

Stop Trafficking !

Anti Human Trafficking Newsletter



Awareness

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Action

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This issue highlights the growing trade in human organs and the abuses that are associated with organ trafficking.

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Black Market for Body Parts Spreads Among the Poor

Pavle Mircov and his partner, Daniella, nervously scan their e-mail in-box every 15 minutes, desperate for economic salvation: a buyer willing to pay nearly \$40,000 for one of their kidneys.

The couple, the parents of two teenagers, put their organs up for sale on a local Serbian online classified site six months ago after Mr. Mircov, 50, lost his job at a meat factory. Unable to find any work, he has grown desperate. When his father recently died, Mr. Mircov could not afford a tombstone. Their telephone service has been cut off.

One meal a day of bread and salami is the family's only extravagance.

"When you need to put food on the table, selling a kidney doesn't seem like much of a sacrifice," Mircov said.

Facing grinding poverty, some Europeans are seeking to sell their kidneys, lungs, bone marrow or corneas, experts say. This phenomenon is relatively new in Serbia, a nation that has been battered by war and is grappling with the financial crisis that has swept the Continent.

The spread of illegal organ sales into Europe, where they are gaining momentum, has been abetted by the Internet, a global shortage of organs for transplants and, in some cases, unscrupulous traffickers ready to exploit the economic misery.

In Spain, Italy, Greece and Russia, advertisements by people peddling organs — as well as hair, sperm and breast milk — have turned up on the Internet, with asking prices for lungs as high as \$250,000. In late May 2012, the Israeli police detained 10 members of an international crime ring suspected of organ trafficking in Europe, European Union law enforcement officials said. The officials said the suspects had targeted impoverished people in Moldova, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

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Black Market *cont. on pg. 2*



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Black Market *cont. from pg. 1*

tims from Turkey and former communist countries to Kosovo to sell their kidneys with false promises of payments of up to \$20,000. *“Organized criminal groups are preying upon the vulnerable on both sides of the supply chain: people suffering from chronic poverty, and desperate and wealthy patients who will do anything to survive.”*

The main supply countries have traditionally been China, India, Brazil and the Philippines. But experts say Europeans are increasingly vulnerable.

An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 kidneys are illegally sold globally each year, according to Organs Watch, a human rights group in Berkeley, CA, that tracks the illegal organ trade. The World Health Organization estimates that only 10% of global needs for organ transplantation are being met.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, the director of Organs Watch and a professor of medical anthropology at the Univ. of CA, Berkeley, said the attempt by poor Europeans to sell their organs was reminiscent of the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when chronic joblessness created a new breed of willing sellers.

Trade in organs in Serbia is illegal and punishable by up to 10 years in prison. But that is not deterring the people of Doljevac, a poor municipality of 19,000 people in southern Serbia, where the government refused an attempt by residents to register a local agency to sell their organs and blood abroad for profit.

Violeta Cavac, a homemaker advocating for the network, said that the unemployment rate in Doljevac was 50% and that more than 3,000 people

had wanted to participate. Deprived of a legal channel to sell their organs, she said, residents are now trying to sell body parts in neighboring Bulgaria or in Kosovo. *“I will sell my kidney, my liver, or do anything necessary to survive,”* she said.

Hunched over his computer in Kovin, about 25 miles from Belgrade, Mircov showed a reporter his kidney-for-sale advertisement, which included his blood type and phone number. *“Must sell kidney. Blood group A,”* the ad said. *“My financial situation is very difficult. I lost my job, and I need money for school for my two children.”*

After six months of advertising, Mircov said his days are punctuated by hope and disappointment. He said a man from Mannheim, Germany, had offered to fly him to Germany and cover the transplant costs. But when Mr. Mircov tried to follow up, he said, the man disappeared.

A woman from Macedonia offered \$24,000 for a kidney from his partner, Daniella, but that was \$12,000 below her asking price. She noted that she has blood type O, which can bring a \$12,000 premium on the organ market because the blood is safe for most recipients.

Mr. Mircov said he had no fear about an eventual operation or legal strictures forbidding organ sales. *“It’s my body, and I should be able to do what I want with it,”* he said.

Government officials insisted that Serbia was not so poor as to reduce people to selling their body parts, while police officials said not a single case of organ trafficking in Serbia had been prosecuted in the past 10 years. Experts who study illegal organ sales said prosecutions were rare because transplants usually took place in third countries, making them difficult to track.

Dr. Djoko Maksic, a leading nephrol-

ogist who runs the transplant program at the Military Medical Academy in Belgrade, expressed disbelief that illegal organ selling was taking place in Serbia, saying every potential donor was scrutinized and vetted by a hospital committee consisting of doctors, ethicists and lawyers.

