

# **Human Trafficking as a Human Rights Issue And Policy Responses of Arctic Nations**

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## **Introduction**

Human trafficking, considered to be a modern form of slavery and a major human rights abuse, has increasingly received attention over the last decade from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments world-wide, and the media. The United States defines trafficking as “all acts involved in the recruitment, abduction, transport, harboring, transfer, sale or receipt of persons; within national or across international borders; through force, coercion, fraud or deception; to place persons in situations of slavery or slavery-like conditions, forced labor or services, such as forced prostitution or sexual services, domestic servitude, bonded sweatshop labor or other debt bondage” (Pub. Law 106-386). World governments, including each of the eight Arctic nations, have introduced legislation to combat human trafficking at various levels. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of human trafficking as an issue of governmental concern, both within a historical and contemporary context, to discuss human trafficking policies as they relate to Arctic nations, and to discuss the debates that exist within the human trafficking policy arena.

While reviewing conference proceedings from previous NRF Open Assemblies I noticed that human trafficking as a policy issue or human rights abuse had not been previously discussed by NRF participants during the Open Assemblies. While human trafficking may not be as pertinent an issue for Arctic nations as other more imminent threats such as climate change, it is none the less worthy of attention and discussion among Arctic stakeholder groups.

## **What is Human Trafficking?**

People often confuse human trafficking and migrant smuggling; however human trafficking and migrant smuggling are quite different. Migrant smuggling is simply assisting someone to move from one country to another country, illegally and for a fee. This is a mutual arrangement in which both parties benefit; basically a service (assistance to gain entry into another country) is purchased. In human trafficking, *force*, *fraud*, or *coercion* is used to exploit illegal immigrants

to work in the commercial sex industry, in domestic servitude, or in labor services such as in agricultural work or in sweatshops. Force includes acts such as constraint, beatings, rape, or kidnapping; fraud may include promises of a better life in another country, false offers of employment, or offers of marriage, and coercion includes threats, debt-bondage, psychological intimidation, withholding documents such as passports, and telling victims that they will go to jail if caught. The United Nations Office On Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that about 80 percent of human trafficking victims are forced into prostitution and that the remaining 20 percent are forced into labor services (UNODC, 2007).

Contrary to popular belief, movement of a person isn't necessary for trafficking to occur. Often times an illegal immigrant who is willingly smuggled into a country may find himself or herself in a trafficking situation. A common scenario is that an illegal immigrant will pay to be smuggled into a country, however will then be forced into prostitution or into sweatshop labor to work off the fee that was charged for the smuggling. Sometimes illegal migrant workers will be refused pay for their labor because the employer knows that the illegal immigrant will not go to the authorities to report the abuse; this is another form of human trafficking.

## **Estimates of Trafficking**

It is difficult to get accurate estimates of trafficking victims because the trafficked population is hidden and inaccessible. In recent years there have been a number of debates regarding realistic estimates of trafficking victims. Some NGOs believe that the numbers of trafficking victims are severely underestimated, while other stakeholders maintain that the numbers of victims are severely inflated. The International Labor Organization (ILO) (2005) estimates that approximately 12,300,000 victims world-wide are trafficked into forced labor, child labor, bonded labor, or sexual servitude each year. The U.S. State Department (US DOS) (2008) estimates that approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders each year.

## **Types of Human Trafficking**

Policy makers do not agree with what constitutes human trafficking exactly, however it is generally agreed that the major forms of trafficking are for forced labor, bonded labor (debt bondage), involuntary domestic servitude, forced child labor, child soldiering, forced begging and forced prostitution (US DOS, 2008). Organ trafficking, mail order brides, runaway children

in exploitative situations, and international infant adoption, are also considered to be forms of human trafficking, although recognition of these as human trafficking varies between nations. For example in the United States, a trafficking victim must be in the country illegally to be considered a victim of trafficking. Mail order brides are legally in the country (usually on a spouse visa) and so would not fall into the official definition of what constitutes a trafficking victim. In the U.S. organ trafficking is not considered to be a form of human trafficking, but the United Nations (UN) addresses organ smuggling as a trafficking offense.

