**ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ Γ. ΕΡΩΤΟΚΡΙΤΟΥ**

**ΣΤΟ ΣΕΜΙΝΑΡΙΟ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΜΠΟΡΙΑ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΩΝ**

**(HUMAN TRAFFICKING)**

**ΑΝΩΤΑΤΟ ΔΙΚΑΣΤΗΡΙΟ**

**4 Μαρτίου 2020**

Παρακαλώ να μου επιτρέψετε από αβρότητα και μόνο προς τους ξένους προσκεκλημένους μας, να μιλήσω στα Αγγλικά.

On behalf of the Supreme Court and the Judicial Training School, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to today’s Seminar on Human Trafficking.

The idea to hold the Seminar belongs to the Ministry of Interior, as the National Co-ordinator against Human Trafficking. When they first approached us, we immediately embraced the idea, as we all agree that Human Trafficking is indeed a very serious problem and not only are its dimensions growing, but also its manifestations are constantly changing and the authorities cannot keep up with the new methods that are adopted by those involved in HT on an organized basis.

Human Trafficking is an extremely complex phenomenon, as it involves social, political and economic factors. In this respect, most people agree that we have to fully understand the driving forces behind trafficking, in order to be able to combat the crime.

Despite the progress made, so far, we have not been able to eliminate this form of crime. One of the reasons, is that it has not been made a top priority of many Governments, who in the past have been extremely tolerant. Even today, there are a number of countries that don’t even have Human Trafficking legislation.

Unfortunately, some Governments use Human Trafficking to further their own political goals. I refer to our neighbouring country Turkey, which allows the refugee trade to flourish on its shores and borders. And the only reason I mention this, is because we have proportionally become the first country in Europe with the most refugees, who now constitute almost 4% of the population, thus presenting a huge security problem to Cyprus.

Human Trafficking is not a new phenomenon. It existed throughout history.

The slave trade which was the most ancient form of Human Trafficking existed in Babylon, where they even had a legal code to regulate it. Also, in Egypt where the Exodus of the Jews marked the biggest manumission of slaves.

Even in ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy and human rights, prostitution and slavery were predominant. The prostitutes were considered slaves of *“barbarian”* origin, meaning of non-Greek origin, which means they were trafficked from other territories. The so called “*Solonian brothels*” were very famous at the time.

The irony is that most Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Euripides, although they were great advocates of human liberty, they defended slavery as a natural and necessary institution.

Human slavery and trafficking continued in ancient Rome, where there was a lucrative trade. In fact, the slaves contributed greatly to the economic growth and expansion of Rome.

In contrast, ancient Persia formally banned most forms of slavery and opted for paid labour.

In medieval history, it was the Portuguese, the Spanish and the British that were mainly involved in human trafficking. I remind you of the massive slave trade in the 16th century, from Africa to America.

Today, the problem of Human Trafficking, as I am sure you will hear from our distinguished speakers, exists in both developed and underdeveloped societies.

In developed countries, where the sexual trade flourishes, there are sexually exploited women. In many European capitals, you often see beggars in the streets, many of whom are victims of human trafficking.

In underdeveloped countries one cannot ignore the phenomenon of child soldiers, or people who are trafficked in order to sell their organs.

Unfortunately, laws are useless, unless enforced. And this explains why, although the number of laws about Human Trafficking has increased all over the world, the number of traffickers who have been prosecuted, has not followed a relative increase.

With us today, we have three distinguished speakers who are experts in Human Trafficking and I would like to thank each one of them for accepting our invitation, and despite their busy schedule, they travelled all the way to Cyprus to enlighten us on Human Trafficking.

I would like to thank Judge Michelle Brewer, who is an immigration and Asylum Judge from the United Kingdom, who will concentrate mainly on the European perspective of Human Trafficking.

I would also like to thank Judge Jamie Cork from Minesota USA and Mrs Laura Provinzino, who is the Attorney responsible for Major Crimes and Priority Prosecutions at the Attorney’s Office in Minnesota.

They will concentrate more on the victims of human trafficking and the trauma that they experience. They will also deal with some of the challenges that we are facing and they will refer to some best practices in United States Courts. Right after lunch, they will discuss with you some case studies.

It is a great pleasure indeed to have all three colleagues with us and I wish them a pleasant stay in our small island which for 46 years is divided and occupied by Turkish forces.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Interior and the US Embassy for their support and collaboration, without which we would not have been able to organise this very specialised event.

I wish you a fruitful discussion.

Nicosia

4 March 2020