But Milovan, 52, a former factory worker from a rural village in southern Serbia, said he “gave” his kidney to a wealthy local politician who, in return, put him on his company payroll and offered to buy him medication. The kidney was extracted at a public hospital in Belgrade, he said, with both men using forged donor cards indicating they were brothers.

Debt-ridden, Milovan, who declined to give his last name for fear of being ostracized by his neighbors, lamented that the recipient had recently cut him off, and his family said he had spent his money so quickly that he was reduced to selling eggs at a local market. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/29/world/europe/black-market-for-body-parts-spreads-in-europe.html>)



Hu Jie, 25, a Chinese migrant worker, changed his mind about selling his kidney but could not prevent his surgery once he had signed for it.

Photograph: Nicola Davison



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Trafficking for Organ Trade

According to the United Nations trafficking in organs is a crime that occurs in three broad categories. First, there are cases where traffickers force or deceive the victims into giving up an organ. Second, there are cases where victims formally or informally agree to sell an organ and are cheated because they are not paid for the organ or are paid less than the promised price. Third, vulnerable persons are treated for an ailment, which may or may not exist and thereupon organs are removed without the victim's knowledge. The vulnerable categories of persons include migrants, especially migrant workers, homeless persons, illiterate persons, etc. It is known that trafficking for organ trade could occur with persons of any age. Organs that are commonly traded are kidneys, liver and the like; any organ that can be removed and used, could be the subject of such illegal trade.

Trafficking in organ trade is an organized crime, involving a host of offenders. The recruiter who identifies the vulnerable person, the transporter, the staff of the hospital/ clinic and other medical centers, the medical professionals, the middle-men and contractors, the buyers, the banks where organs are stored are all involved in the racket. It is a fact that the entire racket is rarely exposed and therefore, the dimensions are yet to be appropriately fathomed.

Several International standards are in place on trafficking for organ trade:

- a. The *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* includes "organ removal" and its subsequent sale as an end purpose of trafficking. Article 3 of the UN Trafficking Protocol that defines trafficking in persons, clearly includes trafficking for the purpose of removal of organs.
- b. Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000) to the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). This protocol states that the sale of children for the purpose of transferring their organs for profit should be a criminal offence.
- c. World Health Organization (WHO). The *Guiding Principles on Human Organ Transplantation* (1991) of WHO state that the commercialization of human organs is 'a violation of human rights and human dignity'.
- d. An *Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine Concerning Transplantation of Organs and Tissues of Human Origin* (2002) prohibits organ and tissue trafficking, deriving a financial gain or comparative advantage from the human body and its parts and calls on States to provide appropriate sanctions for such trafficking.

The response to trafficking in organ trade has more or less been lackluster. Considering the serious health implications and the severe human rights violations of the vulnerable victims, it is essential that this issue get the desired attention. This requires several steps including the following:

- Appropriate laws in sync with the UN Protocols and principles.
- Stringent law enforcement against all those involved.
- Training and orientation of the law enforcement agencies as well as the medical staff who are likely to be drawn into the commission of the offence, especially for want of the dimensions of the crime.
- Awareness generation of the vulnerable sections.
- Public awareness posters and display boards, etc. to be made mandatory at health centers, where health care is ordinarily provided.

(<http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/about/traffick>)



Donor Countries

Recipient Countries

Typical Donor (Philippines)

Age: 28.9 years

Gender: male

Annual Income: \$480

Typical Donor (Israel)

Age: 48.1 years

Gender: male

Annual Income: \$53,000

Source: Organs Watch



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Demand for Organs: Growing Black Market

The World Health Organization estimates 10,000 black market operations involving human organs take place each year.

The illegal trade in kidneys has risen to such a level that an estimated 10,000 black market operations involving purchased human organs now take place annually, or more than one an hour, World Health Organization experts have revealed.

Evidence collected by a worldwide network of doctors shows that traffickers are defying laws intended to curtail their activities and are cashing in on rising international demand for replacement kidneys driven by the increase in diabetes and other diseases.

Patients, many of whom will go to China, India or Pakistan for surgery, can pay up to \$200,000 (nearly £128,000) for a kidney to gangs who harvest organs from vulnerable, desperate people, sometimes for as little as \$5,000.

The vast sums to be made by both traffickers and surgeons have been underlined by the arrest by Israeli police of 10 people, including a doctor, suspected of belonging to an international organ trafficking ring and of committing extortion, tax fraud and grievous bodily harm. Other illicit organ trafficking rings have been uncovered in India and Pakistan.

