

The Cabaret Artistes  
of Cyprus

# Table of Contents

<b>Prologue</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter I: What Is Trafficking in Persons?</b>	<b>5</b>
A Global Look	7
Europe and the European Union	9
Trafficking routes to Cyprus from Eastern and South Eastern Europe	10
<b>Chapter II: Trafficking in Persons in Cyprus</b>	<b>11</b>
Scope of the Problem	11
The Dynamics of Trafficking	13
The Cabaret Industry	14
<b>Chapter III: The Cabaret Artistes of Cyprus</b>	<b>19</b>
Recruitment	20
Daily Conditions	20
Escape	25
<b>Chapter IV: What is Being Done?</b>	<b>27</b>
Challenges to Combating Trafficking	27
<b>Chapter V: In their Own Words: The Stories of the Cabaret Artistes of Cyprus</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>46</b>



## Prologue

*“It is no secret that girls who arrive on this island to work as dancers in fact don’t have anything to do with that profession here.”*

– Tatiana, trafficked to Cyprus from Russia.

In February of 2004, members of The Protection Project staff traveled to Cyprus to document the scope of the problem of trafficking in persons.

What began as a project seeking to quantify the extent of trafficking in persons in this small Mediterranean country soon became a deeply personal journey into the lives of young women who had been lured to the island with promises of lucrative employment as barmaids or cabaret dancers.

For many of the young Eastern European women who found themselves on the island, the dreams of economic opportunity and a better life turned instead into nightmares of servitude, abuse, sexual exploitation, and alcoholism. With few advocates, these women remained, and many continue to remain, largely invisible, suffering in silence.

This narrative, based in part on interviews conducted largely in Russian and Romanian with thirty-five young women brought under false pretenses to Cyprus, as well as on conversations with those few who are actively involved in helping them escape from the exploitation and abuse, is intended to break the silence and to give a voice to the young women trafficked to Cyprus.

The Protection Project is grateful to the staff of the United States Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, whose passionate dedication to eradicating trafficking in persons continues to inspire those of us who work in the field.

The Protection Project would also like to express its gratitude to civil society organizations working in Cyprus on behalf of victims of trafficking and who were of invaluable assistance in The Protection Project's work.

The Protection Project would like to especially thank Father Savvas Michaelides, Priest of the Russian Church in Limassol, whose relentless commitment to helping the cabaret artistes has allowed many to find freedom and provided them with a chance to begin rebuilding their lives.

This document was developed and written by Michele A. Clark together with Anna Koppel. It was designed by Kashka Kisztelinska at the KMK Studio.

Dr. Mohamed Mattar provided expert advice on all aspects of this project.

Finally, this booklet is dedicated to all the young women artistes whose voices still remain to be heard.

## Chapter I: What Is Trafficking in Persons?

**T**rafficking in persons is a dynamic process involving individuals on multiple continents playing different roles to facilitate the movement of people for purposes of gain and profit.

To understand what trafficking in persons is, it is helpful to look at the acts, the means, and the purposes of trafficking.

Acts of trafficking include recruitment, transportation, harboring and receipt. While these acts themselves are not illegal, they become so through the illegal means by and the illicit purposes for which these acts are performed.

Illegal means include threats, the use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power, the abuse of a position of vulnerability and the receipt or payment of benefits. For example, if a young woman refuses to comply with an order to perform sexual services with the clients of a restaurant, she might be beaten or her children and parents might be threatened. Such fear is stronger than chains or locked doors in keeping the trafficked person in the control of her trafficker. In other cases, recruiters exploit the vulnerability of their potential victims: in some countries, traffickers are known to pay off clerks at public health clinics for information on poverty-stricken young women with sick children and few visible means of support.

# United States Definition of a Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons

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The Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines **Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons** as

- a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Definition of Terms Used in the Term **Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons:**

**Sex trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

**Commercial sex act:** means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

**Involuntary servitude:** includes a condition of servitude induced by means of

- a) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or
- b) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

**Debt bondage:** the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.

**Coercion:**

- a) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person;
- b) any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or,
- c) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

Illicit purposes include the prostitution of others as well as other forms of exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, or servitude. Young women are exploited in the red light districts of European capitals or may be imprisoned as domestic servants in wealthy households; young children are forced to beg on the street; men and women end up in sweatshops around the world.

## A Global Look

The fall of the iron curtain opened up vast new markets, rapidly expanding the scope of global business opportunities set into motion by the processes of globalization. However, these expanding possibilities also contributed to the growth in opportunities for transnational criminal organizations. Trafficking in persons, lurking beneath the surface of international scrutiny prior to the 1990s, capitalized on the changes in transportation, technology and international banking to emerge as the most egregious global human rights problem of our time.

*Trafficking in persons is an internationally recognized human rights violation and a crime against humanity, as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.*

Today, nearly every country in the world can be considered a country of origin, transit or destination for victims of trafficking. Trafficking affects women and men, adults and children, and has become the third largest source of income for organized crime around the world, surpassed only by drugs and arms.

Latest estimates from the United States government indicate that between 600,000 and 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders annually. These numbers increase dramatically when internal trafficking (trafficking within a country's borders) is taken

into consideration, with estimates reaching as high as 2 and 4 million for the total number of persons trafficked across and within international borders around the world<sup>1</sup>. The countries of the former Soviet Union are considered to represent one of the fastest growing regions of origin for trafficking in persons.

The causes of trafficking in persons are complex. Economic as well as political instability create conditions of vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, especially among women and children. Traffickers prey on the weak and the marginalized, on those who have no means of protection or of ensuring their own livelihoods. Because of the often unequal social status afforded to women, a lack of education or employment opportunities, and therefore few means of support, women and children comprise the largest number of victims of trafficking. Often faced with little choice but to leave their home countries in order to find a means of supporting themselves and their families, they find themselves trapped in webs of deceit, fraud and exploitation. Trafficking becomes a cruel punishment for those whose sole offense is a dream of a better future.

## United Nations Definition of Trafficking in Persons

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Article 3, paragraph (a) of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, states that:

“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...

## Europe and the European Union

Europe has become one of the largest regions of destination for victims of trafficking, especially for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. The Council of Europe estimates that the number of victims may range from 120,000 to 180,000 to 500,000<sup>2</sup>. Other estimates have placed this number at as high as 800,000.