### **The Rise of Human Trafficking Worldwide**

Human trafficking is a global problem which is present in every continent worldwide. Researchers suggest that a number of factors promote trafficking including globalization of capital and information technology (Santos, 1999; Hughes, 2000), gender-based social and economic inequality (Raymond & Hughes, 2001), macro-economic policies promoted by international lending organizations which push women out of their countries of origin to seek work (Raymond & Hughes, 2001), and expansion of transnational sex industries. Technology such as the internet, the break up of the Soviet Union, the global demand for cheap labor, war and conflicts which cause people to become displaced, and the creation of the European Union are also factors that have led to an increase in human trafficking (Stolz, 2005). Arctic nations are not immune to the affects of globalization and some Arctic nations have experienced an increase in migration. Generally where there is migration, there is human trafficking.

Despite the recent attention given to human trafficking as a contemporary human rights problem, the concept of human trafficking, or “White Slavery”, as it was called in the past, is not new in the United States or in other western nations. Organized movements against “White Slavery” were popular in the United States and in some western European countries during the progressive era, a time of economic, political, and social reform that spans from 1893 to 1917. The progressive era was stimulated by a number of societal changes and social problems that were caused by industrialization. During the progressive era, “the specter of White Slavery became an image used to depict commercial sex as a form of slavery where women were ‘trafficked’ against their will into the trade by third parties, typically foreign men, such as pimps” (Wahab, 2002, p. 3). As Wahab (2002, p. 3) notes, “the fear of White Slavery was based not on a large number of documented cases, but rather, was fueled by fears of cultural

contamination (due to immigration), moral pollution, social anxieties about changing gender roles, sex, class and race relations at the turn of the century”. Although “White Slavery” received a large amount of attention, interviews of 6,309 prostitutes conducted during the progressive era revealed that only approximately 7.5% of the respondents listed “white slavery” or extreme coercion as a reason why they were involved in prostitution (Pivar, 2002, p. 84). O. Edward Janney (1911) (in Pivar 2002) described “White Slavery” during the progressive era as follows:

*“the human chattels of these traffickers are practically slaves, for the girls and women are lured, deceived through affection, or in some instances forced into prostitution, and are held in bondage by subtle but compelling means. Whether the victim is confined behind closed doors, or is allowed to go out under close watch, or kept in submission by fear of personal violence, she is, under any of these conditions, a slave—one forced to do her master’s bidding and obliged to give him the money she receives”.* (p. 84)

This depiction of “White Slavery” is quite similar to modern depictions of human trafficking.

## **Who are Trafficking Victims?**

It is thought that the majority of trafficking victims are women and girls, although males are also trafficked, mostly for forced labor (US DOS, 2008). Trafficking victims may not speak the language of the country in which they are living and so may be unable to communicate their situation to others, even if given the opportunity. Often times trafficking victims are kept in isolation and are prevented from seeking help, so communicating their plight may not be possible. Trafficking victims are also vulnerable and may have been psychologically manipulated and so may be afraid to seek help (Hughes, 2000).

Once identified, trafficking victims have extensive immediate needs such as the need for housing assistance, medical care, safety, and security. Victims also need mental health counseling and crisis management. In the longer term, victims need money, long term housing, job training, and language training. Victims also need legal status to stay in the country to which they were trafficked. Some victims may prefer to be repatriated back to their countries of origin, but many trafficking victims do not want to return to the conditions from which they left (US DOS, 2008).

## **Debate over the Definition of Trafficking**

Although human trafficking may seem like a straight forward issue, human trafficking has been subject to multiple and extensive heated debates between radical and liberal feminists. This feminist debate is reflected in multiple countries' trafficking legislation/protocols. Prostitution and sex trafficking cannot be separated because "in the initial stages of feminist analysis of prostitution in contemporary society, prostitution has been treated in a reductionist way as a deviant activity and as sexual slavery" (O'Neill, 2001, p.15). Contemporary debates between feminist groups center on the issue of sex work/prostitution as being either a form of exploitation of women or a form of women's liberation. The feminist camp (radical feminists) that views sex work as a form of exploitation perceives women as being forced into sex work because of sexism and inequality in all aspects of women's lives (Wahab, 2002). Feminists who embrace this perspective believe that women are in no way free to choose sex work or prostitution, but the supposed choice is actually forced due to oppressive societal factors. Feminists in the other camp (liberal feminists) see sex work as a form of liberation for women, and these feminists view anti-prostitution laws as being a form of power and control over women and women's rights to have free rein over their own bodies.