The Guardian contacted an organ broker in China who advertised his services under the slogan, "Donate a kidney, buy the new iPad!" He offered £2,500 for a kidney and said the operation could be performed within 10 days.

The resurgence of trafficking has

prompted the WHO to suggest that humanity itself is being undermined by the vast profits involved and the division between poor people who undergo "amputation" for cash and the wealthy sick who sustain the body parts trade.

"The illegal trade worldwide was falling back in about 2006-07 – there was a decrease in 'transplant tourism'," said Luc Noel, a doctor and WHO official who runs a unit monitoring trends in legitimate and underground donations and transplants of human organs. But he added: "The trade may well be increasing again. There have been recent signs that that may well be the case. There is a growing need for transplants and big profits to be made. It's ever growing, it's a constant struggle. The stakes are so big, the profit that can be made so huge, that the temptation is out there."

Lack of law enforcement in some countries, and lack of laws in others, mean that those offering financial incentives to poor people to part with a kidney have it too easy, Noel said.

Kidneys make up 75% of the global illicit trade in organs, Noel estimates. Rising rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems are causing demand for kidneys to far outstrip supply.

Data from the WHO shows that of the 106,879 solid organs known to have been transplanted in 95 member states in 2010 (legally and illegally), about 73,179 (68.5%) were kidneys. But those 106,879 operations satisfied just 10% of the global need, the WHO said.

The organization does not know how many cases involved the organ being

obtained legitimately from a deceased donor or living donor such as a friend or relative of the recipient.

But Noel believes that one in 10 of those 106,879 organs was probably procured by black marketeers. If so, that would mean that organ gangs profited almost 11,000 times in 2010.

Proof of illegal trafficking is being collected by networks of doctors in various countries known as "custodian groups". The groups work to support the Declaration of Istanbul, the 2008 statement against global organ exploitation that was agreed by almost 100 nations.

Made up of hospital specialists who treat patients with end-stage kidney failure who survive on dialysis, and surgeons who operate on those lucky enough to get a new kidney, the groups monitor reports of black market activity in their own country or involving compatriots abroad.

A medical source with knowledge of the situation said: "While commercial transplantation is now forbidden by law in China, that's difficult to enforce; there's been a resurgence there in the last two or three years.

"Foreigners from the Middle East, Asia and sometimes Europe come and are paying \$100,000 to \$200,000 for a transplant. Often they are Chinese expats or patients of Chinese descent."

Some of China's army hospitals were believed to be carrying out the transplants, the source added.

The persistence of the trade is embarrassing for China. The health ministry in Beijing has outlawed it and has also



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Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism

The 2008 Declaration of Istanbul was the first document to define organ trafficking. According to this declaration, organ trafficking is: *“the recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring or receipt of living or deceased persons or their organs 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 to, or the receiving by, a third party of payments or benefits to achieve the transfer of control over the potential donor, for the purpose of exploitation by the removal of organs for transplantation.”*

(<http://www.declarationofistanbul.org/>)

Transplant Tourism

Transplant tourism, derived from the term ‘*medical tourism*’ is defined by the Declaration of Istanbul as *“travel for transplantation that involves organ trafficking and/or transplant commercialism or if the resources (organs, professionals and transplant centers) devoted to providing transplants to patients from outside a country undermine the country’s ability to provide transplant services for its own population.”*

The condemnation of transplant tourism is a complex issue. Not all countries prohibit it. Moreover, in practice, transplant tourism is difficult to differentiate from travel for transplantation. Transplant tourism touches upon various complex legal issues including secrecy oath, duty of medical care, right to privacy and the privilege of non-disclosure.

The effect of these laws and regulations on patients returning from a transplant abroad, and their doctors, is not sufficiently addressed.

Transplant tourism, including its link to trafficking in human beings, forms an important part of the HOTT Project. (<http://hottproject.com/about-the-crime/other-crimes/transplant-tourism.html>)

International Study on Organ Trafficking

The European Commission and the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam have been researching the international trade in human organs for three years. The study will conclude in October 2015. Researchers include those from Romania, Sweden, Bulgaria and Spain, as well as the EU police agency Europol. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime is also involved in the HOTT project.

EU prosecutors were investigating organ transplants allegedly carried out illegally in Kosovo in 2008. In May 2012 several suspects were arrested in Israel. Separately, a Council of Europe report released in December 2010 accused Kosovo’s Prime Minister Hashim Thaci - a former leader of the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) - of involvement in organ trafficking. He denied the allegations. Organs were allegedly taken from prisoners killed by the KLA after the 1999 war against Serb forces. There have been high-profile cases of illegal organ trafficking in the U.S. and South Africa.