The dramatic rise in trafficking to Europe, in particular for sexual exploitation, began following the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe and the resulting political, social, economic instability, and the accompanying rapid opening of international borders in the region. Hundreds of thousands of women, from Belarus, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and especially from Russia, Moldova and the Ukraine, have been trafficked into prostitution in Europe by organized networks which actively recruit young women through false promises of lucrative and glamorous work in Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Greece, France, and Cyprus. These promises are rarely fulfilled and the young women find themselves instead forced into providing sexual services to men in bars, restaurants, and in red light districts. Overall, it is estimated that 78% of victims of trafficking in Europe come from Central and Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>.

*78% of victims of trafficking in Europe are from Central and Eastern Europe.*

# Trafficking routes to Cyprus from Eastern and South Eastern Europe



Russia

Belarus

Ukraine

Moldova

Romania

Bulgaria

CYPRUS

## Chapter II: Trafficking in Persons in Cyprus

### Scope of the Problem

**T**rafficking developed in Cyprus in the early 1990s, when thousands of Asian women, enticed by the promise of high-paying legitimate jobs, were forced into prostitution in the local cabarets and bars. As of the mid 1990s, however, most of the cabaret artistes were from Russia and other countries of the former Soviet block. In 1995, Romanian police broke up a trafficking ring that reportedly moved 300 women from Romania and Moldova to Cypriot brothels<sup>4</sup>. Current reports of cases of trafficking for prostitution in Cyprus involve almost exclusively eastern European women, particularly those from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania and Belarus.

Many women respond to what they believe to be legitimate employment ads for dancers or barmaids only to end up forced into prostitution by the agents (so-called “impresarios”) who recruited them, provided them with visas and contracts, placed them in the cabarets and then informed them of their obligation to work off their debts by providing sexual services to clients. Owners of the Cypriot cabarets often pay impresarios between US\$500 and US\$1,000 for each woman they send to Cyprus and authorize the agents to advance money to the women to cover their travel costs, which are then added to the debt<sup>5</sup>.

While the number of victims of trafficking in Cyprus is difficult to quantify, a groundbreaking report published by Ombudsman Eliana Nicolaou in November 2003 stated that the rate of arrival of foreign artistes contracted to work in the cabarets of Cyprus exceeded 1,000 per every 6 months<sup>6</sup>. In January 2001, 827 women, all from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, reportedly were working as dancers in Cypriot cabarets; in December 2003, according to available immigration figures, an estimated 1,400 foreign artistes were working in 79 cabarets and 53 nightspots on the island<sup>7</sup>. Accordingly, the estimated number of foreign artistes employed during a given year is around 3,400.

While not all foreign artistes in Cyprus are victims of trafficking in persons; however, the Ombudsman was able to find significant evidence of violations that pointed to pervasive abuse in the island’s cabarets. The Ombudsman’s report thus concluded that thousands of women who had arrived in Cyprus legally as “artistes” on entertainment visas were, through various forms of pressure and coercion by their employers, prostituted, living in desperate conditions, with their basic human rights such as the right to freedom being violated.

## A Russian Internet Job Forum Listing

Новая тема | В начало |  
Перейти к теме | Поиск

Предыдущее сообщение  
| Следующее сообщение

### Работа на Кипре

Автор: Таяна  
Дата: 05.12.03 23:36

Нужны девушки для работы в кабаре на Кипре. По контракту от 3х до 6ти месяцев. Мы платим комиссию посредникам. Быстрое оформление визы. Высокая зарплата.

Ответить на это сообщение | Показать список сообщений

“Work in Cyprus”  
Author: Tanya  
Date: 05.12.2003

Young women wanted for work in a cabaret in Cyprus on a contractual basis between 3 to 6 months. We will pay a commission to intermediaries. Quick visa turnaround. High salary.

# The Dynamics of Trafficking

## Immigration Patterns

The island's economic prosperity, recent accession to the European Union, strategic location at the juncture of Africa, the Middle East and Europe and accessibility by air and sea make it an attractive country for migrants from Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt; Eastern European countries, particularly Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus; Southeastern European countries, specifically Romania and Bulgaria; and South and Southeast Asian countries, such as Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines. These same characteristics also make the island attractive for criminal elements that benefit from the same prosperity, location and ease of access.

Young women from a number of the former Soviet block countries began to look to Cyprus in the 1990s as a favorable destination for seeking employment abroad, as the island offered high-paying salaries for three to six month contracts, allowing them the potential opportunity to make some money abroad without having to make a long-term commitment, and return home to their families or studies. These women provided the supply side of the business opportunity for traffickers in persons. The Cypriot cabaret industry provided the demand side.

*“Using oppressive methods that constitute violations of fundamental human rights, the majority of these women are pushed into prostitution by their employers.”*

- Summary of Report of the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) of Cyprus Regarding the Status Quo of Entrance and Employment of Alien Women

# The Cabaret Industry

## *Background*

While many of the Cypriot cabarets are legitimate public entertainment establishments featuring fine food and music, others offer entertainment directed toward a distinctly adult and mostly male audience. Prostitution has grown on the island in the past 20 years, and the number of cabarets has more than doubled since 1982<sup>8</sup>.

Billboards outside of cabarets along the walls of the old city of Nicosia can be seen featuring uncensored photos of scantily clad eastern European women in provocative poses, clearly indicating that entertainment in these clubs is not of the family kind. Those who are familiar with the cabaret culture enter expecting a night of strip tease, drinking and attractive female companionship. For an additional price, clients are able to have sex with a dancer of their choice.

For a country with a population of under 800,000, the number of cabarets appears to be quite high. Alvaro Gil-Robles, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed his concern over the extent of the cabaret industry during a trip to Cyprus in June of 2003, stating that “compared to the size of the population of the island, I think you show a lot of interest in these matters,” and that there seemed, according to him, “enough” foreign artistes working in night clubs and topless bars on the island. In his follow-up report, Alvaro Gil-Robles likewise stated that “by the authorities’ own admission, the number of young women migrating to Cyprus as nightclub artistes is well out of proportion to the population on the island<sup>9</sup>.”

