



Should prostitution be legalised in South Africa?

The most commonly cited arguments used by the pro-legalisation groups are:

1. Legalisation will decrease the risk of violence toward the prostitute by the customer and the pimp because the prostitute will then be free to report it to the police.
2. Legalisation will decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS because of mandatory testing and non-stigmatisation.
3. People who engage in prostitution make a free choice.

But let's look at the facts: The safety of the prostitute can never be guaranteed. Many women can't work in brothels because they have children to look after, are drug addicts or aren't what the brothel owners want. They just carry on in prostitution outside of the system, very often in street prostitution. Research, however, has shown that prostitutes in legal brothels (in countries where prostitution has been legalised) still experience violence from customers, security staff and pimps and seldom report it because of fear of retribution. The legitimisation of prostitution increases the number of men who would otherwise not use prostitutes. This increases the demand, and so more women and children are trafficked to meet the demand. Trafficked persons are sexual slaves and suffer the most unspeakable abuses. Many prostitutes do not register as prostitutes under the legalisation system because they don't want to have to pay taxes and because of the stigma of being a prostitute. Brothels, which are usually involved in various criminal activities, also do not want to be subject to control. Most do not comply with HIV testing programmes anyway.

If a woman tests positive for HIV or a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) under the legalisation system, she can't be forced to stop engaging in prostitution. She usually continues in prostitution regardless. A two tier system of prostitution develops, criminal and legal. In Sydney, Australia, where prostitution is legal, the Adult Business Association estimates the number of illegal brothels in the metropolitan area has blown out to exceed 400. "It's out of control," association spokesman Chris Seage said. Involvement in prostitution is often precipitated by family problems, physical and/or sexual abuse, poor role models, lack of education, drug addiction and unemployment. International studies show that between 65 % and 90 % of prostitutes were sexually abused by male relatives or acquaintances as girls. Many people caught up in prostitution are psychologically conditioned to the prostitution lifestyle and suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Stockholm syndrome which are recognized clinical conditions. They experience acute anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks and emotional numbing. 75% of prostitutes in escort agencies have attempted suicide. The average age for the entrance of girls into prostitution is 14 years old. According to a study by the Dutch Institute of Social Sexological Research, 79 percent of women in prostitution gave an indication that they were in prostitution due to some degree of force. Prostitution can therefore hardly be called a free or a legitimate choice.



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Sweden, Norway and Iceland have reversed prostitution legislation

- Sweden, Norway and Iceland have criminalised the "buyers" and pimps. Iceland has also banned strip clubs. The German government, as well as local authorities in cities in the Netherlands (notably Amsterdam), have conceded that the goals intended by the legislation have not been achieved. The Mayor of Amsterdam has admitted that organised crime dominates the industry in which sex trafficking, exploitation, drug abuse and money laundering is rife. One third of the brothel windows have been bought out and replaced with fashion boutiques. Permits have been withdrawn from dozens of sex businesses including the well known Yab Yum brothel and Casa Rosso Theatre who reportedly had links to organised crime. Rafts of new restrictions on other aspects of the sex trade are being introduced. Amsterdam and Rotterdam have closed down their Toppelzones (pickup areas). If South Africa legalises prostitution, it will be trying to replicate, with its already struggling bureaucratic administration, the **failed experiments** of other nations.
- In Sweden, where the "buyers" have been criminalized, and where prostitution is regarded as an aspect of male violence against women and children, the number of prostitutes has been effectively reduced. Street prostitution has all but disappeared in many Swedish cities and in Stockholm the number of women in street prostitution has been reduced by two thirds, with the number of customers down by 80%. Gone too, for the most part, are the renowned Swedish brothels and massage parlours, which proliferated during the last three decades of the twentieth century when prostitution in Sweden was legal. The number of foreign women now being trafficked into Sweden for sex is very small. The Swedish government estimates that in the last few years only 200 to 400 women and girls have been annually sex trafficked into Sweden, compared to the 15,000 to 17,000 females yearly sex trafficked into neighbouring Finland. No other country has yet duplicated Sweden's promising reversal.



Behind the Mask. Prostitution Paid Rape or Sex Work? A South African Story

DVD Produced by: Go-tell Communications

The call to decriminalise prostitution coming from prominent government officials is concerning. What's this really about? Do they want taxes from the sex industry? Or do they want to make it easy for pimps and gangs to exploit prostitutes without making this a police problem? How should we as Christians respond to this issue? R85

DVD
20 minutes



Escaping the Devil's Bedroom
By: Dawn Herzog Jewell

The sex industry enslaves millions of women, men and children, but Christians are fighting back. Dawn Jewell weaves the stories of individual victims with a careful examination of the realities that propelled them into prostitution in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Alongside, she highlights ministries that are reaching one life at a time through prayerful visits to strip clubs, bars and brothels. The transforming power of the Gospel shines in men and women who have left lives of sexual exploitation and started new lives of dignity. This book will help equip you with a greater understanding of this from a Biblical perspective and jump-start your personal, family or community's desires to take action. R130

BOOK
200 pages

Ex- prostitutes say NO to legalisation

When Eve, an ex-prostitute, was asked what she thought about prostitution being legalised and seen as a 'normal service industry,' she said, 'No way can prostitution be seen as a job, because it destroys women!' She said that if prostitution was legalised and turned into a 'service industry' she felt sure that the 'industry' would be taken over by international crime syndicates and these crime syndicate bosses would be given the cloak of respectability. She said that the public really needs to know what happens to prostituted women.