The Erasmus Medical Center stated the investigation is necessary because *“there is increasing evidence of organ tourism, where patients travel abroad for the transplant of an organ that could have been purchased. Donors, whether*

Netherlands *cont. pg. 6*

Demand *cont. from pg. 4*

promised to stop harvesting organs from executed prisoners by 2017, a practice that has brought international condemnation.

John Feehally, a professor of renal medicine at University Hospitals of Leicester NHS trust, said: “Since the Declaration of Istanbul the law on trafficking has been changed in the Philippines – which was one of the centres of transplant tourism – and the Chinese government realizes that things have to change.” Feehally is also president of the International Society of Nephrology, which represents 10,000 specialist kidney doctors worldwide. “Trafficking is still continuing – it’s likely that it is increasing,” he said. “We know of countries in Asia, and also in eastern Europe, which provide a market so that people who need a kidney can go there and buy one.”

The key issue, Feehally said, was exploitation. “You are exploiting a donor if they are very poor and you are giving them a very small amount of money and no doctor is caring for them afterwards, which is what happens.

“The people who gain are the rich transplant patients who can afford to buy a kidney, the doctors and hospital administrators, and the middlemen, the traffickers. It’s absolutely wrong, morally wrong.”

Noel wants countries to defeat the traffickers by maximizing the supply of organs from deceased and living donors, and encouraging healthy lifestyles to stop people getting conditions such as diabetes in the first place.

(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/27/kidney-trade-illegal-operations-who>)



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Netherlands *cont. from pg. 5*

forced or not, often become victims of human trafficking. However, little is known about how often it occurs and how criminal organizations, physicians and others involved operate.”

Almost half (46%) of the Dutch transplant professionals who treat kidney patients know patients who traveled abroad in the past five years for a kidney transplant. In 90% of the cases, the care providers suspected, or were sure that the organ had been paid for. Paying for organs is illegal in the Netherlands. These findings are the result of a study carried out by criminologist/international lawyer Frederike Ambagtsheer, who works at the department of Nephrology and Transplantation at Erasmus MC. The researchers distributed the anonymous survey among Dutch transplant surgeons, nephrologists, transplant coordinators, nurses and social workers. A total of 241 medical professionals who treat kidney patients participated in the survey.

Ambagtsheer and her co-authors argue that disclosing the identity of patients who are going to purchase or who have purchased a kidney to police authorities is not justified. But they proclaim that it should be made possible for care providers to warn the police, without revealing the patient's identity. Transplant professionals should be able to anonymously reveal the names of physicians and hospitals, as well as intermediaries, who facilitate illegal transplants to a central hotline. However, the patient's approval is necessary to make this possible. Or alternatively, an amendment of the law is required.

Although the care providers said that the majority of the patients traveled to countries outside the EU, 17 transplant professionals say they treated patients between 2008 and 2013 whom they suspected of having bought organs in the Netherlands. Two patients admitted to having paid a donor in the Netherlands for their kidney.

Furthermore, 13 transplant professionals said that they are treating donors who have sold their kidney to a patient in the Netherlands. Nine transplant professionals suspected human trafficking for organ removal between 2008 and 2013. Three professionals reported that the donor had told them that he/she had been forced to donate a kidney. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20354401>) (<http://www.erasmusmc.nl/1172194/2014/4881680nierpatientenbetalenvoororganen>)

Film: “Tales from the Organ Trade”

“Tales from the Organ Trade” is a gritty and unflinching descent into the shadowy world of black-market organ trafficking: the street-level brokers, the rogue surgeons, the impoverished men and women who are willing to sacrifice a slice of their own bodies for a quick payday, and the desperate patients who face the agonizing choice of obeying the law or saving their lives.

Fifty years ago it was science fiction. Today, it is an everyday miracle. Every year, tens of thousands of human organ transplants are performed around the globe. Most transplanted organs come from cadavers or relatives of the

patient. But demand for kidneys alone far exceeds the supply. So thousands are bought and sold on a black market that flourishes in dozens of countries where the rule of law is hostage to the dollar sign. International organizations monitoring the situation estimate – conservatively – that black market transplants generate over \$500 million a year.

With unprecedented access to all the players, the documentary film explores the legal, moral and ethical issues involved in this complex life and death drama. What would any of us do if put in the position of having to buy or sell an organ? For each party, the stakes could not be higher.

