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Position Papers

Examining the role of sex work in modern society

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Welcome from the Dias and Secretariat

Dear Delegates,

The following documents are a collection of position papers for the countries represented in our ATUMUN conference on the topic of *Examining the role of sex work in modern society*. We expect you to have read the Study Guide beforehand and hope that you've had the time to research by yourself as well. It is of great importance that you read the Position paper for your respective countries before the session begins, as this will serve as the very basis of the negotiations.

When reading your Position Paper, it is important to note the central view that your country represents. We recommend that you take note of your country's position regarding what we are discussing as well as how your country would be willing to solve this issue, if at all. We highly recommend that you compliment your Position Paper with your own research. The Position Papers are kept short in order for you to make your own conclusions as well as the position that the paper reveals.

In order for you to be able to have a fruitful debate, we highly recommend that you read other countries' Position Papers as well. By doing so, you will get a better understanding of the topic and the different perspectives that the countries represent.

If you have any questions, we would like to remind you that you can always write in the Facebook group or to atumunsekretariatet@gmail.com, and if you need any help with your research, we would like to refer to Questions a resolution should answer, Further reading, and Bloc positions in the Study Guide.

Sincerely your Dias and Secretariat,

Signe Ottesen, Dicte Møberg, Lucca Dybtved Kjærgaard, Nicoline Meng Aagaard Andersen,
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Plurinational State of Bolivia

In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, henceforth known as Bolivia, sex work is neither explicitly legal nor illegal. However, there is a mandatory system for registering sex workers. In this system, health check-ups are mandatory every 15 days and a test for sexually transmitted infections and HIV is mandatory every 3 months. Once a sex worker is registered by the state, they can not be arrested by the police.¹

Finding a reliable source on the amount of sex workers in Bolivia can be quite difficult. However, it is estimated that between 13,500 and 25,000 people work as sex workers in Bolivia. Further, prostitution has a long history in Bolivia, dating back to the Incas, and its first known 'official' brothel was opened in 1875. Despite this long history, sex work is frowned upon and heavily stigmatised in Bolivian society.²

Unfortunately, Bolivia has quite a few cases of human trafficking each year. More precisely, 1,359 cases of violations against the law *Against Trafficking in Persons* were reported in 2023. This is an increase from 2022, where 1,105 such crimes were reported. Furthermore, according to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Bolivia is, in a South American context, the primary country of origin for human trafficking. All of this is despite national and subnational campaigns and operations being carried out to combat these particular crimes.³

The Bolivian government is taking steps to eliminate human trafficking. One such step is strengthening the migratory control with neighbouring countries. Another step is looking towards bilateral and multilateral agreements to fight human trafficking. Furthermore, Bolivia believes in non-victimization where victims of human trafficking must be assisted within the Bolivian framework.

All in all, Bolivia will want to fight for an international framework against human trafficking, as that is their main problem when it comes to sex work. Bolivia will not necessarily fight in favour of or against laws regarding sex work. They will, however, be opposed to outright banning sex work.

¹ <https://sexualrightsdatabase.org/countries/375/Bolivia>

² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/lamp.12308>

³ <https://latinarepublic.com/2024/01/15/the-fight-against-human-trafficking-in-bolivia/>

People's Republic of China

In the People's Republic of China, henceforth known as China, sexwork, pornography, and prostitution is illegal and all actors involved can face sanctions and legal action. Selling and buying sex is illegal under administrative law, whereas working as a sexworker while having a STI or HIV or organising/profitting from sexwork are criminal offences.⁴

In 2019, China stopped their controversial custody and education centres where police could punish sexworkers with up to 2 years' detention and forced labour without a trial. Prostitution remains illegal in China but punishments are now typically up to 15 days in detention and fines of up to 5,000 yuan (around 1000 USD).⁵

Even though China has been engaging in a long running campaign against pornography, strictly monitoring and censoring what can be seen through online networks, a legal grey area has occurred with rent people apps. Here, the users can 'rent' someone, usually of the opposite gender, to do legal activities such as shopping or dining. However, these apps present a danger of prostitution or rape, which is illegal.⁶

