



## **US report launched today urgently calls on Ireland to do more to prevent and respond to trafficking in human beings**

Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains one of the most predominant forms of trafficking in Ireland, according to [the 2019 US State Department Trafficking in Persons report](#) launched today.

Each year this report provides the most comprehensive global overview of trafficking in human beings and state actions to both prevent and respond to trafficking. As per the US Department of State's criteria, Ireland was downgraded in 2018 to a Tier 2 country and maintains this ranking for this year. As such, the Irish government is again deemed as failing to meet minimum standards for fighting against and eliminating all forms of trafficking.

According to the 2019 TIP Report, state authorities only identified 27 victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Ireland, due to shortcomings in the identification processes and a lack of consistent law enforcement standards when assessing suspected victims.

Sheila Crowley, Service Manager at Ruhama, said: "This report is comprehensive and highlights some of the concerns our frontline work attests to, specifically in the realm of identifying and protecting victims. We're concerned about the victim identification process in Ireland, which excludes EEA nationals and asylum seekers who are suspected victims of trafficking. This has implications for their abilities to access services, which is exacerbated by the Habitual Residency Condition. Ireland must increase its efforts to adequately protect victims of trafficking."

Sex trafficking is a hugely gendered crime, affecting almost exclusively women, as is reflected in the report. Currently, many women who are victims of sex trafficking are being placed in Direct Provision accommodation in Ireland, rendering them vulnerable to continued abuse and exploitation.

Ms. Crowley continued: "It is crucial that the Irish government takes action to provide gender specific accommodation for victims of sex trafficking. Direct Provision is simply not suitable for women who have been subject to such gross violations of their human rights. Those who have survived being trafficked into the commercial sex trade must be given space to move past that trauma in safe, stable surroundings. Another way these efforts can be further strengthened is the introduction of a Special Rapporteur on Trafficking to Ireland".

Ruhama worked with 122 victims of sex trafficking from 29 countries in 2018, 32 of whom were new cases for that year. These cases are frequently very complex and many take years of frontline work to result in positive outcomes for the women involved.

Policy and Communications Manager at Ruhama, Amanda Keane, said: "The official numbers are only the tip of the iceberg. Victims of human trafficking face a number of challenges in being formally identified as such via the National Referral Mechanism. For instance, a number of individuals we support will not report their traffickers as they are very tightly controlled and fear

reprisals from the trafficker against them or their families. Without denouncing their traffickers, victims are not formally identified by the Irish state. This must be addressed.”

Ms. Keane added: “Networks of human traffickers are highly organised and efficient in evading justice. A key mechanism to preventing sex trafficking and countering impunity is to target the demand that drives it. This is a central purpose of the Sexual Offences Act 2017 which criminalised the purchase of sex. Without male demand for paid sexual access to others, women would not be trafficked into the sex trade for massive profits.”

*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 for a free, confidential call back.*

- ENDS -

**For further information, or to speak to someone from Ruhama, please contact:**

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**Read the full TIP 2019 report here:** <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf> (Ireland on pg.250-253).

### **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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### **Ruhama**

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