

CHRISTINA

FORCED INTO SELLING HER BODY

My name is Christina, I'm 28 now and I live in Paris. I came to France to earn a bit of money in order to finish my Master's degree in chemistry. But nothing worked out as I'd planned.



In 2020, I was living in Moldova. I was studying and, at the same time, working for a modelling agency. A French photographer, Christophe, found me through this agency and contacted me via the Internet, asking me to come to France and pose for him.

He promised to take care of everything: pay for my plane ticket, find me somewhere to live and a visa, give me work. This proposal was tempting. It offered me a way of paying to complete my studies. So I agreed. Christophe kept his word and organised my trip and arrival in Paris perfectly.

For two years, my job consisted of posing for erotic photos. I made the most of it and I earned a bit of money and thought I was in a position to impose my conditions on clients.

But my situation became more complicated when Christophe suggested that I should become an escort girl and have sex for money with some of his high-profile contacts. He tried to convince me, saying that I would be rubbing shoulders with high society and gaining access to a luxury lifestyle. When I refused, he became more insistent and threatened to circulate photos of me on the Internet, to destroy my career... I was afraid of losing everything and I ended up agreeing to what he wanted.

“When I refused to have sex for money, he threatened me”

Christophe quickly started to control my life. He created a website in my name to show me off and attract new clients. I had to always be at his disposal. He hassled me, sending me messages day and night to give me appointments with clients and instructions as to what to wear and how to behave...

The clients were men who were much older than me, persuaded that they were doing me a favour. They showed me off like a trophy, just another one of their possessions.

After three years of this life, I was completely lost. I wanted it all to stop, but Christophe put pressure on me. After an argument one night, he threw me out onto the street. That was when I decided to contact an association to help me find a way out of this situation.



KEY POINTS

According to Article 225-4-1 of the French Criminal Code, the trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation is “the act, in exchange for remuneration or for any other advantage or promise of remuneration, of recruiting, transporting, transferring, providing accommodation for or hosting an individual in order to place him or her at the disposal of the trafficker or of a third party in order to permit the perpetration against such individual of the offences of procurement, aggression or sexual violence”.

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Human trafficking in view of sexual exploitation is frequently characterised by a network of exploiters who have total control over their victims. While not all victims have the same profile, similarities can be found between many of them. They can be of any nationality.

Concerning foreigners, associations work mostly with people originating from Sub-Saharan Africa or South America, whose exploitation in the street is more visible. Women, young, from minority or marginalised backgrounds, foreign and showing multiple areas of weakness (in particular, financial) make up a large percentage of the victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Their life stories have generally been marked by violence and numerous types of trauma, which makes them vulnerable and inclined to trust people who are however ill-intentioned.

Trafficking networks reel them in by dangling false promises of a better future.

These hopes push victims to come to France, hoping to find a job allowing them to meet their own needs and those of their close friends and family back home.

During their migratory journey, if this is overland, victims are exposed to extraordinary levels of violence on the part of the traffickers, including acts of torture and rape.

Generally speaking, once the trafficking process has been put in place, the victim is deprived of all means of defending herself by the total psychological, physical, material and financial stranglehold of the traffickers.

Whether they are aware of the prostitution that awaits them or not, these victims cannot imagine the world of violence into which they are about to be plunged or the difficulty of getting out.

It should be noted that French nationals, both men and women, are also victims of trafficking. Trafficking is not defined by crossing an international border. It can occur within a home country.



HOW CAN THEY BE IDENTIFIED?

Victims can be difficult to identify as trafficking networks threaten victims and their families.

Many victims are therefore afraid of disclosing their situation and claim instead that they are working as prostitutes on their own behalf.

In addition, many victims are provided with accommodation or even kept locked up by the trafficking networks, with the threat of being kicked out on to the street if they refuse to obey orders, and this makes them additionally vulnerable and hard to identify.

Vulnerabilities and signs of visible violence may make it possible to detect the situation in which a victim finds herself. In the case of doubts regarding a situation observed, refer to a specialist association rather than trying to act unilaterally.



WHY DOES THIS SITUATION OCCUR ON THE SIDELINES OF MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS?

Due to the massive influx of tourists attending major sporting events, searches and demand for paid-for sexual acts are high.

In order to meet this demand, trafficking networks will be recruiting and bringing in new victims.

