

Azerbaijan Continues to be a Stronghold for Human Trafficking

By Student World Assembly, studentworldassembly.org

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NEW YORK, New York (July 20, 2009) Student World Assembly's (SWA) membership in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan has drawn attention to the growing issue of human trafficking in Azerbaijan. According to the 2009 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, women and children are trafficked within Azerbaijan for forced prostitution and forced labor, including forced begging. Women and children are also trafficked to countries such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, while men and boys are trafficked to Russia for the purpose of forced labor.

The TIP report mentions the government is making significant efforts to eliminate trafficking but have not been very successful stating "although the government made modest improvements, victim identification and access to victim assistance remained limited during the reporting period. The government adopted a new national action plan on trafficking in February 2009, however, it did not allocate funding to implement the programs and policies in the plan, and funding for anti-trafficking efforts remained low and inconsistent throughout the reporting period..."

Shahram Hashemi, Executive Director of Student World Assembly, spoke on the importance of drawing attention to human trafficking in Azerbaijan and around the world. He said "Human Trafficking is an epidemic in much of the world, because exploiting people for money has become one of the most lucrative businesses. It is imperative that people who are enslaving others for profit be brought to justice, and that the international community pressure governments to enforce tough laws to crack down on trafficking."

According to the State Department, Azerbaijan must increase law enforcement efforts to prosecute and convict traffickers and make sure that a majority of convicted traffickers serve time in prison. Also mentioned was increasing inter-agency coordination of anti-trafficking efforts; improving victim assistance and protection for child victims of trafficking; providing initial assistance to domestic victims without them having to file a formal complaint with the police; and conducting awareness and victim treatment training for law enforcement and judges.

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Category	Government, Health, Society
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