In 2021, the State Council approved *China's Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2021-2030)*. The Action Plan is drafted on the basis of relevant international conventions and Chinese domestic laws and aims to actively respond to human trafficking crime situations in China and abroad, prevent and combat human trafficking crimes in accordance with the law, assist and resettle victims, and safeguard citizens' legitimate rights and interests.⁷ China has also adopted a new Women's Rights and Interests Protection Law which heightened existing protection against trafficking crimes involving women as well as the responsibilities of government officials to respond to trafficking crimes. The law mentions cooperation with foreign law to extradite Chinese nationals suspected of human trafficking abroad and award restitution to trafficking victims. However, China has been accused of "lacking significant efforts" and not meeting the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking and for their pattern of widespread forced labour.⁸

⁴ <https://www.nswp.org/country/china>

⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-30/china-to-stop-punishing-sex-workers-with-forced-labour/11832040>

⁶ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/12/china-people-for-rent-startup-app-prostitution-social-networking-sex/>

⁷ <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/countertraffickingplan2021thr2030/>

⁸ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/china/>

Republic of France

Prostitution was legal in the Republic of France, henceforth known as France, up until April 2016,⁹ where a new law criminalised the solicitation and buying of sex work. France now follows the Nordic Model, with some bylaws. This includes some areas being able to ban sex work and sex workers not being allowed to work together - like borrowing a flat from a co-worker to do their work. Sex work is not a recognised profession in France and does therefore not have regulations or a requirement for registration.¹⁰ Clients can risk a fine of €1,500 when caught, which rises to up to €3,750 for repeat offenders.¹¹

There has been a large distress in the country, where 260 female and male sex workers filed a case to the European court in 2019 against the law that makes buying sex work illegal. As they claim, the law goes against several articles of the European Convention of Human Rights and the sex workers in question argue that it has unjustly affected their livelihoods.¹² Sex workers and their associations regularly protest against the law. They claim that the law has pushed prostitutes into secrecy and isolation while it has heightened negative risks to their physical integrity and even lives. Furthermore, the criminalisation of sex work impacts their freedom in their private lives. They hope that the court will recognise the law's destructive impact on their lives, health, and safety.¹³

The change in legal ideology means that all sex work is now seen as violence against women. Thus, all sex work is associated with rape and human trafficking. This ideology translates into the belief that sex workers are victims of a crime. With the change in law, the government also set up an official 'exit pathway' for sex workers who want to stop doing sex work, which provides individuals with a residency permit and a small stipend. However, the change in law has been criticised for going against its intended purpose; to protect victims. It is rather eradicating sex workers from cities and limiting the number of sex workers in France. Some testimonies from sex workers state that the law has made the client-sex worker relationship more unbalanced, as the clients who still want to buy their services now have more bargaining power, and sex workers can only be as selective with their customers as earlier. There has also been an increase in sexually transmitted diseases between sex workers after 2016.¹⁴

Further reading: https://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/france_legal_case_study.pdf

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_France

¹⁰ <https://www.nswp.org/country/france>

¹¹ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230831-rights-court-agrees-to-hear-french-prostitution-law-appeal>

¹² <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20230901-european-rights-court-agrees-to-hear-appeal-against-french-anti-prostitution-law>

¹³ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230831-rights-court-agrees-to-hear-french-prostitution-law-appeal>

¹⁴ https://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/france_legal_case_study.pdf

Republic of India

While prostitution itself is not illegal in the Republic of India, henceforth known as India, various activities related to it are criminalised under the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956 (PITA). Soliciting in public, running brothels, and pimping are prohibited. However, sex work can technically be carried out privately without interference although enforcement practices often blur these distinctions. There are approximately 3 million sex workers in India, aged from 15 to 35.¹⁵

In May 2022, the Indian supreme court recognised sex work as a profession, further legitimising sex work in the eyes of the law. According to one of the judges, *“Sex workers are entitled to equal protection of the law. Criminal law must apply equally in all cases on the basis of ‘age’ and ‘consent’. When it is clear that the sex worker is an adult and is participating with consent, the police must refrain from interfering or taking any criminal action”*.¹⁶ Thus greatly cementing the rights of sex workers in India.

