

Ireland upgraded in the latest Trafficking in Persons report but more needs to be done

Ruhama welcomes the upgrade of Ireland to Tier 2 in the Trafficking in Persons report 2022 released today from the US Department of State. Ireland was downgraded from Tier 1 to Tier 2 in 2018 and dropped further to Tier 2 Watchlist in 2020. In the latest report, Ireland is commended for securing the state's first convictions for human trafficking in June 2021 and expunging over 600 commercial sex offences. This progress is acknowledged in the TIPs report, however, it also highlights significant gaps and areas for Ireland to improve upon.

Ruhama CEO, Barbara Condon, highlighted major gaps in Ireland's identification procedures and the protection of victims: "Formal identification of trafficking victims and access to the National Referral Mechanism continues to require victims to cooperate with the Gardai in identification and investigations, which can exclude many victims and can be re-traumatizing. This is seriously underestimating the number of victims, which has a serious impact on their access to vital support services. Commitment from the government to reform the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to be more inclusive and extend the formal identification of trafficking victims to civil society and other professional organisations has been extensively delayed partially due to the pandemic. The pandemic presented additional issues from lockdowns and restricted travel movements to redeployment of An Garda Síochána, which made identification of victims of human trafficking incredibly difficult. A very hard to reach cohort became almost invisible."

Condon continued: "Whilst we are assured that the reformed NRM will be introduced soon, the demand for sex trafficking is prolific with evidence of increased online websites advertising sexual services. It is a multi-million-dollar business and Ireland alone is touted to generate €180 million per year from the sex tradeⁱ. A trade that is harming and traumatizing countless girls and women in Ireland. We need to and must do better if we are to achieve a zero-tolerance society to sexual exploitation"

"Victims of sex trafficking continue to be accommodated in Direct Provision centres. This environment is completely inappropriate and unsuitable for women who have gone through severely traumatic experiences. They're also at risk of re-traumatisation and re-trafficking in the centres. We need to ensure safe, secure, gender-specific accommodation is prioritised as a matter of urgency. We witness on a regular basis the severe impact that unsafe and inappropriate accommodation has on victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation."

In the emergence of the crisis in Ukraine this year, Ruhama along with other NGOs raised concerns about the risk to Ukrainian women and girls to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. We are working closely with the Gardai and civil society to offer supports to Ukrainian nationals and assist in the prevention of trafficking in Ireland. Risks to trafficking are inevitably higher during periods of war and displacement and we must remain vigilant to the threat of increased numbers of trafficking and ensure protective services actively respond to the needs of victims.

A key theme highlighted in the report is survivor engagement globally. Ruhama actively champions survivor engagement through many initiatives including the peer mentoring programme.

For further information, please contact:

Danielle Mc Laughlin, Policy and Communications Officer: 086 259 1247 / policy@ruhama.ie

Read the full TIP 2022 report here: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

(Ireland on pgs. 298-201).

About Ruhama

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

CONTACT US. FOLLOW US.

Ruhama

4 Castle St
Dublin 2

Tel: +353 1 836 0292

Website: www.ruhama.ie

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Ruhamalreland

Twitter: [@Ruhamaagency](https://twitter.com/Ruhamaagency)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ruhama>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ruhamaagency/>



ⁱ High Level Working Group (HLWG) (2020). The Implementation of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, Part IV – An Interim Review <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020HLWGInterimReportSOA2017ByGeoffreyShannon.pdf>