

Amnesty Criticizes Israel Over Trade in Women

By Einat Fishbain, Ha'aretz Correspondent

In a report to be published today by Amnesty International, the human-rights organization is scathing in its comments on Israeli authorities' responsibility for the local proliferation of the phenomenon of "traded women," in which women from abroad are lured to Israel under false pretenses and then enslaved as prostitutes in brothels.

"The traded women come in contact with many Israeli government agencies, but there seems to be no clear policy in fighting these violations of human rights," Amnesty noted in its report.

The report, the product of a special investigation conducted last spring, adds, "The government of Israel failed to take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, try and punish those responsible for the violations of human rights committed against traded women."

The report marks the first time that Amnesty International has turned its investigative eye toward "trade" in women. Israel was chosen as the group's first case study. Hundreds of women are smuggled into Israel annually, most from the former Soviet Union. The presence of a large community of immigrants from those countries facilitates their illicit entry and stay in Israel.

The case of "Valentina," 27, is a typical one. She was offered a job as a company representative by an Israeli who made all the necessary arrangements. He received her at the airport, the next day took her passport, money and return ticket and transferred her to an apartment – where she realized that she had been brought to Israel to work as a prostitute.

"The conditions were horrible," she says. "Most of the girls suffered from venereal diseases. There was nowhere to run – there were bars on the windows and guards all the time, day and night." Eventually she jumped from the first floor of the building in order to escape

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