While sex work is legal in India, there is a large part of the population which views sex work as unethical and as a violation of cultural values, making sex work heavily stigmatised in Indian society. In an attempt to stop the exploitation of women, the Indian government has launched campaigns to inform people of the risks and hazards involved in the commercial sex trade. Furthermore, in an attempt to guarantee the rights of women and girls who engage in sex trade, the government formed the National Commission for Women.¹⁷

According to official statistics from the Indian government, just over 6000 people were victims of human trafficking in 2022. The split between kids (below 18 years old) and adults (above 18 years old) is approximately 50/50. Out of the 6000 human trafficking cases, only around 2000 of the cases were related to sexual exploitation and around 50 were related to child pornography. However, some sources dispute this number as not reflecting reality. Instead, they estimate that more than 100,000 minor girls are abducted and trafficked each year. These girls are never reported missing as they are sold by their parents to make some cash.^{18, 19}

15

<https://www.iyops.org/post/a-guide-to-prostitution-in-india-then-and-now-the-dark-shadows-behind-the-glittery-curtains>

16

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-recognises-sex-work-as-a-profession/article65461331.ece>

17

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/welfaremeasuresunderthefactoriesactcriticalappraisal/prostitution-legality-and-morality-in-india-55396/>

18

<https://www.ncrb.gov.in/uploads/nationalcrimerecordsbureau/custom/ciiyearwise2022/1701608543CrimeinIndia2022Book3.pdf>

19

<https://www.iyops.org/post/a-guide-to-prostitution-in-india-then-and-now-the-dark-shadows-behind-the-glittery-curtains>

Altogether, India is not very clear on their views on prostitution, though they do not officially discriminate against sex workers. However, there is a large problem with human trafficking where there might be a large number of cases not being picked up by the government as they are never reported.

Islamic Republic of Iran

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, henceforth known as Iran, prostitution is viewed as a serious moral, religious, and legal offence. The country's stance on prostitution is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and the principles of Sharia law, which govern many aspects of Iranian society. Prostitution is considered haram (an act that is forbidden by Allah) in Islam, and engaging in it is seen as a violation of both religious principles and societal norms. Punishment ranges based on the offence, all from 10 days to 2 months to 74 lashes for the customer. The death penalty can alternatively be imposed for prostitution if the woman in question is married. In such cases, the client may also be executed. However, when it comes to enforcing Iran's prostitution laws, the Iranian government only prosecutes selectively and inconsistently. Authorities frequently turn a blind eye or focus on high-profile crackdowns and their actions are widely believed to be steered by corruption and bribery.²⁰

However, there is a way around Iran's strict look on sex and relations outside of marriage which are completely legal; so-called temporary marriages. When entering into a temporary marriage, the partners involved determine its duration in advance, which may range from a few minutes to 99 years, agreeing on a fixed dowry to which the 'wife' is entitled. For young and modern people in Iran, it is a way to be in a non-binding relationship with whom you can split from whenever you want. For traditionalists, on the other hand, temporary marriage means that a well-off man, even if married, can use the services of one or more women who earn their living through sex work. The most common factor for people in Iran who enter sex work is because of economic instability and the high cost of living caused by the US sanctions and global inflation. For some, it can become an economic liberation, and for others, it is a way of survival. The age of prostitution is getting lower and an estimate goes all the way down to children as young as 8-10 years. These are presumably forced by their families to make money. Husbands can also force their wives into the industry. However, it is not only women who are prostitutes in Iran, some men also go into the line of work to survive.^{21, 22}

Because of the legal and social sanctions that can be made against prostitutes, many advertise their services online with suggestive imagery or with a cover, like disguising it as a massage.²³ There has also been a form of tourism industry out of the underground sex market, especially in major cities like Tehran and the two main pilgrimage cities of Mashad and Qom, where the sex industry is booming. Therefore, men from neighbouring Shia-Muslim-countries make pilgrimages to Iran, enjoying the beautiful landscape, the sights, and the women²⁴

Further Reading: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18966982>

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV0u5G70zc0>

²¹ <https://qantara.de/en/article/prostitution-islamic-republic-iran-open-minded-loving-and-desperate>

²² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-60661875>

²³ <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202407167661>

²⁴ <https://qantara.de/en/article/prostitution-islamic-republic-iran-open-minded-loving-and-desperate>

<https://iranwire.com/en/society/102883-more-than-40-percent-of-iranian-survey-respondents-admit-to-using-prostitutes/>

