



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **Trafficking in Persons:**

### **Cyprus on the Tier Two Watch List for Third Year Running**

The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies [MIGS] expresses its alarm and concern towards the Cyprus Government in relation to combatting trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The findings of the US State Department report on Trafficking in Persons placed Cyprus under the Tier 2 Watch List for a third consecutive year, falling just short of Tier 3 which is the fourth and worst Tier placement. Countries placed on this list are those that deserve special scrutiny for failure to show evidence of increasing efforts to combat human trafficking and fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking as they have been set by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000.

### **The Failure of the State to Combat the Phenomenon**

According to the State Department TIP report, Cyprus is the only European Union, country placed under the category of Tier 2 Watch List, despite Cyprus recently passing an Anti-Trafficking Law as well as opening a government-run shelter for trafficking victims. Although the report cites these improvements, it emphatically states that these efforts are outweighed the government's failure to show 'tangible and critically needed progress in the areas of law enforcement, victim protection and the prevention of trafficking'.<sup>1</sup> According to the report, the Cyprus Police Anti-Trafficking Unit remains under-funded, under-equipped and under-staffed rendering it unable to adequately investigate trafficking offences.

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<sup>1</sup> Trafficking in Persons Report 2008, United States State Department, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/>

MIGS is further concerned by statements made by government officials that view the report with suspicion and criticize the US State Department. Such reactions conveniently displace the problem rather than concentrating on making real progress toward eliminating the phenomenon.

The reality is that trafficking in women for sexual exploitation in Cyprus has taken dangerous dimensions, a fact that the government itself seems to tolerate and even promote by continuing to fuel demand for sexual services with the issuing of specific entrance visas for 'artistes' as well as licenses for the operation of 'high risk establishments' such as cabarets.

**The Institute stresses that any efforts on behalf of the government to combat trafficking will fail if the category of 'artiste' visa is not abolished entirely.**

Based on the research results of the MIGS's report entitled "[Mapping the Realities of Trafficking of Women in Cyprus](#)"<sup>2</sup> which was completed in October 2007, MIGS urgently calls for the respective authorities to:

- Immediately account for the issuing of 'artiste visas' and proceed with their abolition. Any efforts by the Cyprus Government to combat trafficking in women for sexual exploitation are and will be undermined by the existence of such visas;
- Ensure that the Cyprus legislation on trafficking is gender specific and recognizes women as a vulnerable group;
- Address the issue of demand through funded research and targeted awareness-raising activities
- Respect the deadlines as set out in the National Action Plan and adopt a timetable by which the government departments and NGOs involved will implement all the measures assigned to them
- Thoroughly monitor and evaluate the measures and strategies of the National Action Plan on Trafficking and ensure that such monitoring is undertaken by an

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<sup>2</sup> Please see <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp/?p=322> for the full report.

independent organization not party to the National Action Plan.

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*\*The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) is a non-profit NGO affiliated to the University of Nicosia.*

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