

Trafficking in Persons

The subject of Human Trafficking now also known as Trafficking in Persons (TIP), has within recent times captured stakeholder interest within the Caribbean and Latin American region. It is suggested that this is a growing problem in Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and Barbados. This is supported by the fact that these islands have been placed on the Tier 2 Watch list by the U.S. Department of State - 2012 Trafficking in Persons Report.

The level of concern about the trafficking in persons was clearly articulated in a workshop held in Lima, Peru, September, 2013, which was organized by the Organization of American States. Coming out of that forum, two alarming conclusions were made, which would cause every conscious citizen to sit up, take note and think. It was posited that the governments of the region were in denial of the existence of human trafficking, and that there is the need for political will to be exercised, if the problem is to be addressed.

This position as articulated may appear to be condemnatory but those who share this view may argue that the evidence put out by the USA, serves as adequate justification. Those who frown on this may put the case that this position is neither a rational nor reasonable one. While it is acceptable to hear both the arguments and counter arguments, the fundamental question which remains is....Is there anything being done about the problem?

There is no doubt that in the case of Barbados work being done, and successfully so, to arrest the problem. It however requires a sustained plan of action if this unacceptable practice is to be curbed. There must be a no tolerance approach to this, as it is not enough to simply aim to control it. Those who engage in the trafficking of persons, cannot be looked upon as honourable individuals, considering that they are knowingly undertaking actions that are illegal and immoral.

When it comes to human trafficking, there isn't a shadow of doubt that those who suffer most by way of exploitation, are persons who for the most part are seeking legitimate work. In many a case, it would seem that such persons are very unsuspecting of the intention of the prospective employer. It is usually the most venerable who are victims of human trafficking. These persons have their human and constitutional rights infringed. They are discriminated against, humiliated and most of all suffer the loss of their dignity.

There is the claim that women are usually the victims of human trafficking. Seemingly women who work as domestics are targeted. There are those who are lured to work as prostitutes, usually against their will and better judgment. Inasmuch that the advocates on behalf of women are in the forefront of calling attention to the abuse and

exploitation suffered by females, it would be shortsighted to think that men are not victims in much the same way.

Victims are known to have to surrender their travel documents to their employer. These persons usually receive basic wages, are forced to work long hours and are housed in substandard conditions. Since there are no known peculiar features that can help prospective employees to identify that the intended employer is a human trafficker, then persons are generally at risk. It requires that an offender when caught is punished by the full force of the law.

Whilst the offender rightfully deserves to be punished, it is rather unfortunate that the employee, who is the victim, sometimes seems to be hard done. This is so in the case of non nationals, who more often than not are seemingly subject to immediate deportation. Where this is so, it may be argued that this applies depending on whether these individuals were granted a work permit, or that they breached the length of stay granted by the Immigration Officer on arrival on the island.

There is a case to be made for the prevention of human trafficking, and more so, for the protection of those who become victims of this horrific crime.