Japan

Japan has a long history and tradition with commercial sex work, which goes back to the Edo Period (1603-1868) where Geishas and courtesans were key figures in Japanese society. These factors still linger in Japanese culture where companionship and entertainment still are selling points. Prostitution, which is defined by Japanese law as ‘intercourse with an unspecified person in exchange for payment’, was made illegal in 1956. However, no other aspects of sex work is prohibited and can therefore be offered as long as it does not include intercourse. Services range from companionship, bathing, dancing, to all sexual acts (except for conventional heterosexual penetrative sex). Sex work is also often advertised as something ‘for one’s health’, implying that sex work is only for satisfying the individual’s physical need for sex and companionship - not for any emotional need. Therefore, sex work is largely socially accepted in forms like ‘soaplands’, ‘delivery health’, or escort services and is also regulated by law. Some Japanese people don’t even view it as infidelity if sexual services are used, emphasising that romantic relationships consist of both a physical and emotional aspect.^{25, 26}

However, there has been a rise in people exploited into prostitution in Japan. Examples include foreigners, who went to Japan seeking work but ultimately ended up as sex workers to afford going back home or just to survive, and vulnerable Japanese citizens, especially young girls, who are tricked into being indebted by ‘hosts clubs’ where they are forced to work as prostitutes to pay off that debt. The number of prostitutes in Japan has grown rapidly since the pandemic. The Tokyo Police arrested 140 people for alleged prostitution in 2023, which is nearly triple the amount from 2022, and 43% of those arrested prostitutes reported they went into the sex work to pay off the ‘host club’ debts.²⁷

The Japanese government has increased efforts to prevent trafficking through various initiatives. It produced an annual report tracking progress on its anti-trafficking action plan and began implementing the 2016 Act on Proper Technical Intern Training which is aimed at criminalising labour abuses, enhancing oversight, and improving conditions for Technical Intern Trainees (TITP) which is a system to enable foreigners to work in Japan. The Act on Child Prostitution and Pornography prohibits engaging in or facilitating child sexual exploitation with penalties up to five years of imprisonment or fines and up to 10 years imprisonment for purchasing or selling children for prostitution or child pornography.²⁸

²⁵ <https://www.nswp.org/country/japan>

²⁶ <https://medium.com/@naturalist314/understanding-the-complex-notion-of-prostitution-and-relationship-dynamics-in-japan-6560b406ddc>

²⁷ <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13917980>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKEtFLAelgI>

²⁸ <https://web.archive.org/web/20180710010326/https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282680.htm>

Further Reading:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180710010326/https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282680.htm>

New Zealand

New Zealand is the only country in the world where sex work is completely legal, with the only exception being facilitating sex work if the worker is under 18. This came about in 2003 with the Prostitution Reform Act (RPA), where the goals were to safeguard the human rights of sex workers, protect them from exploitation, promote welfare, health, and safety in the industry, and prohibit workers under 18. This reform has been known as the New Zealand approach and is an alternative to the Nordic model, where the focus is shifted from the sex worker being a victim to legitimising the line of work. Therefore, sex work is protected under several government bodies, as many other jobs. They are therefore also entitled to workfare protections, such as access to healthcare. However, there is still opposition to this approach in New Zealand, most noticeable from fundamentalist groups and some feminists. However, switching to the Nordic model is disregarded on the basis that it could have negative consequences for the health and safety of sex workers and that there has never been a totally successful way of eradicating sex work as a whole.²⁹

Reviews made by both the [Prostitution Law Review Committee](#) and independently by Christchurch School of Medicine (CSM) found that sex workers have generally been the same or better off because of the RPA. Where 90% of sex workers believed the PRA gave them employment, plus legal, health, and safety rights. A substantial 64% found it easier to refuse clients. Significantly, 57% said that police attitudes towards sex workers changed for the better. Especially the relation between the police and sex workers has turned better, because they are now seen as individuals, who should be protected like everyone else, instead of criminals. Some feminists still want to impose the Nordic model, where the sex workers are seen as victims, which sex workers in New Zealand frown upon as they do not want to be reduced to victims and have their rights taken away.³⁰

Some sources claim that the numbers mentioned earlier are not true and that there has been an expansion in the industry since the decriminalisation. Coincidentally, most of these sources are also advocating for other models, such as the Nordic model, and could therefore enforce data bias. Moreover, they disregard that sex work, which might have been underground earlier, is now regulated by the state.^{31, 32} It should not be forgotten that in any country where sex work exists (which is everywhere) violence follows, and New Zealand is no exception. There are therefore also instances of grooming and trafficking in the industry, and several former workers are coming out with horrific personal stories from the industry.³³ The government has tried to combat the violence and enforcement against workers by legally declaring that nobody – including brothel operators, receptionists, minders, or clients – can