## *Supply and Demand: Changing Patterns and Emerging Opportunities*

Until the early 1990s, cabaret dancers and barmaids were predominantly from countries of Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines. Today, two-thirds of immigrant women from Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines are employed as domestic workers while women from Russia, Ukraine

and Belarus, Bulgaria and Romania make up the vast majority of all cabaret artistes in Cyprus. Two factors have contributed to this change. The first was the change in policies in countries of Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines. The government of the Philippines, following complaints from women who had gone to Cyprus on entertainment visas with promises of jobs as cabaret dancers and found themselves instead forced into prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, put a ban on such visas for its young women.

The second factor was the worsening economic situation in the countries of the former communist block, leaving many young women there with little opportunity other than to seek employment abroad. Unscrupulous recruiters began to approach women particularly in former Soviet Union countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, promising them attractive job opportunities as barmaids or cabaret dancers in Cyprus, mentioning little about the extent of the prostitution industry, and nothing about the fact that these women would be hired to provide sexual services to clients.

### ***The Power of the Cabaret Industry***

Prostitution is an extremely lucrative business in Cyprus, facilitated in large part through the cabarets. Prostitution revenues exceed 40 million Cypriot pounds (CYP) annually (over 71 million USD or 59 million EUR)<sup>10</sup>.

The penal code specifically prohibits prostitution-related activities such as procurement, maintaining a brothel or living off the earnings of prostitution<sup>11</sup>, and Cyprus has a comprehensive anti-trafficking law on the books<sup>12</sup>. Cabarets, on the other hand, are licensed entertainment establishments. Therefore, many young women are recruited through apparently legitimate agencies, and sign contracts describing jobs as barmaids or as dancers in licensed establishments – the cabarets. They learn the true nature of their occupations after being placed in one of the cabarets, or sometimes while they are taken from one cabaret to another until they are picked by an owner of

a particular establishment. By then it is too late to say no. Told that they owe money, stripped of their travel documents, and frequently abused into submission, they see no way of escape. Young women who provide sexual services are often paid only a small percentage of the client's fee. The cabaret owner pockets the rest. Reputable sources, including the Ombudsman's report, and first person testimonies from women who have escaped, indicate that these practices are quite common, although rarely discussed.

Additionally, first-hand stories of trafficking survivors indicate that there are certain clues which indicate the likelihood of sexual activity as part of their job descriptions, but only once they arrive on the island. When young dancers arrive on the island with their entertainment visas, they are handed a booklet entitled "The Rights and Responsibilities of Foreign Artistes." This booklet states that artistes are to undergo a medical checkup for sexually transmitted diseases every three months and that artistes are not permitted to work in any other industry outside the cabaret industry either during their present stay on the island (from cabaret dancer to domestic worker or concierge in a hotel, for example), nor will they be permitted to work in any other industry upon a possible return to Cyprus.

The officially organized unions of cabaret owners and "artiste agents" have succeeded in blocking any proposed regulatory changes to their industry. In their many years of operation, not one cabaret has lost its license for abetting prostitution<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, sophisticated surveillance technology has helped these establishments to intercept police raids before they actually take place. Police are hindered in investigating criminal allegations because guards are placed at the entrance to the artistes' apartments, and refuse access to police who would like to question the young women<sup>14</sup>. The women are difficult to access outside of cabarets. In one case in Limassol, they were allowed to go to the supermarket for no longer than 20 minutes, and fined 20 CYP if they were late. The Limassol Cabaret Owners Association has recently threatened demonstrations when the government attempted to limit the number of artistes allowed to work in a particular

cabaret. In the past, every similar initiative by the government has been shut down by protests from cabaret owners and the limitations never took effect<sup>15</sup>.

### ***Supply and Demand Revisited: Established Patterns and Expanding Opportunities***

A significant contributing factor to the continued success of the cabaret industry in Cyprus is the high demand for the Eastern and Southeastern European women currently working in Cypriot cabarets. In recent times, growing numbers of Cypriot men have begun to marry cabaret artistes. According to interviews conducted in Cyprus with experts on female migration to the island, Cypriot men did not marry the Southeast Asian women working in cabarets at the same rate they marry their Eastern and Southeastern European counterparts<sup>16</sup>. One in eight foreign artistes are estimated to marry a Cypriot man thereby obtaining residency, but also leaving the nightclubs and cabarets. Over 1,200 civil marriages are documented annually between foreign women and Cypriot men, as opposed to only 70 such ceremonies between Cypriot women and foreign men per year<sup>17</sup>. As these women leave the cabarets, others are needed to fill their spots.

These marriages, however, are often a far cry from the possibilities they may suggest as a way out of the cabarets, and as a promise of a better life. Two-thirds of marriages between Cypriot men and the women working in the cabarets on the island end in divorce. A large number of these men will go on to marry other cabaret artistes, therefore perpetuating the demand for more women from Eastern (and Southeastern) Europe. Conversations with shelter organizations for victims of domestic violence indicate that a growing number of women seeking assistance from these groups are foreign, recently married to Cypriot men.

On the supply side, as the economic situations in the former Soviet Union and in countries like Romania and Bulgaria are improving slowly at best, young women continue to look for financial opportunities in the cabarets of Cyprus. The traffickers and their counterparts then mediate between the supply and demand, continuing their profitable activities.

## Entertainment Visas

Entertainment visas, a legitimate practice in many countries, are extremely vulnerable to abuse. In Cyprus, the provision of entertainment visas has revealed itself to be a contributing factor to the increase of trafficking in persons. The Cypriot law requires that prospective employers apply for the visa on behalf of the employee, creating an environment in which the young woman to be employed may not know anything about her prospective employer or employment until she arrives on the island.

## Chapter III: The Cabaret Artistes of Cyprus

**T**he stories of women trafficked to Cyprus all follow a similar pattern of dreams, deception, and tragedy. At the same time, each story reflects how one woman lived through her ordeal, and The Protection Project believes that it is important to share those individual stories.