A counsellor at Straatwerk, a ministry that has worked with prostitutes for 43 years, says that the legalisation of prostitution would be the worst thing to happen. She says, "The girls and guys in prostitution are being torn apart. It damages their mind, body and emotions. They are not happy in prostitution so they turn to drugs or alcohol. There is almost always some substance abuse. Most come out of rape or abuse situations, which was a factor in them turning to prostitution in the first place. We are seeing second-generation prostitutes, that is, when both mother and child are involved."

A woman who has left prostitution as a result of Straatwerk's work, says prostitution must not be legalised because it is

horrible. She says, "Even thinking about that lifestyle is horrible. Women get raped, drugged, physically abused and pushed into many things that they don't want to do. Many of them are like sex slaves. It hurts and you can't get a normal relationship or life." **So why would government legalise something so destructive to women and the family?** The Financial Mail (December 2000) reported that the SA Revenue Service, in an effort to broaden SA's tax base, is looking for ways to tax prostitution. When this happens, government effectively becomes a PIMP.

The answer also lies in more than just the fact that this trade in women's bodies stands to make crime syndicates, sex traffickers and corrupt officials millions of rands.

Fundamentally, it is yet another attempt by our nation to throw off another "safety belt" of God's Law. Many men and women are rejecting the responsibility of marriage and family and want to legitimise the worship of sexual pleasure.

This law has not been passed yet, so now is the time to take a stand. If we don't want to see South Africa plunged into even further pagan darkness, then we all need to play our part in "speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8).

"Live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Ephesians 5:8-11

Stop prostitution from being legalised in South Africa! WHAT YOU CAN DO

The South African Law Reform Commission received thousands of submissions from concerned citizens, the majority of whom want the entire sex industry to stay criminalised. The SALRC is now embarking on a lengthy process of acknowledging every submission before making recommendations to the Minister of Justice. A Bill will probably be drafted in 2011. The Justice Portfolio Parliamentary Committee will then begin deliberations on the Bill. Public hearings on the Bill will then be held at Parliament. However, we need to get information to Members of Parliament before then.

- The Family Policy Institute has compiled a fact-based booklet on **Why Prostitution Must Not Be Decriminalised or Legalised in South Africa**. Download the booklet from www.familypolicyinstitute.com or call: 021- 462 7888 to obtain a copy. Subscribe to FPI e-updates via the FPI website.
- **Contact Members of Parliament**, particularly the Chairman of the Justice Portfolio Parliamentary Committee, Mr. N A Ramathodi to register your opposition to any moves to decriminalise prostitution. We also need to be urging the state to enforce the law and prosecute pimps. You can liaise with Mr. Ramathodi's PA at 021-403 3082.
- The best way of influencing them is through a face-to-face meeting. If you live in Cape Town or Pretoria, you can arrange to meet them at their office. Contact Africa Christian Action for more detailed advice on lobbying:

info@christianaction.org.za or 021-6894481.

- **Contact** details of MPs can be found here: www.info.gov.za/faq/contact.htm or by contacting the Parliament switchboard: 021- 4033 826. Emails followed-up by phone calls asking them if they have read your letter and what they plan to do about the situation are effective.
- **Identify** influential organisations and individuals and arrange to meet with them and give them copies of research papers and news articles that highlight the problems and the solutions.
- **Write** letters to the editor of your local newspaper and phone-in on radio talk show programmes to make your voice heard. Every bit helps.
- Justice Acts has developed a programme called **Traffick Proof** for empowering and educating people at risk of trafficking. Please contact them (see below) to receive training on presenting this programme in your community.
- Request Straatwerk to come and train you to present their **Valuable to Jesus Campaign** in your community. This presentation encourages children who have been sexually abused to receive help.
- Why not have a "**Not For Sale Sunday**" at your church, where you raise awareness about prostitution and trafficking? Visit www.notforsalecampaignsa.org for some ideas. Contact STOP Trafficking and the Not For Sale Campaign for short DVD clips that can be used to create awareness.
- **Volunteer** with or support ministries such as Doctors for Life, Straatwerk and STOP Trafficking that reach out to prostitutes with the Gospel and provide Safe Houses with rehabilitation programmes.

Christians for Truth: 032 481 5512, www.cft.org.za

Doctors for Life International: 079 046 4200, www.dfl.org.za

Family Policy Institute: 012 462 7888, www.familypolicyinstitute.com

Justice Acts: 021 788 6691, www.justiceacts.org

Not for Sale Campaign: 021 788 9296, www.notforsalecampaignsa.org

Straatwerk: 021 930 8055, www.straatwerk.org.za

STOP Trafficking: 082 321 7661, www.stoptrafficking.org.za



What you can do to clean up your community

- Speak to the managers of businesses surrounding the sex shops and courteously ask them to write a letter confirming incidents of litter, criminal activities or prostitution occurring in or around those strip joints etc.
- Arrange a meeting with your local ward councillor and give him/her these letters. Find out from your City Council if the strip joint/sex shop has the correct business licence and make this known to the police and your ward councillor. Urge them to issue fines. Persist with polite pressure.
- Organise a meeting of all residents that are directly affected. Invite ward councillor, police and pastors.
- Get your local Neighborhood Watch or Community Policing Forum involved in advising residents of safety measures and alerting the police to incidents.
- Get church groups to hold prayer vigils, outreaches and placard demonstrations outside the brothels to discourage customers from frequenting the premises.
- Encourage your community newspaper and radio station to report on the criminal activities happening in and around these places to help galvanise support for your initiatives.
- Urge the Provincial MEC for Community Safety of your Province to enforce the Sexual Offences Act (1957 and 2007). The Western Cape MEC is Mr Lennit Max. PA to the Minister: 021 – 4833878. Contact Christian Action for other Provincial MECs.