Some feminist scholars take the "sex wars" to a more in-depth level. Vanwesenbeeck (2001) eloquently demonstrates the academic debate stating that because only the validation and appreciation of 'voluntary' prostitution truly challenges traditional perspectives on female sexuality, 'voluntary' prostitution is still not much appreciated and is met with criminalization and social stigma. Women who choose to be prostitutes and refuse victim status are most likely to be treated with disdain and loathing (e.g., Shaver, 1994). Doezema (1998) has argued that the distinction between 'forced' and 'voluntary' prostitution has reproduced the whore/madonna division within the category 'prostitute.' 'Thus,' Doezema writes, 'the madonna is the 'forced prostitute'-the child, the victim of trafficking; she who, by virtue of her victim status, is exonerated from sexual wrong-doing. The 'whore' is the voluntary prostitute: because of her transgression, she deserves whatever she gets' (1998, p. 47). (p. 244)

Two competing international feminist NGOs emerged during the 1990s and both are dedicated to eradicating human trafficking worldwide; the Global Alliance against Traffic in Women (GAATW) and the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW). Both GAATW

and CATW have their own definitions of trafficking, as do other NGOs, governments, and other players involved in discourse and policy development regarding trafficking.

GAATW positions itself as ensuring that the human rights of migrant women are respected and protected and advocates for the incorporation of what they view as human rights standards in all anti-trafficking initiatives. GAATW believes that women should be free to choose sex work as an occupation and it maintains that the trafficking of women and girls is directly linked to the failure or refusal of governments to accord women the same basic human rights as men. GAATW contends that the standard concept of trafficking has ignored the human rights of trafficked persons, has been used by moralists to dictate to women in prostitution, and has been used by governments to restrict the movements of women. CATW's philosophy is that it is a fundamental human right for women to be free of sexual exploitation in all its forms and women and girls have the right to sexual integrity and autonomy.

In 1999 and 2000 in Vienna and Austria, 120 countries debated the definition of trafficking. The governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United Kingdom wanted to separate issues of trafficking from issues of prostitution and argued that a person willingly engaging in prostitution should not be considered to be a trafficking victim (Leuchtag, 2003). Over 140 NGOs that make up the International Human Rights Network as well as the governments of Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, China, Columbia, Cuba, Egypt, Finland, France, India, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sweden, Syria, Venezuela, and Vietnam maintained that trafficking cannot be separated from prostitution and that persons being trafficked are in no position to give meaningful consent to participate in prostitution (Leuchtag, 2003).

## **Human Trafficking Legislation**

In 2000, the United States was the first government to pass a comprehensive human trafficking bill which focused on trafficking prevention efforts, protection of human trafficking victims, and prosecution of the traffickers. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is Division A of a larger bipartisan crime bill, the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (VTVPA). The purpose of the TVPA is "to combat trafficking of persons, especially into the sex trade, slavery, and slavery-like conditions in the United States and countries around the world

through prevention, through prosecution and enforcement against traffickers and through protection and assistance to victims of trafficking” (Pub. Law 106-386).

The United States uses a two-tiered definition of trafficking in the TVPA and distinguishes between severe trafficking and trafficking that does not involve force. Feminist groups debated the definition of trafficking that would be used in the TVPA. Some wanted all forms of prostitution, including voluntary prostitution, to be considered human trafficking, while others did not want voluntary prostitution to be included in the definition of human trafficking. In the end, it was decided that force, fraud, or coercion must be present for one to be considered a victim of a severe form of human trafficking. Only victims of severe forms of human trafficking are protected under the TVPA legislation.

Around the time that the TVPA passed, the United Nations adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which came into effect at the end of 2003. The Protocol is also known as the Trafficking Protocol or the Palermo Protocol because it was adopted in Palermo, Italy. The UN Trafficking Protocol is a comprehensive treaty with international obligations for the prevention of trafficking, the protection of trafficking victims, and the prosecution of traffickers.

There were scores of debates and lobbying by various feminist groups to determine the definition of human trafficking that would be used in the Protocol, similar to the debates that occurred during the making of the U.S. trafficking legislation. In the end, there was flexibility included in the definition of trafficking to allow States to make their own interpretations.

To date the UN Trafficking Protocol has 117 signatories and widespread support. All eight of the Arctic nations have ratified the Protocol with Iceland being the last country to ratify the Protocol in 2007.