*“I come from the city of Chisinau in the small country of Moldova. I am in Cyprus where I daily ask myself, “What am I doing here?” I am a 20 year-old university student. To pay for school in my country, you need a lot of money. I am from a poor family, and we needed money.”*

*“I live in the Republic of Moldova, in Chisinau. I am 19 years old. I study at the National University. I have never traveled abroad before. I came to Cyprus to make some money to pay for school and to help my family financially.”*

*“I came to Cyprus for the first time. I am from Ukraine, from Krivoi Rog.”*

*“My name is Natalya and I am from Ivanovo in Russia. I have completed my secondary school studies and I also have a degree from a technical institute. Currently, I am studying to receive my diploma as a clothing designer. I live with my mom, and my older brother works in another city. Since I am already 23 years old, I decided that it was time for me to find employment which pays well and which would allow me to be independent and still help my mother.”*

The majority of the cabaret artists in Cyprus are young women in their twenties, but some are younger. Some have children, some arrive in Cyprus to earn money for their families and help their children, and some to pay for their studies. They are usually from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, particularly Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Romania. A small number of women from the Philippines are still working in the cabarets.

## Recruitment

These women all arrived in Cyprus in a similar way, by responding to newspaper or employment agency advertisements inviting young women to work as cabaret dancers or barmaids in cabarets, nightclubs and bars on the island. Many mistakenly trusted seemingly legitimate, sympathetic, and knowledgeable employment recruiters. Others were deceived by their acquaintances, even childhood friends:

*“I am from a small city in the Lugansk region in the Ukraine. I am 25 years old. In the spring of 2004, an acquaintance of mine proposed that a small group travel to Cyprus on work visas to explore opportunities for employment and working conditions.”*

*“A work acquaintance had introduced her to a woman who suggested that I could find work as a waitress in Cyprus.”*

## Daily Conditions

Many foreign cabaret dancers live lives of abuse and violence. At a minimum, they are deceived about the exact nature of their employment, sold by impresarios to cabaret owners, paid only a small fraction portion of the client’s fee or given no payment at all for a sexual transaction, and

have little freedom of movement. They are often raped and beaten until they submit to performing a sexual service. Their passports are taken away, leaving them little avenues for escape or assistance. While not all are forced into prostitution, most women experience sexual abuse and other forms of physical violence at the hands of the cabaret owners, their employees, or friends. Those women who are not forced into prostitution might be obliged to serve drink topless, or engage in “consumatsia,” (the practice of the provision of a service by a young woman working in the cabaret or bar, such as an informal conversation with a client, or a striptease for the client, or caressing the client, in order to induce the client to buy alcoholic drinks – both for himself and for the young woman, so as to increase the profit to the establishment where she is working).

Not all cabarets engage in such blatant violations against their workers, but firsthand accounts of abuse from women who have escaped from the cabarets are widespread. Abuse is particularly common against women who refuse to dance nude or engage in sexual activities with clients. Often, cabaret owners gradually move the artistes from legitimate tasks to more exploitive conditions, for example from being a barmaid to cleaning the cabarets, to consumatsia, to prostitution. If she “misbehaves,” is too demanding, or refuses to engage in a certain activity, she may be raped by the boss, by a client, or by both. After this initial violation the woman is increasingly expected to provide sexual services for the clients.

According to Father Savvas, there are cabarets with private chambers where girls have sex with clients for designated periods of time. These private rooms are used for so-called “quickies” each night. Each room is comfortably furnished, and a light outside each door indicates when a session begins and ends. The girls are given 3 to 4 minutes to bring a client to climax. If this is not enough time, the client is expected to pay for more, and the dancer will then provide oral sex. The client and dancer used to be able to strip completely in the private chambers but now, because of the threat of police raids, they leave on some of their clothes. After the cabarets close, the girls may go with the clients to a hotel.

Nina, who worked in a cabaret, provided the following story:

*“I am a dance teacher and I had the chance to find out firsthand what life in a Cyprus cabaret means. It means debauchery, depravity and the corruption of young souls. Everything I tried to teach these girls, such as the grace of movement and stage presence, turned out to be worthless. Girls who arrive on the island to work as dancers don’t even come close to what this means.”*

In other cases, refusal to perform sexual services has led to physical abuse. Tatiana describes the fate of some of the dancers in her cabaret:

*“In that cabaret the girls were engaged in prostitution in the club in special rooms. During her workday, they had to service many clients. If they did not, they were beaten by the boss who also took their money and threatened deportation.”*

Many of the cabaret artistes have little freedom of movement and are closely guarded during their off hours. They usually live in small apartments above the cabarets and these same rooms are often used to service clients who pay for sex. The women share small living spaces and are provided with few personal necessities such as toiletries and items of personal hygiene. Women have told of broken toilets, lack of blankets and virtual house arrest during their “free” time. Contact with others is limited, and women are not allowed to visit other cabaret dancers in their free time. They are given 10 minutes per day to buy cigarettes or food, and a guard usually accompanies them. Some have been fined 20 CYP for being late. Some have had to rely on their clients to provide them with food. Once a week, or for some once a month, strictly controlled shopping days are provided when women are allowed to leave in groups to buy clothing and make-up, but these visits are strictly controlled. Many women have had their passports taken away and told that they must sell sex for a determined amount of money in order to retrieve their travel documents.

The following stories provide a very personal view of daily life in the cabarets:

*“When I woke up in the morning, I was shocked. There were no bed sheets; the apartment was filthy and the kitchen was full of trash and dirty dishes. The apartment consisted of several rooms where two other girls were living. The rooms did not lock and whenever I left my room, anyone could have access to my things .My friend’s emergency money was stolen. For all the girls living in the rooms, there was only one bathroom, one shower, one kitchen, which again was extremely messy and dirty.”*

*“I was shocked when I saw the living condition in our apartment. The rooms looked like jail cells. There was nothing to eat and everything was extremely dirty. I was thrown into the room and left alone for a couple of days, after which an impresario came and took me around to different clubs. He raped me. Condoms were never used when I was forced to have sex. I was finally sent to work in a club where the living conditions were even worse than those I had seen originally. There were roaches and rats everywhere. The boss was constantly screaming at the girls, and I had barely eaten anything during all this time. Fines were imposed on the girls if they misbehaved. I couldn’t stand it and was taken somewhere else. There, we had to drink with the clients and then have sex with them. I spent three days there. During this time I was given no more than 10 pounds.”*

In some cases, cabaret artistes are held in debt bondage. Others are insulted and otherwise psychologically abused. One Ukrainian victim who responded to an offer from an acquaintance to travel to Cyprus to seek employment, and escaped from being forced into prostitution, recounts:

*“I asked Ioannis to return our passports and the tickets. My friend even offered to return the money for the tickets to help us terminate our business with these people. But when I mentioned to him wanting to go home, I heard a number of interesting things. He said, “You are old enough, why are you listening to all these people, you have not even once come out to work for me yet,*

*and have already jumped to all these conclusions. Are you an idiot? Are you stupid? Promise me that you will not talk to your friends, this is not allowed, and don't think about lying to me and meeting with them anyway."*

The emotional and psychological consequences of such abuse are immense:

*"The girls have no alternative but to do what they are told. Step by step, their circumstances transform them into prostitutes and this is the beginning of the decay of their identities. They would begin to fight constantly among themselves and developed bitterness towards the world outside, envying those who found husbands and could escape. In the beginning, most tried to preserve their human dignity but, as a result of the ongoing abuse, most came to terms with their fate."*

*"It is no wonder that, after two to three months of such a life, many girls began to have psychological problems. Some became hysterical, others disrupted dance routines and a few stopped working all together. These symptoms were usually treated by large quantities of alcohol or even stronger medications."*

Victims suffer further abuse due to the restrictions of their visa status. According to the law, artistes, whose legal status on the island derives from an entertainment visa, may only switch employers *within* the cabaret industry, which is difficult to do. Cabaret owners pay an impresario for a particular woman and will retract these payments if a woman changes establishments. If a woman does succeed in moving to another cabaret, it is more than likely that she will be subjected to similar abuses.

If she abandons her place of work before the expiration of her contract, she may be deported as an illegal immigrant. Stories of cabaret artistes indicate that employers use threats of deportation in order to get the artistes to submit to their demands. Deportation under such circumstances, where the cabaret owner breaks the work contract with the cabaret artiste, annulling her ability

to remain on the island legally, means that the cabaret artiste may be intimidated by immigration police both upon leaving Cyprus and upon her return home, she will be denied the protective services she may require, and which are stipulated by Cypriot law for victims of trafficking, such as psychological and health assistance<sup>18</sup>, as authorities do not question the women being deported under such circumstances regarding the conditions under which they were kept on the island prior to their deportation, and the reasons for the contract being broken. According to independent local organizations, many women arrested in cabaret raids in Cyprus and found in violation of their visas are driven directly to the airport to catch the next available flight to their country of origin. They are provided no time for gathering their belongings, contacting friends, family, or their embassy in Cyprus, nor are they able to seek the assistance of legal counsel.

## Escape

Many angels in disguise are instrumental in assisting these young women to escape from the exploitation and abuse they endure at the hands of their employers. In some cases, these angels come in the form of compassionate law enforcement officers. At other times, a client might take pity on a young woman, or it may be total strangers who help to open the prison doors.

In Chapter V, The Protection Project presents three stories, all of them written down by young women who were able to escape.



## Chapter IV: What is Being Done?

**N**on-governmental organizations on the island are beginning to get involved in the fight against trafficking in persons. Church advocates are providing temporary shelter and assistance to women who escape and who want to return to their countries of origin. These groups are forming relationships and developing informal referral networks. Civil society organizations are providing legal advice and shelter referrals.

Most recently, the Cypriot government has strengthened its anti-trafficking efforts. Police have increased the number of raids on cabarets and law enforcement officials have been contacting non-governmental organizations providing shelter for the women they have rescued. Women are being interviewed about their experiences, and they are receiving legal and psychological assistance. Nevertheless, the numbers of those who are rescued and who receive even minimal services remain low.

### Challenges to Combating Trafficking

The Cypriot population lacks knowledge and understanding of the extent of human trafficking in their own country and the extent of the abuse suffered by the cabaret dancers. The island resi-

dents share many common misperceptions, notably that women coming to Cyprus as dancers are aware that they will be working in the commercial sex industry. These women are therefore not viewed as victims but as prostitutes, and many are treated as criminals. Cypriot authorities have been slow to recognize that many of these women have been deceived regarding their terms of employment, exploited for profit and abused severely by their employers, classifying them as victims of trafficking in persons, a term legally defined by the Cypriot law entitled Combating of Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Children Law of 2000.

Many Cypriot women have a negative view of Eastern European women on the island. The high rates of second marriages between Cypriot men and cabaret artistes, often following a divorce from a Cypriot woman, have elicited strong reactions from these divorced wives. They view the Eastern European women as a threat to their families and to Cypriot family values. The wives have at times demanded the deportation of those foreign women their husbands wanted to marry, and immigration officials have complied with these requests under the guise of protecting Cypriot family values. The Ombudsman's office has received complaints from some Cypriot women stating that their families are not being protected and advocating for the deportation of Eastern European women flooding the island. Such behavior has caused the artistes to be perceived as immoral women who intentionally set out to steal Cypriot men away from their wives. These attitudes have done little to create public sympathy for the artistes, who must rely on the few organizations available to assist them, or the client who might develop compassion for them. The near absence of any public awareness education conducted on the island regarding the issue further erodes the possibilities for public concern.

## Chapter V: In their Own Words: Stories of the Cabaret Artistes of Cyprus

In November 2003, a young Russian cabaret dancer attempted to escape the Nicosia apartment where her pimp held her captive while she endured a life of abuse. Tying several bed sheets together, she attempted to climb down from the balcony to the street. The makeshift rope came apart and the young woman was killed <sup>19</sup>.

Her story, quickly making the headlines, was only heard after it was too late.

The Protection Project is therefore grateful for the opportunity to present the stories of two young women, as written down by them, and translated by The Protection Project, for whom it was not too late. The Protection Project presents these stories in the hopes that they will serve as a source of hope to many other young women whose voices remain, for the moment, silent. All names and identifying characteristics included in the stories have been changed.



### *Ioanna's Story*

My name is Ioanna, and I am from Romania. In my country, I was unemployed and, while looking for work, I noticed a newspaper ad for cabaret dancers in Cyprus.

Through this ad, I met an impresario, and he made all the arrangements for me to travel to Cyprus. I arrived there with a visa allowing me to work as a dancer in a specific cabaret, owned by a man named Nikos. I came along with another Romanian girl, Ana Maria, who was supposed to work at the same cabaret. We were picked up from the airport by Georgeta, who as I found out later, was Nikos' wife. We arrived at night and they took us straight to the apartment where all the cabaret artistes were living.

