexual nature performed by another person, including prostitution.

3,664 crimes associated with exploitation were identified in Belarus in 2000-2012, including 3,533 associated with sexual and 130 with labor exploitation. There is a more detailed classification, but one should note that the type of exploitation is not singled out there. For instance, this is true for human trafficking and abduction. The dynamics of crimes against personal freedom for 2000-2012 is provided in table 1.

Under the Belarusian Criminal Code, **trafficking in persons** means purchase and sale of a human being or other transactions with regards to a human being, as well as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a human being for the purpose of exploitation; **abduction of a human being** means the illicit taking of a person, covert, open, by way of deceit or betrayal of trust, or combined with violence or threat of violence or other forms of coercion, without essential crime elements.

Table 1. Crimes associated with human trafficking identified in Belarus in 2000-2012.

	Human trafficking	Use of slave labor	Abduction of a human being	Illicit actions aimed at employment of citizens abroad	Use of prostitution	Involvement in prostitution
2000	0	-	0	-	149	0
2001	7	-	0	-	186	0
2002	22	-	2	-	342	47
2003	35	-	7	-	347	99
2004	92	-	4	-	331	128
2005	159	-	10	6	150	44
2006	95	-	7	16	115	61
2007	84	-	8	4	115	57
2008	69	-	6	14	87	34
2009	61	1	7	4	107	39
2010	39	1	5	0	123	49
2011	9	0	2	1	116	41
2012	8	1	0	0	76	35
Total	680	3	58	45	2244	634

Source: data of the Belarusian Ministry of Interior

As one can see from the table, almost 80% of crimes are related to prostitution. The joint work of law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations have reduced this problem since 2005. The remaining 20% of crimes are related to human trafficking and abduction. 1,600 crimes against personal freedom associated with the export of persons from Belarus were identified from 2001 to 2012.

Human trafficking victims

Records concerning human trafficking victims in Belarus have been kept since 2002. 4,900 persons were registered from 2002 to 2012, 88% of them were victims of sexual exploitation and 12% - of labor exploitation (table 2). One should mention that criminal investigation into a notorious modeling business case lasted two years and finished only in 2006. This case dealt with sexual exploitation of persons, mostly minors.

Table 2. Crimes associated with human trafficking identified in Belarus from 2000 to 2012.

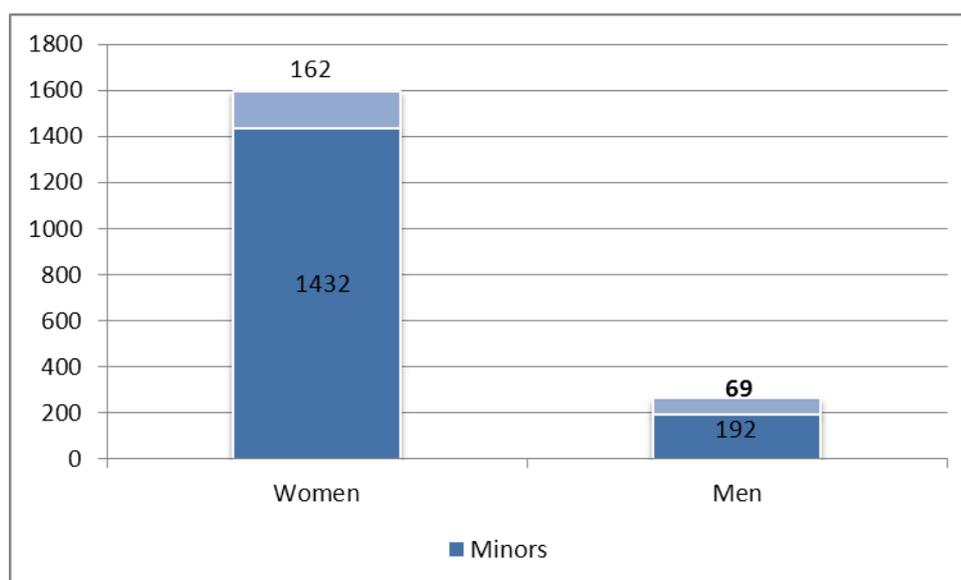
	Type of exploitation		Place of exploitation	
	sexual	labor	overseas	In Belarus
2002	100	0	-	-
2003	350	0	-	-
2004	400	0	-	-
2005	365	260	-	-
2006	1011	96	998	109
2007	378	40	338	80
2008	458	133	345	246
2009	369	29	291	107
2010	345	14	182	180
2011	387	8	142	153
2012	208	1	85	124

Source: data of the Belarusian Ministry of Interior

Furthermore, 70% of victims were subjected to exploitation overseas, though during the last two years Belarus prevailed as the place of exploitation. The study of the distribution of labor exploitation victims by place of exploitation demonstrated that 96% of crimes had been committed overseas.

Records of underage human trafficking victims have been kept since 2005. 530 children subjected to sexual exploitation and seven subjected to labor exploitation were registered in Belarus between 2005 and 2012.

As for the distribution of human trafficking victims by gender, women and girls are the ones who are exploited most often (figure 1). The total number of female victims of sexual and labor exploitation was 1,594 in 2008-2012, 10% were underage.

Figure 1. Exploitation victims by gender for 2008-2012

Nevertheless, the number of men was also significant – 261 victims in total, and the share of underage victims among men was 2.5 times higher than among women, i.e. 26%.

Exploitation channels

The main export channels of Belarusian nationals for the purpose of exploitation (they accounted for 80% of all closed channels in 2005-2012) were Russia (55%), Poland (10%), Turkey (10%) and Germany (5%). 610 channels were shut down.

One should draw the reader's attention to the fact that human organ trafficking is not a pressing issue for Belarus. Only three victims whose organs were removed were identified in 2002-2012, all of them in 2010.

At present, despite certain successes in the field of the prevention and suppression of human trafficking, this problem remains a priority for law enforcement agencies, state security bodies and for the UN office in Belarus.

List of sources used

Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, 9 July 1999 No. 275-Z with amendments.