²⁹ <https://www.nzpc.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Model>

³⁰ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/decriminalising-sex-work-in-new-zealand-its-history-and-impact/>

³¹ <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2023/09/25/what-really-happened-in-new-zealand-after-prostitution-was-decriminalised/>

³² <https://thestandard.org.nz/the-new-zealand-model-for-prostitution-liberalisation-doesnt-work/>

³³ <https://redyellowblue.org/data/nz/prostitution/>

force a sex worker to have sex, even if a client has paid, according to both Criminal Law and the PRA.³⁴

³⁴ <https://www.nzpc.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Model>

Kingdom of Norway

The Kingdom of Norway, henceforth known as Norway, implemented the decriminalization approach to sex work, following their neighbouring country, Sweden, in 1972. However, it was not until 2009 that the framework known as ‘The Nordic Model’ was implemented. The model was introduced to reduce prostitution plus combat organised crime and human trafficking. The law also defines that sex work is inherently bad and predatory. Therefore, the blame should not be on the workers (here seen as victims) themselves but alternatively on the provider (e.g. pimp or brothel) and buyer. However, it is debated whether the criminalization of the buyer pushes sex work underground where the state cannot monitor and support people in the industry. Additionally, it is argued that the law only further empathises the stigmatisation and discrimination of sex workers.³⁵ Additionally, it has been debated whether the law has been successful, asking if there has been an increase in prostitution after the law was enforced. There was an evaluation of the law made and published in August 2014. The report found that enforcing the law, in combination with the laws against trafficking and pimping, made Norway a less attractive country for prostitution-based trafficking than what would have been the case if the law had not been adopted. The question of whether it is the best solution still lingers.³⁶

Punishment for buying/providing sex work ranges from fines to 5 years of imprisonment depending on how the person made money from the prostitution and whether the sex worker is under 18 years old (even though the sexual age in Norway is 16). Providing sex work in Norway is defined as someone who benefits from or facilitate other people’s prostitution. This also makes it illegal to rent out an apartment, premises or a hotel room to persons who sell sex. Earnings made from sex work is subject to the laws surrounding any other earnings even though the work itself is criminalised. Some people go around the grey area by registering themselves as self-employed, for example as masseurs, to pay taxes and access the welfare benefits that come from this.³⁷

Norway follows the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which was implemented in 2008. It includes limiting human trafficking, helping victims, prosecuting human traffickers, coordinating national measures, and international cooperation. Norway has additionally made an organisation and hotline, called Rosa, to help victims of human trafficking. It was created in 2005 and is open all 24 hours of the day and offers help in 3 languages; Norwegian, English, and Spanish.³⁸

³⁵ <https://workingwithnorwegians.com/understanding-the-legal-status-of-sex-work-in-norway/>

³⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_Norway#Prostitution_in_Norway_today

³⁷ <https://www.prosentret.no/laws-and-regulations-1/norwegian-law-on-prostitution/>

³⁸ <https://www.rosanorge.no/>

Romania

Regarding human trafficking, Romania came into the spotlight in December 2022 after influencer Andrew Tate was arrested in Bucharest. Romania has been known as a haven for human trafficking and prostitution with thrice as many victims as Poland and Bulgaria and twice as many as France and Italy. A report from 2022 states that 70% of trafficking victims are forced into sex work and half of them are in Romania. Romania does have a special department focusing on human trafficking with limited prosecutors assigned to it.³⁹ Europol has been helping exchanging information within the EU to help combat the trafficking groups.⁴⁰

The ‘loverboy’ method is one of the most used ways of luring victims into the sex- and trafficking industry, whether that be in Romania or with the goal of the victims going to another country. The loverboy method is when the perpetrator preys on vulnerable people by making them think that they have found a loving partner. Afterwards, they will force the victims into prostitution or other sexual crimes. One of the reasons Romania has so many people involved with the sex industry is that poverty makes people more vulnerable since they can be desperate to escape it. Romania grappled with communist authoritarianism until the late 1980s and has since struggled to build a stable economy.