In 2002, the Nordic Ministry Council commenced the Nordic-Baltic Campaign against Trafficking in Women and Children. The campaign was suggested by Sweden’s Minister for Gender Equality in 2001. The campaign was carried out in 2002 in the Nordic and Baltic countries; the mission of the campaign was to protect and assist victims of trafficking, prevent, detect, and prosecute traffickers, and to end the demand of human trafficking (The Protection Project, 2008).

Also in 2002, the Council of the European Union adopted the Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The decision requires member states to penalize acts

of human trafficking and to establish criminal penalties for traffickers. The European Union financially supports anti-trafficking projects throughout Europe and coordinates with the UN, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on anti-trafficking projects (The Protection Project, 2008).

In 2003, the Arctic Council recognized human trafficking and stated that “the Arctic Council emphasizes the crucial role of women in developing Arctic communities and emphasized the urgent need to take action against all forms of violence against women in the Arctic, including trafficking and prostitution” (Arctic Council, 2003).

In 2005, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Convention emphasizes the human rights of trafficking victims more than the UN Trafficking Protocol, and is upheld as the most comprehensive policy to combat human trafficking at every level, using a human rights framework.

In 2007 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched a Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. The Global Initiative has the goal of raising public awareness of human trafficking as part of a larger strategy of eliminating it. The ultimate goal of the UNODC Global Initiative is to end human trafficking and slavery worldwide (UNODC, 2007).

## **Arctic Nations and Trafficking Policy**

In addition to the Arctic nations being a part of the multi-national treaties and initiatives mentioned above, Arctic nations have also made efforts to combat human trafficking within their own countries and internationally. Following is a summary of trafficking prevalence and policies as it relates to each of the eight Arctic nations:

### **Sweden**

Sweden is considered to be a destination country and a transit country for women and children trafficked from Estonia, Russia, Poland, Albania, Nigeria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Thailand, and Venezuela (US DOS, 2008). Sweden has been on the forefront of the anti-trafficking movement and has had an anti-trafficking law since 2002. Sweden is considered to have fewer problems with human trafficking than other European countries and some think that this can be attributed to Sweden’s 1999 “demand side” of prostitution law, which criminalizes purchasing sex, but does not criminalize prostitution.



Worldwide attention has been given to Sweden's "demand-side" prostitution law as Sweden is the only country which criminalizes the customers of prostitutes and not the prostitutes themselves. Sweden interprets prostitution as being an act of violence against women, hence the criminalization of the customers and/or pimps and not the prostitutes. It is thought that since the implementation of this law neither prostitution nor human trafficking has increased and has possibly declined (Ekberg, 2004) in Sweden.

Despite the "demand side" prostitution law, Sweden is estimated to have about 400-600 women trafficked into the country each year as prostitutes (Anwar, 2007). Although trafficking does still exist in Sweden, it is a much smaller problem than in neighboring countries. The number of trafficking victims is thought to be 10,000-15,000 in Finland, Sweden's much smaller neighbor.

Even with the low numbers of trafficking victims in Sweden, the Swedish government is committed to eradicating human trafficking and provides monetary funding to NGO's both within and outside of Sweden to fight human trafficking. In 2004, Sweden amended its Aliens Act to provide residence permits for victims of trafficking who cooperate with trafficking investigations. In 2007, Sweden began granting temporary residence permits to all victims of trafficking found in the country and in December 2007, the Swedish government introduced a national action plan focusing on improved awareness of trafficking issues (US DOS, 2008). Sweden can be viewed as a model country, when it comes to human rights focused attempts to eradicate human trafficking.

### **Finland**

Finland has a much more notable problem with human trafficking than Sweden. Finland is considered to be a transit and destination country for women trafficked from Russia, China, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Thailand to and through Finland to other Western European countries for the purpose of sexual exploitation and is also a destination country for women and men trafficked for labor purposes from China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (US DOS, 2008). Most trafficking victims from the Baltic States travel by ferry to Finland (The Protection Project, 2008). The breakup of the Soviet Union contributed to the trafficking infrastructure in Finland because the previously closed southern and eastern borders of Finland were opened, which enabled people to freely move to Finland.

