Violence & torture against women & girls in trafficking & prostitution: Educating service providers

Dear friends,

I’m here to give you some encouraging information in the fight in my country against the serious violence suffered by the victims of the prosperous system of sexual exploitation.

you know that France adopted in April 2016 a law that makes people involved in the sexual trafficking system victims in their own right.
Two years after its adoption the law begins to produce promising effects around four objectives. The first concerns the situation of victims through a system that facilitates protection, access to social housing and reintegration actions, provided they have left prostitution. The second reinforces the severity of punishment against the exploiters whose penalty is aggravated in case of tortures or serious violence, regarding nearly 500 offenders condemned per year. The third is to penalize the buyers of sexual services that thus create the demand and maintain the violence suffered by thousands of victims of which 95% women. Several thousand clients, men exclusively, were thus arrested and had to choose between a fine or an internship inspired by those planned for domestic violence. The fourth aims to sensitize public actors as well as NGOs and public opinion to the intrinsic violence generated by sexual exploitation.
in this context I want to share with you three good news:

• the 25\textsuperscript{th} January the largest congress of francophone specialists of brain sciences gathered in Paris has decided to launch studies on the PTSD of victims of trafficking of human beings. this will better assess and repair the immediate and lasting consequences of the violence suffered

• The first February, at a conference held at the French Supreme Court, the presidents of the two highest European courts reaffirmed their opposition to all forms of merchandising the human body.

• the same day, the constitutional council validated the conformity of the penalization of the customers with the constitutional principles of our Republic.

The law was accused of violating the principle of protection of privacy (of clients) and the freedom of enterprise of sex sellers.

The legislator considered that the vast majority of people who engage in prostitution are victims of procuring and trafficking and that these offenses are made possible by the existence of a demand for prized sexual relations.
By making the choice to penalize the sex-buyers, the legislator intended to ensure the safeguarding of the dignity of the human person against these forms of enslavement and pursued the objective of constitutional value of safeguarding public order and crime prevention. The way is thus clearer for the effective recognition, by all the actors in our societies, of the reality of this violence, always excessive and sometimes extreme, inflicted on the most vulnerable.

The SCELLES Foundation, which has played its part in the progress just mentioned, calls on all organizations represented here not to release their vigilance and their efforts in this struggle, which is essential to a true gender equality.

Yves Charpenel, President of the Fondation Scelles, First Honorary state prosecutor of the Supreme Court in France