During that night, Georgeta escorted us to the cabaret where we would work and showed us around. There, I met Nikos for the first time. He explained my working conditions. I was told that when a client entered, I was to sit with him, talk with him, and get him to buy me drinks, for which I would get a commission. I never did find out what the amount of the commission would be, since I was never paid. Nikos also told me that I would have to dance.

On the first day of «work,» Nikos told me that I had to dress provocatively and he bought me such clothes himself. He told me that I had to caress the clients and engage them in such a way that they would order as many drinks as possible.

Three days later, Nikos came to the apartment and told me that I had to have sex with clients who would ask for it. He explained this by saying that this way he would give me more money so that I would be able to repay my debt to him. According to him, I owed him \$700, which was his commission for bringing me to Cyprus. I also had to pay CYP20 per week for rent and common expenses. In addition, Nikos also wanted CYP150 for the clothes and shoes I was to wear in the cabaret. When Nikos told me that I had to have sex with clients, I replied that I didn't come to Cyprus for this and that I wanted to go back to Romania.

In response, he threatened me and told me that I could not leave until I had repaid my debt. I was terrified because the debt he claimed I owed was quite large and because I heard that the other girls at the cabaret all had to repay their debts in this way. I had no choice.

Soon after this conversation, Nikos introduced me to a client named Damaris and forced me to have sex with him. According to Nikos, Damaris always went with the new girls of the cabaret. He bought me six drinks that night and took me to a hotel to have sex. For this, he gave me CYP30. I learned that I had to go with a client each time that the total drink bill was larger than CYP40.

Sometimes the client did not give me any money because he paid Nikos directly. Nikos promised me the money when we got home, but often pretended to forget. The only money I got was from tips with clients after we had sex. I was going out for sex about twice or three times a week, particularly on Friday and Saturday. All the girls had to go out for sex on Saturdays. During my time at the cabaret, I only learned the first names of my clients. I didn't know anything else about them, except that most of them were friends of Nikos.

I was told that I had to satisfy all the demands of the clients, even the most aberrant ones and if I refused, Nikos would keep part of my salary. I only consented to normal sex and if the client's demands were abnormal, I refused.

The clients complained to Nikos and he threatened to fine me. On one occasion, a client wanted to have sex with me without any protection and because I refused, he hit me. When I told Nikos, he replied that such was the work at the cabaret. I was forced to have sex with that man without any protection. He hit me and I screamed but because he had taken me to a secluded house, no one could hear. I feared for my life. None of this had been in my work contract.

Although the immigration police explained my rights during their visits to the cabaret, I didn't tell them anything because I was afraid of the consequences, since Nikos usually knew when the immigration police would come and he told us to say that everything was normal.

During my time in the cabaret, I met Charalambos, who was a client. I liked him and I told him what was going on at the cabaret. He promised that he would help me. One night, he sat with me as a client and told me that I would go out with him to have sex, because he had already paid Nikos. He offered me four drinks in order to reach the amount of drinks that would allow me to go with him. We had prearranged that, since it was the only way for a girl to go out of the cabaret. I left with him that night. Thanks to his help, I hope to never have to return to the cabaret.



### *Victoria's Story*

My name is Victoria and I am in my early thirties. I come from the city of Kursk, in Russia. I am divorced and have been raising two daughters on my own, as my ex-husband does not help me out financially. My mother lives in Belarus on her own, and as she is not well, I also help with taking care of her health. I used to work as an apartment leasing agent and I lived off the commissions that I received. In the summer, I had very little business, as the students I was usually able to rent to all left for vacation. It was not till the fall that I was able to work again. It therefore worked out that I was free from May till September, and since I am not used to relaxing, I was looking for a job for myself for that period.

In the spring of 2004, my older daughter fainted during a class at school. I started taking her to the doctors for examinations, and it turned out that she had a number of health problems. My little one also had problems with her nervous system. I love my children very much and would like to give them everything I can. I wanted to earn enough money to take them to a sanatorium for health treatment, but this was very expensive.

I knew I could not make this kind of money in Russia, so I went to an employment agency that was able to provide work abroad. There, I made acquaintance with a woman named Sveta while standing in line. It seemed that she sympathized with me, with my situation, and she offered her help. She said that she could get me work in Cyprus directly, so that I would not have to pay the commission fee to

the employment agency. She told me that she had been working for several years already in Cyprus and that the working conditions were great, there is a possibility to make good money, and possibly to get married. She said that you could work as a dancer, as a waitress, or to work in consumatsia. She did not say anything about prostitution. I had even asked her specifically about that, and she gave me a firmly negative answer. I told her ahead that I had no intention of selling myself.

This was how it would work: she knew a man in Cyprus named Kostas who deals with employment situations. He would sponsor my travel expenses and I would pay him back \$800 in several installments since I would be earning \$800 a week plus tips as well as bonuses. She added that the employer would cover living expenses and that food was very inexpensive. She also said that when I arrived in Cyprus, Kostas would meet me and give me a place to live along with some spending money while he looked for suitable employment for me. I would have to obtain a local passport by law and for that I would need to take various medical tests. She said that Kostas would take care of all the details, which would take about a week.

I found all of this acceptable, I am used to trusting people, and because I had told Sveta about my difficult situation, I believed she wanted to help me. I did not know that she was working as a recruiter and planning to earn some money at my expense. Now I know for certain that if Kostas had been able to find me employment, or rather, had sold me to a cabaret owner, Sveta would have received about \$1000 in commission payment. Then I did know what awaited me, so I left with a light heart.

When Sveta was seeing me off, she gave me a piece of paper received by fax, in Greek, so that I was not able to read or understand anything. I asked her what that was and she said that it was a letter that I was supposed to take with me and present at the airport along with my passport so that I can receive the tickets prepared in my name. I went to Moscow, and there, at the international airport, came up to the cashiers of Cyprus Airlines, presented the letter with my passport, and received my tickets. This was how I left for Cyprus.

When I arrived in Cyprus, I was really greeted by Kostas, who put me in his car and brought another girl, whose name was Lena, and who had arrived on the same flight. She was 23 years old and from another town in Russia.

