



Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

I hope, you have returned well rested from your summer holidays. The political summer break in Berlin is also over and the continuous election campaign is starting. Before the Federal Parliament is being elected in September 2009, there will be elections for 6 parliaments in German countries and 7 communal elections as well. It's doubtful, whether the law concerning prostitution – which had been announced in Jan. 2007 – will yet be discussed by the present parliament; it seems, it has been forgotten. But for us that's no reason, to remind in this circular letter, that the lawless situation for prostitutes still exists, something the planned law intended to correct. Quite the reverse happened; the position of people running brothels or of pimps has been strengthened considerably, as Klaus Bayerl, chief of the Augsburg criminal police, declares.

Our SOLWODI advisor in Augsburg, Soni Unterreithmeier, participated in a judicial questioning in a case of trafficking and she felt terrible, when she saw the superiority of 3 lawyers plus 2 assistants defending one suspect. The victim however was only defended by 1 female lawyer. Our code of criminal procedures allows such an inequality. Doesn't it look, as if a reform of those procedures would be needed as well?

On the home page of the Cologne editor DuMont Schauberg one could read in summer 2008: „For the autumn the EXPRESS plans a great series called: „The business with sex”, which will explicitly describe, how big and important this business has become meanwhile“. Should politicians take action in such a big business or not? I believe, when politicians are not interested in that subject, then we should take action and make prostitution a subject in the election campaign – we, democratically thinking people, who feel obliged to our constitution, which grants the human dignity and the equality of men and woman as fundamental rights. In the second half of September, you can read on our website www.solwodi.de, how we from SOLWODI believe a law concerning prostitution should look like.



Yours, Sr. Lea

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SOLWODI – postcards with motives from Kenia



They play with balls, they are playing theatre, they are selling fruits, they are learning at school, they are reading in the light of a petrol lamp – such 5 motives with women and girls from SOLWODI and SOLGIDI in Kenia can be seen on the new postcards. All motives can also be seen on our website www.solwodi.de in colour. Each card costs 50 cents. If you buy such cards, you support our work. Orders for cards can be sent to SOLWODI Deutschland e.V., Propsteistr.2, 56154 Boppard-Hirzenach, or by e-mail to info@solwodi.de. To the price for the cards an extra charge will be added for mailing the cards

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International conference in Donezk

Since 7 years the Hans-Seidel-Foundation organizes international conferences to discuss the subject: „Trafficking of women in Eastern European countries, from where many of the victims come“. The last conference took place in Donezk / Ukraine, an industrial city with more than 1 million inhabitants. As in the years before, sister Lea Ackermann, belonged to the German delegation. She was glad to have the opportunity to introduce SOLWODI to members of ministries, police and judicial authorities from the following countries: Ukraine, White Russia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Tadjikistan, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldavia. Sister Lea said: „Those conferences have become a good means to build confidence among the participants.“



Law concerning prostitution: Profits for pimps instead of rights for prostitutes

From Klaus Bayerl

Klaus Bayerl, head of the criminal police in Augsburg / Bavaria, gave a well received lecture in Donezk. The following articles are parts of that lecture:

The red light milieu tries since years to get rid of its criminal connotation by improving its image. One tries to make people believe, what`s happening, is legal. This strategy was quite successful so far. With the law concerning prostitution from 2002 the legislature has sanctioned the fictitious legality of prostitution, which means, that brothels are being considered as normal business. Even courts have followed this line and by doing so, have ruled that the relations between prostitutes and pimps, respectively brothelowners, correspond with the normal working relations between employers- who are authorized to give instructions to their employees – and employees. This however means, that the rights of brothelowners and pimps have been strengthened, whereas the rights of prostitutes have clearly been weakened. How does it really look like behind that legal facade?

In recent times, so called „Mega-brothels“ have been established in various cities. They are all cooperating with each other. In many cases they look like wellness establishments with sauna, swimming pool etc. With high investments they have been furnished very luxuriously. Normally run by managers

with a good reputation, the real business is done in the background by people, who come from the pimps or criminal milieu, people who almost all have contacts to the organized crime.