Romania has the highest poverty rate in the EU. At the same time, the war in Ukraine has seen an unprecedented amount of refugees fleeing to Romania. This means that more people are vulnerable and at risk of becoming victims of the industry.⁴¹

Prostitution in Romania was banned under criminal law until 2014. Since then, this has been changed to it being an administrative offence and punishable by a fine. That makes Romania one of the few countries in Europe where the provision of sexual services in general is punishable.⁴² Romania is currently using the abolitionist model to combat prostitution.⁴³

³⁹ <https://www.nzz.ch/english/romania-grapples-with-growing-problem-of-trafficking-in-women-ld.1757474>

⁴⁰ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/fake-love-devicious-men-luring-young-women-prostitution-busted-in-spain-and-romania>

⁴¹ <https://www.socialeurope.eu/sex-trafficking-in-romania-and-moldova>

⁴² <https://www.streetchildren.org/legal-atlas/map/romania/status-offences/can-the-law-cause-commercially-sexually-exploited-children-to-be-criminalised/>

⁴³ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-where-prostitution-is-legal>

Russian Federation

In the Russian Federation, henceforth known as Russia, it is illegal to work with and organise sex work. It is, however, not illegal to buy sex.⁴⁴ Even though sex work is criminalised, it does not stop people from working with sex work. Different sources estimate different numbers, but they are generally between 1 and 5 million people involved in the Russian sex work industry.⁴⁵

The very large sex industry in Russia is supported by the fact that the government tries to ignore the problem in hopes of it going away. This, combined with corruption and bribery, leads to sex work being prevalent.⁴⁶ However, a part of the reason might also be the fairly low punishment, which is a fine between 1500 and 2000 rubles (21-29 USD), for supplying sex services. Alternatively, one can be imprisoned for up to five years for organising a prostitution ring.⁴⁷

While not directly related, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has had a large impact on prostitution in Russia in many different ways. For one, the police has become more aggressive against prostitutes. Typically, 30-40 people were fined for prostitution each month. However, after the war begun, the number has been as high as 1000 fines in a single month. Furthermore, with the increasing mobilisation, a lot of the clientele is gone, making it harder for prostitutes to earn a living. This is all combined with the fact that soldiers (or former soldiers) can be more aggressive and threatening while some expect discounts or even free services because they have served in the war.⁴⁸

Russia also has a very large problem with sex slavery. A recent report estimates that a 1 million strong slave force exists in Russia. This report does not differentiate between types of forced labour. However, it says that the sex industry is among the main employers of the Russian slave industry. While many other countries might try to fight against slavery, this is not the case in Russia where both the government and the public prefer to look the other way. This is due to the fear of harming Russia's reputation if the problem is admitted. Panteleyev, who has been combating human trafficking in Russia since the 90's, says, "*Admitting the existence of slavery, in the eyes of officials, would harm our prestige*".⁴⁹

All in all, sex work is a large business in Russia even though it is illegal. However, the government tends to look the other way, both due to rampant corruption and in the hope that it will go away. Furthermore, Russia has a large problem with sex slavery, which they

⁴⁴ <https://www.nswp.org/country/russia>

⁴⁵

<https://iz.ru/1504542/dmitrii-bulgakov/naprasnyi-blud-v-rossii-predlozhili-vvesti-shtrafy-za-reklamu-seksualnykh-uslug>

⁴⁶

<https://semnasem.org/posts/2023/05/23/prostituticiya-v-rossii-eto-tema-kotoroj-kak-budto-ne-sushestvuet-v-publi-chnom-diskurse>

⁴⁷

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/08/26/amnesty-international-highlights-russias-prostitution-problem-a49128>

⁴⁸ <https://worldcrunch.com/culture-society/russian-sex-workers-ukraine-war>

⁴⁹ <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/12/01/sex-slavery-thrives-in-russia-out-of-public-view-a41881>

currently won't try to fix due to a worry of losing face. Thus, during a debate, Russia might be willing to work against sex slavery while resisting that it is a problem in Russia.

