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SEVEN QUESTIONS TO SEO-YOUNG CHO

»Germany is one of the major destinations for human trafficking«

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1. Dr. Cho, human trafficking is an international problem, and the latest 3P Index on this subject has recently been published. What is the purpose of this Index? Human trafficking is a major global problem. The United Nations adopted the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in 2000, the so-called Anti-Trafficking Protocol. The 3P Index aims to evaluate governmental efforts to tackle human trafficking. The 3Ps stand for prevention, prosecution, and protection, in other words, the three main policy dimensions in combating human trafficking.
2. What is the global extent of human trafficking? The United Nations estimates that there are currently approximately 2.45 million victims of human trafficking worldwide, and about half of them are children under the age of 18.
3. What are the causes of the problem? The countries sending human trafficking victims are mainly developing countries. The countries receiving human trafficking victims are normally developed countries. So basically, this is a problem caused by income disparity between the countries of origin and destination. The countries from which trafficking victims originate are not necessarily the world's poorest. Frequently, they are Eastern European countries, former Soviet states, and also some Asian countries. What they have in common is geographical proximity to developed countries. The reasons behind human trafficking are largely rooted in the income disparities between countries and their geographical proximity.
4. What role does Germany play in human trafficking? The United Nations has categorized Germany as one of the major destination countries with a very high inflow of human trafficking. According to the German Federal Criminal Police Office, approximately 600 to 1,200 victims are identified every year. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. The true magnitude of human trafficking in Germany is still unknown.
5. What are governments doing to combat the problem? Germany, for example, has anti-trafficking legislation, particularly in connection with sexual and labor exploitation. The perpetrators are investigated and prosecuted. This applies especially to those who recruit people in their home countries and traffic them to Germany. Efforts are also being made to prevent human trafficking. These include border controls, checking travel documents, international exchange of information, and public awareness-raising campaigns.
6. What are the most serious problems in combating human trafficking? Worldwide, and also in Germany, prosecution policies to combat human trafficking have been significantly improved. But the main problem arises with victim protection policy, granting them amnesty for illegal acts they have committed as a direct consequence of the fact that they have been trafficked. Victim protection policy is clearly lagging behind the other efforts to combat human trafficking.
7. Why isn't more being done to protect the victims? Basically, governments see human trafficking as an illegal immigration issue so their main objective is to curtail this illegal movement of people. But victim protection have a different policy objective. It aims to guarantee protection and amnesty and provide humanitarian assistance for those who have been trafficked and are residing in the destination country. In this case, the aim is not necessarily to reduce human trafficking flows into the country. It is rather a matter of providing basic human rights for the victims of human trafficking. Consequently, there is a potential conflict between the two different policy objectives: reduction of illegal migration vs. victim protection.

Interview by Erich Wittenberg.



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