By consequently trying to make those brothels to appear as wellness clubs, one tries to get rid off the brothel image and by doing so, one tries to acquire new customers. This concept proves to be very successful. As a result of that concept, even small houses earn a monthly net income of at least 100.000,- EUROS.

Women working in such „Wellness-clubs“ are being permanently and fully controlled by video-cameras and also by brothel and security personnel. The women have to walk around in those houses only undressed, they are not allowed to make telephone calls and they are only allowed to leave the house, when authorized by the boss of that house. Working hours are often up to 16 hours per day. The dignity of those women or any personal interests of them don`t count; what only counts is the profit of the club. The prostitute is only considered as a tool to earn money and she is being treated correspondingly bad. The prostitutes come from all over the world, to satisfy the different

wishes of the customers. One can see, that the brothelowners ordered different types of women, similar to ordering goods in a warehouse catalogue. In order to be able to offer all the times new faces, the prostitutes are required to change weekly or monthly to other brothels. This offering of new prostitutes requires a detailed planning, which takes into consideration clothing sizes and a good proportional presentation of European, Oriental or Asian women.

Brothelowners and their lawyers often make the point, that the often very young, foreign prostitutes have worked already as prostitutes in their home countries. For that reason they can`t see anything bad, if those women do the same here in Germany. About the reasons and under which conditions and why those prostitutes have been recruited and under which conditions they have to work as prostitutes, obviously nobody is thinking about. Alone the fact, that they worked already as prostitutes in their home countries makes many people doubt that those women are really victims. And this way of looking at the prostitute – problem is being exploited by the culprits consequently.

And suddenly the victim is becoming the accused

Some thoughts from Soni Unterreithmeier

In June the SOLWODI advisor Soni Unterreithmeier participated in a judicial questioning concerning trafficking. Present were: the judge, the public prosecutor, a police officer, a clerk of the court, the victim as witness with an interpreter and a lawyer and a bloc of 3 renowned attorneys with 2 assistants for the 1 accused person.

A young woman describes in a very emotional way her experiences as a forced prostitute in an Augsburg brothel. I am shocked by the sadistic force this women had been exposed and I was stunned when I heard, how often customers were demanding dirty and humiliating practices from the prostitutes.

The judge is unemotional, competent and neutrally friendly. The woman tries to look only at him and not to the attorneys sitting next to him. Nevertheless the nonverbal messages of those attorneys are not to be overseen. They range from demonstrative indifference over penetrating views and dismissive sweeps of their heads.

The questioning of the victim by the attorneys took hours. I was wondering how an attorney could gain the ability to play down crimes thereby making out of an accused culprit a

good culprit and to deny suffering of the victim and talk instead of a wicked victim. Is it the lot of money that possibly can be gained that steers those attorneys or is it an exciting game that must be won? Whatever the reasons may be, suddenly the victim becomes the accused person. Still shattered by the revived pain and by desperate hopelessness, she is being crossexamined and hostilely accused: „Don't pretend, you didn't want to do that!“. „Why didn't you run away?“ „Why didn't you defend yourself?“ In a very subtle way she is being accused to be a woman with a doubtful character, who is twisting the facts and who is lying. Again she is being told – and this time not by the culprits but by our „right and law“ -, that she is a worthless person, a person that is not worth to be estimated and protected.

I get confused, when I think about justice and fairness. I always thought, that our legal system is governed by the principle that human dignity may not be hurt. But doesn't our criminal code of procedures hurt this principle by excessively providing means to the culprits, means that should be available to the victim. Not to be mentioned, that according to the opinion of the attorneys it should almost be legal that prostitutes can be forced to accept sadistic raping.

The right as a value becomes dissolute. And the injustice of the criminal offence is being reduced by the power of the attorneys. This power is being demonstrated by the statement: We attorneys will – even in the case of a small abuse against the legal rules – appeal against the verdict, if it should be a verdict of guilty.