When the car started, me and Lena got acquainted. Kostas then took us to about 5 to six nightclubs and cabarets. I tried talking to the girls, but every time, Kostas prevented me from doing so. I tried to ask Kostas, in English, why he is taking us from one club to another, to these strange places, why the girls are nude, why were men looking at me and Lena in such a strange way, and what he was telling them about us. He said that he doesn't understand me and that these are his problems, not mine. I started asking him to take us to a hotel, that we were tired, that it was late, that we were sleepy and hungry. But he continued to take us from one cabaret to the next. He took us with him inside, seated us next to him at the bar, and took us into the offices, and talked about something with the men working there – possibly they were the owners. We could not understand what they were saying, but I did not like the way the men were looking at us - as if at merchandise or goods.

Then we went to the airport again, and it was almost morning. There, we picked up another girl named Lyuda who just arrived from Moscow. She started talking to Kostas in Greek. Finally we got to Nicosia, to a house. We came in with all our things. While the first floor was not residential, the second floor had two rooms that were considered offices, and three rooms that were residential.

It was very dirty and messy. In each room there were three beds, and there we were met by two young women. Tanya was 24, and had also come to Cyprus from Kursk. Her story was very similar to mine – she was looking for a job, went to an employment agency, and met the same recruiter who promised her work in a restaurant. There was no talk about strip tease or prostitution. As soon as Tanya arrived at the airport, Kostas also took her to different nightclubs for two nights in a row. He took her passport away immediately, and so she did what she was told. Tanya said that she was able to talk to a girl in one cabaret and that what that girl had told her was awful. In that cabaret the girls were engaged in

prostitution in the club in special rooms. During her workday she had to service many clients. If she refused to go with a client, she was beaten by her boss, he took her money, insulted her and threatened deportation. This was the case with all the girls working in the nightclubs. Because the clients rarely used protection, many girls became pregnant or got sexually transmitted diseases.

The other young woman's name was Olga. I think she was also from Russia. During the entire time that the girls had been there, Kostas had kept them under lock and key, took their passports, did not feed them, and was extremely rude to them. Tanya said that only once Kostas let them leave, gave them some money and sent them to a market to get some food.

Olga said that when she arrived, Kostas took her passport and her return ticket. He sold her right away to an owner of a nightclub. She was there as a slave for ten days, until she was thrown out on the street because she had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. She told me that her own boss there had been taking advantage of her sexually, and then afterward his guests would do the same. She was beaten, insulted, and she was not paid. She barely ate or drank. When she was thrown out without money even for a taxi, she didn't know what to do and so she came back to Kostas, especially since he had her passport. Telling her story, she looked frightened and very tired.

I felt sick and these stories had also frightened me. Everyone went to bed, but I remained sitting on the balcony. In the morning, Kostas' assistant arrived. I was brushing my teeth when he came in. I saw and heard that he was taking passports from the newly arrived girls. I hurried outside since the door was unlocked. The assistant went after me. I was not afraid of him on the street. He asked Lyuda to act as an interpreter. He was saying that I should give him my passport, sit in the car, and go for the medical tests, to register with immigration. I asked Lyuda to explain to him that I was there by accident, that I was lied to, that I didn't want to work in a cabaret where I would have to strip and have sex with clients.

He became angry, and I could tell by his tone of voice and his gesticulating that he was cursing. Lyuda was no longer interpreting. He took me inside the house, closed the door and left with Lena and

Lyuda. In his anger, I think, he forgot to lock the door with the key, and it was just closed by a chain. Tanya and I were able to come outside. I had a few dollars, so we went to the bank to exchange our money and buy a phone card to call home. There was a long line at the bank, and we were advised to go to a newspaper stand. A Russian Cypriot named Andrei overheard our conversation, and came over to us. He was very kind, fed us, gave us his mobile phone number, so that we could call him if we needed anything. He promised to help us get away from our pimp and so he drove us to that house so that we could get our things.

Tanya went in first, and we waited outside. After some time passed, and Tanya had still not returned, we approached, and as we got closer, we heard yelling.

Andrei said that they were yelling at Tanya and possibly hitting her. Tanya eventually came out on the balcony and gestured for us to leave. Andrei had to go to work so he left me to sleep in his car for the time being. That evening, we returned to the house to try and get Tanya and to take my things, but saw that it was locked with a key this time. I called to Tanya, and she said that my things were in the office and that the office was locked. She said it's better not to return if I can.

Andrei offered to help me find a place to live and I spent two days in a dark, dirty apartment, where it was dark inside, very humid, and stale. I began to feel very sick on the second day. I told Andrei that I could not live there anymore and asked him to take me to the police.

To my luck, there was a woman there, who was working as a volunteer lawyer, and who was currently working on a case of a Ukrainian girl who had been "working" in a cabaret. This girl was severely beaten by her boss one time because she had taken a taxi after work to take care of some personal things. She had come to the police to complain. The taxi driver was called as a witness, and he denied everything. I talked to that girl – she spoke of the same things I had already heard about. She again spoke about lack of payment, about beating, about the sexual abuse.

When the volunteer lawyer finished working with her, she contacted a priest who arrived with a nun and took me to a private house belonging to the church. I was given a separate room with clean sheets, I was fed, and treated very kindly. The nun gave me some money. The next day a policeman from immigration came to pick me up and asked me to come with him. I explained my situation. He called Kostas, and within an hour, Kostas' assistant brought my belongings. Then the policeman took me back to the house where I was staying.

While I was with the police, a very young Moldovan girl arrived, saying she had come from another city in Cyprus. Crying, she begged for help to get her 19-year-old sister out of a cabaret and to return home. Two months ago, six men had raped her sister. She was now in a state of shock, terrified, and numb, enduring all abuses and insults in silence. She said that she had been in Cyprus for two months and that she had gone to the local immigration authorities before in the city she had come from, but she received no help. She was told that she could go home, but that her sister had to stay. I tried to defend her, but the policeman told me that she was an excellent actress and not to be trusted. She told me that no one believed her or any other girls from the cabarets, that complaining was useless. No one would help.

I was extremely angry with all of this, and couldn't come to terms with the fact that no one seemed to care that we were being treated in this manner, and that nobody had warned us about what we were signing up for.