Republic of South Africa

The Republic of South Africa, henceforth known as South Africa, has since 2022 been working on a bill to decriminalise sex work but it has yet to be written into law.⁵⁰ The topic has been subject to considerable debate in South Africa, especially due to the complexity of the topic and the intersection between social and economic factors, of which unemployment, inequality, and poverty are key factors. The South African government acknowledges that the criminalisation of sex work has not stopped selling or purchasing of sex. The government also acknowledged that the legislation might have contributed to greater amounts of violence against sex workers and that those affected have predominantly been female workers rather than their male clients. The plan for the bill is that it would work in two steps: First step being decriminalisation, with the goal of destigmatising sex work, and the second step being regulations. The new regulations would be similar to those regarding the location of taverns and the like e.g. restricting trade near schools and religious buildings. With the new bill, current laws prohibiting children from selling sex as well as those against trafficking for sexual purposes will remain in place.⁵¹

Since the election, there has been no new updates on the bill.⁵² Multiple parties did state before the election that they were in support of decriminalising sex work, though to differing degrees (especially regarding the clients). Some parties did either not comment on the issue or are against it for various reasons.⁵³

The current laws on sex work in South Africa block sex workers from access to health care, healthy working conditions, as well as labour right and human rights.⁵⁴ South African has a long history of laws criminalising sex work and a just as long history of it not working, going all the way back to colonial times. The view on sex work has also changed, from being seen as a source of illness to an enabler for interracial relations to the current call for decriminalisation making it less of a taboo.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ <https://elitshaneews.org.za/2024/05/31/sex-workers-call-for-decriminalisation-bill-to-be-signed-into-law/>

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<https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/minister-ronald-lamola-criminal-law-amendment-bill-2022-decriminalisation-sex>

⁵² <https://elitshaneews.org.za/2024/05/31/sex-workers-call-for-decriminalisation-bill-to-be-signed-into-law/>

⁵³ <https://groundup.org.za/article/elections-2024-what-major-political-parties-say-about-sex-work/>

⁵⁴ <https://aidsfonds.org/news-stories/the-sexworkpromise-decriminalising-sex-work-in-south-africa/>

⁵⁵ <https://mg.co.za/thought-leader/opinion/2023-01-05-prostitution-in-south-africa-a-history-of-ineffective-laws/>

United States of America

The United States of America, henceforth known as the US, is prohibiting prostitution in every state except Nevada, where prostitution is legal in licensed brothels and only in 10 of the 16 counties.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Maine passed a law in 2023 that partially decriminalised prostitution by legalising the sale of prostitution while still prohibiting the purchase of prostitution.⁵⁷ In the US, prostitution laws are determined by the individual state. Depending on applicable state laws, arrests, and criminal charges can be applied to providers of sex work, customers, and anyone who profits from it. Depending on the offence, solicitation and prostitution are in most states punished by a minimal fine. However, the circumstances of the arrest can affect the severity of the penalty.

Though the federal government mostly leaves the prosecution of prostitution up to the individual states, it does seek to protect minors and addresses trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. The Mann Act enacted in 1910, which later has been amended and clarified, makes it a crime to transport an individual in interstate or foreign commerce, specifically with the intent to make the individual engage in prostitution or other illegal sexual activity. Federal sex trafficking convictions can result in lengthy prison sentences and fines. Other federal laws on this topic are The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA).⁵⁸

However, in the US, human rights groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, are pushing for further decriminalisation of sex work, advocating for reforms to focus on those who engage in consensual sexual acts, and arguing that criminalisation enables people who victimise sexworkers as well as people and groups that profit from human trafficking.⁵⁹

It is important to note that even though prostitution is illegal in most of the US, it is legal to purchase and access pornographic materials. However, it is illegal to knowingly distribute pornography to minors. Furthermore, it is illegal to produce, distribute, receive, or possess pornography depicting minors in sexual acts. Revenge porn is also illegal to distribute in all but 4 states.⁶⁰

In 2016, the US Department of Justice published an overview of the initiatives targeting the demand for commercial sex in the USA. The report states that it is intended to serve as an introduction for those considering applying anti-demand tactics in their communities and for those at the state government level who consider policies, statues, and infrastructure investments supporting local efforts.⁶¹

⁵⁶ <https://thedefenders.net/blogs/nevada-prostitution-and-brothel-laws/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.cato.org/blog/maine-legalizes-sale-prostitution-services>

⁵⁸ <https://www.nswp.org/country/usa>

⁵⁹ <https://www.findlaw.com/criminal/criminal-charges/prostitution.html>

⁶⁰ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/pornography>

⁶¹ <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/initiatives-reduce-demand-prostitution-and-sex-trafficking-us>