In 2006 Finland amended its Aliens Act to allow its victims of human trafficking to remain in the country indefinitely and to have access to unrestricted employment rights. In April 2007, Finland issued its first residency permit to a human trafficking victim (US DOS, 2008). In 2006 the Finnish Parliament passed a law which criminalizes the purchase of sex from a known victim of human trafficking; the fine can include up to six months in prison. Finland had considered, but then rejected passing a law similar to Sweden's "demand side" prostitution law.

### **Norway**

Norway is considered to be a destination country for sex trafficking victims from Nigeria, Russia, the Ukraine, Albania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Brazil and East Asian nations (US DOS, 2008). Some victims of trafficking are routed through Sweden, Denmark, Italy and Balkan countries to Norway (US DOS, 2008). In 2007, 190 victims of trafficking were identified by the Norwegian government (US DOS, 2008). Norway is seen as being dedicated to combating human trafficking and in 2004, Norway passed the Crimes against Personal Freedom Law, which prohibits all forms of human trafficking and provides measures for the protection of trafficking victims, the prosecution of traffickers, and the prevention of human trafficking. Norway also provides generous funding (\$20 million in 2007) to NGOs who are committed to eradicating human trafficking both within Norway and internationally.

Norway has a legalized sex trade, however starting in 2009, legislation that has been enacted to criminalize those who purchase sexual services, similar to Sweden's "demand side" legislation, will take effect.

### **Greenland**

Danish laws protect potential trafficking victims in Greenland, although little evidence of human trafficking in Greenland exists. Denmark is a hotspot for trafficking however, most likely because prostitution is legal. The number of foreign women involved in prostitution is considerably higher in Denmark than it is in Sweden and Norway (The Protection Project, 2008). Since the 1990s women from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states have been brought to Denmark to work in the commercial sex industry and it is estimated that approximately 6,000 women are employed in prostitution in Denmark, with half of the foreign prostitutes coming from the Baltic States (The Protection Project, 2008).

The Danish criminal code prohibits human trafficking and in 2002 Denmark introduced an action plan to combat trafficking in women that focuses on two areas: victim support and the prevention of trafficking (The Protection Project, 2008).

### **Iceland**

Recent increased international migration into Iceland has led to an increase in human trafficking into the country. In a statement to the U.N. by Ambassador Hannesson (2006), the Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations noted that,

*“A new era of mass international migration has recently begun. Iceland is acutely aware of this. Only ten years ago, Iceland was one of the most homogenous societies in the world. Today, a higher portion of our labour market is occupied by immigrants . . . closely linked to migration is the rapid growth of human trafficking and smuggling. Attempts have been made to use Iceland as a country of transit on the route over the Atlantic and the Icelandic authorities have taken steps accordingly.”* (p. 2).

Iceland is believed to be a destination and transit country for victims of trafficking (US DOS, 2008) and the Icelandic police have records of around 15 to 20 possible victims of human trafficking in the country.

Iceland ratified the UN Trafficking Protocol in 2007, being the last of the Arctic nations to ratify the protocol. Although Iceland has had a law on the books regarding human trafficking since 2003, the law is considered to be ineffective because it does not provide protection or support for victims of human trafficking. Therefore, the Icelandic government has begun to prepare a plan of action on how to respond to human trafficking. The plan is going to be similar to Norway’s plan to combat human trafficking (Iceland Review Online, 2008).

### **Russia**

Exacerbated by the break up of the Soviet Union, human trafficking continues to be a massive human rights abuse in Russia. Organized crime, poverty, corruption, gender discrimination, violence against women, dreams of a better life abroad, and lack of adequate legislation contribute to the human trafficking problem in Russia (The Protection Project, 2008). In addition, human trafficking brings profits to the government and the police force in the form of pay-offs and bribes. The number of trafficking victims from Russia is estimated to be in the tens of thousands and possibly in the hundreds of thousands (The Protection Project, 2008).

According to the U.S. Department of State (US DOS, 2008) Russia is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking victims. Women and men from the Russian Far East are trafficked to China, Japan, the Middle East and South Korea for forced labor and prostitution. Russian women are trafficked to Turkey, Greece, Germany, the U.S., Italy, Spain, Malta, Canada, Vietnam, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Costa Rica, and the Middle East for commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, thousands of people are trafficked within Russia from Russia, the Ukraine and Moldova for forced labor and prostitution. The UN stated that Russia is the country of origin most frequently named by human trafficking victims (The Protection Project, 2008).

