



IJM CANADA CALLS UPON CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE PROTECTION OF THE LAW FOR VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING

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International Justice Mission Canada's concern over the recent Canadian judicial decision decriminalizing certain aspects of the commercial sex industry is informed by our experience over the past twelve years combating child prostitution and sex trafficking in Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines and India.

International Justice Mission (IJM) investigates the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adults forced into the sex trade, and helps local law enforcement to remove victims of these crimes from brothels, bars and other venues and to apprehend and prosecute brothel owners, pimps and traffickers. Between January 2008 and September 2010 alone, IJM secured the freedom of nearly 650 children and trafficked women and the arrest of 483 suspected perpetrators.

IJM has learned that those who sell adults for sex against their will or children under any circumstances make enormous profits. We have seen no evidence that traffickers, pimps and brothel owners are deterred from these profitable crimes by anything other than law enforcement of robust criminal sanctions.

Further, individuals in the commercial sex industry, whether voluntarily or by force, are uniquely vulnerable to violent abuse. It is intolerable for any government to allow zones of impunity, where perpetrators may commit rape, assault, abduction, trafficking and exploitation without fear of apprehension by police, and victims of these crimes are denied the protection of national law.

While we appreciate and share Justice Himel's legitimate concern for the safety of those involved in the sex trade, IJM Canada is concerned that her recent Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruling (*Bedford v. Canada*, 2010 ONSC 4264) may in fact result in greater vulnerability for trafficked children and adults forced into the sex trade.

In particular, IJM Canada wants to ensure that these changes do not, in practice, limit the access of Canadian law enforcement to venues where children are sexually exploited and adults are forced against their will or whose physical safety is otherwise compromised by violence at the hands of customers, brothel owners or traffickers. In IJM's experience overseas, abuses against both children and trafficked adults are highest in situations where professional law enforcement is absent.

Accordingly, IJM Canada urges that any Canadian policy or legislative initiatives with regard to the commercial sex industry be informed by the following principles:

- The Canadian government must ensure that any policies on prostitution do not contribute to an increase in child prostitution or sex trafficking. Any policy or legislation that addresses prostitution must be grounded in comparative research and its effects actively monitored to ensure that no increase in child prostitution or sex trafficking occurs.
- Legislative changes related to the recent judicial decision should not hinder the legal authority, obligation, or powers of Canadian law enforcement to investigate and locate victims of sex trafficking, including anyone under the age of 18, and to apprehend and bring to justice those responsible for any aspect of their exploitation and abuse.
- Canadian police must retain unrestricted access to sex industry venues so as to secure the protection of the law for children and adults forced into the sex trade. No limits should be placed on law enforcement's ability to locate and rescue children and adults forced into the sex trade from commercial sexual exploitation, wherever these crimes may be commissioned.
- All women and men in the commercial sex industry also deserve full legal protection from violence, coercion and abuse. Police officers must have unrestricted access to commercial sex venues to provide protection to those in prostitution from violence and abuse by clients, pimps and brothel owners.
- Those responsible for abuse and violence against adults and children exploited in the commercial sex industry should be apprehended and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

For more information on the work of IJM, please visit [IJM Canada's website](http://www.ijm.ca) at www.ijm.ca

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International Justice Mission Canada is a human rights organization that brings immediate relief to victims of sexual exploitation, slavery and violent oppression, in partnership with U.S.-based International Justice Mission (IJM). A multi-national team of lawyers and law enforcement professionals conduct criminal investigations and collect evidence to relieve victims and bring perpetrators to justice, and IJM social workers secure appropriate aftercare for victims of abuse. IJM was founded by Gary Haugen who was the Officer in Charge of the U.N. investigation into the Rwandan genocide. IJM's multi-national staff works in 13 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to ensure that the global poor are protected from violent forms of oppression by their countries' own laws. IJM Canada was founded by Jamie McIntosh in 2002 and is located in London, Ont.