Organ Trafficking: A Multi-Level Equation of Exploitation

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“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Organ Removal

Photo courtesy of www.mydailyclarity.com
U.S. Case of Organ Trafficking

- 2009 first case of organ trafficking and largest corruption case in NJ (bribery, money laundering, extortion)

- NY/ NJ case involving trafficking kidneys from vulnerable victims in Israel

- Would pay victims in Israel US $10K and charge desperate patients in U.S. more than $100K

- Transplants took place at top U.S. hospitals with one defendant taking at least 15 pairs of donors/ recipients to hospitals between 1999-2002

- More than 40 defendants in case including rabbis and politicians (mayors, city councilors, legislators) in NY/ NJ
U.S. Case of Organ Trafficking

- Ten year investigation called “Operation Big Rig” which included a separate multi-million dollar money laundering ring that funneled money through charities operated by local rabbis

- Lead defendant, an Israeli citizen, pleaded guilty to 3 counts of acquiring, receiving, and transferring human organs

- Defendant was sentenced to 2 ½ years and was not deported from U.S. after release in 2014
Emerging trends in organ trafficking*

- Major source of kidneys currently is Syrian refugees where vulnerable victims will sell a kidney for passage to Europe. Transplant will take place in Egypt after victim is trafficked.

- Organ traffickers in the Middle East tend to be human traffickers overall and linked to other criminal activities, including terrorist financing. Surgeon is part of the network.

- Largest kidney market is in Egypt (2017).

- Sources of these kidneys globally are mostly live donors.

- Direct buying and selling. No broker in equation. This could be due to online information.

*Report for OSCE by Dr. Campbell Fraser, March 2018
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