

THAILAND'S PROBLEM WITH THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to address the problem of female sex trafficking in Thailand because it is a serious human rights issue that degrades and marginalizes women. Presently, Thailand is a source, transit, and destination country for those trafficked in the sex industry. While sexual exploitation is a worldwide problem, it is especially prevalent in Thailand because of economic, socio-cultural, and political factors. The scope of this thesis will cover the years from 2000 to 2010 and will be limited to women being trafficked. It will not cover young children in the sex trade. The U.S. Department of State considers the sexual exploitation of women as part of human trafficking and, since 2000, it has published its Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report on a yearly basis. Unfortunately, since 2004, Thailand has been placed on the Report's Tier 2 Watch List because it has not shown sufficient improvements in combating sex trafficking.

This thesis is organized in five chapters. Chapter I, "Introduction: Background Information on Thailand and the Sexual Exploitation of Women Prior to 2000," will include a short history of the sex trade before the 21st Century. Chapter II, "The Causes of Sex Trafficking in Thailand and the Methods of Recruitment of Female Sex

Workers,” will cover a definition of the term “human trafficking;” the economic, socio-cultural, and political reasons for the sex trade and how sex traffickers recruit their female victims. Chapter III, “The Work Conditions of Female Sex Workers in Thailand and the Adverse Effects of the Sex Trade,” will deal with the following issues: lodging and work; financial aspects; diet and healthcare; forms of punishment; and the adverse effects of the sex trade. Chapter IV, “The Reform Efforts Under the Four Main Thai Premiers from 2000-2010,” will examine the work of Chuan Leekpai (2000-2001), Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-2006), Surayud Chulanont (2006-2008), and Abhisit Vejjajiva (2008-2010) in suppressing sex trafficking in Thailand. Chapter V, the “Conclusion: Recommendations for Alleviating the Female Sex Trade in Thailand and Prospects for the Future,” will first propose ways whereby the Thai government can curb sex trafficking and will then discuss some prospects for the future.