

Pimp wars expose vicious nature of Ireland's sex trade

Ruhama, Ireland's only dedicated national frontline service for women **affected by prostitution and sex trafficking**, responds to reports by the *Irish Independent* (14/08/17), [of a savage attack in Dublin yesterday](#) which is believed to have involved crime gangs linked to the city's lucrative organised prostitution trade.

Sarah Benson, CEO of Ruhama, said: "News of this level of violence within Ireland's sex trade comes as no great shock to us. We have nearly 30 years of experience supporting victims of the gangs who organise prostitution. This particular incident is a timely reminder of who really controls prostitution in Ireland and an insight into the violence it thrives on. If this is what prostitution 'organisers' are prepared to do to each other, then it doesn't take much imagination to consider how they treat the women they exploit."

Sarah Benson added: "We supported **304** women, transgender people and men during [2017 alone](#), very many of whom had experienced **multiple incidents** of physical violence, rape and sexual assault, at the hands of **pimps, traffickers, sex buyers and opportunistic criminals** alike. Women recount to us the various brutal means used by gangs to control and exploit them, including physical and psychological abuse, grooming, debt bondage and threats to their loved ones."

Sarah Benson said: "This has to stop. Ruhama has long campaigned to see greater measures taken to reduce the harm and exploitation of the commercial sex trade. As ever, we urge An Garda Síochána to use all of the legislative and operational tools at their disposal to step up their efforts to clamp down on those who organise prostitution in Ireland, those who profit from it and those who fuel it – the sex buyers themselves."

Sarah Benson concluded: "Buyers are the cohort who act with greatest impunity and minimal stigma, but this needs to change as they are the drivers of demand which perpetuates prostitution and trafficking in the first instance. It has been a criminal offence to pay for sex for over a year in Ireland for this very reason. Ruhama looks forward to seeing increased convictions of both buyers and the thugs who pimp and traffic these very vulnerable women and girls."

- ENDS -

Ruhama urges anyone who finds themselves in a difficult situation in Ireland's sex trade, or who is concerned about someone they know, to contact them for support on (01) 836 0292, or text the word REACH for free to 50100.

Notes to editor

1. 'Man stabbed 13 times after car chase linked to prostitution gang' *Irish Independent*, 14/08/18 <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/man-stabbed-13-times-after-car-chase-linked-to-prostitution-gang-37213669.html>

2. Since March of 2017 it has been illegal to pay for sex in Ireland under the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017*
3. Download our 2017 Annual Report and read the stories of women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking in Ireland here: <https://goo.gl/TuKfjg>

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About Ruhama

[Ruhama](#) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and a registered charity, which works on a nationwide basis with women, including transgender women, affected by prostitution and sex trafficking. Ruhama offers **free and confidential** support and assistance to women who:

- Are actively involved in prostitution
- Are seeking to exit (leave) prostitution
- Are victims of sex trafficking
- Have a past experience of prostitution/sex trafficking.

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