

US GLOBAL TRAFFICKING REVIEW FAVORS GOVERNMENTS AND IGNORES CIVIL SOCIETY CHARGE ADVOCATES IN ITALY AND NIGERIA

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Women's groups in Italy and Nigeria that are working together to curb massive and abusive trade in women between the two countries, have criticized a recent US report on global trafficking for exaggerating the efforts of their two governments to crack down on traffickers, and for ignoring the vital role played by civil society.

The report is issued each year by the US State Department, as required under US law (the 2000 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act). It ranks the anti-trafficking efforts of all governments except for the United States.

The latest report has placed fifteen governments on 'Tier 3,' which means they could face sanctions from the United States if they do not take vigorous measures to combat trafficking in the next few months. Italy is given the highest grade (Tier 1) while Nigeria is placed on Tier 2 for making a serious effort.

Many view the annual trafficking review as another example of selective moralizing by the United States. But the reaction from Italy and Nigeria suggests that it has become a valuable lobbying tool for many advocates on the front line, and that it could even be stronger.

In a press release, Rosanna Paradiso, director of the Turin branch of Transnational AIDS/STD Prevention Among Migrant Prostitutes in Europe (TAMPEP), welcomed the publicity generated by the review. This was echoed by Olabisi Olateru-Olagbegi, director of the Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), which has campaigned to stop the 'export' of Nigerian women to Italy and provide better protection for those deported from Italy and sent home.

At the same time, both advocates highlighted the importance of civil society in the campaign against trafficking. The report states that it does not seek to analyze 'nongovernmental entities,' but Ms. Paradiso argued that this omission seriously discredits any evaluation and could also discourage the United States from funding NGO programs. She urged the Bush Administration to work directly with civil society in countries like Italy and Nigeria, to build 'an interdisciplinary network of organizations, professional training, health and legal services' against trafficking.

TAMPEP also faults the United States report for awarding the Italian government its highest rating. The report commends Italy for a 'net increase of 10 percent' in anti-trafficking projects approved in the past year. In fact, says TAMPEP, funding for NGOs has been severely cut back. Last year, the government only approved 60 percent of TAMPEP's own budget.

According to TAMPEP, the Italian government is also undermining its own efforts to curb

trafficking, by cracking down on illegal immigration. Precisely because they are lured into the sex trade, many trafficking victims do not possess documents and face the constant fear of expulsion. This discourages them from coming forward to testify against traffickers in return for residency rights, as permitted under Article 18 of a progressive Italian law. The TAMPEP statement warns that the 'arbitrary' issuance of Article 18 permits by immigration police, and the absence of standardized procedures for applicants, makes it increasingly difficult for trafficked persons to benefit from Article 18.

Speaking in Nigeria, Olabisi Olateru-Olagbegi from WOCON said that Nigeria deserved to be ranked in Tier 2 of the US review because the Nigerian National Assembly has passed a new bill on trafficking and the Nigerian president has appointed a special advisor on trafficking. In addition, she said, deported Nigerian women are being treated better on their return and detained for shorter periods.

But Mrs. Olateru-Olagbegi also warned that Nigerian civil society had been rebuffed in its efforts to get stronger protection for victims into the new bill. A witness protection program is still not in place, and civil society has had to take on the task of providing permanent shelters for repatriated victims. This underscores the importance of expanding the US review to cover the efforts of civil society.

The possibilities for direct cooperation between WOCON and TAMPEP have increased because two interns from The Advocacy Project are working with the two organizations this summer. Together with six other AP interns, they are posting directly onto the AP website. In her latest entry (blog), intern Julie Lee in Turin describes TAMPEP's efforts to prevent the deportation of an unmarried Moroccan woman with a seven-month old baby.

- Contact [WOCON](#).
- Read the 2003 [US report on trafficking](#).