According to the Protection Project (2008), “In 2001, in the U.S. government’s first use of the new U.S. anti-trafficking law, a grand jury indicted one Russian citizen and three U.S. citizens for trafficking six Russian women to Anchorage, Alaska, for forced labor in a strip club”. Although Russia does have a human trafficking law on the books, little priority is given to combating human trafficking in Russia by the Russian government. Because of this, much of the anti-trafficking work in Russia is carried out by NGOs (The Protection Project, 2008).

The U.S. government has recommended that Russia needs to develop a “national strategy that acknowledges the gravity of Russia’s multi-faceted human trafficking problem and allocates adequate resources to address deficiencies in victim assistance” (US DOS, 2008, p. 216). The U.S. has placed Russia on its trafficking Watch List for its failure to increase efforts to combat trafficking from Russia and within Russia.

## **Canada**

Canada is considered to be a source, transit and destination country for both women and men to work in the labor and sex industry. Women and children are trafficked from East Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (US DOS, 2008). Many trafficking victims are trafficked through Canada to the United States, in particular South Korean females (US DOS, 2008). In 2006 an NGO identified Canada as being a country that was not adequately dealing with human trafficking in the country. The Future Group (2006) found that “Canada has systematically failed to comply with its international obligations under the Trafficking Protocol for the protection of victims of human trafficking [and that] Canada’s record of dealing with trafficking victims is an international embarrassment and contrary to best practices” (p. 13). The Future Group (2006) found that Canada has systematically ignored calls for reform and re-

traumatizes victims of trafficking by refusing to provide any support services and by routinely deporting the trafficking victims. Victims of human trafficking are generally retained as illegal migrants and then deported and Canadian law does not provide any formal protective measures to meet the needs of trafficking victims (The Future Group, 2006). After the Future Group's report was released, in 2007 Canada increased the length of temporary resident permits for foreign trafficking victims and significantly increased anti-trafficking prevention efforts (US DOS, 2008). However, Canada still struggles with law enforcement efforts against trafficking offenders (US DOS, 2008).

It is important to note that Indigenous women in Canada are at extreme risk for trafficking and are often found in situations of commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution in urban areas. The Canadian Committee on the Status of Women found that indigenous females are at a greater risk of becoming victims of human trafficking (Loyie, 2007). Because Indigenous women are Canadian citizens, they may not be considered as victims of human trafficking, by official definition.

### **The United States (Alaska)**

The United States is primarily a destination country for victims of human trafficking. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on human trafficking in Alaska. Trafficking cases have been found in Alaska, including trafficking for sexual exploitation and labor trafficking. As mentioned, in 2000, the United States passed the TVPA, which focuses on prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts. Under the TVPA legislation, a new visa category was created to provide residency for human trafficking victims. Up to 5,000 T Visas can be issued to victims of human trafficking and their families on a yearly basis, including those victims found in Alaska. The state of Alaska recently passed a state level human trafficking law, using guidelines outlined by the federal government. In 2008, an Alaskan man was sentenced to 30 years in prison for human trafficking in the state. Like in Canada, Indigenous Alaskan women are especially vulnerable to internal human trafficking, although they are not protected under U.S. human trafficking legislation because they are not illegal immigrants (you must be an illegal immigrant to receive services as a trafficking victim under U.S. law).

## **Conclusion**

After my presentation on human trafficking policy at the NRF Open Assembly, the question “why should Arctic nations care about this issue when we have so many more important matters to deal with?” was posed to me. As I mentioned in my introduction to this paper, human trafficking may not be the most pressing issue in Arctic areas at present, however as globalization and increased migration continue to impact Arctic nations, so to will human trafficking.

Obviously, as outlined above, there has been a wealth of responses to the human trafficking problem from individual nations and from multi-national organizations that include Arctic nations in their membership. What is alarming however, is that despite these various responses, human trafficking is still a major human rights abuse and there is no sign of there being a significant reduction. In fact, trafficking is considered to be on the rise in many regions of the world. All nations, including Arctic Nations have an obligation to address the causes and consequences of trafficking and to work towards the elimination of trafficking worldwide.

Additionally, because Indigenous women seem to be particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, especially in Canada and Alaska, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) should have human trafficking on their radar screen since the Council has a goal of working towards international recognition of the human rights of Indigenous peoples (ICC, 2008).

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