



IROKO Association, Resistenza Femminista, Unione Donne Italiane di Napoli, Salute Donna and Differenza Donna invite you to attend a day of talks and reflection on the sex industry and human trafficking on **28th May 2018 from 15:00 to 19:00**. It will be held in the **“Aldo Moro” room in the Chamber of Deputies in Rome**. Taking part in these talks will be the honourable Fabiana Dadone (from the 5 Star Movement) and Senator Edoardo Patriarca (from the Democratic Party).

Julie Bindel, writer and journalist (The Guardian, New Statesman, Sunday Telegraph, Standpoint), co-founder of Justice For Women and author of the book entitled *The Pimping of Prostitution* - an investigation into the global sex trade, drawing on interviews with 250 women from 40 countries - will be among international speakers at the event. Alongside her; **Ingeborg Kraus**, a German psychologist and trauma expert, who has held conferences around the world on the failure of the German Model (legalising prostitution), and the links between trauma and prostitution; **Rachel Moran**, an Irish survivor of prostitution, author of the book *Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution* and co-founder of SPACE International, an association of women who have escaped from prostitution; **Blessing Okoedion**, activist, author of the book *Il coraggio della libertà* (The Courage of Freedom), who has lived through the experience of being trafficked to Italy; **Giovani Conzo**, the anti-mafia prosecutor, who has been involved in significant trials of trafficked Nigerian women in Italy.

On 27th May at 16:00 in the Palazzo Merulana in Rome, there will be a preview open to the general public, in preparation for the seminar. Speaking at this preview event, there will be Rachel Moran, Blessing Okoedion, Ingeborg Kraus, the journalist and documentary-maker **Silvestro Montanaro**, creator of the documentary on prostitution entitled “Bambole” (Dolls), and **Serena Perini**, the President of the Equal Opportunities Commission in the municipality of Florence.

We believe that in the fight for gender equality, the theme of prostitution - inextricably linked with violence against women and human trafficking - is inescapable and that the Italian State, among others, must identify the most suitable political solutions, taking into account the significant criticisms of countries where decriminalisation laws have been adopted, such as Germany. Experts have condemned the occurrence of grave human rights violations, such as the subsequent explosion in the market for commercial sex and trafficking.

As has been noted in reports from European and international institutions, as well as many studies, human trafficking is a huge business, made up in large part by the sexual exploitation of women and girls in the market for prostitution. Today this market has taken on the proportions of an enormous industry, as a result of the globalisation of criminal networks and the growth in socio-economic inequality that leads women to leave their home countries in search of livelihoods, becoming victim to traffickers and often to sexual abuse, even during their journey.

In 2015 the European Commission calculated that, of the 30,000 victims of trafficking recorded in Europe between 2010 and 2012, around 70% were for sexual exploitation, and of these 95% were women and minors. The most common countries of origin within Europe are Romania, Bulgaria and Poland, and outside Europe, Nigeria, Brazil, China, Vietnam and Russia. Added to that we must consider the difficulties of measuring this phenomenon because of the common tendency to underestimate its spread. New forms of trafficking are actually more and more difficult to distinguish from the normal exploitation of prostitution, as

a result of changing techniques adopted by traffickers, who increasingly steer clear of the most blatant forms of violence towards victims. Instead, they adopt more subtle techniques of psychological subjugation. In addition, more generally, the Manichean distinction between trafficking and prostitution present in political and academic debate tends to cover up the fact that, as survivors of prostitution like Rachel Moran attest to, it is not only victims of trafficking who are subjected to violence. Both the situations of those trafficked into prostitution and those who enter under other circumstances "share the consequence of a woman having sex with strangers that she has no desire to have". In the case of women who are not forced by traffickers, there are other factors which constitute an invisible, but not necessarily less serious, form of coercion towards the sex trade, like large socio-economic inequality, drug dependency, having been subject to childhood abuse, etc.

In 2014 the European Parliament approved the *Honeyball Resolution* on prostitution - prior to the publication of a report on the appalling dimensions of the industry in terms of numbers, levels of profit and methods of recruitment - in which they recognised that **prostitution is a form of violence against women and that considering it "sex work", and thus decriminalising the sex trade as a whole, is not a valid solution to protect women and vulnerable minors from violence and exploitation. It actually has the opposite effect, contributing to the promotion of the market for prostitution and increasing the number of women subjected to violence and abuse.** At the same time, the document places great importance on the necessity to tackle the demand side of prostitution and support women who want to get out of prostitution with concrete programmes and assistance.

In recent years in various European countries, among them France, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, new prostitution laws have been approved that render the clients criminals for the purchase of sex and completely decriminalise the prostitutes themselves, as well as providing for support programmes for those getting out of prostitution. This has come to be known as the Nordic or Equality Model.

In Italy, although some draft laws have been submitted to Parliament that draw inspiration from this model, it is a struggle to initiate a serious debate on prostitution, the damage caused by regulation, and on what institutions should and could do to put an end to this intolerable violation of human rights.