This is not a black and white story of exploitation, but rather, a nuanced and complex story that compels you to explore your own moral and ethical beliefs. This is a world where the villains often save lives and the medical establishment, helpless, too often watches people die, where the victims often walk away content and the buyers of organs - the recipients - return home with a new lease on life.

The drama unfolds in Philippine slums; in villages, where nearly every man has sold one of his kidneys for the price of a laptop; in neglected shards of the former Soviet Empire, where criminal gangs tease donors with promises of vast sums of cash; and in places like Philadelphia, where a Craigslist ad urges an unemployed hustler into an operating room and a twenty thousand-dollar payoff.

At the core of “Tales from the Organ Trade” is the anatomy of a single black market operation. The recipient is a Canadian man who can't wait for a legal transplant at home. The transplant surgeon is a glib and defiant fugitive Turkish doctor dubbed “Dr. Frankenstein” by the international media. The nephrologist is a distinguished Israeli physician who sees no evil in paying

Film *cont. pg. 7*



Action

Film *cont. from pg. 6*

for human organs. The prosecutor is a crusading Canadian working for the European Union. The donor is a beer-loving woman from a fledgling Eastern European republic who willingly sold her kidney, saved another human being's life and is now at the center of the world's most notorious organ trafficking case.

(<http://www.talesfromtheorgantrade.com/awards.html>)

"Tales from the Organ Trade" won the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award in April 2014. The Edward R. Murrow Award for best documentary about international affairs is writer-director Ric Esther Bienstock's second award, after an earlier film about human trafficking, "Sex Slaves," won the same prestigious prize in 2007.

"It's an incredible feeling to have your work recognized by the best of the best in American journalism," Bienstock said. She added that "Tales from the Organ Trade" succeeded in dispelling myths about a shadowy global black market trade in human body parts to tell the real story. "What I discovered while making this film was a morally complex world that forced me to question my own ethical assumptions. And I'm so proud that this effort is being recognized with the Edward R. Murrow Award," Bienstock said.

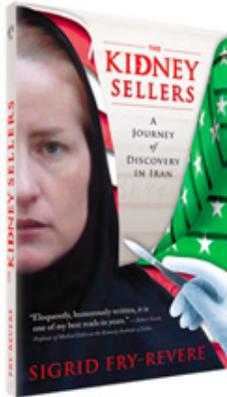
"Tales From The Organ Trade" screened at over 40 film festivals around the world, and earned six festival awards, including the Amnesty International Award from the Human Rights Film Festival of San Sebastian Spain.

(<http://realscreen.com/2014/04/24/ric-esther-bienstock-doc-wins-edward-r-murrow-award/>)

"The Kidney Sellers: A Journey of Discovery in Iran"

The Center for Ethical Solutions is creating a report to study different schemes from countries around the world about how each country allocates organs to patients in need. The book, "Kidney Sellers," explores how the U.S. has failed its kidney disease patients, while Iran, of all places, may have found a way to save them.

"Written by Sigrid Fry-Revere, CEO, president and founder of the Center for Ethical Solutions, and published in May 2014, the book provides an amazing, courageous, provocative, even dangerous look at the complex and generally successful system of selling/donation that has solved the kidney supply problem in Iran." — Robert Veatch, Ph.D., Professor of Medical Ethics at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics and Fellow of the Hastings Center.



"Sigrid's journey...reads like a novel blended with a captivating news article that you quite literally cannot put down. ...I give the book a very strong five stars." — Marisa Slusarczyk, Rogue Reviews (<http://rogue-reviews.com/kidney-sellers-sigrid-fry-revere/>)

"A compelling case for an unorthodox solution to a wide-spread health-care problem." — Kirkus Reviews

Informative Web Sites:
(Each contains information related to human trafficking)

Organ Trafficking Study
<http://www.hottproject.com>

HOTT Project Reports
<http://hottproject.com/reports/reports.html>

Stop Organ Trafficking Now!
<http://www.stoporgantraffickingnow.org/>

"In *The Kidney Sellers*, Fry-Revere shows considerable strengths as a nonfiction writer. She is a keen observer of details in surroundings, events, and people. The reader is caught up in her personal drama of anxieties, impressions, and reactions to events. The history, culture, and current political climate of Iran is interspersed liberally throughout the book so that the reader can better understand why Iranians are motivated to act as they do and why the current kidney donor system was enacted." — New York Journal of Books (<http://ethical-solutions.org/projects/thekidneysellers/>)

Stop Trafficking! is dedicated exclusively to fostering an exchange of information among religious congregations, their friends and collaborating organizations, working to eliminate all forms of trafficking of human beings.

Use the following web address to access back issues of *Stop Trafficking!*

www.stopenslavement.org/archive.htm

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