This and That

Great honour for sister Lea: On 26. September, Lea, who was born in Saarland, will be appointed by the president of the Saarland, Mr. Peter Müller, to a „Saarland Ambassador“, because her relations to the Saarland and her successful journey through life justify such an honour. On 7. October she will be awarded the famous Romano Guardini Price by the Catholic Academy of Bavaria. „By doing so, we honour the life's work of a woman with a high national and international reputation, who is – as a consequence of her christian orientated morality – fighting for women's rights“. On 29. October the catholic faculty of the university Luzern in Switzerland will award her an honorary doctorate (A detailed report about those honours can be found in the next circular letter)

Thanks from Munich: On 15. June the following musicians played in the Maximilian Chapel in Castle Schleissheim in support of SOLWODI: Mechthild Maria Kindl (Soprano), Fatima Vaillancourt (Cello), Ursula Karl (Guitar) and Franziska Nabb (Flute). The excellent concert was well visited and donations of 234 EUROS were given. The Munich women's forum organized an art auction on 27. June and halve of the money raised at that event, went to SOLWODI: 635 EUROS. SOLWODI says many, many thanks to the musicians and to the women's forum.

A new SOLWODI team is planned in Saarland: In Berlin, Braunschweig, Osnabrück, Munich, Augsburg and Ostalb voluntary teams support SOLWODI. They organize public relation work, stage events and do a lot of other good things. Now, also in Saarland it's planned to establish a SOLWODI team and for that team voluntary members are being sought. People interested to do such a job, please contact SOLWODI Munich under Tel. No. 0049 (0)89 – 27370600 or e-mail leonhardt@solwodi.de .

Report from Ruanda

From Monika Weiler-Helbach

Since more than 10 years exists a project taking care of widows and orphans in Ruanda, where in 1994 a civil war and genocide killed almost 1 million people. Hundred thousands of children lost their parents and hundred thousands of women lost their husbands. Still today – and contrary to tradition in this country – 34% of all Ruandan familyheads are widows and female orphans who are taking care of their children and younger brothers and sisters. In that small country with only 8,6 million inhabitants, 400.000 children are half or full orphans; this is also a result of the increasing number of AIDS infections. Two thirds of the population are living below the poverty limit and every second woman is illiterate. For that reason, the project that was initiated by SOLWODI in cooperation with the parish St. Famille in Kigali is still very much needed.

The leader of that project Abbé Rémy Mvuyekure recently reported about the first results of the „Minicredit-System“, for groups helping each other, a system which was introduced in 2007. Each of those groups – consisting of 6 women and girls – elects a committee, which decides, which groupmember should get a minicredit of about 50 EUROS to carry out an idea, for example start selling something. A very small interest of only 1 % has to be paid for that credit, money that also flows into the project. A book has to be kept, showing how much money has been earned and how much money had to be spent and the parish has to be informed about that bookkeeping. Rémy Mvuyekure: „In the groups the women help each other to carry out their ideas. This helps to make the project more successful, but it also helps to increase the feeling of responsibility for the community.“

And it appears, that the women involved in that project are enthusiastic about it. It follows a „Thanks-letter“, that we received from the Abbé.

„I am Vèrène Mukahirwa, I am 48 years old and I am a mother of 4 children. Since 1994 I am a war widow. After the death of my husband I almost had to go and beg for money. Only with the help of some relatives I managed to survive. Sometimes also the parish and my neighbours were helping spontaneously because they felt sorry for me. Finally I got help from SOLWODI Germany, which offered me – via the parish – a credit with an interest rate of only 1 %. I then decided to start a small business. I am now selling charcoal where I live, at the fringe of Kigali. I am working day and night and thanks to the credit of 45.000 Ruanda Francs (which equates to 53 EUROS) which I got, I managed to pay back the 1% interest and I am sure, I will also be able to pay back the rest of the money. At the moment I am living of what I have, I am able to feed my children and I can also pay for the health insurance. I have learnt to work and thanks to the support and advice I got in the group, I will be able to master me and my children`s future.

I say thank you to the benefactors, who are thinking of us. May God bless them!“

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