I asked the police why girls are not warned when they are entering Cyprus, or registering themselves in the country, about the sexual exploitation, when everybody knows about it. I was given several sheets of paper, where in Russian the conditions of the contracts of artistes were stated. I read through them and saw that everything was vague and deceiving, there was nothing concrete in the contract. I asked why they do not write directly "prostitution," since it is an accepted and used word. I was told that it was because there is no prostitution in the cabarets. I was taken back to the house where I was

staying, where I received a phone call from Father Savvas, who told me that he takes in girls that find themselves sexually exploited and offered me care and the patronage of the Russian Church. I do not know the fate of the girl who had been in the precinct with me.



### *Svetlana's Story*

I am 27 years old, and I am from Russia, divorced and without children. I am nearly finished with my higher education, and my specialization is in sewing technology. I live in the Northern Caucasus region with my mother.

I received a job offer to work in Cyprus from an old childhood friend. She had moved away and married a Cypriot man. Her husband was now the manager of a bar in Limassol where she said I might find work. We discussed the details over the telephone. He was satisfied with my knowledge of English and offered me a salary of CYP300 a month with full room and board. My only expense would be the visa and the ticket, which would be subtracted from my first month's salary. Approximately six weeks after this conversation, I received a phone call informing me that the ticket had been issued and that I should depart as soon as possible.

In Paphos, my acquaintance's husband, accompanied by a young Ukrainian woman who had been working at the bar for two months, were at the airport to meet me. This young woman told me that she would get into trouble if she talked too much, so we exchanged only a few words. As I found out later, when she first arrived in Cyprus, she worked in Nicosia but was then transferred to Limassol. It was not her first work contract in Cyprus, and she spoke Greek fluently. In Nicosia, she worked in a bar for two months, where she was forced to engage in consummation, while almost totally undressed.

Since she did not like this, she was transferred to Limassol, where she was forced to have sex with clients. I also learned that we would be living together.

We shared a small windowless room above the bar, right next to the bathroom. Our bedding consisted of one sheet per person. There was a shower stall but no running water. The toilet did not work properly either - the smell was unbearable. We brought in water from the kitchen, and instead of toilet paper, we were given newspapers. We were constantly watched by a Cypriot man who followed us everywhere, and who slept in front of our door, under orders from the boss. Another woman who lived with us had already become an alcoholic. I saw her sober only once, when she was leaving to go home, after a Cypriot man helped her escape.

In addition to working as a barmaid, which is the position I had agreed to, I also had to clean the bar and wash the dishes. Later I was asked to "make drinks", which meant engaging in consumatsia with clients. One day, a Cypriot client took a liking to me. He and my boss became very drunk together, forced me out of the bar and into the client's car and raced to a hotel on the outskirts of Paphos. There, the client raped me. I was sure that he would pass out quickly because he was so drunk, but instead, he became a monster, raping me repeatedly.

I was numb when I returned to Limassol 24 hours later. That evening, I became hysterical. While with clients, I drank until I felt nauseous and threw up. They left me alone and let me sleep in the bar. I started to get drunk every night, which was not a difficult task considering that I rarely ate unless a client brought me food. There was no mention of any kind of salary. We had to provide services to clients at any time of the day or night, and we had anywhere from 1 to 10 clients each. Some clients came for 20 minutes; others could buy a girl for the entire night. We had become slaves.

Up until then, I had been lucky and was able to hold on to my passport, but this meant I did not have any work papers. I finally surrendered my passport in the hopes that I would get my alien work visa. I was left with no documents, no money and, as it appeared, no future.

One evening, a Russian man came to the bar who just wanted to drink and talk. Taking a risk, I spoke with him because I was allowed to talk to clients only if they bought me a drink. They got 10 minutes of conversation for a small drink; 20 minutes of conversation for a big one. He said that he could help and that I need to call a Russian Orthodox priest named Father Savvas. That first time I didn't believe him, but he came in three days in a row, and left me his telephone number. I decided I had nothing to lose by trusting him. He arranged with a young man who had a car to come and pick up my suitcases, which he did. I kept only my most essential things, hoping no one would notice my suitcases were gone.

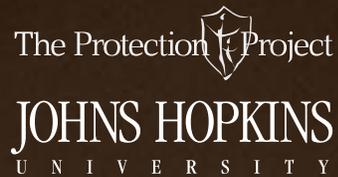
I was lucky, as three days later, when both bosses were drunk, and our guard had been drunk as well, I was able to steal my passport and to run away from the bar. I was frightened, I couldn't believe what I had done, and I spent the night just wandering around the streets. In the morning, I called the young man with the car, who had picked up my suitcases before, and he came to get me, took me to the shelter and introduced me to Father Savvas.

So there is really a God in this world. I am giving this interview before leaving to go home, to Russia. I am returning with a hope of beginning to work in my profession. It's better to be at home and poor, but free.

## ENDNOTES

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11. Articles 156, 157 and 165.

12. Please see Cyprus's Combating of Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Children Law of 2000.
13. Margaret Coker, "Russian Women Prime Cargo for International Trafficking Operations," Cox News Service, 10 March 2001.
14. "Cabaret Problems a Tough Task to Tackle," Cyprus Mail, 7 July 2004.
15. Margaret Coker, "Russian Women Prime Cargo for International Trafficking Operations," Cox News Service, 10 March 2001.
16. According to an interview with Dr. Myria Vassiliadou, Director of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies at Intercollege in Nicosia, Cyprus, this arises from Cypriot men's association of Eastern European women with a "Western" ideal of a woman who is viewed as more attractive, more sophisticated, and more sexual than a Cypriot woman. Darker women, such as those from Southeast Asia, are not viewed in the same favorable light, as they are considered less modern and are perceived as backward. Marrying an Eastern European woman therefore is more likely to bring the man toward the Western ideal, whereas marrying a darker woman would instead distance him from this ideal.
17. Interviews with non-government organizations in Cyprus and "One in Eight Artistes Marries a Cypriot," Cyprus Mail, 25 June 2003.
18. Article 7(1).
19. "Na Kipre Russkaya Seks Rabinya Pogibla, Pitayas' Bezhat' ot Sutenera, (A Russian Sex Slave in Cyprus Killed Trying to Escape her Pimp)," NewsRu.Com, 26 November 2003, available at <[http://www.newru.com/world/26Nov2003/sex\\_slave.html](http://www.newru.com/world/26Nov2003/sex_slave.html)>.



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