



**WORLD  
FREEDOM  
NETWORK**

A commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)

To: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Re: Report of Reem Alsalem, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls: Prostitution and violence against women and girls (HRC/56/48)

June 20, 2024

### **Support Statement for the Special Rapporteur on Prostitution and violence against women and girls**

The World Freedom Network (WFN), represented by global advocates combating slavery, exploitation and human trafficking, appreciates the comprehensive and insightful report by Special Rapporteur Reem Alsalem on the pervasive issue of prostitution and violence against women and girls.

On behalf of the World Freedom Network, we express our strong support for the recently published report, which meticulously examines the complex interplay between prostitution and violence against women and girls.

This report is a crucial document that underscores the inherent exploitation and systemic violence that characterize prostitution, positioning it as both a cause and consequence of gender-based violence.

Prostitution, as delineated in the report, is not merely a transaction but a deeply entrenched system of exploitation and abuse that disproportionately affects women and girls. This exploitation is perpetuated by patriarchal norms and exacerbated by socioeconomic inequalities, making marginalized groups especially vulnerable. The report's comprehensive analysis highlights the multiple layers of violence—physical, psychological, and economic—that

women in prostitution endure, reinforcing the urgent need for a rights-based approach to address this issue.

## **Our Take on Prostitution as Exploitation and Its Risks to Trafficking**

WFN is actively engaged in discussions about defining and accurately narrating the issues of slavery, trafficking, and exploitation. The narrative surrounding the exploitation inherent in prostitution, urgently requires a paradigm shift to accurately reflect the profound human rights violations at its core. As outlined in the UN report, the term "prostitution" itself is fraught with contentious and polarizing interpretations, often obscuring the violent and exploitative realities faced by women and girls. The current lack of clear, standardized definitions in international law exacerbates this issue, allowing euphemisms and confused translations to dilute the true nature of the harm involved.

By framing prostitution as a "system of violence" that commodifies women and girls, we can better address the systemic inequality and discrimination that underpin it. This approach aligns with human rights law and shifts the focus to where it belongs: on the perpetrators—those who buy sexual acts and those who profit from them. Recognising terms like "prostituted women and girls" underscores the exploitation and abuse, rather than legitimizing it as a form of work, thereby respecting the victims' experiences and supporting their right to protection, assistance, and justice. This narrative change is critical in dismantling the structures that perpetuate exploitation and ensuring a rights-based approach to support victims and prevent further abuse.

WFN firmly recognises prostitution as a deeply embedded system of exploitation and violence that disproportionately affects women and girls. As a global network dedicated to promoting human rights & combating exploitation, we advocate for an abolitionist approach to address and eradicate this harmful system.

### **1. Exploitation and Commodification:**

- Prostitution reduces women and girls to commodities, perpetuating gender inequality and discrimination. The act of purchasing sexual services inherently involves an abuse of power and a violation of the human dignity of those exploited.

## **2. Systemic Violence:**

- The report details how prostitution is intrinsically linked to various forms of violence, including sexual assault, physical abuse, and psychological trauma. This violence is a manifestation of the broader patriarchal structures that oppress women globally.

## **3. Risk of Trafficking:**

- There is a direct correlation between prostitution and human trafficking. The demand for sexual services fuels the trafficking industry, as traffickers exploit vulnerable women and girls to meet this demand. The normalization of prostitution in certain legal frameworks further complicates efforts to combat trafficking and protect victims.

## **4. Global Implications:**

- Prostitution is a global issue that requires a coordinated international response. The report's call for abolishing laws that condone or facilitate prostitution is a significant step towards dismantling the systems that enable exploitation and trafficking.

## **Support Points:**

### **● Human Rights Violation:**

- Prostitution is a violation of fundamental human rights, including the right to dignity, equality, and freedom from violence. Recognising prostituted women and girls as victims entitled to protection and support is crucial for their recovery and reintegration into society.

### **● Legislative and Policy Recommendations:**

- The report advocates for the criminalisation of buyers of sexual acts and third-party profiteers while decriminalising those exploited in prostitution. This approach aims to reduce demand and hold perpetrators accountable, thereby disrupting the cycle of exploitation.

### **● Support and Rehabilitation:**

- Providing comprehensive support services, including housing, healthcare, education, and legal aid, is essential for helping victims exit prostitution and rebuild their lives. State and non-state actors must collaborate to create an environment conducive to these support mechanisms.

- **Public Awareness and Education:**

- Raising public awareness about the realities of prostitution and its links to trafficking is vital. Educational campaigns should aim to shift societal attitudes and reduce the stigma faced by victims, promoting a culture of empathy and support.

This Special Rapporteur report on prostitution and violence against women and girls is a landmark document that highlights the urgent need for a holistic, rights-based approach to tackling prostitution and its associated harms. By adopting the recommendations outlined in the report, we can make significant strides towards ending the exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, fostering a more just and equitable society. The World Freedom Network stands firmly in support of these efforts and commits to advocating for the implementation of these crucial measures.

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