

KEY JUDGEMENTS



Title: **Sexual Exploitation & Sex Trafficking - Türkiye**

Country/ Location: **Türkiye - Fatih, Beyolu, Esenyurt, Gaziantep, Kilis and Şanlıurfa**

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INTRODUCTION:

STOP THE TRAFFIK (Aman project) is currently running prevention programmes in the Istanbul area.

- There are high levels of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Turkey.
- Trafficking appears to be highly organised, recruiting mainly young women from East and West Africa for sexual exploitation in Türkiye through false job offers and flown to Türkiye. Women from Ukraine, Russia and Central Asian Republics are also represented.
- Syrian refugees are highly vulnerable to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, with women and children being sold and trafficked directly out of refugee camps near the Syrian border.

WE ASSESS AS FOLLOWS:

A) LOCATIONS:

- The following areas in Istanbul are vulnerable as principal destinations for those trafficked for sexual exploitation: **Fatih, Beyolu, and Esenyurt.**
- Syrian refugees are significant in the exploitation set from regions near the Syrian border, including **Gaziantep, Kilis and Şanlıurfa.**

B) VICTIM PROFILE:

- Men, women and children from dozens of countries around the world are trafficked to and through Türkiye for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The following countries of origin appear to be particularly common: Russia and Ukraine; Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe; Central Asian countries; Syria and Afghanistan.

C) ORGANISED TRAFFICKING NETWORKS OPERATING BETWEEN AFRICA & TÜRKIYE:

- They are often recruited through false job offers (in person or online), including for cleaning and English-teaching jobs. Sometimes they are kidnapped or sold to traffickers by relatives.
- They arrive in Türkiye by plane, often on tourist visas. They are picked up at the airport by traffickers. They are then told they must work off the cost of their transport by selling sexual services. Control methods include passport confiscation, being locked away and physical and sexual violence.
- They are held in houses and brothels, generally alongside many other women, and are forced into prostitution. There is also a profile of domestic servitude in private homes where sexual services are also required.
- Traffickers in Türkiye often have connections to Greece. Victims may move to Greece where they are picked up and exploited by the same or connected traffickers. Refugee smugglers and traffickers are often interrelated.

D) SEX TRAFFICKING OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TÜRKIYE

- There are approximately 3.7 million Syrian refugees in Türkiye. The financial distress experienced by this population makes them vulnerable to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- There is a pattern of Syrian women being sexually exploited by relatives, neighbours and employers in exchange for rent, work and other necessities.
- There is a pattern of Syrian women and children being sold by their husbands or fathers into sex trafficking or forced marriages with Turkish men as an economic coping mechanism.
- Syrians in refugee camps near the Syrian border, such as in the Gaziantep, Kilis and Şanlıurfa provinces, are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. Reports include employees and volunteers in these camps being involved in selling women and children to criminal networks involved in sex trafficking, sometimes under the pretext of legitimate employment.
- People come to border regions from provinces all over Türkiye to purchase women from their families under the pretext of marriage. The women then face sexual exploitation and are sometimes exploited in brothels in cities such as Antakya.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

- Since the pandemic, traffickers have increasingly turned to online recruitment methods, including social media, dating sites and online job search platforms. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, traffickers have become more likely to exploit victims in private homes.

- Some Ukrainian women who were trafficked to Türkiye for sexual exploitation were recruited via Telegram channels, with names such as "Meetings" or "Meet your future husband".

INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS (What we need to know):

- 1) Any information regarding specific websites and platforms used for recruitment.
- 2) Information related to financial flows. Which banks or platforms are being used for payments?

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